

The Turkey Analyst

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ANALYSIS:

TURKISH LIBERALS DISENCHANTED WITH AKP, BUT SOUL-SEARCHING HAS YET TO COME.....3

Halil Magnus Karaveli

Turkey's influential liberal intellectuals have become disenchanted with the ruling AKP, which they accuse of having abandoned its initial, reformist agenda. However, disappointed liberals have yet to acknowledge that events could have taken a different turn if they had chosen to exert a corrective influence on their Islamic conservative allies in the AKP. Above all, liberals who truly aspire to be a vanguard of freedom will have to revisit the question of secularism and its democratic implications.

REGENERATION OF TRADITIONAL ISLAMISTS CHALLENGES THE POLITICAL SYSTEM7

M. K. Kaya

Metin Heper is professor of politics at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey. Heper has recently published an account of how the Turkish state has treated the Kurdish question, "The State and Kurds in Turkey – The question of assimilation" (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Professor Heper shared his views on the Kurdish question, about its history and about what the future may hold, with the Turkey Analyst.

THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW:

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*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute
Silk Road Studies Program*

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THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

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The initiative of a group of Turkish intellectuals to apologize to the Armenian people (www.ozurdiliyoruz.com) is stirring discussion among columnists. Writers in the mainstream media tend to express sympathy for the initiative to bring up the question of the fate of the Armenian people during the First World War, but they don't subscribe to the notion that apologies are called for. But the most heated discussion concerns the allegations made by a Republican People's Party MP that President Abdullah Gül, who has refrained from issuing any condemnation of the intellectuals' initiative, is of partly Armenian extraction. The CHP parliamentarian Canan Aritman is subjected to severe criticism from almost all quarters.

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THE TURKEY ANALYST

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

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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.

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TURKISH LIBERALS DISENCHANTED WITH AKP, BUT SOUL-SEARCHING HAS YET TO COME

Halil M. Karaveli

Turkey's influential liberal intellectuals have become disenchanted with the ruling AKP, which they accuse of having abandoned its initial, reformist agenda. However, disappointed liberals have yet to acknowledge that events could have taken a different turn if they had chosen to exert a corrective influence on their Islamic conservative allies in the AKP. Above all, liberals who truly aspire to be a vanguard of freedom will have to revisit the question of secularism and its democratic implications.

BACKGROUND: The small, liberal intelligentsia of Turkey has played an important, even vital role as promoters of the Islamic conservative AKP. The alliance that was formed between moderate Islamists and liberal intellectuals at the beginning of the decade has served to legitimize the Islamic movement in the eyes of liberal opinion in the West, as well as in Turkey itself. The benediction of the liberals was crucial in constructing the image of the AKP as the party of liberal reforms. Today, the liberal benediction has more or less been withdrawn.

The relationship between the liberals and the Islamic conservatives did begin to cool subsequent to the AKP's second electoral victory in 2007, as the ruling party increasingly displayed authoritarian

tendencies, in particular towards the media. ([See June 4 Turkey Analyst](#)) Yet, the fact that the Islamic conservatives were not pursuing a relentlessly liberal reform course had been apparent for several years. As it were, the period of liberal reforms only lasted for approximately two years. Since 2005, the AKP government has not



David Klein

made any serious efforts to enact any significant liberal reform package. However, that fact had until recently not served to encourage any liberal rethinking about the AKP, though a smaller number of the AKP's liberal cheerleaders began exhibiting doubts following the increasingly Islamic-oriented agenda espoused by the AKP following its re-election.

It is the increasingly nationalist rhetoric lately adopted by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan that has caused the current consternation among the liberal intellectuals. Notably, Erdogan recently invited Kurds who have a problem with Turkey to "leave the country". Liberals now charge Erdogan with having allied himself with the "system", by which is meant the military high command. They accuse the Prime Minister of following the lead of the General staff on issues such as Kurdish rights, Cyprus settlement and recognition of Armenian demands.

Those critics who take the more benevolent attitude towards Erdogan explain his seeming change of heart with reference to what is deemed to have been the insupportable pressures of the traditional state establishment. Bülent Kenes, editor-in-chief of the pro-Islamic daily Zaman holds that "the civil-military relationship in our country is undeniably pathologic" and declares that he still harbors the hope that the AKP government will ultimately be successful in "adapting that relationship to the requirements of the modern age". Others, such as Cengiz Aktar, a liberal academic, are less hopeful, declaring that the AKP has become a traditional Turkish center-right party allied with the state. The most disenchanted former liberal supporters of the AKP maintain, somewhat counter-intuitively, that in fact they knew all along that the AKP was not a truly democratic party set on the liberalization of Turkey.

Both explanations, blaming the "system" and/or the AKP as inherently undemocratic, may indeed be pertinent as far as they go. But they are also conveniently self-serving. They acquit the liberals, rendering superfluous any soul-searching about their own responsibility for the illiberal direction that Turkish politics has taken.

IMPLICATIONS: It is not entirely inconceivable that the AKP might have remained on a reformist and moderate track if the liberal intelligentsia – which did carry political weight with the AKP as its support was crucial for the Islamic conservatives – had played an ideologically restraining role rather than, as it were, encouraging an intransigent attitude towards the secular opposition.

If there indeed was, as is claimed, any early liberal awareness about the proper, undemocratic nature of Islamic conservatism, it was never publicly stated. Yet, the kind of evidence that critical observers of a liberal leaning could have submitted against the AKP was not lacking. The AKP attempted to push through legislation that would have criminalized adultery during its first term; the attempt was abandoned after heavy criticism from the EU, the opposition and from liberal supporters, who in that particular case remained true to liberal principles. But that was to prove to be an exception; in most other respects, the liberal intellectuals did, almost to a man, abstain from voicing principled dissent. On the contrary, when they could have had a moderating impact, the liberals fatefully chose to abet Islamic conservatism.

Even before the eruption of Turkey's regime crisis in 2007-2008 over the issue of secularism, evidence had accumulated that religious conservatism exerted a stronger pull on the AKP than liberal reformism. Religious observance had become a chief criterion for advancement within the state bureaucracy. It was in line with that trend that the

AKP demanded that the country's next president be "religious". Orthodox religious notions, concerning for instance the evolution, increasingly made themselves felt in the regular education offered in state schools. The liberals remained insensitive to the contextual ramifications of these changes; they did not reveal any consciousness about the possible causality between the political messages about the need to "redefine" secularism issued by leading AKP representatives and the concomitant spread of an atmosphere of religious bigotry throughout Anatolia.

Prime Minister Erdogan's statement in 2007 that "individuals cannot be secular" even if the state can, failed to ring any alarm bells in liberal intellectual circles. Neither were any liberal objections raised to the AKP's thrust to "redefine" secularism – specifically, to move from a definition that entails a restriction of the societal impact of religion to a new one that allows for public religious influence, "outside the conscience and the shrine".

The liberals did not counsel restraint as the AKP heightened the confrontation with the secular system after its election victory in 2007; instead, they encouraged the ruling party not to waver in its challenge of secularism. The question is why, as it seemed to run against the basic principles of liberalism. The answer may be found in the liberal repugnance to the influence that the military has traditionally exerted over the political system. That in turn seems to have led liberals astray in the issue of secularism. Since the military is – simplistically (see August 29 Turkey Analyst) – perceived as the unwavering guardians of the secular system, secularism itself has become tainted in liberal eyes. In that respect, the weakening of secularism could be termed the collateral damage of the liberal effort to democratize Turkey.

Obviously, Turkish liberals are not anti-secular, although there is a liberal intellectual tendency to embellish the Ottoman, Islamic past of Turkey. Ottoman nostalgia, and the concomitant belief that the republic's break with that supposedly more authentic culture has created an existential void in modern Turkey, is notably a theme that runs through the writings of Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk. Still, liberals like Pamuk belong to the thoroughly Westernized, mostly Istanbulite bourgeoisie of Turkey. (The last decade has seen the emergence of a new, religiously pious bourgeoisie in Anatolia.) Indeed, it may be argued that the existence of the former bourgeoisie and a liberal intelligentsia are in themselves testimony to the relative success of the secularist revolution that created modern Turkey.



Orhan Pamuk

The liberal assault on the republican system is in its implacability suggestive of an adolescent impulse to tear down the icons of a former generation. It has the unforgiving character of an intra-family settlement of accounts. The contrast between the ire that the liberals reserve for Kemalism and the indulgence displayed towards the Islamic conservatives, with whom they have little socio-cultural affinity, is nevertheless striking. Liberal intellectuals customarily refer to Kemalism as a reactionary ideology, when they do not label, and thereby libel, it as outright fascism. The reputation of the founder of Turkey, Kemal Atatürk, has gone from idolization to evisceration at best. Atatürk's revolutionary enterprise has in the currently hegemonic Turkish academic narrative come close to being judged as an unmitigated calamity, as it failed to institute democracy, and did not develop a philosophy about what is "good, right and aesthetic", to quote liberal academic Serif Mardin.

CONCLUSIONS: What has been decisive for the paradigm shift under way in Turkey is not so much the rise of Islamic conservatism as the defection of the ideology-producers of the liberal, Westernized bourgeoisie from the republican ideals of secularism and nation-state. As noted, liberals have not only legitimized Islamic conservatism as a reform movement, but have also encouraged a radical showdown with the founding ideology of the republic.

While die-hard, increasingly marginalized, and consequently further radicalized Kemalists desperately refute that these ideological tenets may need to be reconsidered at all, the equally dogmatic

liberals have made the mistake of perceiving secularism as the appendix of an undemocratic political order, not appreciating its importance for the evolution of democracy. The liberal assumption, never thoroughly elaborated or justified, has been that greater public space for religion would somehow precipitate the advent of a more liberal society. Liberals will have to admit that that is not a foregone conclusion. The liberals' prejudices about the Kemalist heritage have also misled them to perceive the military as a staunchly secularist force. ([See September 12 Turkey Analyst](#))

The reconciliation between the AKP, or at least the Prime Minister, and the General staff that disgusts the liberals does not imply any conversion to Kemalism by Prime Minister Erdogan. What it does imply is that there is a search for a common ground between religious conservatism and nationalism, with the perspective of securing the integrity of the nation state. In ideological terms, the rapprochement bears resemblance to the "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" that the military junta in the 1980s promoted as state ideology. It points towards a semi-authoritarian, religiously conservative as well as nationalistic Turkey.

Meanwhile, there is no reason why Turkish liberals should leave secularism untended to. After all, the ideological current that they purport to represent invites them to shoulder the responsibility as promoters of secularism. The future of Turkish secularism, and consequently democracy, depends partly on whether liberals and Kemalists of the anti-authoritarian mold will recognize the importance of forming a common ground.

REGENERATION OF TRADITIONAL ISLAMISTS CHALLENGES THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

M. K. Kaya

The traditional Islamists of the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) are mounting a new challenge to the ruling, Islamic moderate AKP. For the first time since Turkey's Islamic movement split into two parts – one moderate and reformist in the form of AKP and the other traditional in the form of the Felicity party – the former, victorious tendency could be facing a serious challenge from within its own core movement. A good showing of the Felicity party in the upcoming local elections would be likely to affect the internal balances of the Islamic movement.

BACKGROUND: The ruling AKP and the Felicity party share the same political roots. Both parties are outgrowths of the Milli Görüs (National Outlook) movement. The movement first entered the Turkish political scene at the beginning of the 1970s with the founding of the Milli Nizam (National order) party under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. Erbakan subsequently headed a succession of Islamist parties, all of which were eventually shut down.

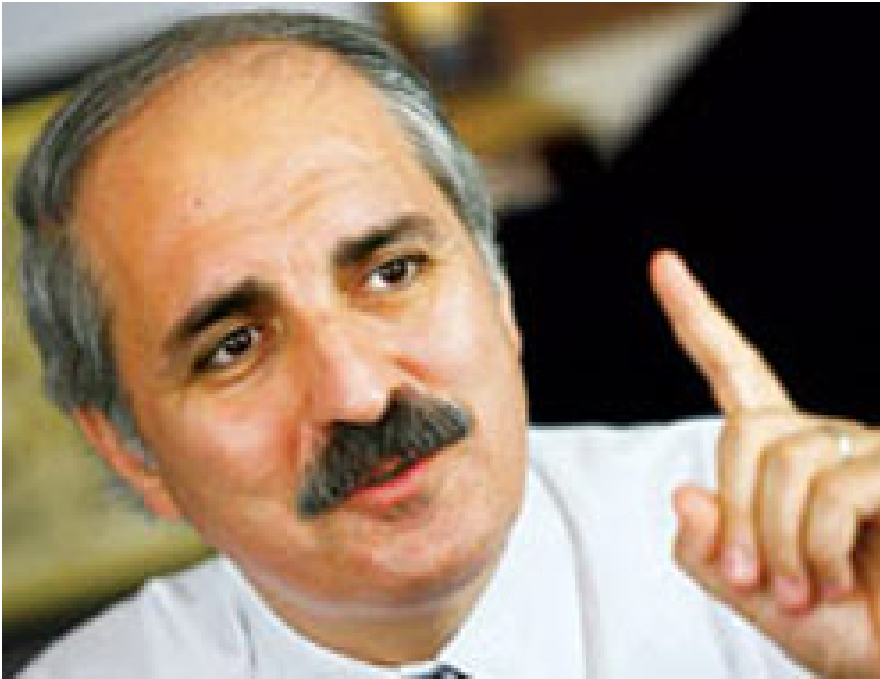
The last closure case, the closure of the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi) and the banning of Erbakan from politics, led to the split of the movement into two parts. Identifying themselves as reformists and led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gül, a group consisting mostly of a younger generation of Islamic conservatives formed the AKP in 2001.

Meanwhile, the mainstream of the Islamic movement regrouped as the Felicity Party under the leadership of Recai Kutan. Remaining true to the traditional line of Turkish political Islam, the Felicity Party has until now been effectively marginalized. In the two latest elections, in 2002 and in 2007, the party received only around 2,5 percent of the votes.

Until now, very little attention has been paid to the prospect of a possible resurgence of traditional Islamism in Turkey. It has been more or less assumed that the makeover realized by the AKP also implicated that the broader Islamic movement had been brought into the moderated mold, or that its more radical parts had been rendered insignificant. The poor election results achieved by the traditional Islamists of the Felicity party seemed to confirm those assumptions.



However, a change could very well be under way. The reasons have to do with the evolution of the AKP, notably with the problems that the party has encountered as it has – rather unsuccessfully – tried to appear to be a centrist alternative. Meanwhile, the AKP has kept an eye on the expectations of its Islamic core, just as the Felicity party recently embarked on an effort at regeneration.



In October, the U.S.-educated Numan Kurtulmus was elected as Felicity's new party leader. Kurtulmus, born in 1959, is a young member of the Milli Görüş movement, connected with the influential Nakshibendi brotherhood. The Nakshibendis have traditionally formed the core of the Islamic movement in Turkey, supplying much of its ideological basis as well as its cadres. Many of its members have risen to political prominence, such as former president Turgut Özal and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

IMPLICATIONS: Although the election of Numan Kurtulmuş obviously represents an important rejuvenation, the older, founding generation of the party still constitutes the

majority of the party cadres. The older generation's reluctance to give up their positions of power restricts the new leader's room for maneuver in the short run. It should however be noted that there is dynamism inside the party in spite of Felicity's introvert image. There is awareness that the AKP can no longer credibly aspire to represent the traditional Islamic movement, a fact that has raised the self-confidence of the Felicity party cadres, which have never tried to be anything other than the "true" representatives of classical political Islam. The Felicity party now sees a renewed potential for a reassertion of traditional Islamism.

By not seeking to position itself in the political center as the AKP has tried to do, the Felicity party is tuning in with other Islamic movements globally. These relationships are rapidly evolving in both ideological and emotional terms. The party is paying renewed attention to educational programs, the training of the young cadres, to local gatherings at homes, and to aid programs to the needy. The new party leader, Kurtulmus, is yet to prove himself, but the activities of the party organization are proof of newfound confidence and purposefulness. The first test he has to pass is the March 29 local elections. A possible achievement, such as reaching a 5 percent share of the vote – something that does not appear impossible – would set the stage for the return in earnest of traditional political Islam, making it a force to reckon with once again.

The strategy of the Felicity party is based on the assumption that the AKP's experiment with "moderate" Islamism has reached the end of the road. The party basically expects the ideological

vote, that of the Islamic core, to turn away from the AKP. Felicity is also counting on exploring the rising discontent with the ruling party in the wake of the economic crisis, and is expecting to be able to exploit widespread anti-Western sentiments in Turkey.

The extent to which the Felicity party will prove capable to capitalize on these political undercurrents will obviously depend on a range of factors, not least on the image that the party succeeds in conveying. The election of a new party leader has enhanced those chances. Yet, perhaps more importantly, the reasoning behind the strategy of regenerated Islamism serves to highlight the difficulties encountered by the AKP.

Trying to become a party of the center, in fact the new establishment party, the AKP had to open up to the traditional, secular center-right. The AKP became a coalition of the classical Islamic movement and parts of the old center-right. Trying to straddle both political worlds was always difficult. And after escaping closure, the AKP has had to further distance itself from its religiously conservative roots. After the ruling of the Constitutional court, it has become increasingly difficult for the AKP to appeal to its traditional core. The ruling of the Constitutional court, while not closing the party down, has set new, constitutional barriers against efforts to challenge the secular order. That effectively reined in the AKP. As the AKP no longer is able to play the religious card, it is left vulnerable for the kind of challenge that the Felicity party is mounting.

The Felicity party is counting on being able to thrive on the desire among religious conservatives to change the system, and is also counting on discontent with the evolution of the AKP, which is seen by the most conservative segments as having changed itself rather than changing the system. This desire is usually met by closures and bans by the control mechanisms of the system. However, an Islamist challenger which has the potential to weaken the AKP seems less likely to attract considerable reaction from the system, at least initially.

CONCLUSIONS: It is definitely possible that the AKP could lose ground in the upcoming local elections. The Felicity Party, led by a young and well informed leader like Kurtulmuş and with its regenerated Islamic alternative, stands a reasonable chance to make important inroads among the supporters of the AKP. As even a small increase in the votes generally has an energizing effect in these types of movements, the Felicity party seems set to increase its weight in the Turkish political arena.

As the AKP has been forced to tone down much of its Islamic ambitions in order to survive, and seems intent on securing survival by following in the footsteps of the traditional center-right parties, a new political space is opened up for a party that represents the old current of political Islam.

That old tradition has now got a new, young face. It is a symbolically important change, one that could signify the end of the time when it was generally assumed that un-moderated political Islam belonged to the past.

THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

SECTION I: WHAT THE COLUMNISTS SAY

The initiative of a group of Turkish intellectuals to apologize to the Armenian people (www.ozurdiliyoruz.com) is stirring discussion among columnists. Writers in the mainstream media tend to express sympathy for the initiative to bring up the question of the fate of the Armenian people during the First World War, but they don't subscribe to the notion that apologies are called for. But the most heated discussion concerns the allegations made by a Republican People's Party MP that President Abdullah Gül, who has refrained from issuing any condemnation of the intellectuals' initiative, is of partly Armenian extraction. The CHP parliamentarian Canan Aritman is subjected to severe criticism from almost all quarters.

MUHTAR: A FASCIST ATTACK ON GÜL

Reha Muhtar in Vatan reacts sharply to the charge that President Abdullah Gül has displayed some sympathy for the initiative to bring up the Armenian question because he is of Armenian extraction. I don't know whether the president's mother is Armenian. But it is certainly outright fascism to make people's ethnic origins a matter of political discussion. In a place like Anatolia, where a multitude of ethnic groups have mixed during for centuries, who can tell who is of what ethnic origin? Unfortunately, others have been accused similarly before. President Turgut Özal was for instance accused of showing lenience in the Kurdish question because of his Kurdish ethnic origin. If there is indeed an ethnic background to the actions of President Abdullah Gül, then I salute him. I am not for apologizing for past events, but I do apologize to the president – not in my own name, but in the name of those who attack him in fascist terms.

IDIZ: WHY I DON'T APOLOGIZE TO THE ARMENIANS

Semih Idiz in Milliyet describes the initiative as a historic turning point in Turkey. The fact that over ten thousand have already signed it is proof that it has met with success. But the question is whether the Armenian side will accept the apology. Apparently, there is reluctance, since the word "genocide" is not used in text of the initiative. I don't think it is unreasonable to expect Armenian intellectuals to display at least certain "empathy", acknowledging that the tragedy in Anatolia was shared, that others also suffered. The families of the Turkish diplomats who were killed by Armenians in the 1970s and 1980s are also entitled to empathy. But the reason why I personally would not sign this initiative has nothing to do with that. As I have studied my own family history, I know for sure that I have no reason to "apologize on my own behalf", to

quote the initiative. And I don't subscribe to the notion of collective guilt.

BAYRAMOGLU: A TRULY HISTORIC STEP

Ali Bayramoglu in Yeni Safak gives the initiative to apologize to the Armenian people his full support. I have received many reactions from readers, and I am well aware that there is strong reaction against the apology. You may think as you will, but I nevertheless happen to think that this initiative, acknowledging the suffering of others and showing responsibility towards history, is one of the most important steps taken in the direction of making Turkey a more democratic, more open society. You cannot talk about decency and modernity without first cleaning up in front of your own doorstep. This campaign is also a sign that the Turkish identity is in the process of maturing and thus getting stronger.

YETKIN: THE SHARED SUFFERING SHOULD HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED

Murat Yetkin in Radikal does not approve of the apology initiative. If the wording had been different, if the aim had been not to apologize, but to address the shared suffering, then I would have had thought differently about it. Yetkin reminds of an interview with President Abdullah Gül in the French weekly L'Express earlier this year. In that interview, Gül stated that it would be wrong to act in a way which enflames emotions. Gül reminded that 5 million Turks died when the Balkans were ethnically cleansed a century ago, and that it would serve no good if Turkey had demanded apologies for that suffering. As for the allegations of CHP deputy Canan Aritman about the ethnic origins of the president, I find her behavior utterly shameful. I believe that many others within her party share my disgust. And I believe I have the right to expect that party leader Deniz Baykal will distance himself from her.

SECTION II: DOMESTIC POLITICS

MHP URGED FOR RENEWAL OF ELECTORAL REGISTERS

Turkey's nationalist opposition party MHP calls for renewal of electoral registers, which are prepared according to the new address based census system and expert's have criticized the system for becoming more vulnerable to government intervention. Turkey is heading toward a shadowy local election process, one clouded in suspicion and uncertainty over the exact number of voters. According to the Supreme Election Board (YSK) six million additional voters registered for the local elections. Opposition parties CHP and MHP raised their concerns regarding the situation. MHP claimed that in the new system even dead people were registered, which was also admitted by the YSK. MHP's deputy leader of the parliamentary group, Oktay Vural told reporters when he urged for renewal the electorate registers, "This would remove the speculation regarding the number of voters and eventually the shadow that would otherwise be cast on the local elections". *Hürriyet December 8*

A MEETING BETWEEN ALEVI REPRESENTATIVES AND THE PM WERE HELD ON SATURDAY

Representatives from the Turkish Alevi community met with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday, which will function as a part of the government's previously announced policy of listening to and addressing Alevi demands. The meeting was held at the Dolmabahce Palace in Istanbul and it lasted for two hours. Cem Foundation President Izzettin Dogan expressed his foundation's demand that Alevi dedes (Alevi spiritual and community leaders) will get regular salaries like the imams get from the Religious Affairs Directorate, where he also wanted representation based on the demographic intensity of Alevis in Turkey. State minister Said Yazicioglu replied to Dogans

demand by saying "If 98 percent of Alevis agree with you, we can solve this problem easily" and after the meeting he told reporters that the meeting had been "extremely balanced and positive" and added that the government wants to prevent the Alevi question from being exploited politically. Dogan told reporters that the legal actions necessary to meet Alevi demands would be taken after the local elections next year so that the general public will understand that the initiative is not a political ploy by the government. Alevi representatives also requested the recognition of the Alevi perspective of Islam by the Religious Affairs Directorate and Dogan also stressed that "State radio and television broadcasting should include programs targeting Alevi citizens". Another topic that was discussed was the possible conflicts that might arise when Alevis are given specific rights by the government. Dogan commented on this by saying, "Why should there be conflict when Alevis are given their rights when there has been no conflict when their rights were not granted? We discussed this in earnest. Our understanding is that the government would like to introduce solutions to problems." *Zaman December 8*

THE IMF AGREEMENT, A SHORT-TERM STANDARD STAND-BY

The deal that Turkey is anticipated to make with the IMF will most likely be made within the framework of a year and a half up to two years; a three years agreement will probably not be the case. Turkey has put 19 stand-by agreements with the IMF on hold. The Turkish Treasury invited an IMF team to Turkey, which will come in early January to discuss a new economic program. The Treasury announced that "Significant progress has been achieved in the technical efforts for establishing a program between Turkey and the IMF". The team will discuss policies, structural adjustments and the program contents within the

framework of an agreement to be signed. *Sabah* December 15

RETIRED GENERAL VELI KÜCÜK REFUSED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS DURING ERGENEKON TRIAL

Veli Küçük is one of the most important suspects in the trial against Ergenekon (a criminal network charged with plotting to overthrow the government). During the 27th hearing trial at the Istanbul 13th High Criminal Court, Küçük refused to answer questions in the cross examination. The public prosecutors Mehmet Ali Pekküzül and Nihat Taskin directed 17 questions to Küçük and he only answered one of them. He refused to answer questions that were asked about notes in his personal notebook and "recommended" that the prosecutor "withdraw" his question. The prosecutor is seeking two life sentences with no possibility of parole. However, Küçük agreed that he met Tuncay Güney a few times, but that they had no deeper connection. Küçük faces 17 charges and denies all charges directed against him in court. *Zaman* December 17

TURKISH PM AND PRO-KURDISH DTP ACCUSE EACH OTHER OF BEING "NAZIS"

During the first day of the debates on the draft budget for 2009, mutual accusations were exchanged between Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the DTP deputies. Erdogan accused DTP of trying to win votes by threatening people and he said that under the roof of this parliament some people, who do not want the Prime minister to visit some cities in the country, have emerged. He continued by saying "While we were implementing our democratic right and I, as the prime minister of Turkey, was attending some ceremonies (in the southeastern provinces), it was very interesting to see some people, who couldn't accept this, setting cars on fire and breaking the windows of my party's building. Is this democracy? Is this freedom? Is these human rights? You can't attain freedom or democracy like this, the path of democracy is the polls". The DTP deputy Hasip Kaplan reacted to this by referring to Erdogan as "Le Pen" (referring to the far-right French politician) and Erdogan replied to this and said "You are the Le Pen. You raised

Nazism in this country". The dispute continued by Kaplan responding to Erdogan by saying "You are the Nazi and you represent Nazism. We have democratic rights. You cannot address us like this". *Hürriyet* December 17

APOLOGY CAMPAIGN FOR THE 1915 EVENT INITIATED BY TURKISH INTELLECTUALS

A group of intellectuals initiated a campaign to apologize for the Armenian claimed genocide event in 1915. The Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan objected to this campaign, saying that it is wrong and that it is "messaging things up". The Turkish group of intellectuals collected signatures for a statement that contained a personal apology for the claimed events. The statement said, "My conscience does not accept the insensitivity showed to and the denial of the Great Catastrophe that Ottoman Armenians were subjected to in 1915. I reject this injustice and for my part, I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers. I apologize to them". Erdogan responded to this by saying, "We cannot accept this just because some writers launched a campaign. I don't accept such a campaign, I don't support this campaign, I don't take part in it. We did not commit crimes, so we don't need to apologize." He continued by saying, "Such campaigns are wrong initiatives. To approach the issues with goodwill is something else. To apologize is something else. I think to apologize is illogical." Erdogan stressed that there have been a positive development in the Armenian issue and said that the Turkish President's recent visit in Yerevan, Armenia, was one of them. President Abdullah Gül also commented on the campaign and said that Turkey is a country in which freedom of expression is alive and well, "We believe in solution by dialogue with our neighbors with whom we have problems. Continuing the problems is not useful to anyone". *Zaman* December 18

THE MAIN OPPOSITION CHP CHANGED ITS MIND ON PROSECUTION IMMUNITIES

The main opposition CHP, Republican People's party, moves to accept women wearing chadors as party members and its critical approach to the

single-party era (1923-1950) have ignited an intense debate and the CHP is now preparing for another initiative, this time to lift all prosecution immunities. CHP have until now argued that only political immunities should be lifted, while AKP has demanded that immunities of all groups, political, judicial and military, should be lifted simultaneously. The CHP leader Deniz Baykal has not been positive to the removal of the immunities of the judicial and military bureaucracy until now. Now, Baykal signals a change of mind on the issue and the AKP has reportedly been extremely surprised by this move. At a meeting in the parliament Baykal said that corruption can only be prevented by lifting immunities and he promised that "If you prepared a bill to lift parliamentary immunities along with the deputies of the bureaucracy, it would be our responsibility to support that bill". In response, Erdogan ordered a senior party executive to draft a bill along the lines suggested by Baykal. *Zaman December 18*

TURKEY MAKES PROGRESS ON WATER, BUT PROBLEMS LINGER

The latest environmental performance review of Turkey, submitted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) shows that Turkey has made progress in water infrastructure and treatment, but that the

quality of the nation's surface water remains unacceptably low. The report stated that Turkey's 8th and 9th National Development Plans contained important elements to ensure the provision of water for industrial and public use. Many people in Turkey benefits from the improved water treatment facilities, which have increased by nearly 40 percent. The report also outlined recommendations. Insufficient pollution control has led to water quality reaching dangerously low levels in some urban municipalities. According to the report "pollution intensity levels calculated according to the amounts of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emitted in relation to overall economic output are among the highest in OECD countries. Approximately 53 percent of total effluent from industry, much of it containing poisonous metals like mercury, lead, chromium and zinc, is still discharged into rivers and coastal waters without any treatment". The OECD suggested that Turkey does more in developing renewable energy sources and urged for stronger regulatory standards in line with EU legislation. The report reminded Turkey that "strengthened environmental efforts of national government, municipalities and the private sector are required to achieve environmental convergence with other OECD countries." *Zaman December 18*

SECTION III: FOREIGN RELATIONS

EU NEED WORKERS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES TO KEEP ITS ECONOMY FUNCTIONING

Joel Hasse Ferreira, member of the Socialist bloc in the European Parliament and the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, said on a conference in Poland that EU is in need of workers from other countries to keep its economy functioning and that the free movement of Turks

within the European Union cannot be restricted. Many Europeans are afraid of an influx of unemployed Turks into Europe once the country becomes an EU member. Ferreira said on the first Europe-Turkey Forum that Turkey's full integration to the EU is of the utmost importance for strengthening the EU common market. *Zaman December 8*

TURKISH PRESIDENT ABDULLAH GÜL PLANS TO VISIT ISRAEL IN JANUARY

Abdullah Gül will meet with the Israeli President, Shimon Peres, to discuss the possibilities for Turkey to advance its mediating role in the negotiations between Israel and Syria. Gül has visited Israel three times before in the role as foreign minister, but this will be his first visit as a president. So far Syria and Israel have held four rounds of indirect talks, mediated by Turkey. However there has been no significant development and Syria claims that Israel postponed the fifth round. The Iranian nuclear threat will also be discussed during Gül's visit in January. The two countries disagree on the matter sharply, since Turkey supports the position of its Western allies but urges that the sanctions are weakening the position of the Iranian reformists and that Iran has a legitimate right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has offered to mediate in the stalled negotiations between the West and Iran over its nuclear program. During the visit in January, Gül will discuss the question of the recognition of the 1915 incident as "genocide" with his Israeli counterpart and ask him to use his influence in Washington to try to prevent this. *Hürriyet December 10*

TURKISH CYPRIOT LEADER DOES NOT WANT EU TO PLAY A MEDIATING ROLE IN THE CYPRUS ISSUE

The Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, asked high-level European Union officials for equal treatment during a meeting in Brussel on Tuesday. During his visit in Brussels he met with European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and EU Commissioner for enlargement Olli Rehn and the Anatolian Agency reported Talat saying, "We asked for equal treatment as we want democracy, which is one of the fundamental principles of the EU. The Greek Cypriot administration joined the EU in an unfair way, and it is claimed that Greek Cypriot side is representing the whole of Cyprus. However, in the aspect of the Cyprus problem, Turkish Cypriots want equal treatment and also they want to be listened to". He also stressed that Turkish Cypriots do not want EU to be a

mediating party, since it would have no neutrality due to the memberships of the Greek Cypriot administration and Greece. *Hürriyet December 10*

IRAN A POSSIBLE GAS SUPPLIER FOR THE NABUCCO PROJECT

The Turkish President Abdullah Gül suggested that Iran and Iraq could be possible gas suppliers for the Nabucco project that would transport gas from the Caucasus, through Turkey to Western markets. The aim of the delayed Nabucco project is to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas, since EU gets about one-third of its oil and about 40 percent of its natural gas from Russia. During Gül's visit in Bulgaria the Bulgarian President, Georgi Parvanov asked him whether there was any development regarding the Nabucco project. Gül responded by saying, "This project is about supplying Europe's energy need sufficiently and in a safe way. A considerable amount of gas is planned to be transported through Turkey. Turkey attaches importance to this project. The most important issue regarding this project is to obtain enough gas". Gül also stressed the importance of diversity of sources in gas supply by saying, "There are also some problems. Turkey is exerting efforts for supplying gas from other dimensions. Arab gas -- in particular Iraqi gas -- is 50 kilometers from the Turkish border. Construction is going on. If the problems are resolved, then more Iranian gas may be bought". Azerbaijan could provide half of the gas demand from the Nabucco project, but Russia and Gazprom have now reached out to Turkey and offer to buy gas at European prices. Another problem with the Caspian supply is the implications of the war between Georgia (one of the transit countries) and Russia in August increased doubts about security of investing in the turbulent region. Parvanov stressed his countries commitment for working together with Turkey and the project. He also expressed hopes of reaching an agreement with Turkmenistan as well, which he will also visit shortly. *Zaman December 18*

PALESTINE ARE REACHING OUT TO TURKEY FOR HELP

The recent claims that Turkey has been mediating between Al Fatah and Hamas was

denied by the Turkish Foreign Ministry. A member of the Palestine Yasama Konseyi, Azam Al-Ahmad, came to Turkey as a representative for the Palestine President, Mahmud Abbas and told Turkish representatives about the development in the country and about the national unity process and urged Turkey to contribute as a mediator. However, Turkey has not offered any mediating assistance in the uniting process, the Palestinian representative stressed. Turkey is playing an important role for the stability and peace in Middle East the Foreign Ministry stressed. The conflict between Al Fatah and Hamas has been going on for over one year and the Palestinian authority is now reaching out to Turkey for help. During a meeting in Ankara the Turkish President Abdullah Gül stressed the importance of finding a solution to the ongoing conflict between the two groups. *Yeni Safak* December 18

DAVUTOGLU CRITIZES THE U.S POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's chief foreign policy advisor, Ahmet Davutoglu said during a visit in Paris that the Bush administration's project in the Middle East has turned out to be a real failure. To be able to move forward everyone has to make a contribution and he stressed the importance of solving the problems with the Hamas and the Talibans. Davutoglu continued by saying that after the failure of the American project in the Middle East new ways of moving forward has to be found.

The U.S President elect Barack Obama has said that a new policy has to be prepared. Davutoglu directed his attention to the Palestinian question and stressed that it is of vital importance. Both Afghanistan and Iraq needs long time to recover and build up their states and societies. Davutoglu also said that Turkey can play an important role in the development of Afghanistan since Turkey has good relations with the ethnic groups in the country. *Radikal* December 18

EU WILL OPEN TWO MORE CHAPTERS IN TURKEY'S ACCESSION NEGOTIATION

A green light was given by the EU to begin talks on Friday on the "free movement of capital" and "information society and media". With the opening of these two chapters the total number being negotiated will reach ten, with twenty five remaining. Since the talks began in 2005 only one chapter has been concluded. Because of Turkey's refusal to open its ports to Greek Cypriot vessels, eight chapters in the negotiations were suspended. The Czech Republic that is the next EU chair country has suggested that two more chapters will be opened during its term. The decision to open up negotiations on two more chapters on Friday was taken without the polemic which usually accompanies such discussions. *Hurriyet* December 18