

# The Turkey Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING

VOL. 2 NO. 10

22 MAY 2009

## ANALYSIS:

### SÜLEYMAN DEMIREL'S ODYSSEY FROM CONSERVATISM TO SECULARISM

*Halil M. Karaveli*

Süleyman Demirel, the grand old man of Turkish politics, aspires to revive the defunct center right which used to rule Turkey, creating an alternative to the AKP. However, Demirel no longer appeals to the conservative majority that composed the constituency of the center right. Indeed, he is accused of having betrayed the historical mission of Turkish conservatism by allying himself with the nationalist-secularist military-bureaucratic establishment. Demirel's evolution in fact personifies the radicalization of republican state ideology.

### ANKARA'S GROWING REALISM ON THE NABUCCO PROJECT

*M. K. Kaya and Svante E. Cornell*

The Nabucco pipeline is key to Europe's diversification of natural gas supply, but faces numerous problems. Turkey has been a problem country for Nabucco given the low level of coordination of Turkish policy on the issue and Ankara's exaggerated demands. Nevertheless, Ankara now appears to have adopted a more realistic policy. However, Ankara's stance on Nabucco and its rapprochement with Armenia did considerable damage to the project by putting into question Azerbaijan's participation. Indeed, while Turkey appears less of a problem than a few months ago, the ball is now in Baku.

### What the Columnists Say

The confrontation between the Islamic conservative/liberal alliance and the nationalist-secularist camp continues to set the tone of Turkish politics. The funeral of Türkan Saylan, the founder of the secularist "Association for the defense of the modern way of life", turned into a manifestation by the secularist opposition. The change of leadership in the Democratic party was widely interpreted as an attempt to revive a secularist center right alternative. While liberal and conservative commentators are worried that the secularist manifestation at Saylan's funeral and the election of a new DP leader are part of the machinations of the Ergenekon organization, others see the former event as evidence that the attempts of Islamic conservative forces to incriminate all opposition is backfiring, and are hopeful about the prospects of a new center right.



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



# The Turkey Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING  
VOL. 2 NO. 10  
22 MAY 2009

## ANALYSIS

### **SÜLEYMAN DEMIREL'S ODYSSEY FROM CONSERVATISM TO SECULARISM...3**

*Halil M. Karaveli*

Süleyman Demirel, the grand old man of Turkish politics, aspires to revive the defunct center right which used to rule Turkey, creating an alternative to the AKP. However, Demirel no longer appeals to the conservative majority that composed the constituency of the center right. Indeed, he is accused of having betrayed the historical mission of Turkish conservatism by allying himself with the nationalist-secularist military-bureaucratic establishment. Demirel's evolution in fact personifies the radicalization of republican state ideology.

### **ANKARA'S GROWING REALISM ON THE NABUCCO PROJECT.....7**

*M. K. Kaya and Svante E. Cornell*

The Nabucco pipeline is key to Europe's diversification of natural gas supply, but faces numerous problems. Turkey has been a problem country for Nabucco given the low level of coordination of Turkish policy on the issue and Ankara's exaggerated demands. Nevertheless, Ankara now appears to have adopted a more realistic policy. However, Ankara's stance on Nabucco and its rapprochement with Armenia did considerable damage to the project by putting into question Azerbaijan's participation. Indeed, while Turkey appears less of a problem than a few months ago, the ball is now in Baku.

### **What the Columnists Say.....11**

The confrontation between the Islamic conservative/liberal alliance and the nationalist-secularist camp continues to set the tone of Turkish politics. The funeral of Türkan Saylan, the founder of the secularist "Association for the defense of the modern way of life", turned into a manifestation by the secularist opposition. The change of leadership in the Democratic party was widely interpreted as an attempt to revive a secularist center right alternative. While liberal and conservative commentators are worried that the secularist manifestation at Saylan's funeral and the election of a new DP leader are part of the machinations of the Ergenekon organization, others see the former event as evidence that the attempts of Islamic conservative forces to incriminate all opposition is backfiring, and are hopeful about the prospects of a new center right.

# THE TURKEY ANALYST

## Editorial Board

Svante E. Cornell, Editor-in-Chief  
Halil Magnus Karaveli, Managing Editor  
M. K. Kaya, Associate 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](mailto: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](mailto:info@silkroadstudies.org)

# SÜLEYMAN DEMIREL'S ODYSSEY FROM CONSERVATISM TO SECULARISM

*Halil M. Karaveli*

*Süleyman Demirel, the grand old man of Turkish politics, aspires to revive the defunct center right which used to rule Turkey, creating an alternative to the AKP. However, Demirel no longer appeals to the conservative majority that composed the constituency of the center right. Indeed, he is accused of having betrayed the historical mission of Turkish conservatism by allying himself with the nationalist-secularist military-bureaucratic establishment. Demirel's evolution in fact personifies the radicalization of republican state ideology.*

**BACKGROUND:** Last week, Hüsamettin Cindoruk was elected party chairman of the Democratic Party. The DP is a remnant of what was once Turkey's dominant political movement. The center-right ruled Turkey for most of the time between 1950 and 2002. The other inheritor of that political tradition is the likewise nowadays politically insignificant Motherland party. In the general elections 2007, the DP received 3.5 percent of the votes. Nevertheless, the change in the DP

leadership is worth more attention than what it would seem to warrant at first glance. Indeed, the significance of the event was not lost on commentators who support the ruling AKP.

Cindoruk's election was widely interpreted as an intervention by former president and long-time prime minister Süleyman Demirel. "What has happened is important because it means that Demirel has returned to party politics", wrote Taha Akyol, a prominent conservative, pro-AKP columnist.

Süleyman Demirel was prime minister for twelve years during the 1960s and 1970s and at the beginning of the 1990s, and served as president from 1993 to 2000. Cindoruk is known to be a loyal executor of missions assigned to him by Demirel. Cindoruk was quick to pay tribute to Demirel upon his election,



welcoming him to the party and thereupon visiting him at his home. Greeting Cindoruk, Demirel declared that he had found it impossible to accept that the fifty-year old center-right movement would go extinct.



However, Demirel's aspiration to represent the center-right is far from being universally welcomed within what is left of that movement. Indeed, Cindoruk's election was not unanimous, revealing that the DP is a sharply divided party. Not having rallied his own party fully behind him, Cindoruk (and Demirel) will face great difficulties when embarking on the proclaimed effort to unite the DP and the Motherland party. Indeed, the new party leader suffered an immediate, symbolically important setback when Aydin Menderes, the son of Adnan Menderes, the conservative prime minister that was deposed in a military coup 1960 and hanged, resigned from the DP in protest. "The DP is going to provide logistical support for Ergenekon (the secularist-nationalist coup conspiracy)", Menderes stated.

On several occasions, Demirel has made a point of displaying his solidarity with some of the

prominent detainees in the Ergenekon investigation, for example showing up at the airport when the rector of an Ankara university was dispatched to imprisonment. At the age of 85, Demirel has taken on the role as the unofficial leader of the secularist opposition. When a journalist of the secularist daily *Cumhuriyet* was imprisoned, it was Demirel who consoled the publisher of the daily, assuring him that "These difficult days will pass."

#### **IMPLICATIONS:**

Demirel's pro-secularist interventions have not endeared him to those who used to support him when his political profile was distinctly conservative. Tellingly, Cindoruk's election as DP leader was welcomed not by liberals and conservatives, who normally should have taken a favorable view of the attempt to revive the center-right, but by secularist social democratic commentators. Conservative columnist Akyol recalled that Demirel abandoned the historical mission of the center-right already in 1997, when as president he was instrumental in bringing down an Islamist-led coalition government in collusion with the General staff. Liberal columnist Hasan Cemal expressed his disappointment with Demirel, who, he recalled, had supported the efforts in 2007 to bar Abdullah Gül from being elected president. "Democracy is not furthered by militarism and by Ergenekonism", read the title of Cemal's article.

Akyol predicts that Demirel and Cindoruk are bound to fail in their attempt to challenge the AKP, as they have become divorced from the democratic core values that he claims have historically distinguished the center-right. Ever since the era of the Democratic party in the 1950s, followed by Demirel's own Justice party from the 1960s to 1980, and the Motherland party of Turgut Özal, the center-right has been "close to the people", with mobilizing calls like "enough, it's now up to the people to decide," Akyol asserts. Cemal, on the other hand, recognizes that Turkish conservatism has traditionally been marred by a restricted view of democracy. Although he was deposed by the military twice, Demirel and the center-right was content with keeping within the boundaries set by a regime of military stewardship. The center-right did not bother to defend the democratic rights of those who dissented from its own views, he argues.

Ideologically, the center-right rested on the pillars of free enterprise, social conservatism and nationalism. In neither respect did the movement challenge or collide with the tenets of official state ideology. Indeed, it could be argued that the center-right represented the embodiment of a republican ideology which was characterized precisely by nationalism and

anti-leftist conservatism. But crucially, Turkish conservatism wedded statism and populism; although its rhetoric was populist and often pro-Islamic, it sought to strengthen the state, not subvert its supremacy. The promotion of social conservatism served to channel religious feelings; the purpose was to control religion, to harness it in the service of the state.

"The secularists used to criticize me for giving in to religious feelings, but I had to. Otherwise I would not have been able to stop Erbakan (the long-time leader of Turkish political Islam)",

Demirel told the *Turkey Analyst* last year. (See the [June 20, 2008 issue](#)) As prime minister, Demirel initiated the vast expansion of the religious schools, and he did not refrain from playing the religious card. What conservatives celebrated as democratic reforms, the secularist left castigated as concessions to the Islamic "counter-revolution." Today, where the former see a defection from the true cause of the center-right, the latter welcome a tardy conversion to secularism.

In fact, to speak of a "metamorphosis" of

Demirel is misleading. Demirel's earlier conservatism and subsequent secularism may appear ideologically irreconcilable. Yet, their application by the same politician at different times nevertheless fits into a historical pattern of state exploitation of ideologies. A typical



representative of the modernizing Turkish state elite, Demirel has above all been preoccupied with safeguarding the pre-eminence of the state, and with shoring up the legitimacy of the state elite.

Ever since the Ottoman era, the modernizing state elite has presupposed that religion, notably its orthodox variant, could not be dispensed with as a tool of social harmony and control. What the state elite has jealously guarded has been its prerogative to set the rules. Yet, the basic assumption of Turkish state ideology, that religion could be controlled, has been revealed to be a fallacy: in the end, Demirel did not succeed in defusing the challenge of Islamic conservatism, neither by adopting a religiously conservative rhetoric, nor by subverting political Islam. Indeed, it is now widely recognized that the post-modern coup of 1997 in which Demirel took part paved the way for the AKP's electoral victory in 2002. It could of course be argued that the intervention of 1997 was instrumental in moderating Islamism, as it brought about a split in the Islamist movement, with the moderates founding the AKP. Yet, from the viewpoint of the old republican elite that ideological "victory" was a pyrrhic victory, as the moderate image of the AKP only eased the way for the take-over of "their" republic by an Islamic conservative elite.

**CONCLUSIONS:** For decades, the center-right provided popular legitimacy to the authority exercised by the state, by wedding religious populism and statism. It served as an intermediary between the state and the periphery. Today, it has to all intents and purposes become superfluous. As Nihat Ergün, AKP minister of Industry, told this *author* in an interview some months ago, "Demirel[’s religious rhetoric and policies]

satisfied my father; I aspire to rule the state". The seven and half years of AKP rule have dissolved the boundaries that used to protect the state from the periphery, with the state to a large extent changing hands in the process.

In the face of that momentous change, Demirel told the *Turkey Analyst* last year that "We did not find this republic on the street, and we are not going to abandon to it anybody," adding that "the citizens have to conform to modernity, they have to be modern!" Yet two decades ago, Demirel had decried the secularist rigidity of the early years of the republic, and built his political career on representing conservatism. His radicalization is a measure of how much attitudes among the members of the old republican elite have hardened, as well as among Turkey's secular population in general.

Once, the rural masses were Demirel's constituency. Today, Demirel puts his hopes on the urban Westernized secularists, who are to be found at the center left rather than at the center right. "It is those who gather at the republican rallies that will supply the popular base (of the roll-back of Islamic conservatism)", Demirel told the *Turkey Analyst* last May.

There is an evocative symbolism in Demirel's shift of constituency, from the conservative majority to the secularist minority. After having attempted to secure the power of the state by mobilizing religion and the conservative majority – the tactic from the 1950s to the 1990s – the old republican elite, now under siege, seeks redemption in a secularism reminiscent of the 1920s and 1930s. Turkish republican ideology has come full circle.

# ANKARA'S GROWING REALISM ON THE NABUCCO PROJECT

M. K. Kaya and Svante E. Cornell

*The Nabucco pipeline is key to Europe's diversification of natural gas supply, but faces numerous problems. Turkey has been a problem country for Nabucco given the low level of coordination of Turkish policy on the issue and Ankara's exaggerated demands.*

*Nevertheless, Ankara now appears to have adopted a more realistic policy. However, Ankara's stance on Nabucco and its rapprochement with Armenia did considerable damage to the project by putting into question Azerbaijan's participation. Indeed, while Turkey appears less of a problem than a few months ago, the ball is now in Baku.*

**BACKGROUND:** Numerous obstacles have prevented the Nabucco pipeline project from getting off the ground. Running across five countries, it requires a high level of coordination between suppliers, transit countries and consumers. All three of these elements have been problematic. Supply remains a question: while Azerbaijan has been a given supplier, it may not have enough gas to fill the entire pipeline. Hence, countries from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to Iran, Iraq and Egypt have been cited as potential

suppliers. This array of potential suppliers may be an asset, but it is also a source of confusion. As for consumers, the target is clear, the EU. Given the prospected growth of natural gas demand in Europe and Europe's growing concerns over diversification of supply, Nabucco and the EU should be a match made in heaven. But as an institution, the EU has failed to coordinate member states' energy policies; some, like Germany, are even hostile to the project, preferring their own separate agreements with



Gazprom at the expense of broader European energy security. Finally, disagreements between transit countries have taken their toll on the project. It is here that Turkey's role has been paramount.

In the past few months, Nabucco has received some political impetus. The latest gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine hastened the EU's search for alternative energy supplies. At several summit meetings, European leaders have reaffirmed political support for the project. Although problems remain, the project is slated to be launched this summer.

The transit issue has been a major complicating factor, and one in which Turkey has not played a positive role. In fact, Turkey's confusing and differing demands have been a great complication to the project. To understand Turkey's position, one has to understand Turkey's attempts to turn itself into a regional energy hub, rather than a simple transit country. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC), Kirkuk-Yumurtalik and the possible Samsun-Ceyhan pipelines boosted Turkish self-confidence and strengthened the country's prospects of becoming an energy hub. Nabucco is also seen as an important part of Turkey's geostrategic aims, as it will make Turkey a force in the European natural gas market. Yet Turkey's own intransigence has, paradoxically, contributed to undermining that very prospect. Turkey has demanded the right to purchase 15 percent of the gas at discounted prices, to resell the gas that enters its territory, and voiced various claims regarding transit fees. Turkey's insistence to continue to benefit from the flow of cheap gas from the Shah Deniz One field in Azerbaijan – which it currently buys at \$120 per thousand cubic meters, well below market prices – has upset Baku and gas-producing companies.

Following the EU's greater interest in the project, the countries working on the Nabucco project

established national units of the Nabucco International Company (NIC). While such branch companies have been established in Austria, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, Turkish officials have yet to establish a Turkish branch of the NIC. The low point possibly came in February, when Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan made comments at a speech in Brussels that indicated that Turkey's support for Nabucco and energy issues more generally had become a card for the negotiations on Turkey's EU accession. This was subsequently denied. In sum, Turkey's stance has slowed down the project's progress. Nevertheless, this picture began to change in the first few months of 2009.

**IMPLICATIONS:** There are various reasons for the Turkish government's lack of a cohesive policy on Nabucco. Most important has been the lack of a coordinated energy policy, and the absence of a foreign policy strategy linked to energy policy. Moreover, given Turkey's large domestic energy problems, Nabucco was seen as a minor issue in some quarters, and to that one that did contribute significantly to supplying Turkey. In that sense, it is a politically driven project; the revival of the project appears to have coincided with growing pressure from the EU, and with the return of EU accession to the Turkish political agenda this year. In the last Turkey-EU Association Council meeting in Brussels, Nabucco and the energy chapter more generally were among the issues discussed, and the parties declared their full support to the project.

A change of policy hence appears to be under way in Ankara, providing for a more realistic approach to Turkey's role in energy diplomacy generally, and the Nabucco project more specifically. Former Turkish Energy Minister Hilmi Guler announced that a treaty between the parties could be signed by the end of June, and that statement was reiterated by the newly appointed energy minister

Taner Yildiz as well. Indeed, Yildiz's appointment appears to signal a higher degree of commitment to the project. Well versed in energy affairs compared to his predecessor, Yildiz has a more realistic view of Turkey's role in European energy supplies. In particular, Yildiz appears to find the prospect for Turkey as a 'hub' (that buys gas from producers and sells it on to consumers) unrealistic, favoring instead the building of Turkey as a transit country, which could provide long-term geostrategic benefits.

But inadvertently, other moves in Turkish foreign policy have created other problems. In particular, the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement has helped put into question Azerbaijan's role as the major supplier of Nabucco. Indeed, Russia has long been courting Baku, offering to buy future production of Azerbaijani gas from the second phase of the Shah Deniz at European prices. And several factors forced Azerbaijan to consider this offer seriously. Baku has long kept its distance from Moscow because of Russian support for Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute and its overall ambitions of dominance over the South Caucasus. Nevertheless, the Russian-Georgian war and the weakness of American and European responses to it – and of Western presence in the Caucasus more generally – has led Baku to feel increasingly isolated, and made a warming to Moscow difficult to avoid.

In this context, Turkey's Armenia move further rocked the basis of Azerbaijan's foreign policy.



*Taner Yildiz*

Turkey's decision to ignore Azerbaijan's interests during the rapprochement with Armenia created a feeling of disillusionment in the Azerbaijani public and leadership regarding 'fraternal' Turkey. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev refused to attend a meeting of the 'dialogue of civilizations' in Istanbul, and instead paid a visit to Moscow. Aliyev made clear that in

case of a Russian support in a series of issues including the Karabakh dispute, Baku would look positively to sell gas to Russia.

The Turkish government has since stepped back on the issue of opening the Turkish-Armenian border without preconditions. Fierce criticisms from Azerbaijan and from opposition parties in Turkey were the most apparent reasons for this



*Turkic Brothers? Aliyev and Erdogan*

policy shift. Prime Minister Erdogan made clear that the government would not take concrete steps on the border issue before progress toward a resolution of the Karabakh dispute. In early May, Erdogan paid a visit to Baku accompanied by five ministers, in order to restore relations with Baku. However, the damage done to the Nabucco project has not been totally undone, since Azerbaijan's gas export decision remains unclear.

On the other hand, Obama's offer of a dialogue with Iran has increased the possibility of the inclusion of Iranian gas in the project; that possibility is still too remote to be seriously considered, however. Likewise, the prospects of Iraqi gas supplies also lie numerous years in the future.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Following the reshuffle in the Turkish cabinet, Ankara has indicated its willingness to compromise on many of the outstanding issues regarding Nabucco. Indeed, there appears to be growing Turkish enthusiasm

about the project. Indeed, following the emergence of a financially more advantageous Russian option for Azerbaijani gas exports, Ankara can be expected to abandon some of its more exaggerated demands. Turkey may insist on reserving 15 percent of the gas for its own needs, but this time at market prices; but other demands are likely to be given up. Ankara realized that its stubbornness over advantageous prices is now blocking the entire vision for Turkey's role as an energy transit corridor to Europe.

Nabucco's fate will largely depend on geopolitical shifts in the Caucasus. Since Iranian and Iraqi supplies remain only long-term possibilities, Azerbaijani supplies are crucial. Moreover, an Azerbaijani rejection of the project would also wipe out the chances of receiving Kazakh and Turkmen supplies. While Ankara long served as an impediment to the project, the main question now lies with Baku's role.



## WHAT THE COLUMNISTS SAY

*The confrontation between the Islamic conservative/liberal alliance and the nationalist-secularist camp continues to set the tone of Turkish politics. The funeral of Türkan Saylan, the founder of the secularist “Association for the defense of the modern way of life”, turned into a manifestation by the secularist opposition. The change of leadership in the Democratic party was widely interpreted as an attempt to revive a secularist center right alternative. While liberal and conservative commentators are worried that the secularist manifestation at Saylan’s funeral and the election of a new DP leader are part of the machinations of the Ergenekon organization, others see the former event as evidence that the attempts of Islamic conservative forces to incriminate all opposition is backfiring, and are hopeful about the prospects of a new center right.*

### CAKIR: THE ATTEMPT TO INCRIMINATE SAYLAN BACKFIRED

Rusen Cakir in *Vatan* writes that the funeral of Türkan Saylan became a powerful demonstration against those forces that had tried to incriminate her by including her in the Ergenekon investigation. By doing that, they only succeeded in enhancing her standing in society. In the end, the attempt by “a force” to criminalize Saylan’s “Association for the defense of the modern way of life” (which offers education opportunities for destitute children, not least girls) in order to monopolize the education sector backfired. The question is why that “force” failed to calculate what the effects would be, how it could commit such a strategic mistake. The answer to that question gives us a better appreciation of the players and their respective positions in the formidable power struggle that rages in our country. The fact that the neo-nationalist

movement has failed to mobilize any significant support either inside the country or abroad, and has been hit hard by the Ergenekon investigation, has emboldened its enemies. They have in short become overconfident. They have acquired the habit of including everyone they dislike politically in the coup plot case.

### CANDAR: QUO VADIS?

No one can doubt that Türkan Saylan was a very special person worthy of respect, writes Cengiz Candar in *Radikal*. But it is also a fact that her death has been used by those who seek to foment trouble. Saylan’s funeral was above all a manifestation against the Ergenekon investigation. The military top brass that were present was applauded and nationalist, Kemalist slogans were chanted. I don’t know if it’s really the case, but there is enough evidence to suggest that an

Ergenekon cell may have gone active: The republican rallies gather again, artists and writers march in Istanbul, expressing solidarity with the Ergenekon detainees, and a court in Ankara has ruled that President Abdullah Gül will stand trial, accused of “fraud”. Saylan’s funeral was the most impressive so far of the pro-Ergenekon manifestations. Could it be that we are headed towards a great misfortune, with the forces behind these machinations organizing mass killings and other atrocities? Quo Vadis?

### ALTAN: THE LOOMING DANGER

Ahmet Altan in *Taraf* warns of a looming danger: the attempts to use the law against the AKP are being revived. The secularist rallies have started again. The masses that gather at these rallies do not constitute the majority, but they represent a quarter of the population. It is a significant minority that can be exploited and manipulated by the Ergenekon conspiracy. There may be massacres and other atrocities ahead. The only force that can prevent such a development is the AKP. The AKP can and should act in a way that assuages the worried, urban secular middle class. These people are genuinely worried that the secular way of life is threatened. They risk being used by the Ergenekon conspirators, who in fact do not care so much about any threat against secularism as they feel threatened by the AKP’s efforts to bring Turkey closer to the West and the European Union. However, the conservative policies that are implemented at municipal level by AKP mayors create the impression that the party has indeed trouble with the modern way of life. If the AKP succeeds in dispelling that impression, and if

it revives its EU-oriented efforts, then the Ergenekon conspiracy will lose its popular base. Otherwise, I fear that we are headed toward trouble. And this time, it’s going to hit us really hard.

### SAHIN: WHY ARE THEY SO BOTHERED BY THE DP?

Haluk Sahin in *Radikal* notes that the leadership change in the Democratic party has provoked negative comments from liberal and conservative quarters. For years, they had nothing but praise for Süleyman Demirel; now they are harshly critical of him. Why? DP is a small party, to which they had paid little attention until now. How come they are now all worked up? It is because the attempt to revive the center-right poses a potential threat to the AKP. Voters seldom change political camps, they change parties within the same camp; that means that the conservative Felicity party and a center-right party are going to be the very likely alternatives for voters who are dissatisfied with the AKP. Can DP become the center-right alternative? It might. That is why the attempt to revive its fortunes causes such consternation among those liberals who have invested heavily in their mutually beneficial relationship with the AKP.

### AKYOL: DEMIREL AND CINDORUK DON’T STAND A CHANCE

Taha Akyol in *Milliyet* argues that Süleyman Demirel and Hüsametdin Cindoruk do not stand a chance of success. The center-right that Demirel claims to represent was always close to the people. The Justice party (that Demirel headed) of the 1960s was not the party of the state. But Demirel and Cindoruk

abandoned the traditions of the center-right in 1997, when they conspired to bring down the coalition government of Necmettin Erbakan. And did they side with the people in 2007, when the military issued its memorandum, when obstacles were laid out against the election of Abdullah Gül as president? It is the fact that it stands close to the people that explains the success of the AKP. Cindoruk is sure to get some headlines, but he will never succeed in transforming the DP into a party with a mass following.

### CEMAL: DEMIREL HAS DISAPPOINTED ME

Hasan Cemal in *Milliyet* expresses his disappointment with Süleyman Demirel. Despite having been deposed by the military

twice, Demirel never challenged the red lines of the regime of military stewardship. He has represented a conservatism which always had a restricted understanding of democracy, which never bothered to defend the rights of those who dissented from its own views. But it is the Demirel of the last decade that has disappointed me the most. I had expected him to become the wise man of Turkish politics; instead, he joined the ranks of those who have tried to prevent the dream of EU membership becoming reality, who have been busy throwing up barriers for instance to a solution of the Cyprus issue. And finally, he has sided with Ergenekon. Now, Demirel is trying to get control of the Democratic party. How can you reconcile militarism and Ergenekonism with democracy?