

# The Turkey Analyst

---

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING

VOL. 1 NO. 7

21 MAY 2008

---

## ANALYSIS:

### REDEFINING SECULARISM? AKP CHALLENGES TURKS' MODERN RELIGIOSITY

Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) rejects the accusation of being anti-secular, instead advancing its own interpretation of secularism. Opinion polls, however, indicate that the AKP's views are representative of but a minority of the Turkish population. A clear majority appears to believe that secularism is in fact endangered, and there is only minority support for the kind of redefinition of secularism that is sought after by the moderate Islamists.

## THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW:

### **I. What the Columnists Say**

Turkish newspapers are bought as much for the writings of their columnists as for news. The writings of leading columnists are an important indication of developments and moods in Turkey. Turn to page 7

### **II. Domestic Politics**

News centered on the AKP's strategies in dealing with the closure case, including rumors of a new party already being planned to succeed the AKP. A row over whether the PKK is a positive or negative force also rocked the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party.

### **III. Foreign Relations**

Western and in particular American officials' statements regarding Turkish domestic politics received wide coverage, including attempts to draw conclusions on stances toward the AKP. The Iran and Cyprus issues also figured prominently.



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



# The Turkey Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING  
VOL. 1 NO. 7  
21 MAY 2008

## ANALYSIS

### **REDEFINING SECULARISM? AKP CHALLENGES TURKS' MODERN RELIGIOSITY.....3**

Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) rejects the accusation of being anti-secular, instead advancing its own interpretation of secularism. Opinion polls, however, indicate that the AKP's views are representative of but a minority of the Turkish population. A clear majority appears to believe that secularism is in fact endangered, and there is only minority support for the kind of redefinition of secularism that is sought after by the moderate Islamists.

## THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

### **I. What the Columnists Say .....7**

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

### **II. Domestic Politics.....9**

News centered on the AKP's strategies in dealing with the closure case, including rumors of a new party already being planned to succeed the AKP. A row over whether the PKK is a positive or negative force also rocked the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party.

### **II. Foreign Relations.....11**

Western and in particular American officials' statements regarding Turkish domestic politics received wide coverage, including attempts to draw conclusions on stances toward the AKP. The Iran and Cyprus issues also figured prominently.

# THE TURKEY ANALYST

## Editors

Svante E. Cornell  
Halil Magnus Karaveli  
M. K. Kaya

*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 Correspondence 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)

# REDEFINING SECULARISM? AKP CHALLENGES TURKS' MODERN RELIGIOSITY

*Halil Magnus Karaveli*

*Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) rejects the accusation of being anti-secular, instead advancing its own interpretation of secularism. Opinion polls, however, indicate that the AKP's views are representative of but a minority of the Turkish population. A clear majority appears to believe that secularism is in fact endangered, and there is only minority support for the kind of redefinition of secularism that is sought after by the moderate Islamists.*

**BACKGROUND:** The question at the heart of the Turkish crisis is whether or not Islam and secularism – and ultimately democracy – can be reconciled, and if so how. Neither side in the ideological confrontation ravaging Turkey rejects the notion of such compatibility. But they do differ as to how secularism and Islam should be understood.

Leading representatives of the AKP have on several occasions called for a redefinition of the traditional, republican concept of secularism. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan last year stated that the “state is to be secular, but individuals cannot be secular.” Former Speaker of Parliament Bülent Arınç openly called for a redefinition of secularism, adding that it was not a notion which has sprung from outside Turkish society.

In its written response to the closure case which was recently submitted to the constitutional court, the AKP repudiates the definition of secularism adhered to by the chief prosecutor and reiterates statements such as that of the prime minister about the relationship of the state and individuals, respectively, to secularism.

The AKP finds that the indictment rests on an interpretation of secularism presumed to be

synonymous with a “civilized way of life and philosophy”, originating in the “uncompromising progressiveness of nineteenth century positivism.” A “modern understanding of secularism aims at securing the harmony between different religions and systems of belief”, the AKP retorts. “Rather than undermining secularism, we have in fact had it accepted by society”, the defense continues.

Indeed, two recent opinion polls indicate that secularism has largely been internalized by Turkish society – but not as understood by the moderate Islamists in power. Neither do the declarations of the AKP about the nature of the regime reassure a majority of the population. According to a poll conducted by A & G, a company renowned for having accurately predicted the results of several elections, notably the general elections of 2007, a total of 49,5 percent of respondents express concern about the AKP and secularism. 38,3 percent believe that the ruling party is set on undermining secularism, while 11,2 percent are somewhat worried. The percentage of those expressing concern have risen by ten points during the past year. It is positively correlated to the level of education of respondents. Among those with the highest education levels, 72 percent

perceive the AKP as a threat to the secular system. In urban areas, 60 percent perceive such a threat.

A survey conducted by professor Hakan Yavuz at Bosphorus University in Istanbul in conjunction with the Open Society Institute in Turkey during the autumn of 2007 established that the “average Turk” does not share the AKP’s perception of secularism as a notion in need of redefinition. Thus, 44,9 percent adhered to the view that “secularism should be fully applied without any



changes whatsoever.” Those desiring a redefinition amounted to only 12,3 percent. Indeed, not only does the idea that secularism should be reinterpreted fail to command any significant support, a majority instead appears to have opted for a redefinition of religiosity.

62,7 percent of Turks define themselves as “modern religious”, while 37,3 percent describe themselves as “traditional religious”. The differences between the two categories are striking. 83 percent of those in the first category

believe it to be possible to adhere strictly to secular and democratic values, while only 17 percent among the traditionally religious subscribe to that view. 83 percent of the “modern religious” do not see the wearing of a headscarf, but rather moral conduct as a measure of religiosity. 79 percent of the “modern religious” accord the same value to the Turkish translations of the Koran as to the Arabic original (The Koran was first translated into Turkish at the instruction of Kemal Atatürk.)

This again sets them apart from conservative believers, of whom only 21 percent accept the translation. These figures suggest that secularism has been internalized by a substantial majority of the population, and significantly that an Islamic “reformation” of a kind has taken place as a consequence of that internalization.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Süleyman Demirel, former president and long-time prime minister, recently told this author that it is a difficult enterprise to explain secularism to the people, the question being whether Islam can accommodate secularism at all, since state and religion, especially in the Muslim world, are like “Siamese twins”. “They have to be separated surgically, and in the course of such surgery either one of the twins or sometimes both fails to survive surgery”, Demirel reminded. “But up until recently, Turkey had succeeded”, the former president continued. The secular state had survived, and so had religion, as the survey above demonstrates.

However, the separation of the sacred and the temporal challenges both the traditional perception of the role of religion in society, as well as that of modern political Islamic movements. Until the founding of the Turkish republic, the Muslim world had not known of any state where social

relations and the way of life were not ordered according to the divine law. Even in countries such as Syria, which are perceived as “secular” in contrast to a Saudi Arabia or Iran, family and inheritance laws remain Islamic to this day.

Turkish republican secularism was indeed, as the AKP points out, inspired by nineteenth century positivism. The Kemalist revolution postulated that religious dogmatism obstructed free and rational thought. It restricted religion to the private realm, to the conscience and to the shrine. Islamic conservatives, and lately also many liberals in both Turkey and the west, have accused this enterprise of being undemocratic. Yet, the curbing of the all-encompassing reach of religion is arguably what has given birth to a modern religiosity at peace with freedom and democracy. This has been the case in the West, and subsequently in Turkey with a scope that is unique in the Muslim world. Implicit in the AKP’s objective of redefining secularism, in its opposition to “uncompromising progressiveness”, is ultimately an estrangement from that kind of reformed religiosity.

Paradoxically, while fostering religious reformation at the societal level, the republic has itself become gradually “sanctified”. The history of republican Turkey is actually two different histories: Concurrently with the internalization of secularism – understood as the privatization of religion – by a majority, the state has over time gone more religious, its bureaucracy heavily invested with Islamic brotherhoods such as the Fethullah Gülen movement, ever expanding the scope of religious instruction and building more mosques than any other state in the Muslim world.

Süleyman Demirel, as prime minister during the 1970s, was primarily responsible for giving impetus to the expansion of the religious schools, stating at that time that Turkey “needed doctors,

lawyers and other professionals acquainted with the teachings of the Koran”. Demirel continued to criticize the secularism of the Atatürk era up until the 1990s. Today, Demirel appears somewhat remorseful. In a recent conversation, the president defended his track record of accommodating Muslim demands with the need to fend off the challenge of radical Islam, at the time represented by Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey’s first Islamist party leader. Demirel recalled how he during the 1960s and 1970s used to respond to those citizens who argued that religious freedom was restricted: “I used to ask, is there anything or anybody preventing you from professing your faith, from praying, from fasting, from giving alms, from going to the pilgrimage, that is, from fulfilling your religious obligations as a Muslim? What else do you want, I would ask.”

The traditional attitude of this more or less secular conservatism, once represented by politicians like Demirel, and which balanced the demands of religion and secularism, clearly does not satisfy the AKP. Nihat Ergün, deputy leader of the AKP group in parliament, pointedly dismissed Demirel’s assertion about religious freedom not having been restricted: “That discourse spoke to my father. It does not address my wishes”, Ergün told this author.

Professor Hakan Yavuz of Bosphorus University maintains that the AKP actually clings to a dated version of secularism when the party defends it as a state principle, not having any bearing on individuals. The secular republic has indeed demanded that every newborn is denominated by religion, in practice making adherence to Islam, be it nominal, a prerequisite for any state position. It is not so much the way in which official state ideology has been implemented since the 1950s that is challenged by the AKP, as the evolution of the self-understanding of a population of which a majority identifies itself as a modern religious, and

of which only a small minority desires secularism to be reinterpreted to mean something other than a modernity inherited from positivism. “The AKP fails to recognize how much it hurts citizens when secularism as a *civil right* is offended against”, professor Yavuz says. That right, to freedom from religious interference, is infringed upon when conformity to religious norms becomes a prerequisite for government jobs or contracts, as is increasingly the case today, and when restaurants stop serving alcohol or close altogether during the month of fasting. “The problem (with the AKP’s interpretation of secularism) is that religiosity is conceived of as the normal state, other attitudes and lifestyles being something to be at best tolerated”, concludes Yavuz.

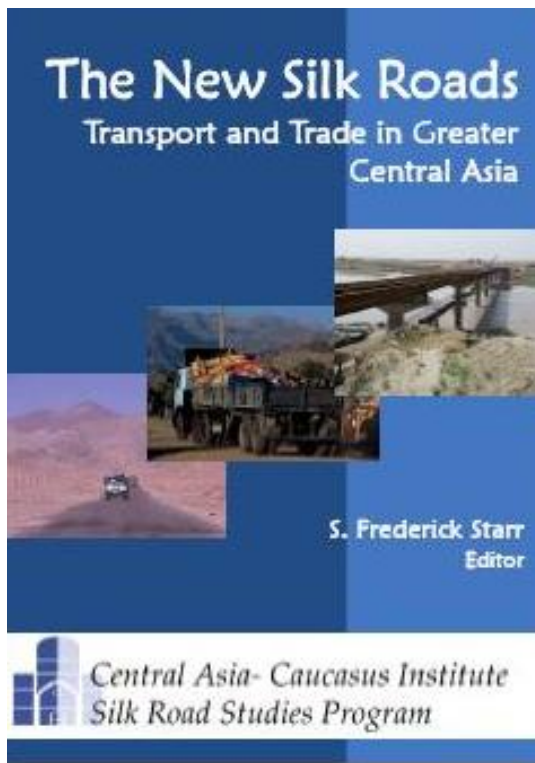
**CONCLUSIONS:** Demirel is blunter: “What they want is to make everybody pray.” This statement, when pronounced by a politician who

was once renowned – in secularist eyes even notorious – as a champion of religion, is remarkable. But it goes to the heart of the matter: why make a reinterpretation of secularism an issue in the name of “religious freedom”, when the right to be a Muslim – in the private sense – has in fact never been restrained? The obvious explanation is that however moderate, the Islamists of the AKP have not internalized the consequence of secularism, the modernization of religion.

Indeed, making religion solely a private matter, as opposed to a matter of public conformity, represents a conceptual leap in the Islamic context. Turkish society has to a large extent succeeded in making that leap. The AKP, or its successors, will have to make their peace with that evolution.

Footnote: Survey available at:

(<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2007/10/26/guncel/axgunor.html>)



New Book:

***The New Silk Roads:  
Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia***

This 510-page volume containing 14 chapters examining the role of Eurasian countries from Turkey to China and Russia to India in the development of trade in Greater Central Asia is Edited by S. Frederick Starr.

The volume’s chapters can be downloaded free at [www.silkroadstudies.org](http://www.silkroadstudies.org). Hardcopy requests should be addressed to Katarina Lesandric at [katarina@jhu.edu](mailto:katarina@jhu.edu).



## THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

### SECTION I: WHAT THE COLUMNISTS SAY

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

#### **BERKAN: ALCOHOL AND WAYS OF LIFE**

Ismet Berkan, editor-in-chief of *Radikal* writes, I remember how I could get a beer in restaurants in towns like Konya, Erzurum or Kayseri for 25 years ago. Today you don't even dare to ask for a beer. It is not the alcohol itself that is important. It is the fact that restrictions like these are not imposed from above, but decided voluntarily that is telling, because they go much deeper. You feel yourself to be under a much more threatening attack. And since elected officials at the municipalities bother themselves with the beer in the restaurant or whether cafés keep open during the month of fast, we also have to be vigilant, making the defense of the lifestyle a political issue.

#### **SAHIN: WHY WAS THE WEST LOST?**

Haluk Sahin in *Radikal* observes how those who have traditionally been the agents of Turkey's westernization today are criticized and even loathed in the west. It is deplorable that the western media, still reeling from the chock of 9/11, has got stuck with a black-and-

white perspective on the Turkish political scene, which is divided into "good Muslims and bad seculars". There is no excuse for the lack of dialogue between CHP, Republican people's party, and the EU and other western institutions. But the mistakes of the CHP notwithstanding, I see Turkey's Westernization as to important a project to be left in the hands of neo-Islamists, who only recently changed their minds and could do so again tomorrow, and their liberal ideologues.

#### **ÖZKÖK: CHP IN BRUSSELS**

The most important political event of the last week was the decision of the CHP, Republican people's party, to open a liaison office in Brussels, writes Ertugrul Özkök, editor-in-chief of *Hürriyet*. As long as CHP does not establish a healthy relationship with the EU, neither will Turkey be able to do so. The need felt by the CHP to explain itself to the European Union is an extremely important "declaration of intent". The person to head the CHP office in Brussels should have a double mission. Besides representing a CHP that sincerely wishes a secular,

democratic Turkey to become a member of the EU, that person should also shoulder the mission of representing the European Union in the Republican people's party, relaying the sensibilities of the EU to the CHP.

### **TURGUT: CHP'S IMPORTANT STEP**

Serdar Turgut, editor-in-chief of *Aksam*, congratulates the CHP leader Deniz Baykal to his decision to establish an office in Brussels. In response to the AKP's use of the "European card" in order to further its political aims at home (the headscarf and religious freedom), the CHP had taken an increasingly anti-European stance. The visionary decision to open a venue for dialogue with the EU represents a departure from that isolationist nationalism. It will hopefully result in the CHP cleansing itself from a nationalism that has hurt the party as well as Turkey. The day the main opposition to the conservative party in government resembles a modern, socialist party in the European sense, Turkey will really look like a country that deserves to be called European.

### **EVIN: THE REAL THREAT**

On the occasion of "Youth day" on May 19, Mehves Evin in *Aksam* calls attention to the state of Turkey's youth. Those of you who have come to think of the headscarf as the most important issue of the country, are you aware of the real threat? The youth is depoliticized and has no faith in current

politics. The age group of 20-24 has the highest level of unemployment, 23,8 percent. 18,5 percent of the unemployed youth have a university degree. Of the young women – outside the agricultural sector – 85 percent do not participate in the workforce. While the percentage of those leaving school before graduation amounts to an average of 15,6 percent in the EU, the figure is 54,6 percent in Turkey.

### **KISLALI: QUESTIONS IN ANKARA**

Mehmet Ali Kislali in *Radikal* writes that it is generally assumed in Ankara circles well versed in the law that the constitutional court will close down the ruling AKP. Besides trying to figure out how the AKP will cope with such a development, there is a lot of guessing going on about how the military will act. Most of all, I hear the questions "Why is the military so silent?" and "Will there be a military coup if the AKP is not banned?" It is only normal that the military remains silent at this stage. Who can know if and what the armed forces are preparing for all kinds of eventualities? I have always wondered why those who want to prevent the military from interfering in politics never bother to better understand the military mind-set. The military is dedicated to the protection of the Republic. If you see to it that the constitution is fully applied, then you will not have to ask why "the military is silent".

---

## SECTION II: DOMESTIC POLITICS

*Summary: News centered on the AKP's strategies in dealing with the closure case, including rumors of a new party already being planned to succeed the AKP. A row over whether the PKK is a positive or negative force also rocked the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party.*

### REFORMS WILL COME IN JUNE

**10 May**

The AKP Assembly has decided on its six-week agenda. By the end of May, the General Council will finish discussing the drafts changing the TRT and Land registry Law. It will also enforce eight drafts of the Employment package. In June the AKP leadership will begin the EU reforms and changes in the Constitution. During the first week of June, the General Council will have the drafts of the legislation on the Turkish Commercial Law, Law of Obligations, State Secrets, Trade Secrets, Personal data and State Archive on its agenda, prepared in line with the EU Aquis and expected to be discussed soon in the Parliament. The much awaited AKP package of Constitutional change will be presented in the first week of June. The Parliament will work with a very busy agenda. The 'Democratization Package' prepared by the AKP after the beginning of its closure case which is said to contain 40 articles. (*Radikal*)

### THE 'CLOSURE CASE' WARNING OF PRESIDENT GÜL

**10 May**

President Abdullah Gül stated that Turkey does not have a good image in the world due the closure case. Noting that everything from the closure of political parties to other issues was discussed freely and openly, he stated that "Even the most extreme things are being openly debated by all." In Financial Times, Mr. Gül said that he saw important developments in Turkey but also recognized the possibility of having political struggles which could become violent. Mr. Gül said that the foundation of Turkey is the democratic, secular, social rule-of-law state, and noted that it was normal to have vocal marginal and extreme ideas in a large country. (*Sabah*)

### OUR COUNTRY NEEDS A NEW POLITICAL CULTURE

**11 May**

Member of the AKP Central Committee and former Deputy Prime Minister, Abdüllatif Şener continues to hint his return to politics. While responding to questions from the press, Mr. Şener said, "I am doing what I can for the transformation of politics. It is the will of the people that clarifies the destination of politics. If my active participation in politics is desired, I take my position according to the demands of the people and the signals that I receive. I do not draw borders for myself in this issue. If there are strong signals from the people about my return to politics, then I will certainly consider it. What this country needs is a new political culture, instead of a political formation. In this country, behind many problems, there lies the old political culture's restraints. In this country it is not important who the political actors will be, but what the political culture will be". (*Hürriyet*)

### ERDOĞAN IS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE SECULAR MEDIA

**11 May**

In an opinion named "Circulation Wars", The Economist claims that the Turkish government is uncomfortable with the secular media in Turkey. The opinion writes that Mr. Erdoğan continuously is confronted by the largest media corporation in Turkey, Dogan Group, which with their newspapers such as Milliyet and Hürriyet, expose the government's actions that were perceived as attempts to undermine the secular republic of Atatürk. It is also said that Prime Minister Erdoğan encouraged his close friends to buy rival media bodies. To that, Sabah-ATV group was given as an example and said that despite the questionable bid from Ahmet Çalık (a

close friend of Mr. Erdoğan), this group was filled with unqualified and pro-government writers. The sale of Kanaltürk, a staunch dissident of the AKP to a pro-government group, and Mr. Erdoğan's case of compensation against the comic magazine "Leman" was also mentioned. (*Milliyet*)

#### **MESSAGE OF COOPERATION WITH IRAN FROM THE GOVERNMENT SPEAKER**

**13 May**

Minister of State and Government Speaker Cemil Çiçek stated that all necessary measures for the fight against terrorism are being taken. Mr. Çiçek commented the cooperation with Iran, "We are trying to cooperate with whomever possible". Speaking after the Council of Ministers meeting, Mr. Çiçek said, "The fight against terrorism is the most important issue for Turkey. We are taking all necessary measures. We are trying to cooperate with whomever possible and we are trying to evaluate every acquired piece of information. Fighting terrorism is not something that can be solved in one day, with one measure. It is an issue demanding continuity. Turkey has recently found significant cooperation possibilities compared to the past". (*Radikal*)

#### **THE ISLAMIC HEADSCARF: ANOTHER OBSTACLE REMOVED**

**14 May**

The research questioning the legality of the inspections made at the entrance of universities by the special private security forces to students wearing turbans reached a conclusion. The Police Headquarters asked for a secret advice on the many complaints being presented especially for private security firms on Istanbul about whether these private security forces have the competence to control and question what students wear. The Legal Advisor at the Ministry of the Interior answered the questions of the General Police Headquarters saying that "The private Security firms do not have the authority to check and question what people wear. If they do this they get punished." This was transmitted to all the local police offices in Turkey. However, it became necessary not to treat it as a secret because the advice had already appeared on the internet. (*Radikal*)

#### **TÜRK: PKK IS HARMING THE KURDS**

**15 May**

Kurdish rooted Democratic Society Party (DTP) Group Leader Ahmet Türk evaluated his meeting with Iraqi President Talabani to the journalists. "I am

speaking very clearly. We are saying this to the PKK: armed struggle is harming the Kurds. It is strengthening the military's hand. The PKK is saying us that 'If a project comes out, if a step is taken we will stop this. We are ready for it'. But it does not solve anything. They are alienating the people. We cannot be effective because there are no projects and no peaceful steps have been taken". Mr. Türk expressed his hope about finding a solution to the problems that would continue after the Presidency of Abdullah Gül and said "The state's policies and viewpoint of the Kurdish question have made a great impact on the AKP and as a consequence, they have not found a solution. There is a government in Turkey, but the effect that the military has on Turkish politics is very powerful". (*Milliyet*)

#### **ANSWER TO AHMET TÜRK: PKK IS NOT HARMING THE KURDS**

**17 May**

The response to the Kurdish rooted Democratic Society Party (DTP) Group Leader Ahmet Türk's previous statements concerning that the PKK harmed the Kurds, came from within the party. DTP Vice Chairman Kamuran Yüksek said "We do not think that the PKK is harming neither Turks nor Kurds". Advocating that the PKK was the result of the existing problem, Mr. Yüksek maintained the state policies as the reason of the Kurdish people's backward position. Mr. Yüksek said, "We want a democratic solution to the Kurdish problem. The PKK will abandon arms parallel to a peaceful solution. The PKK has already declared this. Mr. Türk expressed his thoughts and statements in a written form. He said that the war in the region that has continued for 30 years harmed the people. We are stating openly, what is harming the Kurdish and Turkish people is the state policies". (*Radikal*)

#### **MESSAGES OF THE MAY 19<sup>TH</sup> FROM THE LEADERS**

**19 May**

The May 19<sup>th</sup> day youth and sport, messages of the leaders are as following. President Abdullah Gül: ...Turkey with its powerful economy, democratic and secular regime and respect to human rights, dynamic population, powerful army and most important of all the administration mentality which managed to converge the people and the state, has become a respectable and powerful country. Having begun to reap the fruits of the modern age, Turkey escalated to a position of an international actor that can canalize

the developments in the region and beyond. With the administration mentality of Turkey fortified, she will continue to become more and more powerful. Parliament Speaker Köksal Toptan: Guarantors of our futures, youth, must solve their problems with rationality, knowledge, dialogue and cooperation without leaving the light of science and must struggle for the national and universal peace. I believe the participation of our youth in every step of our decision making process will make our life more dynamic and powerful. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan: It is our youth that will live and carry the ideal of a powerful and prosperous Turkey to the future. We should not forget that only nations that trust their youth and make them grow in best conditions possible will exist in the future. CHP Chairman Deniz Baykal: I invite everyone, but especially the youth to comprehend the importance of this historic day's importance and meaning and to embrace and defend our secular Republic and Republic's values. (*Radikal*)

## REPLACEMENT PARTY PLANS IN AKP

20 May

The AKP administration is currently discussing the possibility of establishing a replacement party with regard to the closure case in the Constitutional Court. Whether a new party will be founded or not will be decided according to the developments in the case and according to the date when the case will be finalized. In AKP circles is guessed that the case will most likely be finalized in next September. According to the people who will be banned from politics, especially Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan; if the party would be closed in September, the efforts to establish a new party will be begin. If the finalization of the case occurs in November or December when the 2009 local elections preparations will begin, the replacement party will be established before that date. It is said that Mr. Erdogan wants the case to be finalized as soon as possible due to this. (*Radikal*)

---

## SECTION II: FOREIGN RELATIONS

*Summary: Western and in particular American officials' statements regarding Turkish domestic politics received wide coverage, including attempts to draw conclusions on stances toward the AKP. The Iran and Cyprus issues also figured prominently*

### REHN: DISPROPORTIONATE FORCE WAS USED ON MAY 1

6 May

The Turkey-EU Troika meeting, which is held at Ministerial level every six months, has taken place in Ankara. During the meeting, the head of the Turkish delegation, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan, underlined the commitment of the government to advance on its reform path with 'confident steps'. Referring to the "strong consciousnesses" for reforms of the government, Mr. Babacan requested more attention from the EU on "not letting subjects of political content affect the negotiations". He reiterated the importance of implementing the stipulations of the Framework Document of Negotiation and stated, "Maintaining the perspective of full membership for Turkey and retaining its stable situation, is a sine qua non for this process".

Underlining the importance of "the French Presidency's impartial and goodwill movement", Mr. Babacan noted that Turkey will continue to support the attempts for finding a solution in Cyprus. Moreover, he added that "unilateral concessions" should not be expected in this case and that cooperation was expected from the EU even on the issue of the PKK in the framework of the war on terrorism. Dimitrij Rupel, Foreign Minister of Slovenia, which holds the presidency of the European Union for this term, expressed his full support and belief in the process towards Turkey's full membership. Concerning the AKP closure case, Mr. Rupel reassured Mr. Babacan that attempts were being made to reach consensus among EU members on opening new negotiation headings for Turkey in June. The Member of the European Commission Olli Rehn was pronounced on the May 1 events in

Turkey, “We said that disproportionate force was used on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May and that consequently the Turkish authorities should start an investigation, and we reiterated our call for more respect for the rights of unions [...] If Turkey wants to advance on negotiations, it must be demonstrated that Turkey respects the EU laws related to the rights of unions”. The question of the ‘Armenian genocide’ was also mentioned and Mr. Rehn and Mr. Rupel recognized Mr. Babacan’s proposal for dialogue with Armenia as ‘a good idea’. (Sabah)

### **GREEKS’ CONSCIOUSNESS OF LIVING TOGETHER**

**6 May**

The election of the pro-solution candidate Dimitri Christofias rather than anti-solution Tasos Papadopoulos seems to have shifted the consciousness of Greek Cypriots towards a better approach to living together with the inhabitants of the Turkish side. According to a survey conducted by the newspaper Politis, the Greeks would be ready to live integrated with Turks if a peace agreement is reached. Despite the separation of these societies since 1974, 83 percent of Greeks claim to have no problem with having a Turkish Cypriot neighbor; 31 percent would accept a Turkish Cypriot as family member and 47 percent would accept to work under a Turkish Cypriot. It is a significant improvement as last year only about 10 percent gave positive answers to the same questions. The survey was conducted with 500 Greek Cypriots from 18 to 30 April 2008 has an error margin of 4.4 percent. (Radikal)

### **TURKEY IS TAKING MEASURES AGAINST IRAN**

**7 May**

The Turkish government, which has insisted on the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program until now, changed its position after the visits of US Vice President Dick Cheney in March and IAEA representative Gregory Schulte in April. A proposal, which states that the export of materials that can be used to make weapons of mass destruction should be put under an export control regime, came to the agenda of the Council of Ministers. According to the proposal, a committee will be established by the contributions of Foreign and Defense Ministries, Under Secretariats of Foreign Trade and Customs, National Intelligence Agency (MIT) and the Turkish Atomic Energy Agency. Development, production, storage and trade of material that can be used to make

weapons of mass destruction directly or indirectly will be subject to the committee’s supervision. Further, according to the decisions of the UN Security Council and the OSCE, a special approval should be made from the committee if a military embargo or economic sanctions are enforced over the partner country to this trade. (Radikal)

### **PROVISION OF RADICAL CHANGE IN THE JUDICIARY TO THE EU**

**8 May**

There are some provisions of radical change in the Draft Judiciary Reform Strategy that Minister of Justice Mehmet Ali Şahin presented to EU Commissioner Responsible from Enlargement Olli Rehn. The draft featured tough criticism from the Turkish Bars’ Union (TBB) and Union of Judges and Public Prosecutors to the provisions which were planned to be enforced within four years. Some of the provisions are as follows: The structure of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors will change. The council will be divided into two sections – that of Judges and that of Prosecutors- and there will be elected members even from the local courts. The Parliament will have the right to choose members. The officers that are not lawyers will not work in military courts. Moreover, military courts will not be within military quarters. The members of the judiciary will have the right to become organized. In this respect, YARSAV will be closed and Turkey’s Judges and Prosecutors Union will be established. Instead of the National Judges Network Project (UYAP), a Judiciary Data Processing Council that will not only be administered by the Ministry of Justice but will also include the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and Council of State in the system will be created. The Academy of Law will be restructured and there will be permanent cadres in the academy. The draft will be finalized with the participation of the representatives from the organs of the judiciary on May 24, 2008 in Antalya. TBB and YARSAV are critical as they say that the draft was presented to the EU representative before consulting them. “The text that is presented as the map to 2013 goes parallel to the 1982 Constitution. It does not have the appropriate content necessary to solve the ‘independence of the judiciary’ problem” explained YARSAV. (Milliyet)

### **BARROSO: SECULARISM CAN NOT BE APPLIED BY FORCE**

**9 May**

In response to a question about Turkey during the 11<sup>th</sup> European Forum held in Ljubljana, President of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso stated “In order to become a full member of the EU, there should be genuine democracy and democratic secularism in Turkey. Secularism cannot be applied by force. This should be a democratic process as in the European democracies”. Expressing his worries about the latest developments in Turkey, Mr. Barroso said, “Submitting a closure case against the most prominent political party of the country creates a situation that requires a debate on the fundamental principles of the state”. (Radikal)

### **PRAISE TO AKP FROM BURNS**

**9 May**

Speaking in a conference organized by the Brookings Institution and Sabanci University, Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, evaluated the recent AKP case: “We should support Turkey in its endeavor to be a country that is modern, democratic and secular in which the administration belongs to the civilians”. Mr. Burns praised the AKP with the following statements: “Turks will decide over Turkish matters. Turkey has developed considerably during the past ten years. It is very important for Turkey to have civilian administrations. President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan are reliable partners and they are very effective. They have improved Turkey’s reputation very much in international arena”. (Milliyet)

### **WE WANT TO SEE A PRO-EU LEFTIST PARTY**

**9 May**

Joost Lagendijk has denied that he used the term “disastrous” for the CHP (the Republican People’s Party) and said that he very much wanted to see a pro-EU leftist party which the Turkish political arena lacks. In response to the criticism concerning the statement he made about the CHP during the conference in Izmir, Mr. Lagendijk said that only the AKP appeared to support the Turkish accession to EU and conducted reforms such as Article 301 or the Foundations Law. Conversely, he said, the CHP appeared to lack a European policy. Mr. Lagendijk stated that one criticism he received concerning his speech was that he, as a European politician, did not have right to interfere in Turkish domestic issues. He said that it was their duty to observe and point out undesired developments during the negotiation process, if Turkey wants to become a member. He

concluded by stating, “There will be more criticisms in the future because we are following Turkey closely. I hope we praise more than we criticize in the future”. (Hurriyet)

### **THE U.S. AMBASSADOR IN ANKARA: NEITHER BY NOR AGAINST GÜLEN**

**10 May**

US Ambassador to Turkey, Ross Wilson, gave an interview to Milliyet contemplating recent issues on the agenda. When asked about the support that the US allegedly gives Turkey’s ‘moderate Islam’, he refused to accept such a discourse noting that the US supports Turkey as a country that they want to work with because it shares their values. The Ambassador pointed out that the term ‘moderate Islam’ is sometimes used in the West to distinguish between the radical extremist Al Qaida-type organizations that practice terrorism. He reiterated what Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated in a speech delivered in Washington on 14 or 15 April; the US respects and supports democratic values and secularism-related principles of Turkey. The second subject of the interview was whether the US supported the Fetullah Gülen movement as Mr. Gülen himself resides in the US. Mr. Wilson underlined that the US system separates religious- and governmental issues and explained that they do not support or oppose the Gülen movement. “When people obtain a US visa they are not ideologically tested. The application is the same for all, be those different from us or supportive of us,” stated the Ambassador. Furthermore, he also claimed that the PKK and PJAK were considered to be part of the same group and it was not relevant to say that the US wants to use PJAK against Iran. Mr. Wilson emphasized that the US encouraged the dialogue between Turkey, Iraq and the authorities in Northern Iraq, including the PKK. “We are pleased with the results of the meetings last week between the Special Representative of Iraq Murat Özcelik and the advisor of the Prime Minister, Ambassador Ahmet Davutoğlu” he said. Mr. Wilson was also pronounced on the Turkish-Armenian question and the expectations about the future Turkish attitude towards the PKK. (Milliyet)

### **TOPTAN EXPRESSED DISCONTENT WITH LAGENDIJK’S STATEMENTS**

**11 May**

The Republican People’s Party (CHP) requested that Parliament Speaker Köksal Toptan react to Mr.

Legendijk's recent remarks against the CHP and Turkey. Mr. Toptan expressed his discontent with Mr. Legendijk's remarks and said that he would look into the issue. CHP Vice Chairman and Turkish Parliament-EU Harmonization Commission member Onur Oymen said, "Being the president of the Commission does not give him the right to insult a political party represented in that Commission and in our country. A person who cannot remain objective should discontinue his duty. As a Parliament, we should react. I think that it would be appropriate to write a letter". Mr. Toptan responded by saying "Such statements displease me, I will consider and evaluate your proposal". (Sabah)

### **“WE DO NOT TAKE SIDE IN THE CLOSURE CASE”**

**12 May**

In the press conference organized in the terrace of the Shidiye Mosque and Madrasa, the Head of the EU Commission Delegation to Turkey, Ambassador Marc Pierini, expressed the usefulness of his visit to Mardin and the reflection his visits to Turkey will have on the Commission's Progress Report on Turkey. He stated that they had noticed positive developments on the projects they had supported with EU funds. "The EU has grants for 1.5 billion Euros. We have given them to projects preparing the country for EU norms such as food security, social gender equality, prevention of violence to women, creation of employment for disabled people, protection of cultural heritage projects, etc. We will continue to support more projects on environmental consciousness and on job creation which will help the progress report of Turkey" he stated. Mr. Pierini did not want to comment the AKP closure case. He pointed out that the EU supports the supremacy of law and democracy. He clearly stated the following, "We are not taking side... The job of the Commission is to follow the candidate countries. We are carefully following the developments but we do not want to say anything as long as the case still is going on. We will explain our positions and opinion after the conclusions of the Court". (Radikal)

### **BAYKAL: EU FIGHTING IN THE NAME OF AKP**

**12 May**

In a response to the criticism of the EU Commissioner Responsible from Enlargement Olli Rehn on the AKP closure case and the 'I am ashamed of the CHP' remark of the Turkey-EU Joint

Parliamentary Commission's Co-chairman Joost Legendijk, The Head of CHP Deniz Baykal stated live on Turkish television that the EU needs to question its relations with Turkey. "Those who made statements as representatives of the EU could unfortunately not build relations with Turkey based on an accurate perception of the country. They equate Turkey with the AKP. They have become even more pro-AKP than those of the AKP themselves. They have started to fight with Turkey in the name of the AKP. Their aim is the judiciary with this dispute" he claimed. Stressing that no one has the right to offend and give democracy lessons to his party; he declared that such approaches are to EU-Turkey relations. Mr. Baykal said that the CHP does not have to prove its point of view towards the EU. Moreover, he criticized the government for ceding easily to EU demands and for being too obedient in its relations with the EU. (Sabah)

### **BABACAN: NO SLOW DOWN IN REFORMS**

**13 May**

While answering the questions of press members in the Parliament of Finland, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Negotiator Ali Babacan said "There is no lack of enthusiasm in the reforms nor is there any tendency of slowing down". He said that Turkey was realizing many reforms about the EU and added that they were in contact with the EU Commission. Underlining that the reforms were being realized for the Turkish people, Mr. Babacan stated "If the EU has concrete demands about the timing of the reforms, then they will have to put a concrete calendar about the membership in front of us". (Sabah)

### **FIVE MESSAGES FROM SARKOZY**

**14 May**

Pierre Lellouche, the advisor of French President Nicholas Sarkozy, commented on the relations with Turkey yesterday when he with the President, the Speaker of the Parliament, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. President Sarkozy gave the following messages. First, he mentioned the change in the French Constitution that removes the obligation of deciding of the new EU membership candidatures by referendum, a subject that will be discussed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. On this subject Ankara expressed the concern it felt about interpreting this change only as a measure related to Turkey. Secondly, Mr. Lellouche invited Turkey to attend the Summit of the Mediterranean Union in July. "If you do not



participate, it will start without you. If this is a continuation of the process of Barcelona then you are already within the process” he noted. Thirdly, the Ambassador reiterated the fact that Mr. Sarkozy has not changed his position related to Turkey. Ankara, on the other side, pointed out that it could not tolerate the over-pronounced position against Turkey by French politicians. The fourth message was about the so-called ‘Armenian Genocide’ draft waiting in the French Senate. Mr. Babacan mentioned the call for dialogue made to Armenia and also reminded France about its role and position in the Minsk process. “This problem cannot be considered independent from Karabakh” he stated. Lastly, France, which will begin its term of the EU presidency, assured that their presidency would not affect Turkey’s negotiations. In the last three months the Minister responsible from the EU Jean Pierre Jouyet and the Mediterranean Union advisor Ambassador Alain Le Roy have visited Ankara. (Sabah)

#### **A QUEEN IN CANKAYA**

**14 May**

The Queen of England Elizabeth II and her husband Philip came to Ankara as official guests of President Abdullah Gül and his wife Hayrunnisa Gül. Mr. Gül hosted a dinner reception in honor of the Queen who had not visited Ankara since 1971. The royal couple were escorted from the airport by the Minister of State Mehmet Aydın and his spouse Nihal Aydın. They visited Anitkabir and signed in the Private Notebook of Anitkabir. The Queen wrote “It is honor for me to express my respect to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, one of the greatest personalities of modern history and one of the friends the United Kingdom values most”. The sides exchanged presents and Mr. Gül was accorded the “Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath” title, one of the important titles given by the United Kingdom. Mr. Gül also thanked the Queen for the support of the United Kingdom on Turkey’s negotiations for EU membership. Queen Elizabeth II pointed out how the EU process has improved the life of people in Turkey. The dinner reception featured representatives from the media and businesses in Turkey. For the first time, Mr. Gül wore a smoking while his spouse was one of four women who wore a veil during the dinner. Mr. Erdoğan sported a normal suit. Lastly, a concert was given in honor of the Queen. (Milliyet)

#### **CHRISTOFIAS IS NOT HOPEFUL**

**15 May**

Southern Cyprus Leader Dimitris Christofias said that Turkey did not convince him about the solution in the island. In an interview with the Cyprus newspaper published in the Northern Cyprus, Mr. Christofias stated that they made a good start with President Mehmet Ali Talat, however there were important problems in the efforts of the technical committees. Saying that he could not possibly accept a confederation solution or a two separate states option but rather a two region-two society federation, he continued, “Do you have a schedule in your mind for the solution?”, “I don’t have such a date in my mind. I see that Turkey is not trying to convince me for the solution in a way to put a schedule in front of us”. (Radikal)

#### **OLMERT: ERDOĞAN IS A GOOD FRIEND**

**15 May**

Regarding Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, who is playing the role of mediator in order to instigate peace negotiations between Israel and Syria, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said “My good friend Mr. Erdoğan is helping me to put the negotiations with Syria in a stable framework”. Mr. Olmert stated that Mr. Erdoğan demonstrated effort to begin the peace negotiations between Syria and Israel, and stated “I hope that this process will be a success, and I am very grateful to the Turkish Prime Minister”. Showing Turkey as the closest democracy to Israel in the region, Mr. Olmert said “To some extent, Turkey is already an EU country. They wish to be a member of the European Union and we support this”. (Radikal)

#### **THE SECOND TIME IN HISTORY: THE GREEK HEAD OF GENERAL STAFF IS COMING**

**16 May**

The Greek Head of the General Staff Dimitrios Grapsas will come for a formal visit to Turkey at the end of this month, the second time in the history of the bilateral relations of Turkey and Greece. These formal visits have began in the past two years and are said to be signals of a ‘softening’ in their relations. The head of the General Staff of Greece General Dimitrios Grapsas will be in Turkey between the 25<sup>th</sup> and the 28<sup>th</sup> of May. The first visit at this level was made on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 2006. Among the subject on the agenda are issues of crisis between the two countries, for instance the territorial waters, airspace, the continental platform, the 140 uninhabited islands

in the Aegean, the recognition of the 'Ecumenical' adjective to the Greek Patriarchate and the opening of the Greek Heybeliada Ruhban school. (Radikal)

### **BRYZA: "WE ARE NOT FOR OR AGAINST THE AKP"**

**16 May**

The Official responsible for Europe and Eurasian Affairs at the US State Department, Matthew Bryza said there was no 'hidden message, no hidden meaning' of the US related to the case opened to close the AKP. Mr. Bryza was present at the conference of TUSIAD in Washington, D.C. under the heading "The Foundations of US-Turkey Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" about the possible effects of the closing of the AKP. In the energy sector Mr. Bryza stated that they "hope that the Turkish voters will determine Turkey's political future in line with her values of secularism and democracy, as also declared by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice". Mr. Bryza reiterated that they were not taking sides. Concerning energy issues, he called for the resolution of the problems between Azerbaijan and Turkey on the Azeri gas, whose destination is Europe. "Whoever is in power, I believe will share the same strategic vision as this government and the previous ones. The geography of Turkey dictates some simple realities and this is not something that is going to change" he said. He added "Yes, we are on the side of democracy. As President Bush expressed in his second oath ceremony, democracy appears in differently in different countries. Every country has its own traditions, history, and culture. The President and the Prime Minister of Turkey have said there is a tradition of democracy. They say Turkey is a democratic, secular and rule-of-law state. This is really the case". (Sabah)

### **IS CLOSING PARTIES THE BEST WAY TO PROTECT SECULARISM?**

**17 May**

The British Ambassador to Turkey Nick Baird stated that the British Minister of Foreign Affairs David Miliband gave the message of "Is closing political parties the best way to protect democratic secularism?" during his visit to Turkey. Answering the questions of CNN Türk regarding the visit of Queen Elizabeth II, Mr. Baird stated that this visit should be perceived as an indicator of the support of the United Kingdom to Turkish membership to the EU. While giving information about Miliband's meetings with the opposition leaders, Mr. Baird stated that they did

not mention the AKP case. According to Mr. Baird Mr. Miliband gave the following message, "The most crucial guarantors of the EU membership are secular democracy and the continuation of economic welfare. Is closing political parties the best way to protect democratic secularism? We say that as a country supporting the modern Turkey". (Milliyet)

### **ANKARA WILL HOST THE PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA**

**17 May**

Following the visit of the Queen of UK Elizabeth II, Ankara will host the President of Austria Dr. Heinz Fischer. Despite the wide opposition towards the Turkish accession to the EU in Austria, Dr. Fischer has thus far kept a balanced stance and put his vote for the starting of negotiations in 2005. Conversely, he also advocated that the membership should come with a referendum in Europe. During his visit, Dr. Fischer will also evaluate the Turkey's EU process in addition to bilateral issues. Ankara is waiting for the support of Dr. Fischer for Turkey's EU membership process. (Sabah)

### **TURKEY IS MOVING TOWARDS AN INESCAPABLE CRISIS**

**18 May**

Former US Ambassador in Ankara Mark Parris criticized the administration of George Bush for not giving a clear stance related to the AKP closure case in Turkey. Mr. Parris said, "The key US ally and one of the most important democracies of the Middle East is moving toward an inevitable crisis". Mr. Parris defended the point that Prime Minister Erdogan had not acted in line with promises given before the election. In the article published in the Wall Street Journal about the AKP closure case under the heading "The Turkish Courts should respect the will of the people", he mentions the constitution as being "outdated". Mr. Parris criticized Mr. Erdogan for not realizing the promised economic and political reforms, the constitutional reform included, and also for his attitude towards the media and civil society. Stressing the mistake of Mr. Erdogan in giving the nationalists the opportunity to turn the Islamic headscarf issue into a fight, Mr. Parris expressed the idea that Mr. Erdogan had moved away from his electorate and had created recent doubts about "his covert intentions to convert Turkey into an increasingly Islamic country". He criticized the indifferent position of the US government towards the fate of the AKP calling it 'miopic' as the closure

of AKP would cause, in his view, very negative repercussions in what he calls 'the only trustable democracy in the Muslim world'. (Milliyet)

### **CRITICAL VOTING IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**18 May**

In the 'key' meeting to be organized on Wednesday concerning Turkey, the legislative draft related to the Ruijten report will be voted. This legislative draft expresses the concerns about the results of the AKP closure case and asks for the continuation of the Ergenekon investigation. The Turkey 2007 Progress report was prepared by the Dutch reporter of the Foreign Relations Committee of the European Parliament (EP) Ria Oomen-Tuijten. The report underlines the need for new steps to support the reform process in Turkey but also mentions that by not opening its ports to Greek ships, Turkey has not followed the Additional Protocol provisions. Some of the other points presented in the legislative draft are as follows: The Constitutional Court should respect the supremacy of law, European Standards and the rules of the Venice Commission concerning the closure of political parties. The Turkish government should initiate a political initiative in order to find a durable solution to the Kurdish problem. In this respect it calls for a distinction between the DTP and the PKK and asks for a comprehensive plan for the Southeast of Turkey from the government. Moreover, it condemns the violence committed by the PKK and other terrorist groups on the Turkish territory, such as in Diyarbakir in January 2008. The draft calls for the immediate opening of the Greek Ruhban School and for a good neighborhood spirit to strengthen the dialogue the Greeks in the Aegean. Furthermore, is called to end its economic embargo towards Armenia and to open the frontier proposing also the European Commission as facilitator of this needed peace process. (Sabah)

### **PRAISE TO TURKISH DEMOCRACY FROM GEORGE W. BUSH**

**19 May**

During a speech yesterday U.S. President George W. Bush described Turkey as "a successful and modern democracy in which the majority are Muslims", while saying that "there are hopeful beginnings in the future of the Middle East". Mr. Bush stated, "This region has a very bright future potential, which the free men and women of the Middle East will shape. During the recent years we see hopeful beginnings in line with

this vision of future. Turkey is a modern and successful democracy in which Muslims constitute the majority in the country. Afghanistan is becoming victorious vis-à-vis Taliban and establishing a free society under the leadership of President Karzai. Iraq, under the leadership of the Prime Minister Maliki, is establishing a multi-ethnic democracy (...) We are pleased to see the light of freedom started to shine in the Middle East" (Milliyet)

### **AKP CASE MET WITH CONFUSION IN EUROPE**

**20 May**

President of Austria, Dr. Heinz Fisher said that the AKP case was met with confusion in Europe "There is an elected government and a prime minister. I could not imagine that this would happen in Austria". "On the one hand there is a decision that will be taken by the Constitutional Court, but I want to express that this situation has met confusion in Europe. Of course I do not want to interfere in Turkish domestic politics. But no one could understand the developments in Europe. On the other hand the decision of Constitutional Court should be awaited. And I must say that the decision of the Court will be respected". In the framework of the fight against terrorism, Dr. Fischer said that it had been decided to hold meetings between the Ministers of Justice of the two countries in order to prevent misunderstandings, and he stated that they were against terrorism. Dr. Fisher also mentioned the Turkish membership to the EU. Underlining that Turkey should not face discrimination he said, "In the framework of the EU, what is valid for the other countries is valid for Turkey". Pointing out that the negotiations can be opened by the unanimity, Dr. Fischer advocated that in this issue Austria has a "just and constructivist" stance. (Sabah)

### **LEYLA ZANA ACCUSED EUROPE IN LONDON**

**21 May**

Former DEP deputy Leyla Zana delivered a speech in the House of Commons in a meeting titled "Turkey, Kurds and the European Union". Invited by the English deputies, Ms. Zana called on the Kurdish people to be united. Claiming that the Kurds made a mistake by trusting European countries, Ms. Zana said "We should not pursue our individual interests, we must be united". She stated that if a constitutional change did not occur in Turkey, they would never reach their goals. Ms. Zana further claimed that for

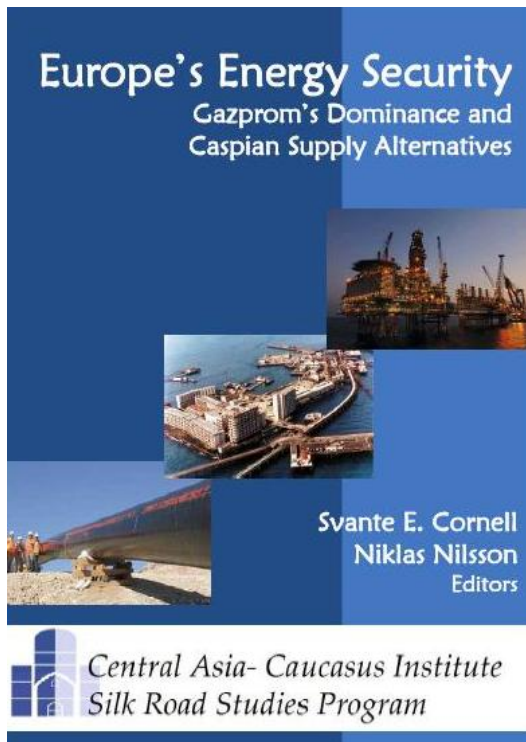
the first time in history, the interests of the Kurdish and Turkish people overlapped. Ms. Zana complained that the Kurdish people have become extremely dependent, and added that it was a mistake for the Kurds to trust the countries they are in. In her speech, Ms. Zana said that PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan had started a process in 1999 which gave a great opportunity to the Turkish people in order to initiate a dialogue with the Kurds; however nobody cared to establish a dialogue. Describing the meeting as a victory celebration because of the release of Zana, English deputies stated that they will continue their struggle in order to make the English government exert pressure on Turkey about the Kurdish issue. (Radikal)

### **EU COMMISSION: MEDITERRANEAN UNION IS NOT AN ALTERNATIVE**

**21 May**

The EU Commission declared that the Mediterranean Union project, which was first proposed by French President Sarkozy in order to prevent Turkish EU membership, cannot be an alternative to the EU.

Expressing the EU Commission's view about the project, (Barcelona Process: Union for Mediterranean) Benita Ferrero-Waldner (Member of the EU Commission Responsible for the Foreign Relations) said "This project is not against Turkey". Ms. Ferrero-Waldner fortified the emphasis that the project was not an alternative to the EU enlargement with this statement in Strasbourg yesterday. Reiterating that Turkey was also invited to the first meeting of the Mediterranean Union, which will be held on 13 July with the participations of the heads of states, Ms. Ferrero-Waldner said "This project is not against Turkey. France declared that openly already. French Minister of State Responsible for the EU Affairs Jean Pierre Jouyet also informed Turkey about the project and the summit during his Ankara visit. Turkey did not give any clear answer but there is still time. I believe that Turkey will join the summit". (Milliyet)



New Book!

***Europe's Energy Security: Gazprom's Dominance and Caspian Supply Alternatives***

**168 pages, Edited by Svante E. Cornell and Niklas Nilsson**

With contributions by Pavel Baev, Zeyno Baran, Robert Larsson, Nicklas Norling, Volkan Özdemir, Vladimir Socor, Elin Suleymanov, Mamuka Tsereteli, and Temuri Yakobashvili.

The volume is freely available online through [www.silkroadstudies.org](http://www.silkroadstudies.org).