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# Crisis in Turkey: just another bump on the road to Europe?

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## **Crisis in Turkey: just another bump on the road to Europe?**

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*The ongoing crisis in Turkey must be seen against the background of a bifurcated society, a weak political system, a low-level insurgency in Eastern Anatolia and a military-dominated power elite steeped in a state ideology known as Kemalism. Kemalists perceive political Islam, Kurdish nationalism and European liberalism as their main challengers. Therefore, and for other reasons explained in this Occasional Paper, a confrontation between the Justice and Development Party (AKP), a party that has its roots in political Islam, and the military was to be expected at some point in time. Already in 2003 and 2004 the military actively considered ways of ousting the AKP from power. But the military could only muster public support once 'Euro-fatigue' increased in Turkey and when the fears of the secular middle class regarding a perceived AKP Islamist 'hidden agenda' became strong enough to drive them out into the streets to protest.*

*As will be shown in this paper, the 'creeping Islamisation' of Turkish society is indeed a cause for concern, but the AKP seems to play only a minor role in this, if indeed it plays a role at all. On the other hand, the military's embrace of the secular aspects of Kemalism seems a little odd if one takes its role in supporting Islam after the coup d'état of 1980 into account. However, the current standoff has less to do with political Islam per se than with the powerful role of the military and its insistence that it will not accept a candidate with Islamist roots and a pro-EU reform agenda as President and Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Republic.*



## Introduction

This *Occasional Paper* focuses on the mass demonstrations and the standoff between the military and the Turkish government from April to June 2007. It aims to explain the nature of the crisis by analysing questions like Islam and Kemalism in Turkey as well as how the Kurdish issue relates to the upcoming elections. This paper therefore does not deal with the question of 'Islam in Turkey' in its entirety nor does it touch on the question of Islamist terrorism in Turkey, the Kurdish issue or the role of the military in its own right, but tries to put all these questions into the perspective of the standoff and the upcoming parliamentary elections that are scheduled for 22 July 2007.

Since the early 1990s Turkey has undergone major economic, social and political developments and upheavals. On the level of Turkish society the opening-up of the economy has created new middle classes, both secular and religious, while on the political level the decline of the left, both in its Marxist and in its social democratic incarnations, has given way to the rise of political Islam and has left extreme Turkish nationalism unchecked. Finally the Kurdish insurgency in Southeastern Anatolia has not only diverted precious resources and energy away from Turkish society but has confronted Turkey with what has been dubbed the 'Kurdish reality'.

But at the turn of the millennium one could legitimately say that if Turkey was facing crises on all fronts it was also on the way to overcoming them. For a while after Abdullah Öcalan was captured and incarcerated it even seemed that a solution to the Kurdish issue was in sight too. Another turning point was the 1999 earthquake

whose aftermath gave the country a chance to focus on much-needed reforms.

Crises and setbacks notwithstanding, Turkey did not deviate from its bumpy road to Europe and one can interpret various initiatives undertaken by the EU as a confirmation of the theory of a 'virtuous' circle according to which EU incentives and EU commitment to Turkish EU membership are greeted by support for and efforts towards necessary reforms. Hence after the 1999 Helsinki Summit decision Turkey was able to submit its EU membership application in 2004 and finally in 2005 the EU agreed on the start of negotiations. However, it has always been clear that Turkey has to go a long way down the road before it can become a full member of the EU. Neither European nor Turkish observers deny the need for further reforms, including reforms in the areas of human rights and minority rights, further democratisation and good governance. The imperative to introduce reforms has forced Turkey not only to address its shortcomings but also to confront many of its taboos. Arguably the most compelling of these concerns the role of the military, and, linked to this, the country's founding ideology, Kemalism: the issue of the powerful role played by both in Turkish society was something that was bound to lead to a crisis at some point in time.

The ongoing crisis in Turkey is multifaceted but essentially ideological in nature. It involves the role of political Islam, or Islamism, as opposed to Kemalism, hence it is about the legitimisation of power – which in the context of Turkey translates as the power and the role of

the Turkish military in the state.<sup>1</sup> To complicate matters further, the Kurdish issue is looming in the background. The EU is involved insofar as it seems unlikely that the situation would have developed as it did without 'Eurofatigue' having replaced 'EU-phoria' in about 2005.

Finally, one also has to see Turkey's current crisis against the background of what might be called an international resurgence of nationalism. This recent phenomenon affects Europe as well as Middle Eastern and other countries and

is reflected in a heightened nationalist political discourse at home and the stressing of 'national interests' on the international stage. Needless to say, the resurgence of nationalism on the international scene has inevitably reinforced Turkey's fervent nationalism. But the fact remains that it seems doubtful whether Turkey's nationalists/Kemalists are able to promote an alternative to the reform package that is to be implemented following European guidelines in order to solve the country's problems.

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<sup>1</sup> The standard reference work on the role of the military in Turkey is Gareth Jenkins, 'Context and Circumstance: The Turkish Military and Politics', *Adelphi Paper* no. 337, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London 2001.



## Islam and Kemalism in Turkey

The major factor underpinning the current crisis is the bifurcation of Turkish society. This cleavage has often been described using catchphrases like ‘the official versus the other Turkey’ or the ‘old Turkey versus the new Turkey’ but ultimately these descriptions are based on misnomers.<sup>2</sup> The source of cleavage is to be sought less in terms of the economy and wealth, or education, than in terms of culture.<sup>3</sup> This implies questions of lifestyle and identity, religion and politics. The main political polarisation in Turkish society is between democrats and anti-democrats and partisans of liberal economics and statist economics on either side of the cultural dividing line. But it also reflects a divide between pro-Europeans and fervent nationalists. On the political level, the cultural divide translates as ‘Islamism’ versus ‘Kemalism’, but of course, as with everything in Turkey, these lines of separation have blurred boundaries. A few generations ago one might justifiably have argued that the split is between rural immigrants from the countryside (‘conservatives’) and sophisticated city dwellers (‘modern’ people), with the conservatives being observant Muslims and the moderns less so. But this is no longer an adequate explanation of the current situation. This is because, over the last generation, political Islam in various mutations has become part of Turkey’s mainstream politics. As a result, a new middle class that identifies itself more with Islam has emerged. Social scientists have ‘over-studied’ this new Islamic middle

class<sup>4</sup> to the detriment of another newly created democratic and secular-minded middle class; both of these new categories occur alongside the traditional Kemalist, state-oriented middle class that mostly consists of civil servants and bureaucrats. The symbol of this bifurcation is the headscarf which has become virtually an emblem of anti-Kemalism. The current standoff is due to political manipulation of these deep divisions in Turkish society, and by now has got the potential to lead to a bitter political polarisation. But perhaps the crisis was unavoidable and may yet even yield positive results, if the three middle classes – Islamic, democratic-secularist, and Kemalist – and their corresponding elites are able to find equilibrium.

### 2.1 Islamisation and political Islam in Turkey

The question of political Islam in Turkey is an old one, going back perhaps as far as Ottoman times. It is not, as some may argue, a question of secularism versus religion *per se*, as Turkish elites, including the Armed Forces, very often embrace Islam publicly in order to muster popular support. Nor do they fear a takeover of the country by something similar to a ‘church’ – there is no church in Islam. If there were a church in Islam than it would be the *Diyanet* – the Directorate for Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*)<sup>5</sup> a state-run body whose members are carefully

<sup>2</sup> See Davut Dursun, ‘Eski ve yeni elitler arasındaki güç paylaşım’, *Yeni Şafak*, 6 June 2007.

<sup>3</sup> A good introduction to the cultural aspect is Jenny B. White, *Islamist Mobilisation in Turkey. A Study in Vernacular Politics* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2002) pp. 29-75; the standard reference remains a collection of articles by Şerif Mardin, *Religion, Society and Modernity in Turkey* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> One of the better recent studies on the new Islamic middle class is *Islamic Calvinists: Change and Conservatism in Central Anatolia*, European Stability Initiative (ESI), Berlin and Istanbul, 19 September 2005. Available at [http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi\\_document\\_id\\_69.pdf](http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_69.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> On the *Diyanet*, see Günter Seufert, *Staat und Islam in der Türkei*, SWP Berlin, August 2004 pp. 17-23; *Ibid.*, *Politischer Islam in der Türkei, Islamismus als symbolische Repräsentation einer sich modernisierenden muslimischen Gesellschaft*, BTS 67 (Istanbul – Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997), p. 196; see also the directorate’s homepage at [www.diyenet.gov.tr](http://www.diyenet.gov.tr).

selected and vetted by the authorities and who, in good Ottoman tradition, preach a very pro-state interpretation of Islamic tenets. What Turkish secularists fear is political Islam<sup>6</sup> as a recognised and legitimate political force on the one hand and the bottom-up Islamisation<sup>7</sup> of Turkish society on the other hand.

Islamisation in Turkish everyday life is a fact and primarily affects small- and medium-sized towns.<sup>8</sup> The renaissance of religious consciousness<sup>9</sup> is undeniable as people are more pious, at least outwardly, and the political discourse revolves much more around religion than was the case a few decades ago. City councils run by the fascist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP – *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*), the fascist-Islamist Great Unity Party (BBP – *Büyük Birlik Partisi*) and definitely those run by the Islamist *Saadet Partisi* ('Felicity Party') are perhaps more important for implementing Islamic mores at the district levels than all AKP councils taken together. One also has to take a certain 'local neighbourhood atmosphere' or 'milieu' (*mahalle havası*) into account. This milieu is the political and sociological atmosphere in city and town neighbourhoods, which at best can be described as a sordid mix of nationalist and religious prejudices prevalent among some of the lower classes who see no opportunity for social upward mobility. It is from this subculture or societal undercur-

rent that the perpetrators of the latest series of murders against Christians originate.<sup>10</sup> In general this radical milieu is not connected to AKP circles although it shares many social features with some constituencies of the AKP electorate.<sup>11</sup> It may one day even actively take up a position against the AKP.<sup>12</sup> Yet most of the real or perceived Islamisation is conducted by semi-clandestine groups<sup>13</sup> who fall into two categories: traditional mystical brotherhoods like the Nakşbandis and Kadiris and neo-Islamic revivalist movements, the most important of them being the Nurcu movement founded by a certain Said-i Nursi, or Said-i Kürdi (1873-1960) as a direct Islamic answer to Kemalism; and by an offspring of the Nurcus, a movement founded by Fethullah Gülen (1938-). For the sake of simplicity all these groups can be categorised under the term 'Islamic Movement'. The Islamic movement follows a very conservative interpretation of Islam and its role can – albeit with many caveats – be compared to the role the Muslim brotherhood and similar groups play in the Arab world. Yet the Turkish state was able to seal off Turkish Islamism from the Arabic mainstream so that in the end all these movements are Turkey-centred – although since the opening-up of the economy under Turgut Özal economic and hence ideological ties with conservative Muslim states,

<sup>6</sup> The standard works on political Islam in Turkey are Şerif Mardin, 'İslamcılık', *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, (CDTA), vol. 7, pp. 1936-1940; Ahmet Çiğdem, 'İslamcılık', *Yüzyıl Biterken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, (YB-CDTA), 15, pp. 1225-1231; Günter Seufert, *Politischer Islam in der Türkei, Islamismus als symbolische Repräsentation einer sich modernisierenden muslimischen Gesellschaft*, op. cit.; M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Cihan Aktaş, *Bir Hayat Tarzı Eleştirisi: İslamcılık* (Istanbul: Kapı, 2007); Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türkler, Türkiye ve İslâm. Yaklaşım, Yöntem ve Yorum Denemeleri* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999); see also Senem Aydın and Ruşen Çakır, 'Political Islam in Turkey', *Insight Turkey*, 9/1 pp. 38-55; see also Christopher Houston, *Islam, Kurds and the Turkish Nation State* (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> In this report we use 'Islamisation' in its broadest possible meaning, ranging from attempting to introduce Sharia law, to the renaissance of religious consciousness in society.

<sup>8</sup> See for instance two examples from Manisa and Denizli at Haldun Akyüz, '43 yıl önce şort 43 yıl sonar eşofman', *Milliyet*, 22 May 2007; Sabrina Tavernise, 'Islam taking roots in Turkish Bureaucracy', *International Herald Tribune*, 29 May 2007.

<sup>9</sup> M Hakan Yavuz, 'The Renaissance of Religious Consciousness in Turkey: Nur Study Circles', in Nilüfer Göle and Ludwig Altmann, *Islam in Public, Turkey, Iran and Europe* (Istanbul: Bilgi University, 2006), pp. 129-61.

<sup>10</sup> A Catholic priest was shot in Trabzon in February 2006; the Armenian-Turkish Journalist Hrant Dink was shot in Istanbul in January 2007 and a group of missionaries of both Turkish and German origin were murdered in April 2007.

<sup>11</sup> This subculture is close to what Jenny B. White, *Islamist Mobilisation in Turkey*, op. cit., pp. 131-55, has described as Islamist Generation 'X'.

<sup>12</sup> Ruşen Çakır, 'Sorun AKP değil, çözüm AKP değil', *Vatan*, 21 May 2007.

<sup>13</sup> A lot of detailed studies have already been conducted on these groups. An excellent introduction is İlhami Soysal, 'Mezhepler/Tarikatlar', CDTA, vol. 5, pp. 1364-74; Faik Bulut, *İslamcı Örgütler*, (Istanbul: Tüzmamanlar, 1994); pp. 685-747; the standard work remains Ruşen Çakır, *Ayet ve Slogan. Türkiye'de İslami Oluşumlar* (Istanbul: Metis, 1990).

especially Saudi Arabia, do exist. The closed ‘in-groups’ or ‘pressure groups’ of which the Islamic Movement consists are mostly fraternities that follow a rigidly patriarchal concept of group organisation, i.e. the spiritual mentor defines and determines issues of lifestyle and policy for its members.

There is not much consensus about what exact form this ‘Islamisation’ should take, and the much-vaunted idea that Turkey should become ‘like Iran’ is not based on a sober analysis of political Islam in the Islamic Republic but on vague sentiments and memories dating back to Iran’s Islamic revolution. Yet secularists’ fears are not without foundation, as illustrated by the fact that there is now a substantial amount of anecdotal evidence concerning attempts by Islamic fundamentalists to infiltrate the police forces and to a lesser degree the military.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the AKP is systematically planting its party officials in all important positions and is said to be in active contact with the aforementioned brotherhoods.<sup>15</sup> But the overall impression is that the Islamic movement is still too weak and too fragmented to effectively challenge the state. Yet another aspect has to be taken into account: unlike for example in Iran, the Islamic Movement in Turkey has never been a revolutionary one and with the exception of two extremist groups the majority of the networks and groups behind the Islamic Movement have integrated the mainstream political system over the last 40 years. Hence most proponents of the Islamic Movement would have much to lose if Turkey’s current system were to be overthrown. There is, however, a core element of perhaps 10-15% among the population who would in fact support the introduction of Sharia law in Turkey.<sup>16</sup> This is not a majority, not even within Turkey’s Islamic Movement, but a figure one nevertheless has to bear in mind in order to understand the

sometimes violent reactions and outspoken opposition to the Islamic Movement.

In a way that is reminiscent of the Kurdish nationalists, the Islamic Movement too challenges the ideological straitjacket of Turkey’s Kemalism on several levels. This challenge is, in a Gramscian way, most successfully posed in the field of culture and symbolism. And the headscarf issue is the centrepiece of this cultural, and by extension political, struggle. This is the focus of a debate about how to define what a Muslim is, how Islamic society should be and therefore it inevitably becomes a political statement about who legitimately holds power in Turkey. A row between Bülent Arınç, the Speaker of Parliament, and the main opposition party’s Ali Topuz, neatly illustrates this confrontation and proves how the political discourse in Turkey has become more and more steeped in references to Islam since the AKP came to power.<sup>17</sup> Bülent Arınç declared that the majority in parliament (i.e. the AKP) will elect a pious (*dindar*) president. Upon this, Ali Topuz angrily retorted by asking rhetorically whether the country’s former presidents had not been pious enough and declared that Arınç had no right to define who is a religious person and who not, because this would be against the principle of Islam.<sup>18</sup> This reaction is remarkable for two reasons: first, because Topuz implicitly agreed with Arınç on the point that no atheist or unreligious person could become president of Turkey, and even used a justification couched in religious terminology in order to challenge Arınç. Secondly, by so doing he summarised the nature of the confrontation between political Islam and the Kemalists: both claim for themselves the right to define the nature of Islam. As a consequence, the Kemalist elites find it increasingly hard to compromise with the Islamic Movement or to view it as part of the Turkish system.

<sup>14</sup> In most cases it is the Fethullahçıs who try to get a foothold in the Police and the Armed Forces. See Zübeyir Kırdıra, *Fethullah’ın Cipları* (Istanbul: Su, 2001); ‘Army chief demands Islamist purge’, 31 August 2000, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/904576.stm>.

<sup>15</sup> Cengiz Çandar, ‘Demokratik rejimi tehlikeye atan milat’, *Referans*, 2 May 2007.

<sup>16</sup> See the report of Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak, *Değişen Türkiye’de Din, Toplum ve Siyaset* (TESEV), Istanbul, November 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Ece Temelkuran, ‘Şehir güzel, kızlar güzel. Miting niye güzel olmasın!’, *Milliyet*, 14 May 2007.

<sup>18</sup> ‘CHP: Arınç radikal dinci militan’, *Radikal*, 17 April 2007.

## 2.2 *Kemalism and the role of the Armed Forces and the European paradox*

Turkey is still pervaded with the spirit of a nationalist doctrine called the ‘Kemalist ideology’<sup>19</sup> (variously known in Turkish as *Kemalizm*, *Atatürkçülük*, *Atatürkçü Düşünce*) that epigones of the ever-pragmatic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk formulated in the years following his death in 1938.<sup>20</sup> It consists of six principles, namely Republicanism (*Cumhuriyetçilik*), Populism (*Halkçılık*), Secularism (*Laiklik*), modelled after the French concept of *laïcité*, and *Revolutionism* (*İnkılapçılık*, *Devrimcilik*), Nationalism (*Milliyetçilik*) and Statism or *Étatisme* (*Devletçilik*). The bulk of this ideology is the product of a certain era, meaning it is an authoritarian, state-centric (for which, in the context of Turkey, read ‘military’) modernising ideology<sup>21</sup> of the 1930s and reflects the need to establish some system in lieu of the Ottoman Empire, to define Turkey once and forever as a European country, and therefore to sever its ties with the Middle East. The cultural, sociological and political consequences of Kemalism are still being debated among scholars and a final judgement and a definitive history on the formative phase of Kemalism and Kemalist policies, up until the Turkish multi-party system was introduced in the late 1940s, remains to be done. Western observers may feel that Kemalism strongly resembles an authoritarian personality cult, but Kemalists would retort that it was the military genius of Atatürk that in the end saved the

Turkish nation in the early 1920s. (This argument is one of the few points on which historians would agree with the Kemalists).<sup>22</sup> Another much-criticised aspect of Kemalism is its tendency to employ slogans and catchwords, like ‘modern’, ‘modern society’, ‘civilisation’ and the like. Also, whatever the explanation it remains unclear what the six principles really do imply, as they are formulated rather vaguely.

The vagueness of this all-embracing ideology allows everybody, from the far right to the far left, to claim Kemalism for their own politico-ideological aims. On the fringes of the political spectrum two extremist parties, namely the fascist MHP and the communist (originally Maoist) *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* (TİP – Workers Party), both of which claim to be Kemalist, are to be found. This is of course ironic as the ideologies they originally embraced are in contradiction with Kemalism.<sup>23</sup> And in the political centre one finds the party Mustafa Kemal personally founded, the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP – Republican People’s Party) which is a member of the socialist international. Its ideological vagueness notwithstanding, Kemalism developed two core messages: strict separation of religion and state, which translates as state control over religion, and the fostering of a single Turkish ‘national’ identity, which makes allegiance to other ethnicities problematic. According to Kemalism, any explicit publicly-shown sign of piety (like the veil) or the use of languages other than Turkish (like Kurdish) in public, has to be seen as a potential threat to the unity and harmony of the nation, hence it has to be treated exclusively from a national security

<sup>19</sup> On the ideological nature of Kemalism, see Toktamış Ateş, ‘Atatürkçülük Bir İdeoloji midir?’, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* (CDTA), vol. 1, pp. 91-3.

<sup>20</sup> The best analysis of Kemalism, its development and political consequences are Tarık Zafer Tunaya, ‘Atatürkçülük’, *CDTA*, vol. 1, pp. 89-90; Ahmet Demirel, ‘Atatürk Döneminde Kemalizm’, *Yüzyıl Biterken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* (YB-CDTA), vol. 13, pp. 766-770; Ömer Laçiner, ‘1960 sonrası Kemalizm’, *YB-CDTA*, vol. 13, pp. 771-76; Tanıl Bora and Ümit Kıvanç, ‘Yeni Atatürkçülük’, *YB-CDTA*, vol. 13, pp. 777-80.

<sup>21</sup> On modernisation in Turkey see İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, *Cumhuriyetin Harcı*, 3 vols. (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2003-4).

<sup>22</sup> For a narrative and an interpretation of the Turkish war of independence in the context of Western reshaping of the Middle East, see the relevant chapters in David Fromkin, *A Peace to end all Peace: the Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Middle East* (New York: Avon Books, 1989) and Margaret Macmillan, *Peacemakers. Six Months that Changed the World* (London: John Murray, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Needless to say both parties are said to have close contacts with the Turkish secret services. The case of the MHP is already well documented, see Cüney Arcayürek, *Derin Devlet (1950-2007). Darbeler ve Gizli Servisler* (Istanbul: Detay, 2007).

perspective. In the field of religion, secularism – *laiklik* – is used as the principle that defines how religion should be expressed.<sup>24</sup> But secularism is not the only principle of Kemalism, which also propounds clear views on economics. ‘Kemalism became the prevailing ideology based not only on secularism but also on *étatisme* and nationalism’, explains Professor Alpaslan Işıklı, who Turkey’s president recently had promoted to membership of the Higher Educational Board (YÖK – *Yüksek Öğretim Konseyi*). His radical leftist interpretation of Kemalism includes the view that the Turkish war of independence and the Bolshevik revolution are the two defining revolutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From this he extends his argument to vociferously defend an authoritarian style of leadership and closed economy, quoting Atatürk, who introduced a statist economy in the 1930s, as a reference.<sup>25</sup> Needless to say, a mindset that promotes economic solutions from the 1930s in order to tackle the realities of globalisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is inevitably going to clash with EU principles (or any sound economic thinking for that matter).

Externally, Kemalism is assertively nationalist but abhors expansionist politics. Anti-imperialist sentiments and a highly suspicious attitude towards the real intentions of foreign powers (including NATO members) with regard to the territorial unity and integrity of the Turkish state underpins the thinking of most Kemalists. The term ‘Sèvres Syndrome’ has been coined to denote this attitude of suspicion and this attitude is still prevalent among the majority of the

political, bureaucratic and military elite.<sup>26</sup> Kemalism’s inherent anti-imperialism was one of the reasons why extremists on the left and the right could find common ground with it and in this respect it resembles similar ideologies in the Middle East, like some forms of Baathism or the Pahlavi nationalism in Iran.

It goes without saying that the ultimate arbiters of what Kemalism means are not political parties or academics but the Turkish army, which since the last days of the Ottoman Empire has seen itself as the saviour and guardian of the Turkish nation. Or as former president Süleyman Demirel put it: ‘God created first the Turkish army, then he realised he had forgotten something and added the people as an afterthought.’<sup>27</sup> Indeed the military would hardly have been able to become so powerful without this ideology. Insulting Atatürk and insulting the army – or even only questioning or reviewing historical facts related to them<sup>28</sup> – accounts for one and the same crime. Hence a weakening of the Kemalist ideology is the first step to weakening and/or to de-legitimising the role and influence of the armed forces – which is just another point that brings Kemalism into conflict with the EU-imposed reform package. There is perhaps no better and no more succinct definition of the different world views concerning the role of the military as conceived by Turkey and the EU – or the West in general – than a speech delivered by the president of the (private) ‘Retired Military Officers Association’ (TESUD – *Türkiye Emekli Subaylar Derneği*),<sup>29</sup> Mr. Rıza Küçüköğlü. He summarised the differences, saying that in

<sup>24</sup> See also Bahattin Akşit, ‘Laikleşme Tipolojisi ve Türkiye’deki Laiklik Denemi’, in Ahmet Öncü and Orhan Tekelioğlu, *Şerif Mardin’e Armağan* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), pp. 65-103.

<sup>25</sup> Can Dündar, ‘Gerdek Kapısında 1 milyon İnsan,’ *Milliyet*, 14 May 2007; Taha Akyol, ‘Atatürk, devletçilik, piyasa,’ *Milliyet*, 16 May 2007.

<sup>26</sup> On the Sèvres Syndrome and its implications for Turkish Foreign Policy, see Kemal Kirişçi, ‘Turkey’s Foreign Policy in Turbulent Times’, *Chailot Paper* no. 92 (Paris: EUISS, September 2006), pp. 32-8.

<sup>27</sup> Demirel said this on the occasion of a visit of European parliamentarians in 1981, see Cüneyt Arcayürek, *Derin Devlet (1950-2007). Darbeler ve Gizli Servisler* (Istanbul: Detay, 2007), p. 79; on the role of the army in Turkish politics, see Ümit Sakallıoğlu, ‘Ordu ve Siyaset’, YB-CDTA, vol. 14, pp.1000-04; on the Turkish Armed Forces and the military as a class in itself, see the excellent studies edited by Ahmet İnsel and Ali Bayramoğlu, *Bir Zümre, Bir Parti. Türkiye’de Ordu* (Istanbul: Birikim, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> In a recent study by Leven Ünsaldı, *Le Militaire et la politique en Turquie* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005), pp. 219-23, the author asks the question ‘faut-il parler du kémalisme?’ The answer is yes. It should be noted that the Turkish Armed Forces take their ‘J-7’ studies branch on military history and strategy very seriously.

<sup>29</sup> See [www.tesud.org.tr/default.asp?sayfa=5smartbaskan.htm](http://www.tesud.org.tr/default.asp?sayfa=5smartbaskan.htm). This is the speech that Küçüköğlü delivered at the Gazi University in Ankara on 5 March 2007.

Turkey the soldiers command soldiers whereas in the West politicians command the military ‘and wars are dominated by political considerations and the profits of giant enterprises’, as can be seen in Iraq every day. Europe on the other hand ‘has actually lost its understanding of national security and the make-up of a national army’ and relies increasingly on ‘mercenaries’ and defence contractors. In short:

‘Our most important difference as compared with the West is that according to our constitution the General Chief of Staff is not the National Defence Minister’s Chief of Staff. He is the Commander of the Turkish Armed Forces! Likewise the forces’ commanders (Army, Navy, Air Force and Gendarmerie) are not the chiefs of staff of the defence minister but fully competent [i.e. independent] commanders of their forces. Our constitution gave the overall commandership to the Parliament. Our President is Commander-in-Chief (in the name of the parliament). Atatürk with his directive [that says] ‘the soldier does not consider politics, he fulfils the requirements of his profession’ did not subordinate the Commandership of the General Staff to the Ministry of Defence.’

This is not an official statement but Küçükoğlu, a retired General Major, would not say anything publicly that ran counter to general opinion prevailing among the higher echelons of the Turkish military. It seems likely that this statement is an accurate reflection of the mood and worldview of the military. Not only do these statements find confirmation in academic literature,<sup>30</sup> but also the military’s subsequent actions and moves against the AKP can be understood if seen from this perspective. Needless to say, the Turkish constitution, which was written in 1982, was drafted by the Turkish generals themselves. Quite tellingly, Küçükoğlu

forgot to mention that – in theory at least – the General Staff would be subordinate to the prime minister. At a press conference, Erdoğan used this point as an argument against the army. ‘If we are a democracy,’ he said, ‘we have to consider that the Armed Forces are an institution subordinate to the prime minister.’<sup>31</sup> A few weeks later, at the end of May, the discrepancy between these two positions was to result in a controversy centring on the Kurdish issue, as we will see below.

In all this lies the European paradox. As seen through a Kemalist prism, EU membership of Turkey would simply seal the European and modern character of Turkey, finishing a process that started in the early nineteenth century with the *Tanzimat* reforms. But things are not that straightforward and it gradually became clear that Europeanisation and democratisation would trim the political claws of Kemalism and confine the army firmly to their barracks. If that should really happen one day, then it would be for the first time in Turkey’s republican history. Needless to say the contradiction between ideological ‘Europeanisation’ (i.e. Kemalist modernisation without democracy) and the reality of EU membership application came vividly to the fore when negotiations started in earnest. However, in the first years of AKP rule radical Kemalists could do almost nothing, as there was a broad consensus and enthusiasm in favour of EU membership and democratisation among the population (i.e. the European momentum) which the AKP wholeheartedly embraced (or exploited). In the end, the AKP was better equipped to deal with the post-modern reality of a globalised world than the *étatiste* modernists like the Kemalists. A fact that the latter find annoying and disturbing, because a modern and (if only outwardly) Islamist party simply does not fit in with the Kemalist mindset which cannot view Islam as anything other than backward and reactionary.

The ‘modern’ Kemalists in the bureaucracy

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<sup>30</sup> Gareth Jenkins, ‘Context and Circumstance’, op. cit., pp. 22, 33f., 81, 82.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Das säkulare Gesicht der Türkei wahren’, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 18 May 2007.

and the military thus became more sceptical towards the European Union than the former Islamists of the AKP. This contradiction did not go unnoticed among Turkish analysts, who have dubbed this anomaly 'Turkey's European paradox'. But why should the AKP, a party after all rooted in political Islam, become the standard-bearer for Turkey's EU aspirations?

### 2.3 The AKP: Islamic/Islamist roots and European reforms

On the political level, pressure groups belonging to the Islamic movement pursue their interests either by joining political parties that have a conservative agenda or by founding their own political parties. Today two parties, the 'Justice and Development Party' (AKP - *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) and the *Saadet Partisi* can rightfully claim to represent the political interests of the Islamic Movement. Both are offspring of the former *Refah Partisi* (Welfare Party), which in turn remains in the tradition of the 'National Standpoint' (*Millî Görüş*) mass movement. *Refah* created an upheaval in the Turkish establishment in the early 1990s. The current split calls to mind the different conclusions members drew from the *Refah* experiment in the 1990s: the older and more conservative ones stayed with *Saadet* while the younger and more radical generation created AKP.

All the important founding members of AKP have their roots in one of the various Islamist movements. Sometimes they even had contacts with radicals in Afghanistan, at the time when the Afghan resistance was hailed as an anti-Soviet guerrilla movement. This holds true for figures like Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Bülent Arınç and Abdullah Gül. But where does the party stand now? Depending on how one views the ulterior motives of the AKP, two interpretations are possible:

a) the AKP acts like any Islamist Party in the

world, using democracy as a first stage, in order to get as much power as possible. In the Turkish context this would mean that the AKP would benefit from the reforms imposed on Turkey by the EU in order to curb the power of the Armed Forces;<sup>32</sup> this view was prominently voiced by Professor Necla Arat in the big meeting that took place in Istanbul on 29 April 2007;

or on the contrary

b) the AKP is indeed a new type of party, nurturing conservative sentiments when it comes to social matters but combining them with freemarket economics. The AKP official position goes along these lines: in official statements senior members of the party stress that the AKP is not an Islamic and even less an Islamist party and that the place of religion is in private worship. In this and with their frequent references to Turgut Özal, they try to present themselves as the heirs to the old ANAP Party, i.e. unifying the moderate conservative block by reaching out to/including secularists.

In a way, the truth seems to combine both positions: on the one hand, the AKP has been successfully Europeanised; on the other hand, the party sends out rather different signals to their core electorate. This is most vividly illustrated by the party symbol, an electric light bulb, something any alert reader of Said-i Nursi immediately recognises as being part of the Nurcu movement's symbolism. Another example is the radical rhetoric in which the party indulged during the adultery affair in 2004 (when the AKP wanted to push through a law criminalising adultery) that sent shockwaves through those circles in Brussels that favour Turkish EU membership; and another being, of course, the fact that the wives of almost all high-ranking party members wear a headscarf.

<sup>32</sup> This interpretation is also widespread in the West. See, for a typical example, Pierre Beylaur, 'L'Europe et les Janissaires,' *Le Point* no. 1808, 10 May 2007, p. 87.

In any case, it is not only Turkish secularists who are suspicious about the ulterior motives of the AKP, even benign Western media commentators use expressions like ‘the Islamist-rooted AK Party’ or ‘the AKP, a party that has Islamist roots’.<sup>33</sup> In a sense this is a reminder that one cannot fool Western observers about the AKP’s Islamic heritage. Yet unlike the Kemalists, the EU and the US were obviously more ready to give the party the benefit of the doubt, for the simple reason that it was the strongest party in parliament and was willing to implement the reforms required by the European Union. But why should a party that still attracts suspicion regarding its Islamic sentiments embrace a democratisation and Europeanisation agenda? The answer is not straightforward and again is to be found somewhere in the middle between a genuine and a feigned change of character among the leadership of the AKP – something that is hard to prove and that perhaps only history may judge. However, there are some factors that made such a transformation plausible and even desirable: to gain a better insight into these requires an analysis of the situation after the demise of the *Refah* and *Fazilet* parties.

It was former Islamist firebrands like Erdoğan, Gül, and Arınç who quickly realised the shortcomings as well as the advantages of the *Refah* experiment. Among the principal shortcomings one might cite the following:

- *Refah*’s often confrontational style with the Turkish Army was in a way an invitation for the generals to intervene, as they did in 1997, when they ousted *Refah* from power (e.g. the so-called ‘Sincan affair’ of 28 February 1997).
- Its economic policy failed; the concept of an Islamic economy does not hold water and Turkey cannot escape from its geographical position and the fact that the Turkish economy is inevitably intertwined with that of Europe, notwithstanding the importance of economic contacts with Middle Eastern countries. But just to quote one example, the

amateurish attempt to replace Europe with East Asia under Erbakan proved abortive.

- Pretty much the same could be said regarding foreign policy: nothing less than a total upheaval would be able to change the Kemalist outlook which combines jealous insistence on national sovereignty with firm commitment to NATO.

Among the positives the new party could list:

- Experienced and enthusiastic party officials, hence an efficient party machine nationwide, even at the level of the smallest towns.
- Therefore, excellent voter motivation.
- The good image of the Party leadership projected by the energetic Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.
- Strong Islamist/Islamic credentials of the party both inside and outside the country.

These experiences were complemented by the following internal and external factors and trends:

- The low public opinion of the ruling political class in the late 1990s and early 2000s, due to scandals like Susurluk (1996) and the initial mismanagement of the earthquake disaster in 1999 that even tarnished the reputation of the Armed Forces.
- As a consequence, the Turkish public’s desire for ‘cleaner’ and more ethical politics and a widespread feeling that ‘something had to change’; the direction of this change was firmly towards Europeanisation and democratisation.
- The emerging debate in political Islam about how democracy can be combined with Islam: this trend started in Iran with the election of Hojjatoleslam Khatami and got more attention in Turkey than normally is known – and is not over yet.<sup>34</sup>
- A Western (essentially American) desire for ‘moderate Islam’, of which Turkey and the AKP became a symbol. This trend intensified after 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Only recently did the theoretician of Turkey’s Islamic Movement, Mehmet Metiner, write a biographical account of the development and mutations of the party’s radical roots. See ‘Bir şeriatçı’nın itirafları’, *Radikal*, 24 October 2004.

<sup>34</sup> In Iran it is clearly about democratising Islam, meaning more democracy for the Islamic Republic, although it seems likely that at least some Turkish Islamists see it the other way round.



■ A convergence of American and EU policies to support modernisation of the state-run economy, encourage privatisation and increase pressure for good governance and more democratisation in Turkey.

All of these trends were strong enough to steer any Turkish government in a positive direction. As concerns the AKP, its implicit understanding that there was no realistic prospect of Islamic politics left them no other choice than to sacrifice some of the typical *Refah* positions. The first example of this was to give up resistance to the idea of Turkish EU membership. Another concerned Turkey's relationship with Israel (see page 32). In the end, when the AKP won its landslide victory in 2002 it had no option but to embrace the 'European momentum' when the country was in a mood of pro-EU euphoria and to pursue a reform agenda that was clearly the only way to move forward for Turkey. Hence secular supporters of democratisation were left without any other choice than to welcome the AKP party's reform agenda. For a while it even seemed that the AKP had managed to rally at least some secularist supporters behind them. However, the reform impetus was strongest in the first two years, i.e. 2002-2004,<sup>35</sup> and lost some of its fervour after that. Or as a colleague in Istanbul put it, 'as far as the reform agenda is concerned, the AKP is worn out'. Alas it remains to be seen whether any other party will be able to conduct reforms effectively. This said, one has to credit the AKP for at least having kicked off the reform process and having started implementing reform – however imperfect this implementation may have been.

On the other hand, most of the secular middle class felt they had to protest against the (whether perceived or real) Islamisation of Turkey. Indeed, this was the greatest failure for which the AKP alone is responsible: it simply could not convince a sufficient part of society of

its new identity as an 'ordinary' or 'new style' conservative party. The AKP was either unable or unwilling to assure the considerable secularist section of the Turkish population that they were not pursuing a hidden Islamist agenda. Not that there were huge and dramatic *Refah*-style provocations against the system, but AKP party officials at all levels managed to deliver enough small-scale provocations to annoy the non-Islamist sections of society. These provocations may seem harmless enough at first glance, like the AKP-inspired ban on advertisements depicting ladies in bathing suits on Istanbul billboards. But they send a clear message to the party's core electorate and make a point about symbolic control of the public space.<sup>36</sup> Public protests would have never grown so big, if it were not for the fears and anger among the Turkish middle class which the AKP either could not or did not want to address. Speaker of Parliament Bülent Arınç, for instance, cast doubt on the democratic value of the upcoming 14 April demonstrations in Ankara because of the involvement of retired General Eruygur (admittedly he had a point),<sup>37</sup> Prime Minister Erdoğan referred disparagingly to the protesters after the first big meeting as 'masses' and wanted to ignore them. It was only after more time elapsed and when the protests grew stronger that Abdullah Gül made some attempt to understand the motives and fears of the protesting 'masses'.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, the prime minister's main adviser, Cüneyd Zapsu, admitted it was an error and a miscalculation on the part of the AKP not to have paid enough attention to these grievances.<sup>39</sup>

In this interpretation of the AKP, the question of how conservative, Islamic or Islamist the party really is has deliberately been left undecided. But if we follow the argument that the AKP was an Islamic fundamentalist party, then Erdoğan dramatically deviated from

<sup>35</sup> See the Report of the Independent Commission on Turkey, *Turkey in Europe. More than a Promise?* (Brussels: British Council and Open Society Institute), September 2004, pp. 20-1.

<sup>36</sup> 'İstanbul'da mayo yasağı', *Vatan*, 15 May 2007.

<sup>37</sup> This was raised in the questions and answers part of the interview. See: 'Büyükanıt'ın konuşmasının tam metni', *Hürriyet*, 12 April 2007.

<sup>38</sup> See his interview with Vincent Boland in the *Financial Times*, 4 May 2007, available at <http://www.ft.com/gul>.

<sup>39</sup> Şenol Çalabakan, 'Zapsu: Kendimizi ifade edemedik', *Milliyet*, 7 May 2007.

this ideology when he said that ‘democracy, secularism and religion are just means. Means for the happiness of mankind.’ But then why did he say in the same interview that ‘an individual cannot be secular, a state is secular’,<sup>40</sup> in the face of millions of secularists taking to the streets? His rejection of personal secularism seems to vindicate the mistrust of many who fear the AKP wants to redefine and reformulate questions concerning Turkish identity and the nature of the Turkish state, including Kemalism, and thus was bound to come into confrontation with the Kemalists, i.e. the army. Others on the right even accuse the AKP of actually being close to the Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>41</sup> However, Erdoğan is now aware of the importance of gaining secularist credentials. At the International Press Institute’s meeting in Istanbul for instance he underscored his commitment to democracy and Turkey’s secular identity.<sup>42</sup> To

this two more factors must be added: firstly, a ‘conservative’ or ‘reactionary’ opposition on the part of the ‘modern’ Kemalist bureaucrats and some vociferous intellectuals against the European reforms *per se*, and secondly, a nationalist reaction against the perceived betrayal of nationalist positions, if not of the nation itself, by the AKP. All of the abovementioned grievances can be formulated by using Kemalist language and one can easily see evidence of the Kemalists’ – i.e. the military’s – hand in helping to orchestrate the protests. This is not to downplay the motivations of millions of Turks who poured out into the streets in order to defend their lifestyles against creeping Islamisation, but the point must be made that in the end the whole situation serves the military’s interests – or, depending on one’s standpoint, forces the military to intervene and do its duty.

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<sup>40</sup> Berivan Tapan and Sibel Bahçetepe, ‘Laiklik ve Din araştır’, *Cumhuriyet*, 16 May 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Utku Çakırözer, ‘Türkiyelilik saçma bir tanımlama’, *Milliyet*, 4 June 2007.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Das säkulare Gesicht der Türkei bewahren’, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 18 May 2007.

## The military and the AKP

The TSK (Turkish Armed Forces) opposed the AKP for both ideological and practical reasons. As concerns the practical reasons, it was of course the redefinition of the TSK's role according to EU standards to which the Army was opposed, but it could not do so openly as long as the pro-European momentum that emerged after the catastrophic 1999 earthquake still held sway over the population.<sup>43</sup> As concerns Kemalism, the TSK warned the AKP several times not to overstep certain boundaries. The first warning came even before the AKP had been elected. On 30 August 2002, on the occasion of a reception given in honour of the Turkish National Day (*Zafer Bayramı*), the generals first issued a warning to the Iraqi Kurds and then devoted their attention to internal problems. Here they took issue with corruption and bad governance (*yolsuzluk*), accused the media of not being serious enough in their investigations, accused the political class of stopping media investigations once they reach a certain level in the hierarchy, and warned against Islamist revival or reaction (*irtica*) and separatism (*bölücülük*) and extremist parties, citing the AKP and the Kurdish HADEP (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*), now DTP (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*), as examples. Both parties only attract protest votes because 'the principles of Atatürk and his revolution have not been sufficiently explained'. Regarding the upcoming elections of 3 November 2002, the generals concluded that 'nobody can resist the power of the people' and that civil society organisations and the media must play a more efficient role.<sup>44</sup> This reads as a blueprint for what is happening today

and indeed one of the generals, the then commander of the Gendarmerie forces, Şener Eruygur, is a crucial figure in today's standoff, as we will see presently.

The AKP's sweeping electoral success was a serious defeat for the Armed Forces and for the Kemalist elites. In fact the only Kemalist bulwark remaining intact outside the Armed Forces was the presidency under Ahmet Necdet Sezer. European reforms and the possibility of a president hailing from the ranks of the AKP would further limit the power of the Armed Forces, i.e. the General Staff, and do away with the core element of Turkey's anomalies, namely the political power of the military. Of all scenarios, an 'Islamist' president, on top of a situation where the AKP has a majority in government and holds other key positions both within and without parliament (e.g. Speaker of Parliament, mayors of the main cities) was simply unacceptable. As retired General Küçüköğlü put it:<sup>45</sup>

'...without the approval of the president, decisions of the higher military council [*Yüksek Askeri Şura*] will not come into effect. For this reason the presidential elections (which are also those for the Commander-in-Chief!) are of vital importance. The President has the authority to approve or disapprove decisions of the Higher Military Council regarding the appointment of distinguished and respectable commanders – Generals and Admirals that have been selected by the Turkish Armed Forces.'

<sup>43</sup> On changes in Turkey see for instance Paul Kubicek, 'The Earthquake, Europe and Prospects for Political Change in Turkey', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 5, no. 2, summer 2001, pp. 34-46 and Kemal Kirişçi, 'Between Europe and the Middle East: The Transformation of Turkish Policy', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 39-51.

<sup>44</sup> 'Komutanlardan Haberler', BİA, 31 August 2002, available at [www.bianet.org/2002/09/02/12863.htm](http://www.bianet.org/2002/09/02/12863.htm) and 'Paşalardan Sert Sözler', *Akşam*, 31 August 2002.

<sup>45</sup> See the General's speech at the Gazi University in Ankara on 5 March 2007, available at [www.tesud.org.tr/default.asp?sayfa=5martbaskan.htm](http://www.tesud.org.tr/default.asp?sayfa=5martbaskan.htm).

The fear was that the AKP would appoint people who shared their own worldview, like ‘separatists, secessionists, racists, reactionaries and those who have been expelled from the army for disciplinary reasons.’ The army was clearly not willing to take this risk. One also has to ask whether the fact that high-ranking generals received prison sentences for embezzling and misconduct was also a factor.<sup>46</sup> If this was indeed the case, then the tables had been turned in favour of the military by mid-May. Because then, Special Forces NCOs who had been involved in the gruesome Şemdinli affair were released and pressure was put on the State Prosecutor who wanted to indict more senior military figures.<sup>47</sup>

Be that as it may, officially the General Chief of Staff could not afford to be as blunt as his retired comrade, and had to formulate matters in a less direct way. Hence the definite warning against a president hailing from the AKP that came on 12 April 2007<sup>48</sup> took the form of a furore over the future First Lady’s headscarf. Needless to say, a Turkish president’s wife wearing a headscarf in public would symbolise a victory for the Islamic Movement. Symbolism aside, the army would certainly lose much of its power to purge its ranks, notably the officers corps, of committed Islamists. Spouses of Turkish officers are not allowed to wear a headscarf in public and in cases where this rule is violated officers are liable to be dismissed immediately. But how could the army uphold such strict rules that successfully prevent infiltration when the spouse of the Commander-in-Chief wears a headscarf herself? Hence, the army had one more reason to defend Kemalism and prevent the victory of a candidate deemed to be Islamist. But, most importantly, the Armed Forces won

widespread support for their pressuring of the AKP among the secular middle class who, as we will see below, poured out onto the streets in masses, with women forming the backbone of the protests.

### 3.1 Plotting a *coup d’état*

As we have seen, after the 2002 elections the AKP was able to profit from the European momentum in Turkish politics and rode a wave of popular support and public sympathy. The generals however were busy behind the scenes. The weekly *Nokta*, the flagship of liberal Turkish journalism, revealed recently how serious the military was in reaffirming its role as the ultimate power-holder in Turkey. Already as early as in 2004 the military had plotted two attempts at a *coup d’état*. Details of the *coup* were gleaned from excerpts from the diaries of the former commander of the Turkish Navy and co-plotter in the *coup*, Admiral Özden Örnek.<sup>49</sup> (At the time of writing it was not possible for this author to obtain a copy of the whole diary as it has been published in *Nokta*.) It must also be said that the magazine’s allegations were refuted in the next issue, but there are strong indications that these allegations were not baseless and that the diary is, indeed, authentic. For once, former General Chief of Staff, Hilmi Özkök (retired in August 2006), did not deny the story.<sup>50</sup> The subsequent behaviour of the TSK goes in the same direction. The military court had the *Nokta* building searched and by the end of April 2007 *Nokta*’s owner, Ayhan Durgun, closed down his magazine, obviously under heavy pressure.<sup>51</sup> And finally there is a consensus among analysts residing in Turkey that the

<sup>46</sup> ‘Korgeneral hapis cezası’, *Radikal*, 11 May 2007; ‘Oramiral Erdil yargılanacak’, *Radikal*, 7 December 2004.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Yargıtay Şemdinli davasında hapis cezası kararını bozdu’, *Milliyet*, 16 May 2007.

<sup>48</sup> See the transcript of a speech given by the General Chief of Staff, ‘Büyükanıt’ın konuşmasının tam metni’, *Hürriyet*, 12 April 2007.

<sup>49</sup> According to the editor there was an indiscretion among other members of the army, who made the Admiral’s diaries available to journalists.

<sup>50</sup> See ‘Özkök Paşa, darbe günlüğünü yalanlamadı’, *Zaman*, 12 April 2007 (the internet version includes also an important interview with the retired pasha).

<sup>51</sup> See Ahmet Şık, ‘Askeri mahkeme kararı ile Nokta’ya polis baskı’, *Nokta*, 19-25 April 2007; and ‘Nokta Noktaliyor’, *Internethaber.com*, 20 April 2007; ‘Darbe Davası Önce Gazeteciye Açıldı!’, *BİA Haber Merkezi*, 24 April 2007.

diaries at least credibly mirror the mood within the milieu of the Turkish generals, even if their authenticity cannot be vouchsafed. This said, corroborating reports and interviews appeared in other media<sup>52</sup> too. And Admiral Örnek did not sue *Nokta* for having published the diaries, but rather by invoking Articles 318 and 319 of the Turkish penal code, which refer to ‘estranging the public from the military’ and ‘supporting military insubordination.’ But perhaps the most compelling argument in corroboration of the source is that they perfectly fit with accounts of what was going on in the papers of the day. The following review of affairs puts the current events and the standoff between the TSK and the AKP into a broader context.<sup>53</sup>

The *coup* was initiated by the heads of the four branches of the Turkish Armed Forces: Özden Örnek (Navy), İbrahim Fırtına (Air Force), Aytaç Yalman (Army) and Şener Eruygur (Gendarmerie). General Chief of Staff Hilmi Özkök was not involved and opposed these attempts when he learnt of them. The potential plotters had already opposed him as early as on 25 October 2003, when they declined to hand in their speeches for the military academies’ opening ceremonies for approval. According to Özden, they viewed Özkök as a person who is outwardly a good republican but is in reality too religious a person (*dinci*), who supports the AKP’s views and who is, worse, a coward. The final showdown between the forces’ commanders and the General Chief of Staff came at a meeting on 3 December 2003, when Özkök declined to issue a memorandum (*muhtıra*), and the General Chief of Staff realised that he was isolated in the TSK. The plan for Operation

*Sarıkoz* (Golden Girl) was adopted on 6 December 2003. The first step in this operation was to win the media over onto their side. A *coup* cannot successfully be undertaken without popular (i.e. populist) support. At the beginning of 2004 the generals met with several business leaders from the media, among them Aydın Doğan, head of the Doğan group, Turkey’s biggest media empire,<sup>54</sup> where they complained that the media did not sufficiently support the Armed Forces. Interesting also is the role of civil society, as the generals regarded university rectors and workers’ unions as natural allies able to bring thousands out onto the streets when called upon. In other words, ‘civil society’ is understood by the army in terms of ‘civil defence’.<sup>55</sup>

Apparently the generals were also convinced that President Ahmet Necdet Sezer was on their side, as he expressed frustration and disgust about ‘these people’ as he referred disparagingly to the AKP. Support from other politicians was explicitly mentioned: the Fascist MHP whose Ömer İzgi, the Speaker of Parliament of the day, was the only politician who knew about the affair; and the CHP. As for the timing, İzgi advised the generals to act quickly, i.e. before the elections, because otherwise there might be different parties in power. In February 2004 the timing of the *coup* was further discussed. Örnek wanted to move later: ‘I have said: if we really wanted to stage a *coup* we must not do so before December 2004 because by then, depending on the answer the EU will give, the AKP will be pushed into a corner anyway and then we can easily get the support from the people.’ Others like Eruygur wanted to move as quickly as possible and made a connection between the Cyprus

<sup>52</sup> Örnek’s diaries were published at a naval website ([www.denizciler.com](http://www.denizciler.com)) that was quickly closed when the Turkish paper *Star* referred to the page. See also the long interview with the editor of *Nokta*, Alper Görmüş, by Neşe Düzel, ‘Amiral Günlüklerinin Varlığını Kabul Etti’, *Radikal*, 9 April 2007; for the refutation and *Nokta*’s reaction as well as a letter of Admiral Örnek, see Alper Görmüş, ‘Geçmiş günler, geçmemiş gündemler’; both articles appeared in *Nokta*, 19-25 April 2007, pp. 4-7.

<sup>53</sup> The information in this paragraph is gleaned from the following accounts of the *putsch*: ‘Eruygur Ülkeyi değil çıkarını düşünüyordu’, *Yeni Şafak*, 29 March 2007; ‘İçinden iki darbe girişimi geçen günlük’, *Radikal*, 29 March 2007; ‘Ayışığında Darbe Yapmışlar’, *Memleket*, 30 April 2007; ‘2004 Darbesindeki Kod Adları’, [www.aktifhaber.com](http://www.aktifhaber.com), 30 March 2007; Ali Bayramoğlu, ‘Dün derken bugün kastettiğimiz ortadadır’, *Aksiyon* no. 644, 9 April 2007, and of course the comments of Neşe Düzel, ‘Amiral Günlüklerinin Varlığını Kabul Etti’, *Radikal*, 9 April 2007; Ümit Cizre, ‘Son Darbe projelerinin anatomisi’, in *Nokta*, 19-25 April 2007, pp. 15-16; Gülay Göktürk, ‘Sarkız sadece ineğin adı’, *Haber7.com*, 1 April 2007.

<sup>54</sup> See the Doğan Yayın Holding’s site at [www.dyh.com.tr](http://www.dyh.com.tr).

<sup>55</sup> Tellingly enough, General Eruygur says when he retired that he ‘reported for duty’ at an NGO named the ‘Society for Kemalist Thought.’ See ‘Org. Eruygur Arınç’a Cevap Verdi’, *Aktifhaber.com*, 30 March 2007.

issue and the *coup*. The underlying logic was that heightened nationalist fever over Cyprus would provide the support needed by driving masses of protestors out onto the streets. This did not happen as the Cypriot Turks voted in favour of reunification (i.e. against the Turkish army)<sup>56</sup> and the Greeks rejected it, so that in the end, as seen from the viewpoint of the Turkish generals, the situation in Cyprus did not really change, apart from the fact that the Cypriot Greeks joined the EU. After the Cyprus referendum the group dissolved and Operation *Sarıkoz* was abandoned. One reason was of course the lack of US support for action because, unlike with other *coups*, this time the US was supporting the government. Another reason was that the media did not cooperate and the population was not in favour of military action. But the most important reason was, according to Düzel's interview with *Nokta*'s Alper Görmüş, the fact that the commander of the land forces would not support it. General Yalman had visited all the senior generals of the army, and asked their opinions. All of them were critical of the AKP government but declined to give their backing to a *putsch*. This opened a deep rift among the top brass of the TSK, as Generals Yalman and Örnek opposed the more hawkish Fırtına and Eruygur, who wanted to strike immediately and go ahead with the *coup*. But there was no way to discourage General Eruygur who must then have decided to go it alone with Operation *Ayışığı* ('Moonlight'), which was also directed against fellow military, notably the General Chief of Staff, Hilmi Özkök, who would thus be forced to retire.

Media coverage and interpretations of these events differs: some now argue that Eruygur's operation started as early as during the summer of 2003, which means that then it would have happened in parallel with *Sarıkoz*, some indicate that these activities only began after the dissolution of the group. In the end, this is a moot point, but the important thing is that Eruygur ran an operation on his own that included eavesdropping on fellow generals and politicians.<sup>57</sup> Whatever the details of this operation, General Eruygur retired in August 2004. Admiral Örnek learned of the second planned *coup* only in October 2004, when Yalman explained that the General Staff had finally got hold of the plan and one of them passed it on to MİT (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilâtı*), Turkey's National Intelligence Agency.

Yet how the diaries came into the hands of *Nokta* remains an enigma. According to another version, they were found on the homepage of a Turkish group based in Utah in the US, from where *Nokta* retrieved the document.<sup>58</sup>

### 3.2 Last warnings

Towards the end of 2006, TSK-AKP relations deteriorated further. In October an obscure professor of geology (who also described himself as a professor of 'science history') at Istanbul University delivered a speech at the military academy on the topic of 'Atatürk and Education.' According to the professor 'the Army has of course the right to stage a *putsch*' because 'it is the

<sup>56</sup> On the sometimes tense relationship between the Cypriot Turks and the Turkish General Staff, see Gareth Jenkins, 'Context and Circumstance', op. cit., pp. 79-81.

<sup>57</sup> A former Gendarmerie colonel, Erdal Sarızeybek, wrote his memoirs on this affair. They also include fascinating insights into several operations of the Turkish Gendarmerie forces in the country's southeastern provinces during the last twenty years. See Hakan Çağrı, 'Gizli Bir Operasyonu Bozdu'm', (interview with Sarızeybek) and ibid, 'Jandarma'yı karıştıran Çok Gizli Dosya' in *Aksiyon* no. 643, 2 April 2007.

<sup>58</sup> This version runs as follows: a group of Turkish citizens in Salt Lake City, Utah, who are connected to an influential religious society (*cemaat*) inside Turkey (Fethullahçis?) but belong to another ethnic group (Kurds?) hacked the General Staff's computers and retrieved the diaries this way. To them belonged a former TSK member and a Turkish citizen who is a Turkish businessman active in Northern Iraq and is somehow connected to Barzani. When it appeared on their website, *Nokta* allegedly took the information. See Salih Zeki, 'Genelkurmay Utah'taki grup ulaştı', *haber7.com*, 2 April 2007, available at [http://www.haber7.com/haber.php?haber\\_id=231549](http://www.haber7.com/haber.php?haber_id=231549). The original article has been published in *Milliyet*, but it is impossible to retrieve it in the newspaper's electronic archive; see 'Darbe Günlükleri'nde adı geçen Paşalar için suç duyurusu!', *Haber Vitrini*, 7 April 2007.

duty of the Army to save the country.’ The General Chief of Staff was present in the audience.<sup>59</sup> Two months later, in December 2006, more preparations took place. Forty Turkish organisations, among them workers’ unions, small entrepreneurs’ organisations, the Society of Retired Non-Commissioned Officers, Kemalist societies like the ‘Society for Kemalist Thought’ (ADD – *Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği*) and others, created a framework of ‘National Unity’ in order to defend the republic’s ‘basic identity’, i.e. Kemalism. The head of the ADD – former commander of the Gendarmerie, retired General Eruygur – was their spokesperson and he raised the question of the future president and mentioned that the current debate on this issue is provoked by the fact that the current parliament is ‘weakened in representing the national will’. He also drew parallels with the 28 February 1997 or Sincan affair,<sup>60</sup> when the military undertook a ‘post-modern’ *coup* against the Islamist government.

It seems that this statement in December 2006 was the first serious warning shot – or even something more consequential, if one takes the role of retired General Eruygur into account. And the president of the parliament, AKP heavyweight Bülent Arınç, took up the challenge: he complained publicly about a letter that had been sent to the General Chief of Staff. In this letter 20 retired officers urged the General Staff to get involved in the upcoming presidential elections, scheduled for April 2007.<sup>61</sup> Shortly afterwards Arınç visited the General Staff and asked rhetorically whether it is the generals’ responsibility to intervene in presidential elections,<sup>62</sup> reminding them that according to

Turkish law it is the parliament that elects the president. Judging from hindsight, by that point in time the generals must have been convinced that the AKP in general and Arınç in particular were not heeding their warnings and were intending to do something that the army and a significant part of society saw as unacceptable, namely to use their – the AKP’s – parliamentary majority to elect Prime Minister Erdoğan as president. But in hindsight one also could conclude that Arınç should have known better as relations between himself and the military are particularly poor. Some analysts of the Turkish military think that the military views Arınç as much tougher to deal with and much harder a person than any other figure in the AKP. Arınç had been warned personally several times before to act more carefully. To aggravate the situation, his relations with the retired General of the Gendarmerie, Eruygur, are especially bad and add a streak of personal antipathy to an already strained relationship.<sup>63</sup>

The letter alluded to still remains something of a mystery. To the best of the author’s knowledge it has not become publicly available. It is also unclear whether Eruygur is among the 20 officers who signed it or not. The TESUD leadership has refuted allegations according to which they were all members of TESUD. TESUD also distanced itself from this criticism, and said that it had nothing to do with the letter, indeed it even suggested that the letter was a fabrication and declared that in any case ‘nobody has the right to meddle in the Chief of the General Staff’s affairs.’<sup>64</sup> This would appear to suggest that TESUD sees presidential elections in Turkey as in fact being the General Staff’s

<sup>59</sup> Önay Yılmaz, ‘Ordu tabii ki darbe yapabilir’, *Milliyet*, 8 October 2006; for the rest of the argument see the full article at [www.milliyet.com/2006/10/08/guncel/gun03html](http://www.milliyet.com/2006/10/08/guncel/gun03html).

<sup>60</sup> ‘40 örgütünün ‘Ulusal Birlik’ buluşması’, *Radikal*, 12 December 2006.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Emekli askerler mektuba kızgın’, *Radikal*, 12 December 2006.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Büyükanıt ile Arınç görüştü’, *Radikal*, 12 December 2006.

<sup>63</sup> In 2003, obviously on the orders of Eruygur, a house belonging to Arınç’s mother was to be searched by the Gendarmerie for illegal activities of a religious group. See further details of the search at ‘Jandarma Arınç’ın Annesi Evinde’, *Vatan*, 28 March 2007. Arınç, still outraged about the search, publicly attacked Eruygur, who, of course, retorted. The latter may also have a point when he argues that part of Arınç’s motivation is the fact that Eruygur is now active in the Society for Kemalist Thought. See ‘Org. Eruygur Arınç’a Cevap Verdi’, *AktifHaber.com*, 30 March 2007.

<sup>64</sup> TESUD later severely criticised Arınç, saying that the officers’ letter was a fabrication and the person responsible for it, General Celal Gürkan, had left the organisation a year ago. See <http://www.tesud.org.tr/default.asp?sayfa=14nisan.htm> and <http://www.tesud.org.tr/default.asp?sayfa=k1.htm>.

business. In the Turkish media only Baskın Oran, in the Turkish edition of the Armenian daily *Agos*, realised that irony.<sup>65</sup> Be that as it may, in a speech given on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 28 February affair, Eruygur underscored the importance of civil society organisations – most of them being nationalist and Kemalist – and called for retired military personnel to actively engage in these. Eruygur also revealed how to proceed: by using the ‘power of civil pressure’.<sup>66</sup> On 5 March 2007 the president of TESUD, retired General Major Küçükkoğlu, gave his speech at the Gazi University where he indirectly predicted something would happen in 2007.<sup>67</sup> This was so to speak the last call, as preparations concerning questions on tactical issues must have been solved by then. Turkey’s electoral calendar then set the timing for the move, which had to happen around or before the Turkish parliament elected the next president, something the Kemalist elites would not allow to happen. This meant that April and May 2007 were the months when action would have to take place. In the end it became mid-April (the timeframe during which the president should be elected was 16 April to 16 May), and took the slumbering AKP government by surprise.

On 12 April 2007 General Chief of Staff Büyükanıt gave a long press conference<sup>68</sup> commenting on many issues but mostly on Northern Iraq and the link between PKK-inspired terrorism and Kurdish nationalism. Yet some of his comments were resolute confirmations of Kemalism. They were also directed against the AKP and the government although, of course, he did not mention them by name. He also criticised the fact that ‘inside the country and abroad highly-prejudiced unscholarly reports [on the TSK] are being prepared by opponents of the TSK.’ (In all likelihood, the general was refer-

ring to the various reports on security sector reform in Turkey, published by the liberal think tank TESEV.) But he must have meant the AKP or the pressure groups behind the AKP when he warned of an immense, far-reaching conspiracy aspiring to change the very character of the state and aiming to harm the state and the TSK. He criticised those who want to change the constitution and to eliminate all its references to Kemalism and who do so by ‘trying to hide behind the argument that this [the elimination of Kemalist principles] would be required by the *acquis* of the EU’. These people, he said, were waiting until their day comes and they were getting stronger every day; the only real guardian and bulwark of the current order was, of course, the TSK, hence they had conducted a smear campaign against the military (meaning *Nokta*’s publication of the *putsch* diaries). This said, according to the general, there is also a tendency to compare the TSK with armies in other countries, but he asked why are criteria (i.e. the Copenhagen criteria) only to be implemented for the army and not for other institutions? (It remains unclear however to what institutions the general was referring). Yet the clearest attack against the AKP and Erdoğan came in the questions-and-answers session where the TSK made it clear that they would not accept a president whose wife wears a headscarf; that said, the leaders of the AKP, including all potential candidates, were seen as unfit for the presidency.

In case anybody might have any lingering doubts as to how serious the army was about not allowing Erdoğan to run for president, a small press declaration<sup>69</sup> that went largely unnoticed would have dispelled confusion. In the declaration a false statement according to which the General Chief of Staff expressed his good wishes for Erdoğan’s future presidency was angrily refuted and the credibility of the TV channel

<sup>65</sup> Baskın Oran, ‘Türkiye’de Lapsus’, *Agos*, 20 December 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Ali Eyvaz, ‘Emekli askerlere örgütlenin çağırısı’, *Yeni Şafak*, 1 March 2007.

<sup>67</sup> See [www.tesud.org.tr/default.asp?sayfa=5martbaskan.htm](http://www.tesud.org.tr/default.asp?sayfa=5martbaskan.htm).

<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately the full text of the press conference is not available but very long excerpts as published as ‘Büyükanıt’ın konuşmasının tam metni’, *Hürriyet*, 12 April 2007, a slightly different version, obviously retrieved from the paper’s print edition, appeared in [www.bianet.org](http://www.bianet.org) 13 April 2007.

<sup>69</sup> See: <http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/basac/2007/a07.htm>.



which had spread this news was questioned. But the final warning came a few days later amidst increasingly heated debates on the future president and after the first protests (on 14 April) had already taken place. The sharply-worded press declaration of 27 April 2007<sup>70</sup> was issued late at night on the very day when the parliament failed to vote for a president. It was sent out as email, hence the ‘e-memorandum’ (*e-muhtıra*). It underscored the threat posed by some groups that aim to undermine and to destroy Turkey’s secular system. According to the memorandum, these conspiracies now went so far as to organise alternative celebrations in lieu of the official national holiday (23 April), which is ‘the symbol of the independence of our state and the harmony and conviviality of our nation’. And they did so ‘under the cover of religion and have now openly challenged the state.’ The alternative celebrations in question were celebrations in honour of the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed, which this year coincided with the national day. They were indeed hard to overlook, but they were organised by a state body, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), and not by the AKP. The memorandum then quoted some examples where religious celebrations were used for provocation, including one abortive attempt to burn or otherwise to dishonour the Turkish flag. It also underscored the necessity to oppose a ‘reactionary mindset’ (*irticai anlayış*) which is ‘an enemy of our Republic and has no other aim than to undermine the basic characteristic of our state.’ In this context the ‘National Directorate for Education’ was specially criticised for not being alert enough to what was going on or even worse for condoning some of these activities. One of the final paragraphs of the memorandum includes the ‘warning’ (the second meaning of the word *muhtıra*):

‘In the last few days, the main question that came up during the election of the President of the Republic was focussed on the discussion of secularism. The Turkish Armed Forces are watching this situation with concern. Don’t let us forget, the Turkish Armed Forces take sides in these discussions and are firm defenders of the secularist principle.’

And:

‘In short, everybody who is against the understanding [proposed by] the founder of our Republic [that says] “So happy the one who can say ‘I am a Turk’” is an enemy of the Turkish Republic and will remain one.’

The memorandum also refers to Büyükanıt Paşa’s previous press conference of 12 April where he had allegedly said that only somebody who ‘is in heart and not merely in words committed to Kemalism’ can be president. By then the AKP had proposed Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül as presidential candidate. But to no avail, as for the army he was as unacceptable as Erdoğan. According to Soli Özel, the memorandum was by any standards strongly-worded and risky as it was paving the way for an even bigger crisis – later developments confirmed his scepticism.<sup>71</sup> 500 intellectuals started a countrywide campaign against it.<sup>72</sup> But their voice was hard to hear in the buzz surrounding the new elections. But unlike the intellectuals and some journalists, political parties did not protest against the *muhtıra*; indeed one party, the CHP, even seemed to welcome it.<sup>73</sup>

When the memorandum was published, *Hürriyet*’s Oktay Ekşi concluded that ‘after this the only possibility is direct [military] intervention (*müdahale*)’.<sup>74</sup> As the AKP was showing no sign of giving in, only two scenarios were possible in

70. Available at the Turkish military’s website <http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/basac/2007/a08.htm>. See also ‘Genelkurmay’ dan sert laiklik çıkışı’, *haber7.com*, 28 April 2007; as if the situation was not complicated enough, another retired officers’ website claimed the said document was not authentic but produced by a general who is about to retire in cooperation with some journalists. Be this as it may, the fact that the memorandum appeared on the military’s webpage is proof enough of its authenticity. For a different view, see [www.harbiyeli.net](http://www.harbiyeli.net).

71. Soli Özel, ‘Muhtıra’, *Sabah*, 29 April 2007.

72. ‘Muhtıra’ya ret’, *Milliyet*, 14 May 2007.

73. As a consequence one of its representatives, the deputy of Hakkari, Mr. Esat Canan, left the party. See the interview with him at Fadime Özkan, ‘Kıskaçta siyaset’, *Star*, 5 June 2007.

74. ‘Bu bildiriye ancak muhtıra denir’, *www.haber7.com*, 28 April 2007; see also the more detailed analysis by Hasan Çağrı, ‘Siyasetin üzerindeki yeni hayalet: Darbe korkusu’, *Aksiyon*, no. 649, 14 May 2007.

order to prevent Gül from becoming president: either intervention, as has been said, or the AKP losing its vote in Parliament. But this seemed unlikely given the fact that Abdullah Gül was the only candidate and the party dominated parliament. Hence the opposition under the leadership of the CHP had to find a solution in terms of the procedural requirements – like voter turnout. In the end, the 27 April memorandum failed in its intended aim because the AKP did not bow down. Instead it triggered developments that may yet lead to a deeper crisis.

### 3.3 Elections, referenda and vetoes

The first round of voting for the president took place on 27 April 2007, the day that was concluded by the famous memorandum. As different opinions on the necessity of the minimum participation of 367 parliamentarians could not be resolved, the CHP decided to bring the case before the Higher Constitutional Court. The court then decided in record time, on 1 May 2007, that indeed at least 367 parliamentarians had to be present.<sup>75</sup> Ever since the circumstances of how this decision emerged, and whether the procedure involved was correct at all, has remained a contentious issue.<sup>76</sup> It would be naïve to expect that the memorandum of the military would not have any impact on the decision, although of course a direct link is impossible to establish. But it augurs badly for Turkey's democracy when main opposition leader Deniz

Baykal even went so far as to warn of – or threaten – ‘unrest’ if the High Court took any other decision.<sup>77</sup>

The second round took place on 6 May 2007 but did not result in the necessary participation of 367 parliamentarians either, as the opposition had either left the debating chamber or did not come to the Parliament in time. Therefore Abdullah Gül withdrew his candidacy and, as a result, the electoral process scheduled to end on 16 May was prematurely terminated due to the lack of candidates. Thus, the scene was set for new parliamentary elections, to be held on 22 July 2007. The election of the new president was to be carried out by the new Parliament.<sup>78</sup> To make matters even more complicated, the idea of electing the president by public mandate and lowering the 10% barrier for parliamentary elections was aired and has remained a topic of discussion ever since. The situation is a novelty in Turkish electoral history. And the standoff between the TSK and the AKP continued, although there had been an attempt before the second round to find a solution.<sup>79</sup> The AKP then took the initiative and made a proposal for a change of the Turkish constitution that would allow the president to be elected by popular vote.<sup>80</sup> The proposed amendment would include the following changes:

- The president would be elected by popular vote
- His tenure would be for a term of five years with the possibility of being re-elected only once, again for five years
- 20 parliamentarians would have the right to

<sup>75</sup> Actually it was a little more complicated and on the details see ‘Meclis Kördüğüm’, *Milliyet*, 28 April 2007; Göker Tahincioğlu, ‘Mahkeme: 367 şart’, *Milliyet*, 2 May 2007; Sabrina Tavernise, ‘Turkish Court blocks Islamist candidate’, *International Herald Tribune*, 2 May 2007. For a much better analysis see ‘Weg frei für Neuwahlen in der Türkei’, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 2 May 2007.

<sup>76</sup> Soli Özel, ‘Krizden Ötesi’, *Sabah*, 3 Mai 2007; ‘Anayasa Mahkemesi Başkanı hoşgörü ve özgürlük çağrısı yaptı’, *Zaman*, 26 April 2007.

<sup>77</sup> See: ‘CHP Lideri Baykal: “Anayasa Mahkemesi 367’ye Gerek Yok Derse Türkiye Tehlikeli Çatışmaya Sürüklenir”’, *Anka – Ankara Haber Ajansı*, 30 April 2007.

<sup>78</sup> Actually it was a little more complicated. See ‘Abdullah Gül adaylıktan çekildi’, *Yüksekova.com*, 6 May 2007; Vincent Boland, ‘Turkey’s Gül vows to run for presidency’, *Financial Times*, 5/6 May 2007; ‘Gül: Söz millet’in ...’, *Radikal*, 7 May 2007; ‘TBMM cumhurbaşkanı seçemedi ama kapanmayacak’, *Radikal*, 10 May 2007; ‘Yine atananlar seçilecek’, *Radikal*, 4 May 2007.

<sup>79</sup> There was an attempt to overcome the standoff between the TSK and the AKP a day before the second round of elections, when Prime Minister Erdoğan met with General Büyükanıt in Istanbul. See Serdar Turgut ‘Dolmabahçe’de neler konuşuldu?’, *Akşam*, 6 May 2007.

<sup>80</sup> The following is based on ‘Anayasa değişikliği paketi için son hafta’, *Milliyet*, 21 May 2007; ‘Sezer’in kritik kararı’, *Vatan*, 21 May 2007; Şakir Aydın and Eylem Türk, ‘Tarih yargılar’, *Milliyet*, 24 May 2007.

- propose a candidate for president
- ▶ general elections are to be held every four years
- ▶ Also some general procedural changes.

The parliament submitted these proposals on 10 May to the president, who had to take a decision in 15 days. Then the parliament took the decision to convene permanently until 3 June so that it could also take urgent decisions over weekends if necessary. Sezer vetoed the package and sent it back to the parliament where it was put to a vote. In the first round the CHP did not participate but in the second round that took place on 31 May it did. The package passed with 370 votes and the AKP hoped that, after the second round, it would pass and then the parliament could send back the unchanged proposal to the president. As he had no right to veto the proposed legislation a second time, he would be obliged to put the proposal to the vote in a public referendum. But this referendum could at the earliest only take place in 120 days, meaning not until mid-October, although in all likelihood the timeframe would be cut down to 40 days if the AKP had their way. A major

disagreement occurred concerning the vote on the first article which was rejected, or rather it did not get the necessary 367 votes – only 366 against 22 ‘no’ votes, and the CHP once again threatened to go to the constitutional court.<sup>81</sup> In ideal circumstances, if things had gone the way the AKP wanted, the referendum on the proposal for the changed constitution would be held on the day of the general elections, on 22 July 2007 (i.e. the 40 day instead of 120 day timeframe). The situation deteriorated further when Prime Minister Erdoğan, obviously nervous and angry, publicly attacked the head of the Higher Constitutional Court, Tülay Tuğcu, over her rulings<sup>82</sup> and tensions between the AKP and the president became all too evident.

We will return to the elections and referendum in the last chapter. In the meantime, the main opposition leader Baykal referred to another player in the standoff, the mass demonstrations. Their nature, and whether they are already a fully-fledged movement or just a fleeting phenomenon whose momentum is destined to be short-lived, will be analysed in the next section.

<sup>81</sup> Önder Yılmaz, ‘Gözler kritik oylamada’, *Milliyet*, 31 May 2007; ‘Paket Mahkemelik’, *Radikal*, 1 June 2007; ‘Gündem yine 367’, *Milliyet*, 1 June 2007.

<sup>82</sup> ‘AKP’den yanıt: Demokrasi üstte’, *Radikal*, 1 June 2007; Derya Sazak, ‘Bitmeyen kavga’, *Milliyet*, 1 June 2007.



## Politics of the street

There are three different layers of opposition to the AKP government. First, the military, with its attempted *coups* and its clear warning against the AKP (*muhtıra*): this is the most important, political layer. Second, civil society organisations, whether run by ex-generals or others: they are the organisational backbone of – thirdly – the masses that poured out into the streets to protest. A fourth player could be added but has been suspiciously absent in the context of recent events: the political parties. As concerns motives for opposition to the AKP, here too several distinctions can be made. The opponents of the AKP include radical groups from the left across to the right of the political spectrum that meet only under the broad roof of Kemalism. This explains why speakers at the meetings did not even mention the Kurdish issue other than in the context of terrorism. Hence Professor Ayşe Kadioğlu rightfully bemoans the fact that at the mass meetings all other non-Turkish ethnic identities were consciously ignored.<sup>83</sup> Yet it would be too much of a simplification to analyse the current situation as merely a confrontation between modern, democratic, hence pro-Western secularists versus reactionary, anti-democratic eastward-looking Islamists. The opposite is in fact true: most secularist opinion-makers are suspicious about what they see as an Islamist-Western alliance, and they are critical towards both.<sup>84</sup>

To repeat one point emphatically, it would be a gross simplification to ascribe the mass participation of people in the protest movement solely to the organisational skills of people like Eruygur and to the extensive media coverage. Of course it is true that, as planned, ex-military per-

sonnel were very active, either by participating on an individual basis or in the framework of clubs and associations (as a retired professional officer confirmed to this author). One may also cite Büyükanıt's encouraging comments from 12 April concerning the demonstrations planned for 14 April. And in some provinces, the AKP claims, the state governors organised the anti-government protests.<sup>85</sup> Be this as it may, Turkish secularists, and especially women's organisations, have enough grievances that would drive them into confrontation with the AKP. Yet it is doubtful that the demonstrations would have reached their impressive size if 'Eurofatigue' had not exacerbated a general sense of frustration.

Judging from hindsight, Admiral Örnek's conclusion was correct: back in 2004 the time was not yet ripe for action as there was still too much enthusiasm for the EU-oriented reforms and EU membership among the Turkish population. The army therefore would have lacked popular support had it made such a move. Hence there was no realistic prospect of cornering or even toppling the AKP before the pro-European momentum started to wane – an entirely predictable phenomenon that has happened in almost every EU candidate country once the European reforms have started to bite. In Turkey this happened during 2005 when the public became increasingly frustrated with the EU process. As ordinary citizens began to conclude that no matter what steps Turkey undertook in order to qualify for membership, in the end Turkey would be denied entry (e.g., during the author's stay in Ankara and Istanbul, statements like 'they will not admit us anyway', 'why

<sup>83</sup> 'CHP solun değil devletin partisidir', *Yeni Şafak*, 7 May 2007.

<sup>84</sup> Mustafa Akyol, 'The threat is secular fundamentalism', *International Herald Tribune*, 4 May 2007.

<sup>85</sup> 'AKP: Erzurum'da organizasyonu Valilik yaptı', *Milliyet*, 15 May 2007.

don't they just come out and say no – *bitsin!*' and 'if they don't want us – fine, let's stay on our own' were frequently to be heard at all levels of Turkish society). And once the AKP had tied its political fate to the country's EU aspirations its popularity was consequently affected negatively – precisely in the way Örnek had predicted. Euro-fatigue or Euroscepticism have had the same results in Turkey as in any other European country, namely a resurgence in nationalist feeling. In Turkey, this took the form of vibrant nationalism in the guise of the state's defining ideology, Kemalism. And this is where Kemalist nationalism dovetails with another issue: Islam, or more precisely, the fear of Islamisation. Before we can analyse the fears underlying the mass demonstrations, we have to take a look at the protests themselves and who was behind them.

#### 4.1 *The mass demonstrations*

The demonstrations were conducted in a peaceful manner, hardly any violent incident worth mentioning occurred and the meeting in Izmir was even described as having a 'carnival-like' atmosphere. The first big demonstration took place on 14 April in Ankara when a crowd of roughly a million gathered at Tandoğan Square and at the Atatürk mausoleum. In terms of timing it was suspiciously close to the 12 April press conference of the General Chief of Staff Büyükanıt. Its main organisers were from the circles around Eruygur and the CHP<sup>86</sup> and the slogans and speeches were archetypally Kemalist and nationalist, using both classical and modern left-wing arguments. Hence anti-imperialism and anti-globalisation played as much a role as specifically Turkish slogans like the commitment to a united and inseparable Turkish nation. Some speakers even went so far as to

accuse the EU and the US of condoning separatism, i.e. the activities of the PKK. Other speeches were directed against the AKP's incompetence and its failed economic policy. Some also criticised the reforms as a sell-out and expressed their loathing of neo-liberalism and globalisation. A further recurrent theme was Turkish independence and criticism against the AKP for making Turkey subject to Western, and even worse, Israeli interests.<sup>87</sup> Yet two weeks later, on 29 April 2007, a second meeting was organised at Çağlayan in Istanbul which drew even more participants than the one in Ankara. An analysis of the speeches leads to the conclusion that it was the most important of all meetings, even when some weeks later, on 13 May 2007 in Izmir, a confirmed 1.5 million citizens took to the streets. Most slogans in Izmir were directed personally against Erdoğan, against 'creeping Islamisation' and 'moderate Islam.'<sup>88</sup> The first signs of dissent appeared in the run-up to the meeting in Samsun (20 May 2007) when opponents to the protests tore down posters, but more serious problems were avoided thanks to the efficiency of the local ADD.<sup>89</sup> But the Samsun meeting, which mustered more participants from left-wing than from right-wing political parties, was also notable for another aspect, namely the participation of veiled women. A fact that some ascribed to the appeal of Turkish nationalism and secularism at all levels of society.<sup>90</sup> Smaller but still impressive meetings attended by around 100,000 people were organised about the same time in Çanakkale, Denizli, Marmaris and Manisa. These meetings were obviously organised by regional ADD branches.<sup>91</sup>

Women clearly dominated the meetings in Istanbul and Izmir. In Istanbul women's organisations were the main organisers. Among them was 'The Society for the Support of Modern Life'

<sup>86</sup> Ahmet Şık, 'Askeri mahkeme kararı ile Nokta'ya polis baskı', *Nokta*, 19-25 April 2007.

<sup>87</sup> This is from several news programmes broadcasted in various Turkish channels in the days immediately after the meeting.

<sup>88</sup> Ece Temelkuran, 'Şehir güzel, kızlar güzel. Miting niye güzel olmasın!', *Milliyet*, 14 May 2007.

<sup>89</sup> Sadi Subaşı, '20 Mayıs Samsun Cumhuriyet Mitingi ve Suskun Sivil Toplumun Uyanışı', *Halk Gazetesi*, 20 May 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Mustafa Mutlu, 'Samsun'da türbanlılar da 'Cumhuriyet' dedi', *Vatan*, 21 May 2007.

<sup>91</sup> 'Laiplik için birleşin', *Radikal*, 6 May 2007.

(ÇYDD – *Çağdaş Yaşam Destekleme Derneği*), but of course ADD was also prominently represented. Hence, at this meeting there was more evidence of credible civil society at work than in the preceding and following demonstrations. Although most of the speeches in Istanbul resembled those in Ankara, there were differences as the meeting in Istanbul definitely reflected the attitudes of civil society rather than those of the military.<sup>92</sup> For instance, for the first time the slogan ‘neither sharia nor a *putsch*’ (*ne şeriat ne darbe*) came up at this meeting and has stuck with the protesters ever since. The popularity of this slogan indicates that the popular mandate on which the military is so keen would be very difficult to obtain if a *coup d’état* was indeed to be conducted, even if, as was the case, the slogan did not figure so prominently in subsequent meetings.<sup>93</sup> This is thanks to the ÇYDD general secretary, Türkan Saylan, who after having condemned terrorism (meaning the PKK) emphasised that ‘it is quite clear that *coups* are not a solution at all.’ Sadi Subaşı of Samsun’s *Halk Gazetesi* argued along the same lines, saying that *coups* were of no help for Turkey’s fledgling democracy but that he now saw, with the awakening of Turkey’s civil society, a positive future development.<sup>94</sup> Not all commentators share this optimism but there is a unanimously negative view of the *coups* in the press. However, only very few commentators, like *Sabah*’s Soli Özel, reminded their readers that it was the military after its last great *coup* in 1980 that had mustered religious support in order to check the left.<sup>95</sup> Saylan also spoke out in favour of the right of 1<sup>st</sup> May workers’ meetings to be held in Turkey, an idea which is still anathema to the Turkish state, addressed the unfairness of the Turkish electoral system, meaning the 10% bar-

rier for parliamentary elections, and she also criticised the social democrats and the centre-right parties for their passivity and incompetence. Of course, she also insisted on the necessity to have a ‘modern couple’ residing in Çankaya, the presidential palace. Another speaker was clearer as concerns the AKP and political Islam. According to Professor Necla Arat, the AKP has never really changed but wants to take control of the key positions in the state apparatus hence it is the citizens’ duty to resist. The ADD did not send Eruygur but his deputy Nur Serter to ‘bow down’ in front of the ‘glorious’ Turkish Armed Forces. This was also sending out a message against a mindset that thinks the General Chief of Staff was only ‘a subordinate’ (*memur*) to the prime minister, and a warning to the AKP to stop exploiting religion and collaborating with imperialism.

Actually there is a world of difference between the positions of Professor Saylan and the ADD. The difference is between real civil society activism and those who see civil society as nothing but a kind of civil defence corps. Quite naturally, these differences had to surface one day as happened at the follow-up meeting in Izmir, when CHP activists prevented Saylan and the popular left-wing singer Zülfü Livaneli from speaking.<sup>96</sup> Needless to say, this split weakened the anti-AKP camp, which is still organised by highly efficient, though ultimately marginal, groups spanning the whole range of the political spectrum from the right, like Şener Eruygur’s ADD, to the extreme left like Doğu Perinçek’s Maoist *Türkiye İşçi Partisi*, and also including real civil society groups like Türkan Saylan’s ÇYDD.<sup>97</sup> These differences reflect to a certain extent two contradictory views prevailing among Turkey’s secularists: those who think

<sup>92</sup> This paragraph follows a selected transcript of the speeches based on ‘Çağlayan mitinginden çıkan sonuç: Sivillermize Güvenilebiliriz’, *Nethaber*, 30 April 2007; the interview with Professor Necla Arat, ‘Kadınlar Laikliğe Sahip Çıktı’, *Hürriyet*, 14 May 2007, and Ece Temelkuran, ‘Şehir güzel, kızlar güzel. Miting niye güzel olmasın’, *Milliyet*, 14 May 2007.

<sup>93</sup> Can Dündar, ‘Gerdek Kapısında 1 milyon İnsan’, *Milliyet*, 14 May 2007.

<sup>94</sup> Subaşı, op. cit.

<sup>95</sup> Soli Özel, ‘Muhtıra’, *Sabah*, 29 April 2007; see also the bitter commentary of Hasan Cemal, ‘Eski Türkiye, Yeni Türkiye’, *Milliyet*, 1 June 2007.

<sup>96</sup> ‘O mitingde ne oldu?’, *Vatan*, 16 May 2007; for a slightly different version of this incident see ‘İzmir tarih yazdı’, *Milliyet*, 14 May 2007.

<sup>97</sup> ‘Özkök’ün “aktif marjinal” grupları!’, *iyibilgi.com*, May 2007.

Kemalism is more or less dated and even have doubts about its democratic credentials – citing the fact that democracy is not named as one of the principles underpinning the ideology – and those who think Kemalism is a general movement of modernisation and as such a necessary prelude to democracy.<sup>98</sup> (Of course there is some overlapping between both groups). Needless to say, proponents of the latter view are more state-oriented in their political views than the former group. They are also the ones who most vociferously promote pro-TSK statements.

## 4.2 Momentum or movement?

For now the protests are what they are: protests based on frustration and fears channelled and directed against the AKP. But they are not a clearly motivated and self-sustaining movement. And there is still no real idea among the protestors of what precisely they want, in which direction to go, and how to proceed in the future.<sup>99</sup> No dominant group has emerged out of these meetings, no charismatic figure to articulate the wishes of the masses and no plan on how to transform these heterogeneous gatherings into an efficient mass movement. Instead ‘active marginal groups’ – to cite Ertuğrul Özkök’s argument again – have found an ideal forum for broadcasting their agenda. In one particular case, the economy, this has resulted in a contradictory situation. On the one hand, radical-left and pro-statist speakers have dominated the discourse – one of them being the previously mentioned Professor Alpaslan Işıklı. His radical pro-state-run economy statements fuelled the fears and general distrust of reforms typically felt by people in state-run companies and civil servants, hence the bulk of the electorate of the

CHP. But here lies an even greater paradox: because speakers like Işıklı, who promote a state-controlled if not state-run distributive economy, have addressed hundreds of thousands of demonstrators who belong to a newly created middle class,<sup>100</sup> which owes its very existence to the liberal market reforms and to the opening up of the Turkish economy and Turkish society.<sup>101</sup>

Therefore must we conclude that the organisers are actually far removed from promoting the true interests of Turkey’s democratic-minded middle class? Thanks to the women’s organisations, this is only partially true. It is clear that Turkey’s assertive women’s organisations have the potential to become a possible nucleus for a sustainable protest movement, perhaps comparable to the anti-mafia *La Rete* movement in Italy in the 1990s. Their focus on down-to-earth politics and their clear, issue-based agenda will continue to remain active whatever the circumstances. Not only do Turkey’s women’s organisations have extensive experience in activating and motivating members and sympathisers, but they also have what others lack – credibility. They do not need any political party to pursue their agenda, rather, as happened in the aftermath of the meeting in Istanbul, it is the parties who are trying to win their support.<sup>102</sup> In short, if the protest momentum of spring 2007 is one day to blossom into a serious movement, then it will be thanks to Turkey’s women’s organisations. This said, one has to accept Nilüfer Göle’s criticism that, after the memorandum of 12 April, the old cliché according to which the real rulers of the Republic are the citizen-military alliance and not parliamentary democracy has proved true again. She goes so far as to conclude that by now bridges that have been built between

<sup>98</sup> Türker Alkan, ‘Açık uçlu Atatürkçülük’, *Radikal*, 16 May 2007.

<sup>99</sup> Ece Temelkuran, ‘Şehir güzel, kızlar güzel. Miting niye güzel olmasın!’, *Milliyet*, 14 May 2007.

<sup>100</sup> The ‘new middle class’ has to be distinguished from the ‘old middle class’, which is more conservative. It includes mostly professionals of all branches, young families with children that have achieved a certain socio-economic position. See the interview with the social scientist Sencer Ayata by Devrim Sevilay, ‘Meydanlardakiler ‘yeni orta sınıftır’’, *Milliyet*, 21 May 2007.

<sup>101</sup> Taha Akyol, ‘Atatürk, devletçilik, piyasa’, *Milliyet*, 16 May 2007; and Taha Akyol, ‘Atatürk efsane ve gerçek’, *Milliyet*, 10 May 2007.

<sup>102</sup> See ‘Kadınlar Laikliğe Sahip Çıktı’, *Hürriyet*, 14 May 2007; for a very critical and different view on the women’s role in the demonstrations see Mehmet Gündem, ‘Doç. Dr. Zeynep Dağ: Kadın olgusu hiç bu kadar sömürülmemiştir’, *Yeni Şafak*, 21 May 2007.



democracy and the Republic have been burnt.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, judging from the slogans, ‘democracy’ and ‘democratisation’ did not figure that prominently. It will be up to activists like Saylan to deliver the final proof that the protests are more than just the street mobilised on the orders of the military.

### 4.3 *Protesting against Islamisation, Israel and the West*

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, political slogans and speeches, many of them populist in nature, covered a broad range of topics ranging from the role of the military in society, to social rights, economic issues, criticism of the West and of course Islamisation and the AKP. It goes without saying that this issue of a real or perceived Islamisation agenda fostered by the AKP is the centrepiece of the protests. It relates to the question of the role of Islam in Turkish society, hence Turkish identity with all its implications, also concerning the country’s domestic affairs and international foreign policy posture. But it is important to notice that these are two very different aspects; both of course are directly related to the AKP.

We have already touched on the fear of Islamisation in chapter one. This fear may be exaggerated but it is real and the AKP is held responsible for it. However the AKP is only part of the problem and is not solely responsible for this situation, as has been pointed out earlier. Thus protesting against the AKP is in a way an impotent gesture by the secular middle class, because ousting the AKP does not oust those groups that are in reality behind what is perceived as ‘creeping Islamisation’.

Needless to say it is easy for those pursuing another agenda to sail with the populist wind blowing against the AKP. One of the most important agendas is in foreign policy and combines hostility to Turkey’s EU aspirations with

classic anti-imperialist positions against the US and Israel, thus uniting nationalists of all political camps who condemn the AKP’s alleged Islamism from the perspective of anti-Imperialism. The fact that the AKP has tied its fate to the EU membership process has already been highlighted. But the AKP is also identified with serving Israeli and American interests. Abdullah Gül, for instance, has been attacked as ‘ABD-ullah’, ‘ABD’ being the Turkish acronym for USA, hence the protesters saw him as a stooge of the Americans.<sup>104</sup> The accusation of pursuing an Islamist agenda and at the same time being actually a Western puppet serving American and Israeli interests makes no sense from a Western perspective. It does however fit perfectly into the worldview of nationalists and leftists in all Muslim societies. There is a widespread conviction in Turkey that the US did use radical Islamists and fascists in the 1970s and later in order to check the influence of the radical/revolutionary left and the nationalists.

Recent developments in the region like the war in Iraq are seen as proof of a big conspiracy directed against the Middle East, in which the US have ‘tasked’ Turkey to function as a role model for ‘moderate Islam’ in the Muslim world. This is not an isolated view of only a few individuals in Turkey. No one less than President Sezer has rejected the idea of Turkey playing the role of a ‘moderate Islamic’ country for the US. The whole idea is simply anathema to Turkey’s Kemalists, because it is seen as a distraction from the country’s modernisation (i.e. Kemalist) and Europeanisation process. President Sezer, in his farewell speech at the Military Academy in May 2007,<sup>105</sup> put the moderate Islam project for Turkey into a broader context:

‘The “moderate Islam” model was announced as a new “role” for Turkey when plans for hegemony over the Islamic world were hatched in some bureaus of the American administration. The promoters of the

<sup>103</sup> As quoted in Cengiz Çandar, ‘Demokratik rejimi tehlikeye atan milat’, *Referans*, 2 May 2007.

<sup>104</sup> Mustafa Akyol, ‘The threat is secular fundamentalism’, *International Herald Tribune*, 4 May 2007.

<sup>105</sup> Okay Gönensin, ‘İlimli ve radikal İslam’, *Vatan*, 14 May 2007.

“Greater Middle East Project” thought that Turkey, which is in a real sense a secular and democratic republic, would as a secular nation be ‘too distant’ from other Muslim countries, but that, in contrast, it would have more influence as a model dubbed ‘moderate Islam’ over other Muslim countries. If we translate ‘moderate Islam’ into everyday language, then what we have is the AKP and its government.’

In other words, the Turkish president in his final speech at the Military Academy accuses the AKP of being part of an American project whose grand design is to try to exert influence over the Islamic world via Turkey. He also pointed out the inevitability of moderate Islam in a very short time metamorphosing into radical Islam, citing Iran, Afghanistan and the problems of Pakistan as examples.<sup>106</sup> There have of course been much-publicised critical comments of the Turkish president’s interpretation of the relationship between the US and the AKP and the role ‘moderate Islam’ plays therein.<sup>107</sup> But by and large it is fair to say that the president has succinctly expressed the views of those who participated in the mass demonstrations.

And of course the protesting masses are also convinced that the AKP is actually an Israeli stooge too. This accusation reaches back to the early phase of the party, to the days immediately after Erdoğan was released from prison in 1999. Back then he received the Israeli ambassador as well as Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), an important organisation

that fights anti-Semitism worldwide, and Erdoğan has maintained contacts with the ADL ever since.<sup>108</sup> Contrary to what a recent report published by an American think tank says, the AKP is not responsible for the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Turkey. Neither did the AKP become a risk for Israel, as stated in the same report.<sup>109</sup> At no point in his tenure as prime minister did Erdoğan hinder Israeli interests. Israeli investments in Turkey have even increased and Turkey is *inter alia* a preferred holiday destination for Israelis. Not to mention more strategic issues like common dam projects in Turkey and water supply support for Israel. Relations are so strong – still – that they even survived his outburst against Israel after the assassination of the blind Sheikh Yassin, who was well known and held in high esteem among the more radical Islamists in Turkey, including the circles from which Erdoğan hails. Inside Turkey, however, Erdoğan’s closeness to Israeli and other Jewish groups has drawn the ire of the nationalists, whether they are Islamists, fascists or Kemalists. An example of an anti-Semitic smear against Erdoğan can be found at a Kemalist website in Izmir, where his relations with ‘Jews’ and ‘freemasons’ are questioned.<sup>110</sup> Another nationalist site criticises Erdoğan for having accepted an award in honorary remembrance of the Turkish diplomats who saved Jews during World War II.<sup>111</sup> The BBP’s Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu has sharply attacked the idea of renting land on the Syrian border to an Israeli company, and accuses the AKP of forgetting about the Palestinians’ plight and of

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.; the last examples are historically sound: the moderate Islamic Bazargan/Bani Sadr government was replaced by hardliners in Iran and moderate Islamists in Afghanistan gave way to the more radical *mujahidin* only to be replaced by the Taliban movement.

<sup>107</sup> See for instance Murat Belge, ‘İlimli İslam tehdidi’, *Radikal*, 17 April 2007.

<sup>108</sup> A short search at the Anti-Defamation League’s website is testimony enough of Erdoğan’s good relations with the ADL: ‘Turkish Prime Minister Pledges to ADL: Will fight Anti-Semitism and Promote Israeli-Palestinian Peace Talks’, 15 November 2004; ‘Prime Minister Erdogan Tells ADL That “Anti-Semitism Has No Place in Turkey”’, 10 June 2005. All easily accessible at the ADL’s website, [www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org). Erdoğan also maintains contacts with the American Jewish Congress and similar organisations. See [www.ajcongress.org](http://www.ajcongress.org) (searching for ‘Turkey’ and ‘Erdoğan’).

<sup>109</sup> These false accusations are forcefully made by Soner Çağaptay, *Secularism and Foreign Policy in Turkey: New Elections, Troubling Trends*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 2007.

<sup>110</sup> ‘Tayyip Mason Mu’, *Kuvayimilliyeye.net*, 7 November 2006.

<sup>111</sup> See for instance Isbara Alp, ‘Ödülü Çoktan Haketmiş’, *Ötüken*, 23 January 2004 available at <http://www.alparslanturkes.net/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=942>.

having no ‘national consciousness,’<sup>112</sup> while the *Saadet Partisi* cites Gül as someone who does not like Islamic political parties, and Erdoğan as the one ‘the Jews’ want to see as leader of Islam.<sup>113</sup> Finally an anti-Semitic smear campaign against Erdoğan and Gül has been initiated that ‘accused’ them of being of non-Turkish (specifically Greek and Jewish, respectively) extraction.<sup>114</sup> Many more examples could be given. But the radical left too has criticised his closeness to Israel in classic anti-imperialist, pro-Palestinian fashion.

These examples suffice to illustrate the point that the Kemalist elites easily embrace support from extremists of both the left and the right

and do not even shy away from overt anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism in order to challenge the AKP. This is annoying to say the least, because the whole fuss about nationalism and the AKP being a Western/Israeli stooge is really much ado about nothing. No political party in Turkey was in a position to change the fundamentals of Turkish foreign policy over the last decade with regard to Turkey’s EU aspirations, its relations with the US and its relations with Israel. Slogans favouring a ‘real independent Turkey’ that prospers economically but has nothing to do with the EU and the US<sup>115</sup> fall into the same category: they are naïve and hopelessly romantic at best, destructive at worst.

<sup>112</sup> ‘İsrail’e Toprak Kiralanmaz’, [www.bbp.org.tr](http://www.bbp.org.tr) under ‘Milliyetçilik’.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Gül: İslami Partileri Sevmiyorum’, *Haberler.com* and ‘Museviler Erdoğanı İslam lideri görmek istiyor’, *Vatan*, 16 February 2007, downloaded from the Saadet Party’s homepage [www.saadetfatih.org](http://www.saadetfatih.org). The articles are not anti-Semitic, anti-semitism is the context into which the Saadet Party puts them.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Tarih yargılar’, *Milliyet*, 24 May 2007.

<sup>115</sup> Osman Ulagay, ‘Tam bağımsız Türkiye hedefi gerçekçi mi’, *Milliyet*, 7 May 2007.



## Party politics and national security

The current situation is the result of many shortcomings and mistakes on the part of all sides involved: the opposition parties as well as the ruling AKP and, of course, the Armed Forces. The latter obviously are proud of having turned back the clock and used a time-honoured tactic of military politicking, a ‘memorandum’ intended to pressurise and intimidate the ruling party. Until April 2007 all seasoned observers of Turkey would have been sure that this kind of thing belonged firmly to the past. But the AKP could also have made things easier and the ANAP is certainly right when they point out that already two years ago they promoted a reform plan for direct election of the president that fell on deaf ears.

In the preceding chapters we have shown how the military, or figures closely aligned with the military, have carefully built up a populist momentum against the AKP. The mass protests they so successfully orchestrated were only possible because the secular middle class is still very suspicious about the real nature and ulterior aims of the AKP. In spite of this, the population has slowly got used to the AKP – grudgingly though. This is simply due to the fact that there was (and in the author’s opinion still is) no real alternative as long as the current electoral system with its 10% barrier exists and as long as Turkey’s political class has not learned the lessons from its defeats in 2002 and 2004. Furthermore no other political party was in a position to challenge the AKP in earnest, and no party could present a real political alternative to the AKP’s pro-European course, notwithstanding some parties on the fringes of the political spectrum

like *Saadet*, the MHP and TİP, which present openly anti-European party programmes. This does not mean that the AKP was extraordinarily excellent and inspiring, but the overall impression is that the party just did its homework. It maintained a highly efficient party machine and remained on course concerning the reforms and Turkey’s EU membership application. No one less than the *grand seigneur* of Turkey’s big business, Rahmi Koç, who opposes the party’s presidential candidate, has publicly praised the party’s economic policy.<sup>116</sup> Even if the government tried to put its own stamp on foreign policy, one could not detect any great or substantial deviation from what has been Republican Turkish foreign policy for decades. Thus it is by any account highly unlikely that any other party would have been able to do things remarkably differently from the AKP. Therefore doing nothing apart from some basic political homework was and is enough for the AKP to stay in power or even to appear more attractive than other parties, because Turkish politics are crippled by the lack of any vision, lack of principles, lack of philosophy or, to rephrase the words of Ayşe Kadioğlu,<sup>117</sup> lack of democratic culture.

The difference the AKP made was in the domestic arena on the levels of the city and district councils it ran. According to many interlocutors, the AKP did a decent job in local governance at the level of city councils and in small towns, where they focus on services.<sup>118</sup> And it is also true that the AKP has not dramatically lost in the big cities like Istanbul and Ankara ever since its forerunner *Refah* took office in the early 1990s. Of course, they consequently appointed their own people to

<sup>116</sup> See ‘Rahmi Koç: Köşk’te türbanlı eş olmaz’, *Milliyet*, 5 June 2007.

<sup>117</sup> ‘CHP solun değil devletin partisidir’, *Yeni Şafak*, 7 May 2007.

<sup>118</sup> This is also the image the party has of itself, see the interview with Abdullatif Şener by Devrim Sevinay, ‘Halka göre süreci iyi idare ettik’, *Milliyet*, 7 May 2007.

key positions and knew how to deliver social goodies in order to keep their electorate happy. Yet this is hardly unusual and reflects a certain typically Turkish understanding of politics and politicking rather than a particular AKP aptitude for corruption or a hidden Islamist agenda.

If the dramatic issuing of the *muhtıra* by the army had not happened, Turkey's political landscape would have moved a step closer towards a two-party system thanks to the 10% barrier that benefits the ruling and the main opposition parties by giving them more seats in parliament than warranted by their percentage of votes. By and large the Turkish public have got used to the prevailing state of affairs, i.e. a ruling AKP with the CHP as the main opposition party. And as time passed by, AKP rule and EU-reforms would have been increasingly seen as normal and the AKP might well not have had any trouble in getting re-elected, not leaving much place for other parties. Yet by the end of its term it has already become clear that although the AKP may do well, it will be unable to repeat its great victories of the 2002 parliamentary and the 2004 local elections. In the end the party had no other option but to continue in the direction of EU membership and to maintain its efficient party machinery at the level of the city councils. It will enter the scheduled elections with nothing to show other than the fact that it has successfully started EU membership negotiations; something that Turkish 'Eurofatigue' may well transform into a burden. And it has definitely had no answer to offer to the main pressing problems facing Turkey like the Kurdish issue, the future of Turkish agriculture or mass unemployment. In government the party also showed signs of internal cracks and loss of direction. Until, of course the day the army intervened and thus enabled the party to redirect its political energy to the election of the Turkish president and, later on, the general elections. And this is, of course, where the political parties come in.

## 5.1 Party politics

Frustration over the incompetence of the secular parties on both the left and the right was voiced during all demonstrations. The Turkish public, rightly, blames the AKP's success on the turf wars and incompetence of these parties. Indeed, one aspect of the AKP's dramatic 2002 and 2004 successes was that the party benefited from protest votes directed against the established parties. And the abovementioned mass protests were as much against what is perceived as the AKP's hidden agenda as they were against the incompetence of the political establishment. The Turkish public is clearly more mature than Turkey's secular political parties, who are unable to express the interests of the modern, reform-minded 'new middle class'.<sup>119</sup> This new middle class, which has protested so vociferously in the last few months, communicated two key messages: first, to take women and their complaints seriously and, secondly, to unite the two main parties on the political left (CHP, DSP) as well as on the right (DYP, now DP and ANAP). But the list of candidates published by all parties adds to the frustration felt by women's NGOs and *Milliyet*'s Meral Tamer may be right when she fears that the number of women deputies will stay at best at around 9%.<sup>120</sup> Contrary to press declarations by the party leaders, it is hard to imagine how the unification intended to create two big mainstream parties could indeed take place. At best there would be electoral platforms with the diverse party identities still remaining in place.<sup>121</sup> For example, the DSP's Raşan Ecevit suggests a model called 'unity of strength' (*güçbirliği*, a misleading term given the circumstances) which seems to be a loose platform rather than two unified parties. However, recent developments indicate that after a bumpy start an efficient electoral platform under the leadership of the CHP has been

<sup>119</sup> Soli Özel, 'Krizden Ötesi', *Sabah*, 3 May 2007.

<sup>120</sup> Meral Tamer, 'Listeler, kadın STK'larda düş kırıklığı yarattı', *Milliyet*, 6 June 2007.

<sup>121</sup> See 'Biz birleştik, sıra millette', *Vatan*, 21 May 2007; it is also rumoured that the SHP might also come into the CHP/DSP unification, see Mansur Çelik, 'Biz birleştik sıra halkta', *Milliyet*, 21 May 2007; 'Yılmaz, Rize'de adaylığını açıklayacak', *Milliyet*, 10 May 2007; and Recai Kutan's *Saadet* would be prepared to unite with the BBP; see 'Kutan: BBP ile ittifaka hazırız', *Milliyet*, 21 May 2007.

created.<sup>122</sup> The situation is different on the right where cooperation between the two parties has already suffered the first setbacks and ‘hope has given way to chaos’ and may result in a situation where both parties stay below the 10% barrier.<sup>123</sup>

Sadly, there is enough reason to believe that this time too the mainstream parties have not learned too much from past mistakes but just continued their crony-based politicking, with party leaders jealously guarding their position and status.<sup>124</sup> The best example of their dysfunctional state can be seen in their women’s organisations. True, all parties recognise increased interest in politics among women, and all parties are keen to find women candidates for parliament.<sup>125</sup> Some journalists accuse the AKP of putting forward women candidates only for ‘window dressing’, whereas in their view the CHP is more effective in terms of fielding women candidates.<sup>126</sup> But when it comes to the hard, grassroots work, the AKP seems to be the only party working seriously. The situation in the Bağcılar district in Istanbul serves as a case in point.<sup>127</sup>

Whereas the AKP has already begun to tirelessly work to win the women’s vote by canvassing from house to house, work within the other parties has not even started. The MHP has dissolved its local women’s branch in Bağcılar, the CHP doesn’t seem to know what their women’s branch is doing, the DSP (*Demokratik Sol Partisi* – Ecevit’s Democratic Left Party) is jealous because house-to-house contacts are ‘actually

the idea of Ms. Rahşan [Ecevit]’, the DYP party premises was not staffed by mid-May (with elections scheduled for July) and the ANAP’s office was closed for weeks too (because ‘the secretary had to go back to his village’). Needless to say, at present, the parties have not managed to formulate any answer to specific women’s concerns relating to Islamisation or other issues.

Instead everybody is busy trying to imagine what form the post-AKP government will take. Analysts who the author met in Turkey drew a picture of a triple coalition consisting of CHP/DSP plus DYP/ANAP and the fascist MHP. The MHP remains one of the big unknowns (the other being the DTP, see below) but during the author’s stay many said that they would consider casting their votes for the first time in their lives in favour of the MHP, mostly blaming the CHP party leader for this decision. Others hinted at the fact that the MHP is trying to give a more serious, less radical impression in order not to squander its chances in a future coalition government and to be more acceptable to foreign governments.<sup>128</sup> On the other hand, the lists of candidates published by the political parties indicate that ideology in Turkey has given way to pragmatism. The AKP will of course continue to attract the religiously-motivated conservatives, plus economic liberals and some (former) leftists, whereas the CHP will attract secularists, republicans and figures from the traditional right plus of course also some economic liberals.<sup>129</sup> Therefore here again we are confronted with the bifurcation of Turkish

<sup>122</sup> Mansur Çelik, ‘Rahşan Ecevit: İki grup etkiyi artırır’, *Milliyet*, 16 May 2007 and ‘SHP de bu birlikteliğin içinde olmalı’, *Vatan*, 20 May 2007; Şenol Ateş, ‘Ucu açık birleşme güvenceli ittifak’, *Sabah*, 7 May 2007; for another useful background analysis of the left-left unification, see Zihni Erdem, ‘Solda birliğe ilk adım: CHP çatında seçim’, *Radikal*, 7 May 2007.

<sup>123</sup> Yurdağül Şimşek, ‘Merkez sağda umut yerini kaosa bıraktı’, *Radikal*, 5 June 2007; Hasan Bülent Kahraman, ‘Merkezdeki zelzele’, *Sabah*, 5 June 2007; ‘DP ve ANAP’ta liste sıkıntısı’, *Milliyet*, 5 June 2007.

<sup>124</sup> See for instance İlter Türkmen, ‘Kriz içinde Kriz’, *Milliyet*, 5 June 2007; and Abdullah Karakuş, ‘Lider sultanından kurtulamadık’, *Milliyet*, 6 June 2007.

<sup>125</sup> ‘Genel merkezlerde kadın ağırlığı var’, *Milliyet*, 10 May 2007.

<sup>126</sup> So says Şükrü Küçükşahin in ‘Vitrinde değil öзде değişim’, *Hürriyet*, 21 May 2007.

<sup>127</sup> The following is based on Demet Bilge Ergün, ‘Kadın mitingde kolları uykuda’, *Radikal*, 21 May 2007; it is highly ironic that the AKP is doing precisely the very thing the CHP was told to do four years ago. Kemal Derviş and Yusuf Işık: ‘Varoşlar cemaatlere bırakılmaz’, *Radikal* 9 April 2004, p. 9.

<sup>128</sup> One of the author’s interlocutors even said the MHP would expel its hitmen from the party and make them join the BBP. This seems logical though there is no corroboration of such a move.

<sup>129</sup> Murat Yetkin, ‘Parti değil, cephe secimi’, *Radikal*, 5 June 2007.

society, with the Kemalist middle class in the CHP's camp, the new Islamic middle class in the

gives the following voter breakdown<sup>130</sup> according to opinion polls conducted in other papers.

**Predicted voter breakdown based on opinion polls**

	AKP	CHP	DP	MHP
<b>TBMM<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>34.28%</b>	<b>19.39%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8.63%</b>
<i>Vatan Gazetesi</i>	29.6%	19.2%	15.3%	10.3%
<i>Yeni Şafak</i>	38.3%	14.7%	7.9%	5.3%
<i>Vatan Gazetesi</i> “which party is best able to solve Turkey’s problems?”	42.7% (Erdoğan: 40.3%)	11.5% (Baykal: 9.3%)		

Note: <sup>1</sup> Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (Turkish Grand National Assembly).

Source: Article by Ertuğul Özkök, *Hürriyet*, 16 May 2007.

AKP’s camp and the new secular, liberal democratic middle class, rooted in economic liberalism, split between the two.

Hence everybody is positioned for the next round of elections on whose outcome one can only speculate. Asked whether new elections might not backfire against the secular parties, a political activist told the author that the latter are well aware of the risks, but are confident that they can win. Quite obviously Turkey’s political elites are gambling – that seems to them to be the only way to send the AKP to the opposition benches. But there seems to be confidence among the parties involved that they really may stand a chance to win enough votes – or to make the AKP lose enough votes – to create a triple coalition of right/right-left/left-extreme right parties. There are already indications that this gamble could pay off. *Hürriyet*’s Ertuğrul Özkök

In other words, the potential of the AKP is still about 40% but, to quote Özkök, ‘because of the fears that have been created about it, the AKP cannot rely on the votes it could otherwise have taken.’ But still the AKP will remain an important party – and one that feels bitterly betrayed by the system.

The nationalist fever that has affected Turkey in the last few weeks certainly helps the MHP and makes the AKP look weak on national security.<sup>131</sup> But all parties will focus on national security, meaning basically the Kurdish issue. Recent terror attacks have reinforced (or vindicated) this view. National security issues, something that in Turkey automatically translates to the Kurdish issue, will therefore dominate campaigning. Before we can analyse the possible consequences of this situation, we therefore have to consider the ‘Kurdish issue’.

<sup>130</sup> Ertuğul Özkök, ‘Şeriat gelirse ne yaparım’, *Hürriyet*, 16 May 2007.

<sup>131</sup> See the MHP’s press declaration: ‘Başbakanın ve AKP’nin Terörle Mücadele iradesi yoktur’, www.mhp.org.tr, 11 April 2007.



## 5.2. The Kurdish issue

As mentioned above, campaigning will be dominated by the national security issue amidst a climate of heightened nationalist feeling intensified by the media, with a clear anti-Kurdish thrust, directed principally against the PKK and against the Iraqi Kurds. General Büyükanıt delivered two speeches, one at the 12 April press conference in Ankara and another one at the security conference in May in Istanbul, where he outlined the new strategy on how to fight against the PKK.<sup>132</sup> He formulated six parameters that are necessary to win the war against the PKK. One parameter is political and military will and decisiveness to conduct the operation. Another is to fight those who cooperate with and who support the PKK, and again another parameter is psychological warfare and cutting foreign support. The ultimate intention is to destroy the hope of the organisation. And finally the general is advocating legal changes in order to facilitate the fight against terrorism. Inside the country two clearly defined targets have been identified: the inside organisation of the PKK, consisting of ‘collaborators’ (*işbirlikçiler*), who prepare the ground and the logistics for the fighters coming from outside, and the militia (*milis*) who are permanently stationed in the region. As the militia operate inside the villages, towns and cities, they are beyond the control of the military. This means that one has to expect an increase in police operations. Another avowed objective – to destroy the hope of the terror organisation – augurs badly for political and cultural organisations that foster Kurdish consciousness. The general called this the most important parameter in the fight against the PKK. This is directed against those organisa-

tions and parties who ‘nurture hope’ for the PKK. It would be too speculative to try to predict what the General Staff intends to do against the said organisations but Büyükanıt made it clear that he is not willing to accept a ‘certain party’s arrogant behaviour’. By stressing the security aspect and the fight against the PKK, the General Staff is pressing the AKP into an awkward position that would make the prime minister look either weak or make it more difficult for the party to benefit from Kurdish votes. This would certainly be the case once the government decides it has to make a move on the terror front and give a free rein to the army, something that most likely will alienate potential Kurdish voters from the AKP.<sup>133</sup> But these voters in any case would prefer the pro-Kurdish ‘Party for a Democratic Society’ (DTP – *Demokratik Toplum Partisi*) or the independent candidates promoted by the DTP.

### The electoral aspect

The DTP shares to a certain extent the fate of the AKP as both are seen as anti-Kemalist (which in the case of the DTP is certainly true because it is an open secret that the party is somehow related to the PKK). However, the anti-democratic 10% barrier is of course designed to prevent a meaningful Kurdish-conscious representation in the Turkish parliament. In order to avoid the debacle of 2002, when thanks to the barrier none of the 53 elected Kurdish candidates could make it into the parliament and their votes were lost, the DTP have pursued a new strategy.<sup>134</sup> At the 28 February 2007 party congress the DTP decided not to run as a party but as independent candidates, and by doing so also to include candidates from smaller parties, intellectuals and

<sup>132</sup> The following is based on two speeches Büyükanıt has delivered, one in Ankara in April and one at the end of May in Istanbul. ‘New dimensions of security and international organisations’, available at [http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/konusma\\_mesaj/2007/konusma\\_sempozyum31052007.htm](http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/konusma_mesaj/2007/konusma_sempozyum31052007.htm). ‘Büyükanıt’ın konuşmasının tam metni’, *Hürriyet*, 12 April 2007.

<sup>133</sup> At least one commentator concludes that the AKP’s mishandling of the Şemdinli Affair which was widely interpreted as cowardice and bowing down from the Army, has already cost it sympathies and votes in the Kurdish region. See Mehmet Altan, ‘AKP’nin Şemdinli’de takındığı korkak tavır, bugün yediği muhtıranın sebebidir’, *Star*, 8 May 2007; ‘Yargıtay Şemdinli davasında hapis cezası kararını bozdu’, *Milliyet*, 16 May 2007.

<sup>134</sup> The following paragraph on DTP tactics closely follows Ergülen Toprak, ‘DTP karar aşamasında’, *Yeni Özgür Politika*, 7 May 2007 and ‘DTP bağımsız adaylarla katılıyor’, *Yeni Özgür Politika*, 10 May 2007; for a detailed analysis of the last elections and their results for the Kurdish districts, see Hikmet Erden, ‘Kürtlere dönük özel yaklaşım: Yüzde 10 barajı’, *Yeni Özgür Politika*, 6 June 2007.

civil society activists. Thus the DTP is confident that it can easily bring more than 30 candidates into the Turkish parliament. As usual, its opponents will try to pre-empt them, once again by blocking the party's most popular candidates, former DEP members Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle, Orhan Doğan and Selim Sadak, and then by using a trick as old as Turkish elections: to support candidates that hail from local elites, like tribal chiefs. This is for example the case with the leader of a 20,000 member-strong tribe from the Silvan region near Diyarbakır who planned to run for the DP, the united ANAP and DYP.<sup>135</sup> According to Emin Sarı from the regionally influential *Yüksekova Haber*<sup>136</sup> this would be the only front on which the DTP could face serious competition. He advised the party to pay more attention to the traditional social structures of the population because a failure to do this has in the past already led to the loss of votes. And the party admits that it is already feeling the pressure posed by the right-wing 'feudal' elites in the Diyarbakır region.<sup>137</sup> The deteriorating security situation in the Southeast may also play a role on election day, if voters are unable to make it to the polls or otherwise feel intimidated.

Another aspect has only marginally been touched on in the press. This is another unknown of the upcoming parliamentary elections. Namely, that Kurdish – or pro-DTP – candidates may get elected in Western Turkey, where a sizeable minority of Turkish Kurds have migrated. To date there are no serious predictions possible and to the author's knowledge the DTP has not commented on this,<sup>138</sup> but it contributes to the party's confidence. But campaigning as an independent candidate for the DTP may become inconvenient to say the least when the media is reporting daily on Turkish casualties and terror attacks threaten the

country, like the one that took place in Ulus, Ankara on 22 May 2007.

### The military aspect

The TSK have conducted enough operations in the last few months to make it safe to conclude that they have decided to implement the General Chief of Staff's parameters in the fight against the PKK. This means conducting a major military-political campaign, including many military operations in Southeast Anatolia and perhaps even a limited incursion into Northern Iraq. The operations began back in the spring and are intended to prevent the PKK from leaving their winter bases and taking up positions inside the country; by doing so, the TSK hopes to block the PKK's expected summer offensive. The said operations unfortunately may, according to the general, yield unintended and undesirable results; i.e. they may involve civilian casualties. According to the pro-PKK press, villagers in the Şırnak region are already feeling the pressure of the Army and want to flee.<sup>139</sup> Recent developments include the deployment of armour to the border and the upgrading of the 'Tactical Border Regiment Commando' in Şenova/Şırnak to brigade level, thus doubling the number of troops there. The centre of gravity is, according to the Turkish press, the Şırnak-Cizre region which is key to blocking infiltration routes. The press also mentions the creation of new special services teams in Şırnak and Hakkari consisting entirely of NCOs and specialists. These teams can remain in the theatre of operations for a long time and it is reported they have already killed 37 terrorists during the last two months.<sup>140</sup> In all likelihood these teams will cooperate or guide regional volunteer forces recruited in the villages and

<sup>135</sup> Ferit Aslan and Muharrem Kontaz, 'Hanımağa Aday', *Milliyet*, 16 May 2007. In this case it is the Şeyhdoda tribe, the chief of which is a '35 year old lady' who 'wears modern clothes in the city centre and in the village she toils the fields with a tractor.'

<sup>136</sup> Emin Sarı, 'Bağımsız Adaylık', *Yüksekova Haber*, 15 May 2007.

<sup>137</sup> See 'DTP: Başarıya kilitlenelim', *Yeni Özgür Politika*, 5 June 2007.

<sup>138</sup> The party's websites have been disabled for months.

<sup>139</sup> 'Asker Baskısı isyan ettirdi', *Yeni Özgür Politika*, 10 May 2007.

<sup>140</sup> '40 tank Irak sınırına gönderildi', *Milliyet*, 5 June 2007; 'Operasyon timi sınırda', *Vatan*, 5 June 2007.

armed by the TSK, the so-called village guards (*köy korucular*). Their number has been recently increased, but numbers only exist for Hakkari alone where there are now about 8,100 as compared to 7,600 before.<sup>141</sup>

Needless to say, at no point did General Büyükanıt or anybody else give an idea of a time-frame or a prioritisation schedule according to which the Turkish Armed Forces would act. But given the circumstances, i.e. the dislocation of so many troops in the region, some major operations may be conducted over the summer and maintained until the first snowfalls. This would be at the end of October. In the author's view, given the extensive media coverage, psychological warfare against the PKK and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq has already started (actually it has never really ceased). If one puts both elements together than one has to conclude that the military plans a double offensive, one against the party and one against the PKK members or anybody connected to the PKK inside the country. The question is whether this will take place before 22 July or later.

### Inside Turkey

Skirmishes between Turkish security forces and small pockets of PKK fighters occurred throughout spring 2007. Judging from the media one got the impression that the PKK acted defensively rather than offensively because until June it did not conduct any classic guerrilla<sup>142</sup> activities such as ambushes. Instead the organisation has switched to bomb attacks involving suicide bombers, an unprecedented tactic for them. Due to limited background reporting and other restrictions, it is impossible

to establish whether the recent attacks like the one in Ankara are desperate acts committed by elements only loosely connected to the organisation or whether the leadership actually ordered them (although the latter scenario seems to be more likely). If they were indeed ordered by the leadership it would be interesting to know by whom – Öcalan himself (who is incarcerated at İmralı island in Istanbul) or one of his deputies? As might be expected, no comment on the bomb attacks against civilian targets is to be found in the media sympathetic to the PKK. The organisation's own media reports only guerrilla-style activities.<sup>143</sup> Judging from information posted on their website, they clashed in May and June mostly on the Iraqi border around Şırnak with Turkish troops and in Tunceli, where they conducted a spectacular attack on an isolated Gendarmerie outpost killing some Turkish soldiers (they claim as many as 19, while the official Turkish figure is 7) and losing three of their own men.<sup>144</sup> They also claim to have shot down one Turkish helicopter in Çukurca and claim another one came under their fire. Apart from Tunceli and the immediate border region neighbouring Iraq they claim to be also active around Lake Van. However the PKK do not have a dominant presence around Diyarbakır, which geographically connects the theatres of operations in Tunceli and Şırnak and the Iraqi border region respectively. This is obviously due to the efficiency of the Turkish counter-insurgency activities and their ability to infiltrate some enemy units. For instance, on 11 March 2007 agents poisoned a group of seven fighters in Kulp in the Diyarbakır region. All in all, as things stood at the beginning of June 2007, the PKK/HPG admitted to having lost 52

<sup>141</sup> Erkan Çapraz, 'Gönüllü Silahlanma', *Yüksekova Haber*, 19 May 2007; the problem of the village guards as seen from a counterterrorism perspective is detailed in Soner Yalçın, *Binbaşı Ersever'in İtirafı* (Istanbul: Kaynak, 1994).

<sup>142</sup> The author uses the term 'guerrilla' strictly in the military sense of the word denoting a form of infantry warfare and not in the popular romanticised interpretation of guerrilla warfare.

<sup>143</sup> It may indeed be the case that the PKK's field organisation, the 'People's Defence Force (HPG – *Hêzên Parastina Gel*)' has no connection with suicide bombers. But then the use of the word 'fedai', which is new in the PKK's vocabulary, may indicate a change, since it has the meaning of 'self sacrifice' which is characteristic of the terminology used by all suicide bombers in the Middle East. Their homepage is available at [www.hpg-online.net](http://www.hpg-online.net). See also a short overview at 'HPG'den fedai eylemi', *Yeni Özgür Politika*, 5 June 2007; for the similarities with attacks by HAMAS against Israeli outposts, see 'Ekmek çipi turağı', *Hürriyet*, 5 June 2007.

<sup>144</sup> On this, compare the Turkish point of view, 'Karakol baskını: Yedi şehit', *Radikal*, 5 June 2007, and the PKK's official statement at [http://www.hpg-online.net/tr/news/news\\_410.html](http://www.hpg-online.net/tr/news/news_410.html).

of their fighters, among them a sizeable number of Kurds from Iran, Iraq and Syria.<sup>145</sup> It is clear from the statements of the PKK/HPG that the attacks they have launched in the Tunceli region are only the beginning;<sup>146</sup> this could mean that they envision the mountainous and traditionally rebellious Tunceli region as their main theatre of operations. Turkish Army deployments however are concentrated more to the south-east, namely alongside the Iraqi border. Rumours of an imminent incursion into Northern Iraq have been circulating for months. Recent troop deployments seem to vindicate the rumours.

### Northern Iraq

But would the Turkish army really risk a full invasion of Iraq?<sup>147</sup> True, everything seems to be in place for such an operation. Public support for Turkish intervention in Iraq has increased since the bombing in Ankara, to the extent that Soli Özel has warned against foolhardy ventures motivated by revenge.<sup>148</sup> Even before, on 12 April, the military had already publicly proclaimed that an incursion into Northern Iraq would be necessary and a similar statement was repeated at the end of May. General Büyükanıt even asked rhetorically whether an incursion would be aimed 'only' at the PKK or also against Barzani himself, whose increasing self-confidence and rising popularity among Turkish Kurds is something the Turkish authorities find

extremely irritating and provocative.<sup>149</sup>

In the unlikely eventuality of a broader incursion, heavy fighting and fierce resistance must be expected, given the fact that the PKK is well entrenched in the Qandil Mountains and its bases are reportedly well equipped with anti-aircraft missiles, underground tunnels and so on.<sup>150</sup> Also, this time the situation on the ground has changed from the time of previous incursions and Iraqi Kurds will definitely not side with the Turkish Army to fight the PKK but will resist the Turks not only in Northern Iraq but worldwide.<sup>151</sup> Besides the US have already cautioned against such an intervention, which would destabilise the only relatively stable part of Iraq and put pressure on the only allies the US has in Iraq.<sup>152</sup> Marching into Northern Iraq now would not be a limited incursion but real war. Accordingly, the Turkish media is quite wary in its statements and asks critical questions about the costs and benefits of such an operation.<sup>153</sup> Such an intervention would not only be extremely costly, it would imperatively have to result in a total, glorious victory. In the event of any other outcome, for instance if Turkish casualties were too high and the operation continued for several months, then the patriotic momentum inside the country might fade away and the political climate change.

So why then has the TSK massed so many troops on the Iraqi and Iranian borders? It seems that there are two aspects to this, a military and a political one. As concerns the military aspect,

<sup>145</sup> See the HPG's casualty list available at [http://www.hpg-online.net/sehit/sehit\\_kunyeleri/2007.html](http://www.hpg-online.net/sehit/sehit_kunyeleri/2007.html).

<sup>146</sup> 'Kocatepe Baskını Bir Uyarıdır', 5 June 2007, Press declaration of the HPG commando available at [http://www.hpg-online.net/tr/news/news\\_408.html](http://www.hpg-online.net/tr/news/news_408.html).

<sup>147</sup> See Barkın Şık, 'Yazılı talimat şart', *Milliyet*, 1 June 2007; Fikret Bila, 'Büyükanıt ortada hedef yok mesajı veriyor', *Milliyet*, 1 June 2007; 'Orada ABD var', *Hürriyet*, 1 June 2007; on Turkey, the Kurds and Northern Iraq in general see Walter Posch and Nathan J. Brown, *Kurdische Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen und die Irakische Verfassung*, (Vienna: LVAK, 2004), pp. 31-65.

<sup>148</sup> Soli Özel, 'Ulus', *Sabah*, 24 May 2007.

<sup>149</sup> Sema Ecer, 'Ali Kaya : Şemdinli'de Barzani'nin sözü geçer', CNN-Türk, 8 April 2007. On relations between Iraqi and Turkish Kurds, see the interview with Esat Canan by Fadime Özkan, 'Kıskaçta siyaset', *Star*, 5 June 2007; see also the interview with Mehmet Uzun in Can Dündar, 'Kuzey Irak'a bölgeden bakınca...', *Milliyet*, 4 June 2007.

<sup>150</sup> 'Operasyona Karşı PKK alarında!', *Milliyet*, 1 June 2007.

<sup>151</sup> Can Dündar, 'Kuzey Irak'a bölgeden bakınca...', *Milliyet*, 4 June 2007.

<sup>152</sup> 'Invading Kurdistan', *Financial Times*, 5 June 2007; Guy Dinmore, 'Attacks against Kurdish Rebels risks strategic defeat, US says', *Financial Times*, 30 April 2007.

<sup>153</sup> Berat Özüpek, 'Irak'a müdahale bizi felakete sürükler', *Star*, 5 June 2007; Erdal Güven, 'Harekât değil Savaş tartışılıyor', *Radikal*, 4 June 2007.

blocking infiltration routes, is of course the main reason. But one also has to take into consideration the fact that during the last year and until recently the Iranians were fighting the Iranian branch of the PKK (PJAK – *Partiya Jiyani Azadi Kurdistan*)<sup>154</sup> in the Urmiya region and the ongoing Turkish operation could be the logical continuation of the Iranian operation against the PJAK.

On the political front, Büyükanıt has already achieved something simply by mentioning the possibility of an incursion. He warned Barzani and the US that Turkey is serious and expects cooperation from the international community in the fight against the PKK. Media coverage in Western papers, for instance, has brought Turkey's *bête noire* to international attention.<sup>155</sup> Ankara has obtained an official statement from the EU according to which the European Commission does not want to see the creation of an independent Kurdish state on Iraqi territory. 'And we are of course in a position to take official statements by the representative of the European Commission seriously' said Levent Bilman, spokesman of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, on the occasion of the Commissioner's visit to Turkey in early June 2007.<sup>156</sup> Which means nothing less than that Turkey has got what it wanted from the Europeans, namely an official statement against an independent Kurdish state in Iraq. And Büyükanıt has maintained Turkey's *droit de regard* in Northern Iraq, because nobody challenges what Turkey perceives as its right to intervene. Turkish troops poised for action in Northern Iraq today include several units positioned three to four kilometres into Iraqi territory, with a small facility including an airfield near a place called Bamerni, who have been there since the 1996 Drogheda peace agreement that ended the Kurdish civil war in

Northern Iraq.<sup>157</sup> Thus in the international arena Büyükanıt has reaffirmed Turkey's interests. Meanwhile domestically he has been equally clever, putting the ball skilfully back into Prime Minister Erdoğan's court when he asked him for a written order clarifying the objectives of an incursion into Northern Iraq: was it only to rout the PKK, or was it to target Barzani too?

The alleged security aspect of this row between Büyükanıt and Erdoğan, which makes the Prime Minister look undecided and weak on such a 'vital' issue as the fight against the PKK, has a deeper background. Erdoğan insists on a written request from the General Staff before he gives any orders, something that Büyükanıt says he does not understand (it goes without saying of course that he understands perfectly). But the question of whether the General Chief of Staff has to make a written request for such an order or directive is of course politically important since it touches upon the issue of the relationship between the prime minister and his General Chief of Staff. Hence, neither Erdoğan nor Büyükanıt are willing to yield ground as neither wants to appear as a loser or as having betrayed their principles.

### A new Turkish threat perception?

It goes without saying that the Kurdish factor, which many in the Kemalist elites automatically understand as the PKK issue, has a dimension beyond Eastern Anatolia and Northern Iraq, in the international arena. The PKK remains a burning issue in Turkey and it seems that there is now a new and heightened threat perception in the country. The General Chief of Staff has sketched out this threat perception in two speeches he has delivered. The first is the now

<sup>154</sup> The PJAK website ([www.pjak.com](http://www.pjak.com)) has been recently disabled.

<sup>155</sup> 'ABD, sınır ötesi için Türkiye'ye İsrail'den ders al uyarısı yapıyor', *Milliyet*, 30 April 2007.

<sup>156</sup> 'Sınır Ötesi operasyon tartışmasına Dışişleri'nde ilginç yanıt', *Milliyet*, 6 June 2007.

<sup>157</sup> 'Irak'taki birlikler tetikte', *Milliyet*, 1 June 2007; on the 1996 agreement, see Baskan Oran, (ed.) *Türk Dış Politikası*, vol. II (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), p. 563; see also Martin van Bruinessen, 'Kurdish Challenges', in Walter Posch (ed.), 'Looking Into Iraq', *Chaillot Paper* no. 79 (Paris: EUISS, July 2005), pp. 45-69; and Walter Posch and Nathan J. Brown, *Kurdische Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen und die Irakische Verfassung*, op. cit., p. 42.

famous press conference at the General Staff Headquarters in Ankara on 12 April 2007, the second took place at the military academy in Istanbul on 31 May 2007 at a conference organised by SAREM, the Armed Forces' in-house think tank.

Although we only have access to incomplete transcripts,<sup>158</sup> they include all the relevant points General Büyükanıt has made, which may be summed up under the following headings.

*Allies (EU and NATO member states):*

■ 'The EU Commission and EU Parliament are continually inventing new ethnic minorities and insisting that their rights be protected, and expect Turkey to implement legislation to this effect; Turkey is opposed to this as it will lead to the rise of ethnic nationalism in the country which eventually could lead to the disintegration of Turkey. Allies of Turkey support the PKK both directly and indirectly: the PKK has been supplied with sophisticated explosives from abroad, and a propaganda outlet of the organisation operates from the territory of an ally.

■ A new 'war of darkness' (*karanlık savaşı*) has replaced the Cold War; this war operates via soft power by way of economic machinations, micro-ethnic provocations, redefining the political system of countries, and 'colour revolutions' (e.g. the ones that took place in Ukraine, Georgia etc).

*Terrorism/PKK:*

■ Some allies see only those who exploit religion (i.e. Islam) for terrorist ends as terrorists and tend to forget the threat of ethnic terrorism.

■ Ethnic nationalism sows the seeds of terrorism.

■ Turkey's nationalism is, in the sense of Atatürk, beyond ethnicity.

■ The PKK is a racist, fascist organisation.

■ The PKK is active in three fields: Northern Iraq (logistics), Turkey (i.e. the theatre of operations), Europe (political presence and media activity).

■ Broadest cooperation against terrorism is only possible in the framework of the UN; one should also define those who support and help finance terrorism as terrorists.

*Northern Iraq:*

■ In Northern Iraq the PKK was able to regroup and restart its terror activities as early as in 1992.

■ The issues of the PKK, Northern Iraq and Iraq's national unity are intertwined.

■ The Iraqi constitution is a federal constitution on paper only; in reality it is the constitution of a very loose federation.

■ A group in Northern Iraq that had previously fought the PKK, has now become a natural ally (*NB: this must be the KDP*).

■ An operation against Northern Iraq must be conducted, and a political decision has therefore to be taken. Later the general explains that for any operation outside Turkish territory, which is not under a NATO or UN mandate, a mandate from the parliament is necessary.

What is remarkable in these points is the deep distrust expressed towards Turkey's traditional friends and allies, like the US but also the EU. The critical remarks concerning the colour revolutions make no sense as seen from the background of Turkey's longstanding friendship with the West and the country's democratic tradition and Turkish society's quest for thorough democratisation. In the author's view, it clearly indicates a feeling of strategic loneliness that is widespread among the military as well as a large segment of Turkish society. The reason for this may be the fact that the current military, who were trained in the 1990s, gained experi-

<sup>158</sup> These are transcripts of the opening speech of General Büyükanıt delivered on the occasion of the international symposium 'New dimensions of security and international organisations', available at [http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/konusma\\_mesaj/2007/konusma\\_sempozyum31052007.htm](http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/konusma_mesaj/2007/konusma_sempozyum31052007.htm). See also 'Büyükanıt'ın konuşmasının tam metni', *Hürriyet*, 12 April 2007; Tolga Akner, 'Devletin tepesinde sağlıklar diyalogu', *Radikal*, 1 June 2007; 'PKK için yeni tanım: Faşist terör örgütü', *Milliyet*, 1 June 2007; Sertaç Eş, 'Karanlık savaşı', *Cumhuriyet*, 1 June 2007.

ence in real war situations on the battlefields in Eastern Anatolia and Northern Iraq and not at NATO headquarters in Brussels or elsewhere, as the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* cogently argues.<sup>159</sup> Hence they feel betrayed by NATO. Of course it is too early to conclude that Turkey will drift away from the West, but this constitutes a clear testimony of how deeply the Turkish military is disappointed by the role its allies play in what they see as a vital fight against the PKK.

To sum up, Eastern Anatolia will see more military and police operations against the PKK and elements related to it and at the same time a move will be made, legally, politically or otherwise, against the DTP. So ultimately all of this is nothing new, but just another version of the military's classic repressive approach to the Kurds.

### 5.3 After the elections

The main impact the Kurdish issue is likely to have on the elections may be outlined as follows: (a) the AKP will look weak on security, thus costing it votes in the west of Turkey; (b) at the same time the AKP will appear to side with the army, leading the party to lose votes in the southeast; and (c) a combination of a deterioration of the security situation and politicking will cost the DTP's candidates votes. Thus both the AKP and the DTP would be weakened and the AKP government would be replaced by a formation consisting of – depending on how you calculate – three to five parties. What should follow next? Would such a coalition government be viable at all? One can even imagine a situation where the moderate right will not make it to parliament. The AKP and the independents, i.e. elected DTP deputies, would have around 50% of the parliamentarians opposing the CHP/DSP and the MHP. If this were indeed to turn out to be the case, it would be extremely hard to form a government that commands a stable majority. Provided the moderate right make it into parlia-

ment, one could imagine how disunity and disagreement with potential coalition partners would make the AKP attractive enough for one of the right-wing parties to go for a coalition with them, along the lines of the 'Refahyol' model of the late 1990s.

As for now the situation looks like this: on 22 July 2007 parliamentary elections and a referendum on constitutional reform will take place (although it is not absolutely certain that the referendum will go ahead), and in October 2007 presidential elections will follow, this time perhaps held not by parliamentary but by popular vote. It is unlikely though that the AKP will win both elections. Even if the AKP loses the parliamentary elections, it would certainly run for the presidential elections – with Abdullah Gül as candidate. Thus we would be back at square one. Will there therefore be another intervention or a memorandum issued by the military? In the author's view, the military has already played all its cards against the AKP and has already deployed all means of pressure available to it against the party. There are no more options open to it, definitely not a direct military intervention. But at the same time, given the fact that the AKP will not be able to hold onto its current majority, it will not be able to push a candidate of its own choosing through the parliament which means that the AKP will also have to compromise as concerns the presidential elections. This said, it seems also very unlikely that the proposed constitutional changes voted on in the referendum would pass parliament; at least, they would not pass without being subjected to serious alterations. Therefore it is safe to conclude that Turkey's next president, i.e. the TSK's Commander-in-Chief, will be elected by the parliament too. This seems to be a consensus on this among the Turkish establishment, military, bureaucrats and business people alike.<sup>160</sup>

Whatever happens, Turkey will go through a phase of insecurity in the coming months that will continue until autumn, when the new

<sup>159</sup> 'Warnungen an Ankara vor Militärschlägen im Nordirak', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 6 June 2007.

<sup>160</sup> See 'Rahmi Koç: Köşk'te türbanlı eş olmaz', *Milliyet*, 5 June 2007.

president is elected – if he is indeed elected by that time. By then, the EU will have to make a further decision on Turkey’s membership at the European summit scheduled for December, and the upcoming internal debate on European identity and the borders of Europe will certainly extend to Turkey and generate negative reactions of its own, as it will fuel the nationalist fever more than anything else. Turkey’s military will certainly insist on playing the antiterrorism card towards the EU which it accuses of being soft on the PKK, and relations may turn seriously sour for a while. In the end two scenarios are possible: (a) Turkey overcomes its crisis by autumn/winter 2007, and comes through having only lost some precious time, or

(b) a downward spiral of internal instability, combined with political incompetence on the part of the political parties and negative or wrong signals from Europe leading to a permanent crisis situation, bringing back the bad old days of direct or indirect military rule. Yet in this author’s view at least it seems implausible that the Turkish political system is so dysfunctional as to allow the situation to deteriorate that far. To sum up, after a tense spring (*muhtıra*), one can expect a hot summer (elections), an autumn ushering in change (new government and presidential elections) and some extremely chilly days in Winter (European Summit). By New Year 2008 Turkey should be back to normal.



## Conclusion

Turkey's ongoing crisis is multifaceted but essentially boils down to the fact that the TSK does not want to allow the AKP to elect their Commander-in-Chief, i.e. the Turkish president. The question is now whether the AKP, who will certainly feel betrayed, will be able to contain the anger of its frustrated electorate or not.<sup>161</sup> And also whether a functioning government can be formed in a reasonable period of time. Once this happens, Turkey will have to continue on its pro-European course and to recommence implementing reforms. The country has simply no time to lose and needs to push forward with as many reforms as possible, if it wants to prevent the economy from downsliding<sup>162</sup> and democracy becoming dysfunctional. Needless to say, the military certainly wants to preserve as much as possible from the Kemalist *status quo* or if possible to go back to *status quo ante* EU reforms. But the military are sufficiently realistic to know that times have changed. This holds true, even in spite of Büyükanıt's harsh statements. On 12 April he said that the implementation of minority rights would result in the dissolution of Turkey, and on 31 May he articulated the new concept of the 'war of darkness' (*karanlık savaşı*), an element of which the Turkish military has identified as the 'colour revolutions'. However, it is hard to imagine that this heralds the beginning of a strategic reorientation of the country orchestrated by the military. There is simply no direction away from Europe, away from the US and away from democracy and democratisation, i.e. the political and therefore economic normalisation of Turkey. For all its

shortcomings, Turkish society has never stagnated, with the exception perhaps of the aftermath of the *coup d'état* in 1980.

What then are we to make of the crisis? For once, it seems that it should be seen as a temporary setback, rather than a change of direction. This setback should then be seen in a domestic and a European context. The ongoing rebalancing that is taking place in Turkish society and among its elites forms the domestic context. In the end this experience may even be helpful in the sense that it not only shows how Turkey's politicians can manoeuvre the country into a crisis but also how they can extricate the country from a crisis. The European context is even easier to understand. 'EU-phoria' always starts to fade when the first reforms start biting and the European dream gives way to stark reality. Turkey is no exception to this rule, although the dimensions are different, given the country's geographic position and size.

In any case, the real, global parameters are still the same: Turkey has no alternative other than to go down the road of democratisation if it wants to deliver economically, socially and politically. And it has already decided to adopt this course by submitting its EU membership application. Unless the generals unilaterally call a halt to the negotiations, something it is difficult to imagine happening, the negotiations will continue.

What then is the role for Europe in all this? In the author's opinion nothing more than what was said by Olli Rehn on 2 May 2007<sup>163</sup> and on other occasions: to continue 'business as usual'

<sup>161</sup> Mehmet Tezkan, 'En büyük tehlike, AKP'nin intikam duygusuna kapılması', *Vatan*, 21 May 2007.

<sup>162</sup> At least for the moment there are no economic consequences of the crisis. See 'Turkish court ruling soothes a bruised lira', *International Herald Tribune*, 2 May 2007.

<sup>163</sup> 'Statement by Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn on the political situation in Turkey', 2 May 2007 available at [http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/rehn/press\\_corner/statements/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/rehn/press_corner/statements/index_en.htm).

with Turkey, meaning to remain committed to Turkey's membership prospects. Too many statements from outside Turkey may potentially do more harm than good as long as the situation is emotionally so loaded. It might be thought that a new confirmation of EU commitment to welcome Turkey into its ranks as a full member could be helpful. But whether such a positive confirmation by the EU is possible

given the current political climate within Europe, and whether the Turks really need such a re-confirmation, is not clear at all, and it might in fact be counter-productive. The best thing the Europeans can do is to remain firmly on course, neither panicking nor downplaying the situation in Turkey but accepting the current crisis for what it is: just another bump on Turkey's road to Europe.

# Annex

## Abbreviations

ADD	Society for Kemalist Thought ( <i>Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği</i> )
ADL	Anti-Defamation League
AKP	Justice and Development Party ( <i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> )
ANAP	Motherland Party ( <i>Anavatan Partisi</i> )
BBP	Great Unity Party ( <i>Büyük Birlik Partisi</i> )
CHP	Republican People's Party ( <i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i> )
ÇYDD	Society for the Support of Modern Life ( <i>Çağdaş Yaşam Destekleme Derneği</i> )
DP	Democrat Party ( <i>Demokrat Partisi</i> )
DSP	Democratic Left Party ( <i>Demokratik Sol Parti</i> )
DTP	Party for a Democratic Society ( <i>Demokratik Toplum Partisi</i> )
DYP	True Path Party ( <i>Doğru Yol Partisi</i> )
HADEP	People's Democracy Party ( <i>Halkın Demokrasi Partisi</i> )
HPG	People's Defence Force ( <i>Hêzên Parastina Gel</i> )
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party ( <i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i> )
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PJAK	Party for Freedom and Life in Kurdistan ( <i>Partiya Jiyani Azadi Kurdistan</i> )
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party ( <i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan</i> )
TESEV	Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation ( <i>Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı</i> )
TESUD	Society of Retired Officers ( <i>Türkiye Emekli Subaylar Derneği</i> )
TİP	Turkish Workers' Party ( <i>Türkiye İşçi Partisi</i> )
TSK	Turkish Armed Forces ( <i>Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri</i> )
UN	United Nations





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