

**Erdogan wins for the third time, Syrian opposition meets in  
Turkey, and the generals resign**



**Turkey through French Eyes**

**Second Quarter 2011 of the French debate on Turkey**

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## May

### 1 May 2011 – Turkey on the march on Africa

In the monthly *Le Monde diplomatique*, a series of three articles by Alain Vicky and Wendy Kristianasen discuss the approach taken by Turkish companies in Africa. In the first piece, “Turkey marches on Africa,”<sup>1</sup> Vicky depicts the contribution made by Tukson, the Turkish confederation of businessmen and industrialists, to Turkey’s growing economic presence in Africa. In 2005 the Turkish government marked “The Year of Africa” with visits by PM Erdogan to South Africa and Ethiopia. Two years later Turkey hosted a Conference of Least Developed Countries. A cooperation meeting between Turkey and African countries took place in 2008. Soon thereafter, a centre for applied research on Africa was launched at Ankara University.

According to Vicky, this form of activism combines the “entrepreneurial foreign policy carried out by the government” with “the activism of the new private sector.” Turkey currently has some twenty-five embassies in Africa, “as many as India”, notes Vicky, and holds observer status in the African Union. Turkey is also participating in five peacekeeping missions in Africa. Its battleships have been patrolling the coast of Somalia as part of the international force to combat piracy. Turkish Airlines now flies to 14 destinations in 12 African countries. The volume of trade between Turkey and Sub-Saharan Africa has tripled since 2003, reaching 10.2 billion USD in 2009. Turkish entrepreneurs interviewed in the article explain that their products and services are about 20 to 30 per cent cheaper than their European competitors’. “African farmers recognise our products at first glance,” proudly explains Metin Demir, the General Director of Pancar Motors, a firm producing diesel tractors and engines. “Our engines can function for years on if properly taken care of.”

The article notes that “Ankara demonstrates the same precepts as Beijing” in its approach to Africa. Turkey “does not meddle in the domestic policies of its partners. However, this does not prevent a certain frankness.” For instance, when Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir travelled to Turkey in 2008 he was allegedly “berated severely by the Turkish Prime minister on Darfur.” Ankara “never used the term “genocide,” however. Today over 80 Turkish companies are active in Sudan.

According to Vicky, many African countries also give credit to Turkey for its support for the Palestinian cause and for opposing sanctions against Iran at the UN Security Council in 2010. This last point leads Vicky to discuss whether this “neo-Ottomanism” also has an Islamic dimension. The organisation of a summit of African Muslim theologians in 2010 by the Turkish religious affairs authority, the invitation granted to some 300 Africans to come and study Islam in Turkey, as well as the active role played in Africa by the IHH, an Islamist charity, and the Fethullah Gulen movement, are many elements suggesting a religious element in Turkey’s agenda for Africa. However, according to Vicky, “it would be a mistake to exaggerate the religious dimension of this expansion.

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<sup>1</sup> Alain Vicky, “La Turquie à l’assaut de l’Afrique”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, May 2011, p. 10-11. See: <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2011/05/VICKY/20450>.

TIKA, the Turkish Agency for international cooperation, he points out, is also active in many African countries where Muslims are a minority (Ethiopia, Rwanda, Madagascar).” With much of North Africa in turmoil as a result of the Arab spring, Turkey, the article concludes, “could use the new circumstances to accelerate its expansion south of the Sahara.”

In a separate piece, entitled “A Past cast aside,”<sup>2</sup> Alain Vicky presents the often-neglected history of relations between the Ottoman Empire and sub-Saharan Africa, starting with a 1575 mutual defence pact signed between Sultan Murat III and the Kanem-Bornu Empire, which covered what is now the territory of Chad and Nigeria. In addition to this strategic alliance, the Ottomans’ presence in sub-Saharan Africa also centred around the slave trade: from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Istanbul’s ports received dozens of thousands of slaves from southern Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda. Some of their descendants can be found around Izmir. Vicky explains that this small “Afro-Turk” community has recently been “rediscovered” by media close to the AKP. It is through this small community that Turkey looks back to its common past with Africa. Finally, Vicky notes that Turks’ interest in Africa also comes from the increasing presence of African players (“Jay-Jay” Okocha, Stephen Appiah, and Joseph Yobo, to name a few), in the Turkish football league and renewed interest in the music of the late Esmeray, the most famous of the “Afro-Turk” singers.

A third piece, written by Wendy Kristianasen and entitled “Entrepreneurial Activism,”<sup>3</sup> describes the activities of Turkish businessmen in Africa. The article opens with a quote from Rizanur Meral, founder and president of Tukson, the Turkish confederation of businessmen and industrialists. “When the international financial crisis broke out, Africa was like a lifeline for Turkey,” says Meral. “Now it’s the turn of Latin America, South Asia and South-East Asia to help Turkey pass through the turbulence provoked by the revolts linked to the Arab spring.”

Tukson, created in 2005, currently boasts over 33,000 member companies, bringing together Turkish entrepreneurs and potential customers from abroad, thereby encouraging exports. The article notes that some 90 per cent of Tukson’s activities represent exports in construction material, furniture, machine tools, or spare parts, and other products. The key to Tukson’s success, according to Rizanur Meral, lies in two factors: the group’s ability to bring together producers and investors and the fact that “we do not meddle in politics.” According to the article, this is a rather singular phenomenon – similar groups like Akson or Tusiad have had close links, respectively, to Refah and the AKP. The article notes that Tukson does not balk at calling upon Fetullah Gulen, however. “The Gulen network provides us with markets and contacts with high officials from countries where Turkey has no official interlocutors,” says Meral. “Out of 53 African countries, Turkey only has 25 embassies.” In Gabon, where there is no Turkish embassy, four members of the Gulen network employed at a local school have served as intermediaries.

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<sup>2</sup> Alain Vicky, “Un Passé occulté”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, May 2011. See: <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2011/05/VICKY/20452>.

<sup>3</sup> “Activisme patronal”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, Mai 2011, p. 10. See: <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2011/05/KRISTIANASEN/20451>

Meral denies that the Gulen network lacks transparency. “It is perfectly transparent and represents a solid stepping stone for Turkey.”

## 2 May 2011 – Images of Armenian memories

In Istanbul, an exhibition by French-Armenian photographer Antoine Agoudjian features photographs from different regions of Turkey where the 1915 Armenian genocide took place.<sup>4</sup> Himself the grandson of survivors, Agoudjian has travelled across eastern Turkey over the past 15 years, searching for artefacts and memories of the genocide. Speaking to *Le Monde*, he explains, “What makes the genocide still present is its denial, and the truth of the photographs helps make consciences speak.” The last picture of the exhibit is from the funeral of Hrant Dink. (Agoudjian was close to Dink and several of his pictures have been published in *Agos*, the newspaper Dink founded.) The author of the article, Guillaume Perrier, situates the exhibit against the backdrop of a more open debate in Turkey about the events of 1915. Perrier also highlights the contribution made by civil society. For Agoudjian, exhibiting his works in Turkey was not easy. “Many thought the idea was crazy, even reckless,” he says. “But today, I realise that this story is not only an Armenian issue. It is important to all those who want the truth.” The exhibit, called “Burning Eyes,” will be shown in Paris in September and October 2011.

In the 10 May edition of *La Croix*, special correspondent Agnes Rotivel publishes another article on the exhibit.<sup>5</sup> To her, the opening “demonstrates the extent to which perceptions of the two peoples have changed” since the time when the mere mention of the Armenian genocide was a punishable crime. “These times are bygone.” Rotivel explains that the exhibit was the brainchild of two men: Agoudjian, the artist, and Osman Kavala, the owner of the gallery. “Tall, discreet, almost shy, [Kavala’s] deep blue eyes betray a complex and painful family history. Nicknamed ‘the red billionaire’, [known as a] left-wing militant, his family is originally from Kavala, a small village on the Aegean Sea, near Thessaloniki. They were deported during the population exchange between Greece and Turkey.” As Kavala puts it, “This is not comparable to the history of the Armenians, but it helped me understand them.” According to Rotivel, Kavala is well known in Turkey for his involvement in many projects. He has helped set up cultural centres in Anatolia, including Diyarbakir, and organised an exhibition on human rights violations in Turkey. “Art can help explain what happened,” says Rotivel. “But it will take some time to find a common solution.” He is keen to encourage the Armenian diaspora to visit Turkey: “their presence would help Turks understand how they feel.” Kavala adds, “The 1915 genocide is a human tragedy, and the Turks must hear that.”

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<sup>4</sup> “A Istanbul, la mémoire en images du génocide arménien”, *Le Monde*, 2 May 2011. See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1155725](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1155725).

<sup>5</sup> “La mémoire des Arméniens exposée à Istanbul”, *La Croix*, 10 May 2011. See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/La-memoire-des-Armeniens-exposee-a-Istanbul- EG -2011-05-09-613989>

### 3 May 2011 – Turkey demands visa liberalisation

During a state visit to Austria, President Gul argues in favour of visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens travelling to EU countries, reports *Les Echos* in a short article.<sup>6</sup> Drawing a parallel with the roadmap for visa liberalisation granted to Ukraine last November, Gul complained that no such plan had been granted to Turkey. No other media picked up the story.

### 4 May 2011 – French government opposes tougher sanctions on Armenian genocide denial

Francois Baroin, the government spokesperson, declares that the French government will not support a draft law – tabled in the Senate by the Socialist Party – that would criminalize denial of the Armenian genocide.<sup>7</sup> “The current legal framework is sufficient to deal with issues of revisionism in general, and with the Armenian genocide in particular. France publicly recognised the Armenian genocide with the law of 29 January 2001,” argued Baroin. During the debate in the Senate, the French Justice minister, Michel Mercier, explained that he would send a note to all general prosecutors in the country “to organise the repression of crimes suffered by members of the Armenian community because of their origin, in particular because this community was the victim of a genocide.”<sup>8</sup> The singer Charles Aznavour, currently Armenia’s ambassador to Switzerland, and the philosopher Bernard Henri-Lévy attended the debate to show support for the draft law. However, the text was eventually rejected by a margin of 196 votes against 74. The UMP party issued a release stating that senators had “refused the intervention of courts in assessing historical events.”<sup>9</sup>

### 9 May 2011 – Reactions to the canal

In *Libération*, Marc Semo analyses reactions to the April 27 announcement made by Prime Minister Erdogan regarding a plan to build a canal circumventing the Bosphorus.<sup>10</sup> “Entrepreneurs close to the ruling AKP [...] are exalted, environmentalists are enraged, and diplomats worry about a possible reopening of the question of the Straits,” writes Semo. He wonders whether construction of the canal will be cost-effective given that in line with the Treaty of Montreux (1936) passage through the Bosphorus is already free of charge. According to the government, the benefits of using the new canal will convince

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<sup>6</sup> “La Turquie réclame une libéralisation de la politique de visas de l'UE”, *Les Echos*, 3 May 2011. See: <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-politique/monde/actu/0201340734333-la-turquie-reclame-une-liberalisation-de-la-politique-de-visas-de-l-ue-146679.php>

<sup>7</sup> “Loi/Génocide arménien: le gouvernement contre”, *Le journal du dimanche*, 4 May 2011. See for a reprint: <http://www.europe1.fr/Politique/Loi-genocide-armenien-le-gouvernement-contre-526151/>

<sup>8</sup> See: “Le Génocide arménien bientôt plus sanctionné”, *Le Journal du dimanche*, 4 May 2011. For a reprint, see: <http://www.europe1.fr/International/Le-genocide-armenien-bientot-plus-sanctionne-526473/>

<sup>9</sup> See: “Pas de sanctions pour négation du génocide arménien”, *Ouest France*, 6 May 2011. For background information, see here: <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/carnets-deurope/article/030511/genocide-armenien-le-projet-de-loi-anti-negationniste-se>

<sup>10</sup> See: “Un canal, symbole de la puissance turque et des ambitions d'Erdogan”, *Libération*, 9 May 2011. See: <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012336204-un-canal-symbole-de-la-puissance-turque-et-des-ambitions-d-erdogan>

ship owners to bypass the Bosphorus. (One of the factors is congestion. Ships currently have to cue for days before crossing the straits.) For Semo, the project is first and foremost a political manoeuvre, intended to delay debate on the Kurdish question or a new constitution. The Turkish opposition qualifies the plan as symptomatic of Erdogan's "megalomania."

### **13 May 2011 – Domestic violence on the rise**

In *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand notes that violence against women in Turkey is on the increase, despite laws intended to further the cause of emancipation.<sup>11</sup> The failure to implement reforms has led to an alarming situation, she explains. The article opens with the story of Filiz Akdogan, a hairdresser from the Asian side of Istanbul, who was assaulted and stabbed with a screwdriver by her ex-husband in her salon. Divorced two years earlier, Akdogan complained to the police after receiving death threats from her former spouse. The police did not act, according to Akdogan, arguing that, "If he has not done anything yet, then he won't." Even after the assault, the authorities arrested the ex-husband only when Turkish media outlets asked why he was still free. Akdogan is quoted as saying: "I'm afraid he is going to be released soon... What's going to happen then?"

A human rights website estimated that in the months of February and March alone, some 54 women had been murdered by their husbands in Turkey. What is more, the number of cases registered by the Ministry of Justice multiplied by a factor 14, from 66 to 953, between 2002 and 2009. (Marchand wonders whether this rise corresponds to an actual rise in crimes or to better reporting.) Women's groups note that in 27 per cent of these crimes the victims had filed for divorce. "Their desire for emancipation increases the risk," comments Esra Bas, a lawyer.

Turkey has passed a number of reforms in the area of women's rights. Foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu recently hosted a meeting encouraging the 47 members of the Council of Europe to sign a convention on the prevention of domestic violence. As Human Rights Watch (HRW) notes, however, the laws have not been properly enforced. Gauri Van Gulik, the author of a HWR study, claims that "police and prosecutors do not take women seriously, they send them back home, and judges are slow to deliver restraining orders, which are rarely enforced. The system of protection is not only dysfunctional but risks exacerbating tensions." Women who suffer abuse "are abandoned to their destiny," says Meric Eyuboglu, a lawyer. Eyuboglu claims that the ruling AKP also bears some responsibility for the rise in violence. "Religious values and rising conservatism ... demand that women and their bodies be controlled," he says. A new law on the protection of the family, according to Marchand, should be in force in the autumn. Marchand notes that the law suffers from a glaring limitation: it will only apply to married women, de facto excluding assistance to women who are divorced, unmarried but living with a partner, or married in a religious (as opposed to civic) ceremony.

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<sup>11</sup> "Turquie : la violence contre les femmes croît avec leur emancipation", *Le Figaro*, 13 May 2011. See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/05/12/01003-20110512ARTFIG00772-turquie-la-violence-contre-les-femmes-augmente.php>

## 14 May 2011 – Fethiye Cetin, a writer of mixed heritage

In *La Croix*, Agnes Rotivel writes a profile of Fethiye Cetin, a lawyer, human rights advocate, and writer.<sup>12</sup> After a few words about Cetin's career, Rotivel describes the story of the writer's grandmother, who was taken away from her Armenian parents during the massacres of 1915 and forcefully adopted by an officer of the Turkish army. Cetin's book, which recounts her grandmother's life, helped break a taboo in Turkish society. The article analyses the book's success – it has already been reprinted eleven times – and the Turkish state's previous efforts to silence debate on the fate of the Armenians.

Cetin spent her three years in prison in the wake of the 1980 coup. She recalls having to whisper when retelling her grandmother's story to her cellmates. It was one of the absurdities of the era. "While we shouted against the dictatorship, why couldn't we speak about [the Armenian issue] openly?" says Cetin. "We were setting the same mental traps for ourselves as our parents and grandparents." It is when she left prison that Cetin decided to investigate further, searching for survivors of the genocide, including her grandmother's brother, who had moved to the US. Her book was eventually published in 2004. Did she receive threats? "None. Since my story is so common in our country, millions of people are concerned. In every family, you have similar stories." Why did the politicians fail to react? "Maybe because my book tells the story of a single, unimportant person that it cannot be contested." Maybe, adds Rotivel, this was also because the authorities wanted to avoid giving Cetin too much publicity. "It was more convenient to say nothing than to touch the taboo, which would have led to a debate on the foundations of Turkish society," she writes. Cetin argues that the government must learn to face the past, however, and embrace the Armenian heritage.

"This should be the duty of Turkish authorities. The day when they will claim to represent everyone in the country, rather than only the Sunni Muslims, then we can redefine the Turkish [society], and live in harmony and with mutual respect. It is the responsibility of the state and its leaders to engage in the work of memory, starting with 1915, and to ask for forgiveness."

The article closes by discussing the wider impact that the book has had on its readers, some of whom have decided to convert to Christianity after discovering their Armenian origins. "They did it to become Armenians, not only Christians," says Cetin. "Personally, I am not practising, so the discovery of my Armenian origins has had no effect on my religious practice."

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<sup>12</sup> "Fethiye Çetin, «métisse» turco-arménienne", *La Croix*, 14 May 2011. See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/Fethiye-Cetin-metisse-turco-armenienne- EP -2011-05-13-615328>

## **16 May 2011 – Protests against online censorship**

A brief unsigned article in *Le Progrès* reports on protests against online censorship in Turkey across some 30 cities.<sup>13</sup> In Istanbul, about 5000 people marched down Istiklal Avenue chanting “Free Turkey, free Internet!”, as well as “Tayyip [Erdogan], get your hands off my Internet.” Turkey already bans access to thousands of websites featuring sexual content, but also to those that trample on national taboos. (For this reason sites insulting Mustafa Kemal Atatürk continue to be banned. Because of videos deemed disrespectful to Atatürk, YouTube was inaccessible in Turkey for three years.) Free speech activists complain about vague laws and the opacity of procedures leading to the censoring of sites.

## **18 May – Celebrating Turkish culture in France**

In *Ouest France*, an unsigned article recounts a Turkish festival held in the French city of Alençon to celebrate children’s day.<sup>14</sup> The festival is held to commemorate – albeit belatedly – a holiday celebrated in Turkey on 23 April to coincide with the anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic on 23 April 1920. “On that day, the Turks entrust their destiny to their children,” explain the organisers. In Alençon, the children, who rehearse all year long in their Turkish courses, perform plays, songs and folk dances and recite poems. A professor dispatched by the Turkish ministry of education is present every year in the département (district) of Orne to conduct these courses, which are taught to primary and middle school students. Some 800 Turkish families live in the district. “We arrived in the 1970s, as France needed labour,” says one of the resident Turks. The article concludes: “The third generation, born in France, cultivates its [Turkish] roots.”<sup>15</sup>

## **20 May 2011 – New wave of violence in the Kurdish region of Turkey**

In *Le Monde*, Guillaume Perrier reports on a new wave of violence in Eastern and South-eastern Turkey just three weeks before the legislative elections.<sup>16</sup> In several cities, demonstrations turned into riots. In Istanbul, and in many other cities, Kurdish shopkeepers closed their stores in protest. In Sirnak, pupils at the Atatürk high school boycotted classes and chanted songs praising the “martyrs” of the PKK. In retaliation, soldiers from the nearby barracks fired live ammunition. No one was hurt, however. The

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<sup>13</sup> “Les Turcs dans la rue pour dénoncer la censure d’internet”, *Le Progrès*, 16 May 2011. See: <http://www.leprogres.fr/france-monde/2011/05/16/les-turcs-dans-la-rue-pour-denoncer-la-censure-d-internet>

<sup>14</sup> “Culture turque et bonne humeur”, *Ouest France*, 18 May 2011. See: [http://www.ouest-france.fr/actu/actuLocale\\_-Culture-turque-et-bonne-humeur\\_-1801030-----61006-aud\\_actu.Htm](http://www.ouest-france.fr/actu/actuLocale_-Culture-turque-et-bonne-humeur_-1801030-----61006-aud_actu.Htm)

<sup>15</sup> On the same theme, in different regions, see: “Dimanche, la communauté turque célèbre sa fête de la jeunesse”, *L’Est républicain*, 14 May 2011; “Les enfants fêtent l’amitié franco-turque”, *L’Est républicain*, 18 May 2011, <http://www.estrepublicain.fr/fr/saint-mihiel-et-environs/info/5107020-Saint-Mihiel-Les-enfants-fetent-l-amitie-franco-turque>; “Un petit air de Turquie”, *Ouest France*, 19 May 2011, p. 23; “La communauté turque est fière de ses enfants”, *Ouest France*, 28 May 2011, p. 28. Notably, these articles only appeared in regional newspapers.

<sup>16</sup> “De nouvelles violences agitent la région kurde de Turquie”, *Le Monde*, 20 May 2011. See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1157564](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1157564)

army has intensified controls and set up roadblocks across Kurdish-majority regions bordering Iraq and Iran.

The death of 12 Kurdish militants crossing from Iraq between 12 and 14 May has increased tensions. A group of some 300 people, including members of the BDP, the Party for Peace and Democracy (legal but politically close to the PKK), blocked a road in order to gather the remains of the slain militants in the mountains. Members of the group were shot at – and later arrested – by members of the military, who seized the corpses. A period of mourning decided by the Kurdish movement was widely respected. The leadership of the BDP accused the government of Prime Minister Erdogan of being responsible for these “provocations”.

Over the past three months, some 2500 people – elected officials, militants and activists – have been arrested on suspicion of supporting the guerrillas. 151 Kurdish elected officials are standing trial on charges of forming the civilian wing of the PKK. Meanwhile, the guerrillas have escalated their campaign. 32 attacks against AKP local offices have been reported over the past weeks; two police officers were killed after Erdogan’s political rally in Kastamonu. Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned PKK leader, has allegedly warned of “a bloody war” following the upcoming legislative elections.

### **23 May 2011 – X-rated videos decimate the nationalists**

In *Le Monde*, Guillaume Perrier reports on a sex scandal hounding the ultranationalist party MHP.<sup>17</sup> Ten party officials have had to resign after videos showing them engaging in intimate relations with women other than their wives were leaked on the Internet. Over the past three weeks, a website called “Farkli Ulkuculuk” (“a different idealism”, a reference to the foundational doctrine of the MHP), has featured such footage, threatening to publish more evidence involving several other officials.

All political parties have denounced the revelations. “I find all this disgusting and very dangerous,” PM Erdogan declared during an electoral meeting in Gebze. However, analysts seem to agree that the scandal is likely to benefit the AKP. Should the MHP fail to reach the necessary 10 per cent threshold, it will not enter parliament, losing its current 71 MPs and placing the AKP in a favourable position to reach a two-thirds majority.

At the end of the article, Perrier retraces the history of the MHP. Founded in 1969, the party embraced a fervent nationalism at the core of its ideology. Its militias and youth organisation, known as the “Grey Wolves”, organised a series of terror attacks and political assassinations in the 1970s. After electing Devlet Bahçeli as the new leader, the party refashioned itself and participated in a coalition government in 1999. It also shifted away from its militantly secular base towards rural and conservative voters.

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<sup>17</sup> “Un scandale de mœurs ébranle le parti d'extrême droite turc”, *Le Monde*, 23 May 2011. See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2011/05/23/un-scandale-de-m-urs-ebanle-le-parti-d-extreme-droite-turc\\_1526356\\_3214.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2011/05/23/un-scandale-de-m-urs-ebanle-le-parti-d-extreme-droite-turc_1526356_3214.html)

In an article that appears in *Ouest France* on 28 May, Istanbul correspondent Burcin Gercek reports on the same scandal.<sup>18</sup> According to Gercek, political observers expect that the very conservative electorate of the MHP will forgive these types of excesses, exacerbating the risk that the party will fall short of the 10 per cent threshold. (Such an outcome would certainly play out in favour of PM Erdogan's AKP, which, if equipped with a two-thirds majority, would be in a position to singlehandedly write and adopt a new constitution.) The MHP has claimed that the recordings were the result of a conspiracy, but the authorities deny having anything to do with them. The article ends by noting that Erdogan has in the past attacked political opponents on the basis of their private lives. (Last year, a similar scandal befell Deniz Baykal, the leader of the opposition CHP, who was forced to resign after the emergence of a video in which he appeared in his underpants in the company of a female Member of Parliament.)

### **27 May 2011 – A Turkish mafia smuggling migrants to Italy**

In *Le Monde*, Rome correspondent Salvatore Aloise reports on a Turkish organisation smuggling undocumented migrants to Italy.<sup>19</sup> Using private sailing boats or yachts to avoid suspicion of the Italian coast guard, the group is reported to smuggle between 30 and 40 migrants at each crossing. Since the spring of 2009, over 1500 would-be migrants have been detained on such boats. The ploy follows in the footsteps of an Albanian-led scheme (using fast inflatable dinghies) that was stopped in 2002. The migrants, most of them of Asian origin, pay between 8,000 and 10,000 Euros for the crossing. The article notes that the alleged leader of the ring is a Turk, Kucuk Muammer. Muammer is already known to the Italian authorities, which have asked the authorities in Ankara for help with the investigation. According to the Italian daily *La Repubblica*, Muammer is so confident about his system that he offers the migrants a second trip for free if they are not successful the first time around.

### **30 May 2011 – Erdogan's campaign and the Kurdish question**

In *Le Monde*, Guillaume Perrier reports on Prime Minister Erdogan's difficult re-election campaign in the Kurdish southeast.<sup>20</sup> In the town of Batman AKP delegates was welcomed with stones and in Sirnak a 32 kg bomb was discovered under a bridge, ready to explode when an AKP convoy crossed. In Hakkari, home to a radical constituency of the PKK, empty streets welcomed the Prime Minister. Less than 500 people – public officials and their families, for the most part – attended Erdogan's political meeting. Local shopkeepers kept their stores shut to protest the visit. Sahin, a resident, gloated, "Today, you can't even buy a piece of bread here!"

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<sup>18</sup> "Turquie: des vidéos X déciment l'ultra-droite", *Ouest France*, 28 May 2001. See: [http://www.ouest-france.fr/actu/actuDet\\_-Turquie.-Des-videos-X-deciment-l-extreme-droite\\_39382-1813087\\_actu.Htm](http://www.ouest-france.fr/actu/actuDet_-Turquie.-Des-videos-X-deciment-l-extreme-droite_39382-1813087_actu.Htm)

<sup>19</sup> "Une mafia turque convoie des migrants dans des bateaux de plaisance vers l'Italie", 27 May 2011. See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1158216](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1158216)

<sup>20</sup> "En Turquie, la campagne électorale de M. Erdogan se heurte à la question kurde", *Le Monde*, 30 May 2011. See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1158431](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1158431)

Perrier notes that no such treatment was awarded to Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of the opposition CHP, who was received with courtesy when he visited the town a few days earlier. Indeed, PM Erdogan is considered personally responsible for the violence that has shaken the region, including the death of [12 PKK militants](#). The funerals of one of the slain militants gathered some 50,000 people in the city of Yuksekova and an “electrified” crowd chanted slogans in favour of armed retaliation.

Tensions are also high because the AKP had substantially increased its tally in the region during the 2007 legislative elections – this, on hopes of a political solution to the Kurdish conflict, which started in 1984. However, the optimism born of this “Kurdish opening” has waned, replaced by mutual recriminations. At the beginning of May, Erdogan claimed that “there is no longer a Kurdish problem,” eliciting feelings of exasperation among a population already under heavy strain. In the face of the government’s intransigence and its “policy of assimilation”, the agenda of the Kurdish BDP has become progressively more radical, notes Perrier. The party has launched a campaign of civil disobedience, calling for a boycott of state authorities and their representatives, including imams sent by Ankara. To that effect, the PKK has begun to mobilise local religious leaders who preach in the Kurdish language.

## June

### 5 June 2011 – Anatolian Tigers and growth in Turkey

In *La Croix*, Agnes Rotivel reports, as part of a series on the forthcoming elections, on the “[Anatolian tigers](#)” and their role in pushing growth in Turkey.<sup>21</sup> “This middle class, of rural origin and of pious and conservative lineage, is very close to the AKP,” writes Rotivel. In particular, these Anatolian entrepreneurs have set up companies active in exports.

Rotivel notes that over the past decade Turkey’s per capita GDP has multiplied by a factor of 3, exports have increased twofold, while annual foreign direct investment has skyrocketed from 700 million to 13 billion Euros. “This evolution has completely modified Turkey’s foreign policy, which is now clearly governed by economic interests, in particular towards Turkey’s neighbours in the Middle East,” Rotivel writes. Turkish businessmen are also active in Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa, where the number of Turkish embassies has increased from 7 to 34 between 2000 and 2010. In addition, because of a “rustic” financial system, where complicated financial instruments do not exist, Turkey was not affected by the current crisis. “Only companies with high levels of foreign debts were affected,” assesses an unnamed expert. Besides its flourishing industry, Turkey has also developed its service sector. Shopping malls, mushrooming across the country, are a sign of widening middle class and a growing consumer culture. Each weekend, notes Rotivel, some 15 million Turks (out of 79 million inhabitants) visit malls. As another expert explains, “in the philosophy of the AKP, urban centres are organised around the mosque, the mall, and the parking lot.” The same expert provides some other interesting statistics. In Turkey, there are “more than 60 million cell phones, over 40 million credit cards, and 30 million Internet users.” At the end of the article, a Turkish economist, Ahmet Insel, puts this into perspective. Internal demand may sustain economic growth, he says, but it has limits. In the long run, the economy will have to deal with “a weak level of savings, and the need to find foreign investors to finance growth.”

### 7 June 2011 – Can the AKP shake the secular Turkish model?

In the same series on the eve of the elections (see previous article), Agnes Rotivel publishes a background piece on the achievements of Erdogan’s AKP.<sup>22</sup> While the AKP has demonstrated that Islam and democracy are compatible, will it transform a key element of Kemalist ideology, secularism? In Turkey, the Diyanet (the Directorate of religious affairs) perpetrates a form of state Islam. Directly linked to the Prime Minister, the Directorate oversees the training and nomination of imams, controls the content of

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<sup>21</sup> “Les « tigres anatoliens » tirent la croissance turque”, *La Croix*, 5 June 2011. See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/Les-tigres-anatoliens-tirent-la-croissance-turque- EG -2011-06-05-621869>

<sup>22</sup> “L’AKP peut-elle ébranler le modèle laïc turc ?”, *La Croix*, 7 June 2011. See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/L-AKP-peut-elle-ébranler-le-modele-laic-turc- EG -2011-06-07-622488>

sermons, decides on religious celebrations, and maintains mosques. It has the seventh largest budget of any government body. So far, the director of Diyanet has refused to play a spiritual role. Instead, he perceives himself “as a high civil servant, guarantor of the dominant religion in the country, but not a religious authority.”

At a time when revolutions are shaking several Arab countries, can Turkey serve as a model system reconciling democracy and Islam? Sinan Ulgen, a fellow at the think tank Carnegie Europe, declares:

“The model functions, even if it has limits, such as freedom of the press and issues linked to human rights. These do not render the model worthless. However, it does not mean that it can be replicated in Arab countries: part of the Turkish model comes from the reforms undertaken by Ataturk, who imposed secularism, and from the desire to integrate with the West and Europe.”

Ahmet Insel, a professor at Galatasaray University, adds: “The example of Turkey shows that one can be a conservative Muslim just as one can be a conservative Christian.” For him, the AKP and the US Republican Party share some similarities: “conservatism, economic liberalism, and populism.” According to Insel, the AKP does not have a “hidden agenda”. To the contrary, Turkish conservatives have had a modernising influence, he says. “The young women who used to stay at home are now attending university, even if they are wearing a headscarf.” In the end, Rotivel writes, the question “is to know whether Islam, as it becomes more visible, can also become more secular.”

## **8 June 2011 – The Gulen brotherhood lurking in the shadows**

In *Le Monde*, Guillaume Perrier writes a background piece on Fethullah Gulen, whose movement has allegedly penetrated the police, the justice system and the AKP, and could influence the forthcoming elections.<sup>23</sup> According to Perrier, while Erdogan constantly occupies the centre of attention during the campaign and appears slated to earn another mandate, “in the shadows, a powerful socio-religious lobby, the Fethullah Gulen community, is using all its power to ensure the AKP’s re-election.” Perrier describes the evolution of the movement and its links to political power in Turkey, particularly its support for Bulent Ecevit, first, and then for the AKP. About 100 MPs – including Ilhan Isbilen in Izmir or Muhammed Cetin in Istanbul – are said to be close to the organisation. According to Perrier, since the early 1990s the Turkish state has used the Gulen networks, these “missionaries of Turkishness”, to help attain its foreign policy objectives. Conversely, it now seems that Turkish foreign policy serves some of Gulen’s goals. The community appears to have inspired Turkish policymakers’ recent interest in Africa. Tukson, the entrepreneur association founded by Gulen, allegedly oversees all foreign visits by President Gul or by Ali Babacan, the minister of the economy. In addition, Foreign Minister Davutoglu is also close to the movement. Over the past ten years, Gulen’s followers have allegedly infiltrated key institutions such as the secret service and

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<sup>23</sup> “Turquie : la confrérie de l’ombre”, *Le Monde*, 8 June 2011, p. 3. See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1159344](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1159344)

the police. Many have become imams, teachers, and public servants. An unnamed Turkish intellectual summarises the situation: “This is Frankenstein. We have created a monster.”

In addition, the arrests in March of Ahmet Sik and Nedim Sener, two journalists who were investigating links between Gulen and the police, “have cast a shadow on the organisation, seen as attempting to silence the authors.” If the organisation supports the AKP, notes Perrier, its relations to Prime Minister Erdogan are not easy. According to commentator Mehmet Altan, “Erdogan loves conflict, he wants power, whereas Gulenists promote dialogue, at least in their discourse, and are more interested in long term effects.” This ambivalence resonates in a column by Huseyin Gulerce, said to be Fethullah Gulen’s right-hand man, which appeared in the daily *Zaman*, “the movement’s media showcase.” In it, Gulerce argues that although he supports the AKP in the forthcoming elections he would prefer if it obtained less than 330 seats, as this would force the party to seek the opposition’s backing for constitutional reforms.

### **8 June 2011 – The AKP in Diyarbakir**

In *La Croix*, Delphine Nerbollier reports on the AKP’s campaign in Kurdish regions. Nerbollier explains that while the AKP enjoys the support of many Kurds it must compete with the pro-Kurdish BDP. The AKP has seen its campaign marred by incidents such as the demonstrations that took place in May in Hakkari after the killing of twelve PKK militants (see 20 May).<sup>24</sup>

### **9 June 2011 – Erdogan, a new Putin?**

In *La Croix*, Agnes Rotivel publishes a background article assessing PM Erdogan’s chances of re-election.<sup>25</sup> According to Rotivel, Turkey’s rapid economic growth should ensure the AKP a new mandate, all the more so since the party has also managed to weaken the military. However, Erdogan’s style of exercising power and his “possible authoritarian drift” worries many observers. Sinan Ulgen, president of the EDAM think tank and a fellow at Carnegie Europe, explains: “Erdogan is falling victim to the second mandate syndrome. He’s flying from success to success, he knows no limit.” Other (unnamed) observers argue that Erdogan is “becoming Putinised.” The parallel is meant to suggest that Erdogan is a “populist” who “elicits fear,” notably among minorities. However, the opposition is weak, explains Rotivel. The Kemalist CHP is still reconstructing itself under a new leader and the ultranationalist MHP “has just been beheaded.” Eventually, the only element of uncertainty is whether or not the AKP will win a two-thirds majority in parliament.

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<sup>24</sup> A Diyarbakir, l’AKP déçoit les Kurdes mais reste incontournable”, *La Croix*, 8 June 2011. See: [http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/A-Diyarbakir-l-AKP-decoit-les-Kurdes-mais-reste-incontournable-\\_NG\\_-2011-06-08-624266](http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/A-Diyarbakir-l-AKP-decoit-les-Kurdes-mais-reste-incontournable-_NG_-2011-06-08-624266)

<sup>25</sup> “Erdogan surfe sur le boom du pays pour gagner les legislatives”, *La Croix*, 9 June 2011. See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/Erdogan-surfe-sur-le-boom-du-pays-pour-gagner-les-legislatives- EG -2011-06-09-626249>

In a separate piece in the same edition, Rotivel reports on local politics in the industrial city of Gaziantep, which has emerged as one of the most dynamic cities in Turkey under the AKP.<sup>26</sup> Rotivel explains that the AKP has been particularly successful at the municipal level, bringing together economic dynamism and improving quality of life. An anonymous Turkish expert is quoted as saying, “The real strength of the AKP is managing municipalities. In their cities, services really work.” While Gaziantep has good commercial links with most European countries, its relations with France are complicated. Iran Nakiboglu, who works for the oil and gas producer Total in Turkey, explains that statements by French President Sarkozy have negatively affected French companies. “The consequences have been severe: boycotts against companies like Carrefour, which finally withdrew from Gaziantep; loss of a satellite contract for Alcatel worth millions of Euros, loss of customers for hotel chains such as Ibis and Novotel,” says Nakiboglu. “Each word uttered by President Sarkozy on Turkey and Europe has a negative impact on our exchanges, even though we’re not even interested in Europe anymore.”

### **10 June 2011 – The AKP on the Campaign Trail**

In *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand reports from the AKP campaign trail.<sup>27</sup> Marchand describes a typical event organised around the banner of the electric bulb, the AKP’s symbol, in Gaziosmanpasha, a neighbourhood in Istanbul. In the festive ambiance, “PM Erdogan is acclaimed as an idol.” This kind of event, nicknamed “the walk of love” by AKP officials, enables the party to demonstrate its attractiveness in the country. Marchand uses it as an opportunity to decipher the message conveyed by the party: “A few religious references, thorough canvassing, and the promise of a bright economic future are the main ingredients of the ideology of these business-suit clad Muslims whose main motto is pragmatism.” Campaigners insist on improvements in the quality of services: garbage collection, water and electricity provision, among others. (Thanks to strong economic growth during the past few years, the country has invested massively in infrastructure.) Door-to-door campaigning, Marchand notes, was originally developed by Refah, the AKP’s predecessor, during the Istanbul municipal elections in 1994. (The party’s candidate for mayor at the time was none other than Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who emerged victorious.) The article concludes: “Not a single vote should be lost.”

### **10 June 2011 – A difficult campaign for the CHP**

In *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand continues her series of election dispatches with a report on the opposition’s beleaguered campaign.<sup>28</sup> Marchand notes that after an unsuccessful attempt to use the bogeyman of “creeping Islamisation” against the AKP during the last elections, the CHP has repositioned itself under the leadership of its new chairman,

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<sup>26</sup> “A Gaziantep, la réussite de la Turquie d’aujourd’hui”, *ESI Chronology*

<sup>27</sup> “En campagne, l’AKP ne laisserien au hazard”, *Le Figaro*, 10 June 2011. See:

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/06/09/01003-20110609ARTFIG00763-en-campagne-l-akp-ne-laisse-rien-au-hasard.php>

<sup>28</sup> “Législatives en Turquie: l’oppositionreste à la peine”, *Le Figaro*, 11 June 2011. See:

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/06/10/01003-20110610ARTFIG00729-legislatives-en-turquie-l-opposition-reste-a-la-peine.php>

Kemal Kilicdaroglu. Kilicdaroglu has sidelined the party's pro-military old guard and refocused on social issues, vowing to combat domestic violence and promising native-language education for the country's Kurdish minority. Opinion polls now credit the CHP with about 30 per cent of the vote.

The second largest opposition party is the nationalist MHP, which is in danger of falling short of the 10 per cent threshold. In order to circumvent the threshold, the pro-Kurdish BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) fields its candidates as independents. It is expected to win around 30 seats. The BDP's presence in Parliament, notes Marchand, will allow it to be a key interlocutor when plans for a new constitution are discussed, particularly since "a solution to the Kurdish conflict will be the major challenge facing the new parliament."

### **11 June 2011 – Turkish Christians' Claims for Recognition**

In *La Croix*, special correspondent Francois-Xavier Maigre files a report from Istanbul on the difficulties facing Turkey's Christians.<sup>29</sup> Maigre, who interviewed the Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I for his report, notes that only about 90,000 Christians are living in Turkey today. The Patriarch tells Maigre that he is hopeful the Halki seminary, dedicated to the training of Orthodox clergy and closed since 1971, might soon reopen. This would be interpreted as a sign of goodwill on the part of Turkish authorities. Describing the difficult situation of the various Christian denominations in the country, an unnamed priest explains, "Our weakness is the absence of legal recognition of our institutions. For the past 40 years, we have been told that this demand is incompatible with the constitution." In the absence of legal recognition, Christian churches can do very little when arbitrary decisions – e.g. land requisition – are made at their expense. In this context, the government in power since 2002 is seen as more open to dialogue than its predecessors, perhaps because the protection of (religious) minorities as "an indicator of democratisation" is cautiously monitored by the European Union. However, because of the strength of ultranationalists, notably in the south, recent gains could be rolled back. An unnamed clergyman concludes, "We constantly live with a Damocles' sword [over our heads]. We are at the mercy of petty civil servants and local government agents."

### **13 June 2011 – Erdogan, "the Great Vizir"**

In *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand profiles Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan in the wake of the AKP's electoral victory.<sup>30</sup> Recapitulating Erdogan's political trajectory and highlighting the pragmatism that allowed him to come to power, Marchand quotes Akif Beki, Erdogan's former spokesman, who calls the PM "the man who has changed Turkey the most since Ataturk." Marchand points out, however, that "over the past few years, the man who introduces himself as a 'Muslim democrat' has lost his appetite for reform."

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<sup>29</sup> "Les Chrétiens de Turquie en mal de reconnaissance", *La Croix*, 12 June 2011. See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/S-informer/Actualite/Les-chretiens-de-Turquie-en-mal-de-reconnaissance- NG -2011-05-06-586514>

<sup>30</sup> "Erdogan, Le grand vizir", *Le Figaro*, 13 June 2011. See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/mon-figaro/2011/06/12/10001-20110612ARTFIG00167-erdoganle-grand-vizir.php>

With negotiations with the EU at a standstill, Marchand writes, “Erdogan is a star on the Arab street ... he has replaced the European dream with that of revived Ottoman glory, capitalising on Turkey’s new international standing.” In Turkey, however, the opposition calls him a “sultan”, accusing him of instigating “a regime of fear.” Rusen Cakir, a specialist on political Islam, argues, “Of course, he dreams of being authoritarian.” Marchand wonders: “Will Erdogan stubbornly stick to his presidential ambitions or will he be remembered as the statesman who gave his country a democratic constitution?”

The same day, *Liberation* carries a profile of Erdogan written by Marc Semo and entitled “Erdogan, the new Turkish Sultan”<sup>31</sup>. The article opens with the story of Erdogan’s visit to a school on children’s day in April 2010. At one point, the Prime Minister ceded his chair to a primary school pupil. “Now, you have power. If you want to hang, you just hang, if you want to cut, you just cut,” he told her, alluding to the old formula of deference to the Sultan’s authority during the Ottoman Empire. Broadcast on television, the scene shocked those who fear Erdogan’s authoritarian tendencies, “revealing (Erdogan’s) relation to power.”

Semo explains that Erdogan will not run again in legislative elections after the present election, but he “no longer hides his desire to become the first directly elected President of the Republic of Turkey.” The question, concludes Semo, is going to be whether he will remain as politically astute and pragmatic as he has been so far, always backing down at the right moment. The article ends on a quote by a jurist, Baskin Oran, who declares, “A presidential republic can be dangerous in a country that only became a democracy less than 50 years ago.”

On 16 June, Frederic Pons publishes a report on Erdogan in the conservative weekly *Valeurs actuelles*, entitled “The new great Turk”.<sup>32</sup> Pons argues that Erdogan’s third electoral victory demonstrates the viability of a “Muslim democracy”. He notes that the absence of a supermajority for the AKP has reassured European observers and secular Turks alike, especially after Erdogan’s aggressive campaign. In the article, the AKP is described as a sort of UFO: “a moderate Islamist party simultaneously liberal on economic issues and very conservative on social ones”. Should he succeed in changing the Constitution, writes Pons, Erdogan, “the resourceful kid from Istanbul,” will have become the “new great Turk,” a reference to Suleiman the Magnificent. Erdogan is described as “unpredictable” and a “human chameleon” who often uses his modest roots to generate popular sympathy.

### **13 June 2011 –A third victory for Erdogan and the AKP**

In *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand reports on the AKP overwhelming victory. The ruling party received close to 50 per cent of the vote, an improvement on the 46.6 per cent it secured four years earlier. (Given the proportional voting system, this year’s score will

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<sup>31</sup> “Erdogan, le nouveau sultan turc”, *Liberation*, 13 June 2011. See: <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012343042-erdogan-le-nouveau-sultan-turc>

<sup>32</sup> “Le nouveau Grand Turc”, *Valeurs Actuelles*, 16 June 2011. See: <http://www.valeursactuelles.com/actualités/monde/nouveau-grand-turc20110616.html>

actually yield fewer parliamentary seats, however.)<sup>33</sup> Beyond a series of difficult questions such as the process of EU integration, the Kurdish minority, relations with Cyprus, or domestic violence, the most important issue now at stake is the drafting of a new constitution. Although a large consensus exists in favour of a new fundamental text, Erdogan's adversaries, citing the PM's "authoritarian proclivities", fear a "Putinisation" of the regime. Should Erdogan carry out his plans to put in place a presidential regime, he could be elected president in 2014 and re-elected in 2019. His ambitions, however, are not universally backed even within the AKP, so it remains to be seen if the PM will eventually succeed in imposing his views.

The same day (13 June), *Le Journal du dimanche* summarises an interview with Ahmet Insel on Europe 1 radio, during which the expert weighed in on the results of the Turkish election.<sup>34</sup> "There are several factors contributing to [Erdogan's] success, explains Insel, and the first one is an exceptional growth ... This is a vote for stability." Insel also noted that Turkey has played an increasingly important role in its neighbourhood and could become a model for Arab countries: "If the example of Turkish democracy is not a model, it is nevertheless a source of inspiration for the countries of the region. Turkey has slightly modified its position. Turkish foreign policy wants to be the policy of a mid-level, regional power."

On the same day, *Le Parisien* publishes a report by Julia Kuntzle, who writes about the disappointment felt by Turkish youth in the wake of the election results.<sup>35</sup> The article opens with comments by young CHP voters in Istanbul and Izmir. "I already knew that Erdogan would win another election but I could not imagine he would set a record," declares Bengu, a 24-year-old history student. Both she and Yasar, a 28-year-old manager, fear for the future of Turkey's secular institutions. "If Erdogan receives enough seats," says the latter, "he will completely align his foreign policy on the United States, and we will lose all of Ataturk's accomplishments, including secularism."

On 14 June, *La Croix's* Delphine Nerbollier reports that "Erdogan has overcome [his] power fatigue."<sup>36</sup> Erdogan has been called "the master of the voting booth" by the Turkish media after winning 34 per cent of votes in 2002, 46 per cent in 2007, and just under 50 per cent in 2011. However, Nerbollier notes that the opposition has also been strengthened. The CHP has 23 additional MPs, and the pro-Kurdish BDP 16, almost doubling its representation to a total of 36. "The election of 36 independent MPs supported by the BDP demonstrates to everyone that we have to resolve the Kurdish

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<sup>33</sup> "Erdogan, vainqueur pour la troisième fois", *Le Figaro*, 13 June 2011. See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/06/12/01003-20110612ARTFIG00211-erdogan-vainqueur-pour-la-troisieme-fois.php>

<sup>34</sup> "Les Turcs ont voté pour la stabilité", *Jdd.fr*, 13 June 2011. See: <http://www.europe1.fr/International/Les-Turcs-ont-vote-pour-la-stabilite-E1-585337/>

<sup>35</sup> "Turqui: les jeunes désemparés par le score d'Erdogan", 13 June 2011. See: <http://www.leparisien.fr/international/turquie-les-jeunes-desempares-par-le-score-d-erdogan-13-06-2011-1490849.php>

<sup>36</sup> "En Turquie, Erdogan échappe à l'usure du pouvoir", *La Croix*, 14 June 2011. See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/En-Turquie-Erdogan-echappe-a-l-usure-du-pouvoir- NP -2011-06-14-639494>

question urgently and politically, via the Parliament,” writes Eyup Can in *Radikal*. A large consensus around the forthcoming constitution will be indispensable, concludes Nerbollier.

Two business dailies also report on the election. In *Les Echos*, Jacques Hubert-Rodier describes “the new Turkish power at a crossroads.”<sup>37</sup> Hubert-Rodier notes that with the AKP having failed to receive a two thirds majority needed to force through constitutional reforms, Erdogan must now choose between his “worrisome authoritarian proclivities” and the need to reform the country. These reforms would need to occur in the area of social policy and minority rights, if only to complement Turkey’s standing on the international scene, notably as a member of the G20 and a key player in the Middle East. Echoing an analysis by Dorothee Schmit of Ifri, Hubert-Rodier notes that in the Arab world Ankara has often been perceived as practicing a form of “business diplomacy”. Its response, or lack thereof, to the repression in Syria has disappointed many observers. According to Henri Barkey, an American expert, while Turkish voters have again placed their trust in Erdogan, they do not want to return to the era of one-party politics.

*La Tribune* tackles the election from a different angle, with Delphine Nerbollier noting that “Erdogan’s victory has reassured Turkey’s business circles.”<sup>38</sup> The President of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, Murat Yalcintas, claims that “economic stability will continue.” Tusiad, the employers’ confederation, saluted Erdogan’s plans for a new constitution but called on the government to “strengthen the European integration process and to lower unemployment.”

In the 23 June edition of *Le Monde*, Guillaume Perrier analyses the state of affairs after the AKP’s electoral victory.<sup>39</sup> He presents Erdogan as a polarising figure: “While every other voter chose continuity and stability, the other half clearly disavowed the political record of Erdogan, who divides as much as he unites.” Perrier mentions that Erdogan’s supporters like to compare him to Mehmet II, the Sultan who conquered Constantinople in 1453, and even to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. According to Perrier, after a first term marked by a reform drive Erdogan showed a more authoritarian face during his second mandate. “If he keeps his promises, his third mandate might allow him to give Turkey a new impulse,” he writes. Today, Erdogan finds himself at the helm of a Turkey that is stronger than ever, “but he no longer has the option to disappoint”.

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<sup>37</sup> “La nouvelle puissance turque à un tournant”, 14 June 2011. See:

<http://www.lesechos.fr/opinions/analyses/0201436529591-la-nouvelle-puissance-turque-a-un-tournant-175952.php>

<sup>38</sup> “La victoire d’Erdogan rassure les milieux d’affaires turcs”, *La Tribune*, 14 June 2011. See:

<http://www.latribune.fr/actualites/economie/international/20110613trib000628871/la-victoire-d-erdogan-rassure-les-milieux-d-affaires-turcs.html>

<sup>39</sup> “Turquie : les nouveaux défis du premier ministre Erdogan”, *Le Monde*, 23 June 2011. See:

[http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1160751](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1160751)

## 15 June – Syrian refugees in Turkey

In *Libération*, Marc Semo reports from the Turkish-Syrian border village of Guvecci, where hundreds of Syrians fleeing the repression are trying to avert a humanitarian crisis.<sup>40</sup> Semo describes the mud, the watchtowers, and the dozens of refugees who do not have so much as a tent to protect themselves from the rainstorms. Every night, small groups of refugees cross into Turkey and join the ranks of their struggling countrymen. Guvecci is directly on the border and many residents have family members on both sides. Bonds of solidarity among neighbours and relatives lead to the distribution of blankets, clothes, and food. So far, despite fears that the refugee community may be infiltrated by the PKK, Ankara has welcomed the Syrians and is now musing the creation of a buffer zone inside Syria. After recording the testimony of many refugees, Semo concludes with that of a 14-year-old high school student who arrived in Turkey a few days ago. “I had stayed with my grandparents, but then the soldiers who were inspecting the houses came with two fighters from the shabiha militia. They hit me with the butt of their rifles, and I lost consciousness.” The boy later woke up next to the dead bodies of his grandparents and decided to leave to the border.

In *La Croix*, Delphine Nerbollier files a similar story from the town of Yayladagi. Ankara continues to receive Syrian refugees in camps set up by the Red Crescent, all while continuing to keep lines open with the authorities in Damascus.<sup>41</sup> Nerbollier followed a visit by Foreign Minister Davutoglu in the town of Yayladagi. Nerbollier notes that journalists are not allowed any contact with the refugees. She writes that “the rigidity of Turkish authorities as far as the press is concerned is surprising.” An unnamed Turkish diplomat is quoted as saying that such measures are being taken in the interests of security. The UNHCR confirms the necessity of protecting the refugees’ anonymity and is on record as saying that the work of the Turkish authorities has been “exemplary”.

## 15 June 2011 – A Christian MP in Turkey

In *La Croix*, Celine Hoyeau profiles Erol Dora, the first Christian member of the Turkish parliament in 15 years.<sup>42</sup> After earning a law degree in Ankara, Dora, a Protestant, spent ten years in Belgium before returning to Istanbul to work as a lawyer. He ran as an independent and received the support of the pro-Kurdish BDP. His election “is very good news for Turkish democracy,” argues Sebastien de Courtois, a French expert on religious minorities in Turkey. In the wake of his election, Dora made a statement in favour of Turkish EU integration.

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<sup>40</sup> “Güveççi, refugesyrien en Turquie”, *Libération*, 15 June 2011. See:

<http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012343357-guvecci-refuge-syrien-en-turquie>

<sup>41</sup> “La Turquie organise l’accueil des réfugiés syriens”, *La Croix*, 16 June 2011.

<sup>42</sup> “Erol Dora, député turc chrétien”, *La Croix*, 15 June 2011. See:

<http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/Erol-Dora-depute-chretien-au-Parlement-turc- NP - 2011-06-14-639962>

## 17 June 2011 – Turkish secularism under threat

In an interview with the Communist daily *l'Humanite*, Turkish columnist Ali Sirmen (*Cumhuriyet*) argues that the domination of the AKP is a threat to the Turkish secular tradition.<sup>43</sup>

“In Turkey, what we have is a docile Islamism, an Islamism that has reconciled the mosque with the great financial groups. It’s a bourgeois Islamism supported by foreign capital but which has nothing to do with Ahmadinejad ... As far as democracy and civil freedoms are concerned, there has been no improvement under the rule the AKP. Quite the contrary: no democratic rule is respected anymore and the freedom of the press is trampled upon.”

Sirmen adds:

“... [In] my view, secular rule is under threat more than ever. [Turkey] will not become Iran nor Egypt, but an Islamised version between the two. ... The Islamists do not need to radically change the Constitution. It’s through everyday practices that they will effect change. This already the case in universities where the headscarf is no longer forbidden.”

## 18 June 2011 –Electoral triumph for Erdogan

In the weekly *Marianne*, Eli Barnavi, a historian and former Israeli Ambassador to France, offers a nuanced assessment of the AKP’s electoral victory.<sup>44</sup> On the one hand, he notes that economic growth, the civilianisation of politics, and the emergence of Turkey as a regional power have made Turkey a model to follow. However, Barnavi points out that “not everything is rosy in Mr. Erdogan’s country.” High unemployment, rising inequality, and minority issues are all a source of concern, as are “the Prime Minister’s authoritarian tendencies,” which worry Turkish democrats and foreign governments alike. Local observers describe Turkey’s “Putinisation”, while Reporters Without Borders’ freedom of the press index ranks Turkey a lowly 138<sup>th</sup> place worldwide. The Economist Intelligence Unit describes the Turkish regime as “hybrid”, somewhere between a “failing democracy and an authoritarian regime.” In this context, Barnavi concludes that the election results, having denied the AKP a supermajority, are “rather good news.”

In *Monde diplomatique*, on 21 June, Wendy Kristianasen describes the AKP’s “ambiguous victory” and concurs with Barnavi “that the AKP’s failure to win a supermajority is a good thing.”<sup>45</sup> She adds that “Turkey is already sufficiently centralised and the country does not need a presidential system.” Kristianasen also comments on the disappointed hopes of the CHP, beset by internal divisions and an agenda that fails to set it apart from the ruling party. “On all the main issues,” she writes, “the CHP seems to

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<sup>43</sup> “La laïcité est en danger”, in *L'Humanité*, 17 June 2011. See: [http://humanite.fr/16\\_06\\_2011-la-laïcité-est-en-danger-474464](http://humanite.fr/16_06_2011-la-laïcité-est-en-danger-474464)

<sup>44</sup> “Le Troisième triomphe électoral de M. Erdogan”, in *Marianne*, 18 June 2011, p. 31

<sup>45</sup> “En Turquie, une victoire ambiguë”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, 21 June 2011. See: <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/carnet/2011-06-21-Turquie>

have aligned itself with the AKP: EU accession, Kurdish problem, return of the generals to their barracks, and constitutional reform.” According to the article, Sencer Ayata, the vice president of the CHP, goes so far as to claim that he shares “the neo-Ottoman perspective usually attributed to the AKP.”

In the Communist daily *L'Humanite*, special correspondent Hassane Zerrouky publishes a critical assessment of the AKP's victory.<sup>46</sup> Disavowing the notion that the AKP owes its success exclusively to its instrumentalisation of religion, Zerrouky recognises that the party's success at the polls is a reflection of Turkey's exceptional growth over the past decade. However, she notes, the impressive economic data masks “the bitter reality of unemployment rates above 10 per cent and visible poverty.” Moreover, Zerrouky argues that the regime's authoritarian proclivities are even more worrisome. He mentions a series of elements: journalists in jail, a judiciary under the control of the AKP, and control of the media by industrial groups close to Erdogan. Zerrouky ends his article with the (undocumented) claims that the sway of the AKP extends to the field of education and that “Darwinian theory is now banned from school books.”<sup>47</sup>

The same claim is echoed in *L'Humanite's* interview, published on the same day, with the Turkish author Mine Kirikkanat.<sup>48</sup> In is, Kirikkanat describes a climate of fear and censorship:

“There is no more secularism. The teaching of Darwinian theory is now forbidden. Under the pretence of protection of morals, 13,600 websites have been shut down, even scientific sites, just because they contained words such as ‘anal’. In fact, they want to build a soft, national Internet under [government] control.”

While a military coup is impossible because the army has been brought to heel, Kirikkanat says, “what we now have is a civilian coup.” Finally, Kirikkanat deplores the creeping “Islamisation” of Turkish society, but concludes: “I think that salvation will come from women who will eventually understand that they are being increasingly excluded.”

## **22 June 2011 – A new French Ambassador in Turkey**

In *Les Echos*, Marie-Sophie Ramsbacher reports that France has appointed a new ambassador to Ankara in the person of Laurent Bili.<sup>49</sup> Bili was formerly French Ambassador to Thailand before becoming chief of cabinet for the French Minister of Defence, Herve Morin, in 2009.

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<sup>46</sup> “La recette de l’AKP Conservatisme et modernité”, *L'Humanité*, 21 June 2011. See: [http://humanite.fr/20\\_06\\_2011-la-recette-de-l-akp-conservatisme-et-modernite-474671](http://humanite.fr/20_06_2011-la-recette-de-l-akp-conservatisme-et-modernite-474671)

<sup>47</sup> It seems that Zerrouky is referring to a scandal that occurred a few months earlier when a teacher in an Ankara school had a conflict about Darwin with one of his pupil's mother and got a warning by his school provoking the teachers union to intervene.

<sup>48</sup> “Unemise au pas et un coup d’État civil”, *L'Humanité*, 21 June 2011. See: [http://www.humanite.fr/20\\_06\\_2011-mine-kirikkanat-«-une-mise-au-pas-et-un-coup-d-état-civil-»-474673](http://www.humanite.fr/20_06_2011-mine-kirikkanat-«-une-mise-au-pas-et-un-coup-d-état-civil-»-474673)

<sup>49</sup> “Laurent Bili est nommé ambassadeur en Turquie”, *Les Echos*, 22 June 2011. See: <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-politique/france/carnet/0201438607270-laurent-bili-184035.php>

### **23 June 2011 – Greek dive and Turkish march**

In the conservative weekly *Le Point*, senior editor Claude Imbert signs an editorial in which he contrasts the current state of “two hereditary enemies,” “splendid Turkey and collapsing Greece.”<sup>50</sup> In contrast to Greece and its economic woes, contemporary Turkey is presented very positively. “With its demographic and military might and its impressive economic growth, Turkey imposes its stability in the region,” Imbert writes. Turkey inspired the Arab Spring because it “developed a democratic Islam espousing a market economy and accepting state secularism (...). Its success can only elicit praise.” Imbert ends on a note of caution. The success of Islamic parties in Turkey and the Middle East inspire fear in local secularists and European observers alike, portending, as some see it, the coming of sharia rule through the ballot box.

### **27 June 2011 – Tensions on the Turkish-Syrian border**

In *L'Humanité*, the Communist daily, special correspondent Hassane Zerrouky describes the increasing tension between Ankara and Damascus after Syrian soldiers were deployed at the Turkish border to prevent the crossing of refugees.<sup>51</sup> According to Zerrouky, the situation preoccupies Ankara and risks “poisoning relations between the two countries.” Recent statements by Syrian President al-Assad have failed to convince Turkish leaders. Turkish President Abdullah Gul is quoted as saying that Assad “must say loud and clear, ‘We are switching to a pluralist system, we will organise democratic elections in conformity with international norms.’” According to Zerrouky, the AKP had helped bring Syria out of international isolation in the 2000s, an element Ankara can use in order to pressure Damascus to “radically change its position towards the opposition.”

On 28 June, *Figaro's* Laure Marchand reports that Ankara is losing patience with Damascus.<sup>52</sup> Marchand explains that the situation in Syria risks rendering moot the Turkish government's vaunted zero-problem diplomacy, a cornerstone of which was Turkey's relationship with Damascus. Neither Foreign Minister Davutoglu's nuanced and measured comments nor the more brutal denunciations of Syrian “atrocities” seem to have yielded any significant result. Meanwhile, Ankara has cultivated ties with the Syrian opposition. Soli Ozel, a political science professor, explains: “Some members of the AKP are entertaining very close and friendly relations with Syrian members of the Muslim Brotherhood.” Damascus has criticised the position adopted by Ankara. Syria's ambassador to Turkey wrote an op-ed in the Turkish daily *Hurriyet Daily News* last week in which he accused Turkey of letting “armed members of the Muslim Brotherhood or other terrorist organisations enter its territory.” Turkey officially rejected these allegations.

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<sup>50</sup> “Marche turque et plongeongrec”, *Le Point*, 23 June 2011. See: [http://www.lepoint.fr/editos-du-point/claude-imberty/marche-turque-et-plongeongrec-23-06-2011-1344909\\_68.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/editos-du-point/claude-imberty/marche-turque-et-plongeongrec-23-06-2011-1344909_68.php)

<sup>51</sup> “La Turquie accentue ses pressions sur la Syrie”, *L'Humanité*, 27 June 2011. See: [http://humanite.fr/26\\_06\\_2011-la-turquie-accentue-ses-pressions-sur-la-syrie-475135](http://humanite.fr/26_06_2011-la-turquie-accentue-ses-pressions-sur-la-syrie-475135)

<sup>52</sup> “Ankara à bout de patience face au régime syrien”, *Le Figaro*, 28 June 2011. See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/06/27/01003-20110627ARTFIG00660-ankara-a-bout-de-patience-face-au-regime-syrien.php>

## **28 June 2011 – Turkey with or without the EU**

A new quarterly magazine, *Nouvelle Revue de Géopolitique*, dedicates its first issue to contemporary Turkey.<sup>53</sup> The dossier presents Turkey as “a model of democracy in the midst of the Arab Spring whirlwind.” According to this view, Turkey has managed to find a balance between “secular institutions inherited from Kemalism; a government that sprang from the Islamist camp; and an army now reduced to the role of an observer.” Hence it is Turkey’s vocation to play a major role around the Mediterranean. Representatives of the Tunisian and the Egyptian movements were received in Ankara, and the Turkish head of state was among the first leaders to travel to Cairo after the fall of Hosni Mubarak. According to the magazine, the key to Turkey’s EU integration might well “reside in its capacity to serve as a model for emerging Arab democracies and as a bridge between industrial nations of the North and emerging nations of the South.” In an interview, the columnist Alexandre Adler claims that “Turkey is a laboratory for the Muslim world.”

## **28 June 2011 – Turkish MPs detained**

In *Le Monde*, Istanbul correspondent Guillaume Perrier reports that several MPs elected in the 12 June elections are still held in custody, which might disrupt the inaugural session of Parliament on 28 June.<sup>54</sup> 6 out of 36 independents supported by the BDP are currently in prison; so are two MPs from the CHP and one from the MHP. All are accused of plotting against the government. The BDP is calling for a boycott of the inaugural session, but the CHP and the MHP have announced that their respective members would be present. In addition, the Higher Electoral Council cancelled the election of one of the BDP-associated MPs, Hatip Dicle. Mr. Dicle’s seat was then awarded to Oya Eronat, a member of the AKP and mother of a student killed in 2008 in a PKK attack in Diyarbakir. Perrier comments that “so far, the party of Prime Minister Erdogan has hidden behind an allegedly ‘independent’ judiciary, refusing to condemn the abuse of power by the judges concerned.” However, Perrier suggests that the AKP might be following a particular agenda: “It is only four seats short of the qualified majority of 330 seats that would allow it to reform the constitution without having to consult the opposition.”

## **28 June 2011 – Air France seeks a commercial partner in Turkey**

In *La Tribune*, the business daily, reporter Fabrice Gliszczinski reports that Air France is seeking a commercial partnership with the low-cost Turkish airline Pegasus in order to counter the breath-taking growth of Turkish Airlines, now the fourth-largest airline in Europe.<sup>55</sup> Pegasus’ fleet will reach 40 aircraft by the end of 2011, up from just 30 in June.

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<sup>53</sup> “La Turquie avec ou sans l’Europe”, *Nouvelle Revue de Géopolitique*, 28 June 2011.

<sup>54</sup> “En Turquie, le maintien en détention de plusieurs députés indigne l’opposition”, *Le Monde*, 28 June 2011. See: <http://istanbul.blog.lemonde.fr/2011/06/27/en-turquie-le-maintien-en-detention-de-plusieurs-deputes-indigne-l-opposition/>

<sup>55</sup> “Air France cherche un allié en Turquie pour contrer Turkish Airlines”, *La Tribune*, 28 June 2011. See: <http://www.latribune.fr/journal/edition-du-2806/industrie-services/1177618/air-france-cherche-un-allie-en-turquie-pour-contrer-turkish-airlines.html>

Air France is also said to be interested in striking an alliance with the German airline Air Berlin.

## July

### 4 July 2011 – Ankara defending the Ilisu dam despite criticism

In *La Tribune*, Delphine Nerbollier reports on the controversy surrounding the dam being built in Ilisu on the Tigris River.<sup>56</sup> The dam, which should be completed in 2013, will become the second largest in Turkey, with a capacity of 3.8 billion kilowatt-hours per year. However, numerous polemics have appeared. In May, the UN committee for economic, social and cultural rights accused Ankara of not properly applying international norms regarding the expropriation and resettlement of the 78,000 inhabitants affected by the dam's construction. In addition, the committee raised questions about the flooding of some 300 archaeological sites, including the city of Hasankeyf. In addition, the Iraqi government is concerned that the building of the dam might exacerbate the country's water shortage. Bagdad threatens not to ratify the creation of a strategic cooperation council with Turkey unless the deal includes a paragraph on the sharing of the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates. For the moment, Ankara claims it is ready to hear the claims of its Iraqi and Syrian neighbours but will not renounce its policy of dam construction, judged crucial for its energy independence.

### 5 July 2011 – Turkey finally abandons Gaddafi

In *Le Figaro*, reporter and analyst Georges Malbrunnot reports that Ankara has decided to recognise the National Transition Council (NTC) in Libya as the "legitimate representative of the people," in a move to re-establish its influence in the country.<sup>57</sup> The move was announced by Foreign Minister Davutoglu during a visit to Benghazi. "Libya and Turkey have a common past and a common future", he declared. Davutoglu was accompanied by a delegation of Turkish businessmen. An official from the AKP explains that the change in tone – Turkey's diplomacy had struggled to find its voice since the beginning of the crisis – has as much to do with economic as political factors.

"Turkey was afraid of losing its important standing contracts, worth over 20 billion dollars. If [Ankara] had continued to support a regime with no future, we feared finding ourselves on the losing side when Gaddafi is replaced."

Leaders of the NTC assured Davutoglu that Turkey's contracts in Libya would be honoured in a post-Gaddafi era.

Turkey had come under pressure from countries of the Gulf, in particular Qatar. The Emir of Qatar, Cheikh al-Thani, allegedly warned Erdogan that he might well "find himself all alone supporting Gaddafi" and that "in the long term, his position was unsustainable." Malbrunnot adds that Erdogan might also have been angered by the fact that Gaddafi

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<sup>56</sup> "Ankara défend le barrage d'Ilisu envers et contre tout", *La Tribune*, 4 July 2011. See: <http://www.latribune.fr/journal/edition-du-0407/marches-emergents/1179639/ankara-defend-le-barrage-d-ilisu-envers-et-contre-tout.html>

<sup>57</sup> "La Turquie se résout à lâcher Kadhafi", *Le Figaro*, 5 July 2011. See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/07/04/01003-20110704ARTFIG00621-la-turquie-se-resout-a-lacher-kadhafi.php>

refused two roadmaps drafted by the Turkish government. The Turkish embassy in Tripoli was closed on Saturday, and Turkey has announced that it will enforce UN sanctions against Libya.

In *Le Monde*, an article entitled “Service international” explains that by recognising the NTC Turkey “hopes to position itself as a key political actor in the possible resolution of the crisis.”<sup>58</sup> The article retraces the evolution of Ankara’s position, from its refusal to back the UN resolution on Libya, Erdogan’s 22 March declaration that his country would “never point a rifle at the Libyan people,” and his “personal guarantee” that Gaddafi could be “sent wherever he chooses after he leaves power.” Recognition of the NTC will be accompanied by significant financial support for the rebels, the article explains. A fund of 100 million USD was set up in June and Davutoglu announced an additional package of 200 million USD, adding: “The demands of the people for reforms must be heard, Gaddafi should go and Libya should not be divided.”

### **18 July 2011 – Syrian opposition taking shape in Turkey**

In *Libération*, Christophe Ayad describes the creation of a Syrian National Security Council in Istanbul.<sup>59</sup> The meeting saw the creation of institutional and representative structures for movements opposing the regime of Bashar Al-Assad.

### **25 July 2011 – A Turkish-Armenia trade agreements**

In *Les Echos*, a brief unsigned article notes that despite persistent roadblocks in the process of normalisation between Turkey and Armenia, some 30 businessmen and entrepreneurs from the two countries convened in Erevan on Friday to sign agreements that will facilitate trade when a political agreement is found to reopen the common border.<sup>60</sup> Arsen Ghazarian, the Chairman of the Union of Armenian entrepreneurs and industrialists, is quoted as saying that the agreements “offer a platform for the development of large scale economic cooperation” between the two countries. At the moment, according to the Armenian-Turkish Chamber of commerce, bilateral trade, despite the lack of a direct trade route, represents over 250 million USD.

### **26 July 2011 – Sarkozy’s Mediterranean fiasco**

In *Libération*, an op-ed piece by Jean-Francois Bayart, a political scientist from the CERI (Centre for International Studies and Research) denounces the “improvisation” that, according to the author, characterises President Sarkozy’s policies towards the

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<sup>58</sup>“La Turquie reconnaît à son tour le Conseil national de transition etrompt avec Tripoli”, *Le Monde*, 5 July 2011, p. 6. See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1161708](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1161708)

<sup>59</sup>“L’opposition syrienne prend forme en Turquie”, *Libération*, 18 July 2011, p. 8. See: <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012349491-l-opposition-syrienne-prend-forme-en-turquie>

<sup>60</sup>“Commerce : accord turco-arménien”, *Les Echos*, 25 July 2011. See: <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-politique/monde/actu/0201526070090-commerce-accord-turco-armenien-197687.php>

Mediterranean.<sup>61</sup> According to Bayart, Sarkozy's policies rest on one particular cornerstone: his opposition to Turkey's EU integration, on grounds that Turkey falls outside the "natural borders of the Old Continent." This, Bayart argues, prevents Sarkozy from engaging in an honest and potentially fruitful political debate. "As if the history of European unification had not in fact consisted in transcending boundaries ... [and] as if the EU had not already decided on this issue by opening accession negotiations with Turkey, negotiations to which France has committed itself," writes Bayart. Such a posture "condemns Sarkozy to an untenable position."

In July 2010 Sarkozy's Minister for European integration Pierre Lellouche declared, "We are in favour of carrying on negotiations with Turkey, but we are not in favour of the end point." Bayart mocks the statement, observing that "France has joined the very exclusive club of countries whose diplomacies negotiate in order not to succeed." He then dismisses what he calls the "poor deception" of the "special partnership" advocated by France as an alternative to Turkish EU membership. Turkey, Bayart notes, already enjoys the status of EU strategic partner and is a member of NATO, of the Customs Union, and of the Council of Europe. Sarkozy's brainchild, the Union for the Mediterranean (UPM), was yet "another ersatz accession," Bayart argues. It "did not interest Ankara, angered Madrid [...] and exasperated Berlin: [...] the UPM, or how to uselessly make enemies." Unscathed, Sarkozy

"stubbornly continued his hostility towards Turkey, multiplying hurtful statements, blocking accession negotiations as much as he could by opposing the opening of new chapters, limiting his visit to Ankara as head of the G20 to just a few hours, [...] and, in spite of Turkey's membership in NATO, not inviting it to an international conference on 19 March during which the decision to intervene in Afghanistan was made ..."

For Bayart, Sarkozy's stance is "a short-sighted electoral gamble consisting in not leaving to the National Front the monopoly of using the Islamic scarecrow." However, the benefits of adopting such a posture are doubtful. The price of alienating an important regional actor seems excessive. According to Bayart, Turkish EU membership is an essential building block to the French vision of "Europe puissance", Europe as a key actor on the world stage. This, he writes, "makes Paris' defiance towards Turkey seem even more absurd." Bayart quotes an unnamed diplomat who explained that between 2007 and today France's role in the Eastern Mediterranean moved "from Turkey's best ally" to "strategic partner of Cyprus and Armenia," leading British and American commentators to gloss over an alleged French-Turkish rivalry in the Middle East and the Maghreb.

At the end of the article, Bayart claims that France's policies in the Mediterranean are now in ruins. French support for the ousted Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak, as well as the country's attempts to rehabilitate Assad and Gaddafi have deprived Paris of any credibility in the Middle East. What makes things even worse is "the fact that the Arab

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<sup>61</sup> "Nicolas Sarkozy, naufragé volontaire en Méditerranée", *Libération*, <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012350922-nicolas-sarkozy-naufirage-volontaire-en-meditteranee>

Spring is only perceived in the narrowest possible fashion, through the prism of a potential migratory danger.” This is in “contempt for the decency and the elementary solidarity displayed by the Tunisian people, who have welcomed 250,000 refugees from Libya (by comparison, since January, 7,000 undocumented migrants have arrived in France, 5,000 of whom already went back).”

Erdogan, having won his third electoral contest, may stay in power until 2023 if he manages to succeed Abdullah Gul as head of state. “Whether it likes it or not,” Bayart writes, “France will have to deal with him, but it is clear that the [French] President has made the wrong friends in the Club Med...”<sup>62</sup>

## **26 July 2011 – How Bischwiller became “Turkwiller”**

In *Le Figaro*, reporter Francois Hauter writes a piece on Turkish immigrants population in the region of Alsace, arguing that “their integration will require efforts on both sides.”<sup>63</sup> The article opens with stating:

“It is a strange impression to return to a village where many of your ancestors who valiantly participated in the history of France are buried, and which, in the space of just four decades, has almost become a Turkish village. This is a brutal manner to approach the issue of immigration. You visit the graves of your ancestors in the cemetery and just after that, downtown, you are offered a Turkish coffee at the café surrounded by Turks who speak their language or French with an Alsatian accent! There is such a discrepancy between your childhood memories and this reality that you necessarily ask yourself, ‘Am-I still in my country?’ Indeed, as soon as immigration is concerned, that is to say, as soon as ‘the other’ comes and settles ‘in my homeland’, one becomes a bit like an animal that defends its territory with an aggressiveness that is almost mechanical, claiming first occupant rights ... Nationalism feeds off this instinct, the newcomer always being perceived as a danger, an intruder, even when he only comes to make a living.”

In addition, Hauter claims that “it is difficult to be precise and concrete when discussing immigration in our country,” because “all the statistics on the basis of which one could form a reasonable opinion are banned. In the name of antiracism, which is one very respectable dogma of our Republic, this data is entirely hidden from the public view. Nothing on the religious belonging, mother tongue, cultural or ethnic origins of the newcomers” is allowed. For Hauter, this situation leads newcomers to develop “the feeling that they can do whatever they want” once they are here.

In order to avoid falling into “ideology”, Hauter uses a concrete example in his article: the city of Bischwiller in Alsace, 30 km away from Strasburg, with 13,000

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<sup>62</sup>Short for «Club Méditerranée», a reference to the vacation resorts used to designate the countries around the Mediterranean, usually in a slightly derogatory manner.

<sup>63</sup> Comment Bischwiller est devenue « Turkwiller », *Le Figaro*, 26 July 2011, p. 2. See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/mon-figaro/2011/07/25/10001-20110725ARTFIG00399-comment-bischwiller-est-devenue-turcwiller.php>

inhabitants, 20 per cent of whom are of Turkish origin. The city was on the frontlines of three wars between France and Germany, which led to an important focus on religious belonging. In the 1950s, “bourgeois entrepreneurs of the textile industry are Jewish and Protestant, employees are Catholic. [...] Mixed marriages are unimaginable.” At the same time, “hearts and souls are invariably Republican.” In 2011, however, “temples, churches and synagogues are almost empty.” Meanwhile, “an elegant ‘prayer room’ – not to say a mosque – is about to be built in the outskirts of the city. [...] And suddenly, voices can be heard in Bischwiller against this ‘diversity’ from far away, which would allegedly threaten social cohesion and the great whole of the Republic.” A restaurant owner, only identified by his first name, Raymond, is quoted as saying: “It feels like we’re in Istanbul here!”

Hauter explains that Alsace is France’s second migration destination after greater Paris, and since migration is recent, Raymond’s reaction is deemed “natural”. Indeed, Hauter claims that “we are only the products of our preconceptions, and migration offers us a striking demonstration of this.” At the same time, Hauter explains that he “understands” the migrants’ urge to settle in “neighbourhoods or ghettos: [...] all over the world, communitarianism is the unique response to the problems of rootless people.” However, in Bischwiller, Turkish families have also bought and restored little houses in the centre, which are now colourfully painted. The “dynamic” mayor, Nicole Thomas, approves of these “magnificent colours,” and explains:

“In 2000, the different communities were still closed towards one another. There was very little interaction. Things are slowly moving. I tell them, ‘You are Bischwillers, I respect your roots.’ The other day, I donned a headscarf and I went to present the new project for a prayer room. The imam was very surprised. I was given an ovation!”

A mother of five girls, “Nicole is a pedagogue. To the Turks, who are tireless builders, she explains the laws of city planning, and that one is not allowed to take one’s car apart on the sidewalk, because it bothers the neighbours. To the women, she says: ‘I do not mind if you wear headscarves, my grandmother used to do the same. But burqa and fanaticism, no way! You can’t do that, that’s what excites misunderstandings between communities.’”

Hauter claims that while integration happens through women in Maghrebi communities, in Turkish communities it proceeds through men, who “must learn French quickly to go work, and leave their wives cloistered at home.” This traditionalism has its inconveniences, notes Hauter: the children, born in France, arrive in school not knowing French. “It also has its advantages: the families are strict, the children work hard, and their education is given pride of place. Getting used to France is a matter of generations.” Hauter concludes: “What strikes me is the fact that the values of the Turks are exactly those of the French at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: hard work, no mixed marriages, rigorous moral principles, and a family united like a rugby pack. Finally, [they] come from where we come from.”

## **28 July 2011 – Turkish football paralysed by rigged games**

In *Le Monde*, Guillaume Perrier describes the gambling scandal paralysing Turkish professional football, beginning with the announcement that the start of the Turkish league (Superlig) season has been postponed to 9 September.<sup>64</sup> Competition was planned to start on 7 August, but revelations of game fixing and corruption involving the most important clubs and their owners have cast a shadow over the league. Over 60 people have been arrested. 31 have been charged and await trial in prison. Among them is the owner of the club Fenerbahce, Aziz Yildirim, thought to be at the centre of the scandal. Fenerbahce, which had won the championship on the last day of the 2010-11 season thanks to goal average, is thought to have rigged at least two games. (It is said that a total of at least 19 games were rigged.) Fenerbahce's title has been suspended pending a court decision. Prime Minister Erdogan, himself a Fenerbahce supporter, reacted: "Not only am I a fan of Fenerbahce but I am also a member of its board. If the least wrongdoing was committed, it must be clarified in the most comprehensive manner."

The Vice-President and Technical director of Besiktas, Fenerbahce's rival, are also in prison. Arrests have been conducted in at least 15 provinces across Turkey, and the only important club spared so far is Galatasaray. The clubs found guilty of rigging may be relegated to a lower league. Perrier explains that suspicions of corruption have plagued Turkish football for a few years: betting on sports is legal, and clubs are listed on the stock exchange.

## **29 July 2011 – Sarrazin argues with the Turks in Germany**

In *Le Figaro*, Berlin correspondent David Philippot explains that one year after the publication of his controversial bestseller, Thilo Sarrazin continues to divide the German public.<sup>65</sup> Sarrazin, with a TV crew in tow, recently showed up at an open-air market in the Berlin neighbourhood of Kreuzberg, home to a large Turkish migrant population. Initially there to "start a dialogue" with the inhabitants, he was booed and refused a table at a restaurant. His planned visit to an Alevi association was cancelled at the last minute. Facing a hostile crowd that accused him of being a "racist" and a "Nazi", he yelled back that they were "only confirming preconceptions." Philippot notes that the TV show whose crew had organised the visit drew high ratings, which seems to be the case with every public appearance by Sarrazin. At the end of the article, Philippot notes that over 1.3 million copies of Sarrazin's book have been sold since its publication last year.

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<sup>64</sup> "Le foot turc paralysé par des matches truqués", *Le Monde*, 28 July 2011. See:

[http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1163880](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1163880)

<sup>65</sup> "En Allemagne, Sarrazin polémique toujours avec les Turcs", *Le Figaro*, 29 July 2011, p. 6. See:

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/07/28/01003-20110728ARTFIG00652-en-allemande-sarrazin-polemique-toujours-avec-les-turcs.php>

### 30 July 2011 – A series of resignations among leaders of the Turkish armed forces

In *Libération*, a short, unsigned piece reports on the resignation of General Isik Kosaner, Chief of staff of the Turkish armed forces, as well as that of the heads of the Turkish army, navy, and air force.<sup>66</sup> The resignations allegedly occurred in protest against the Turkish government's decision to either dismiss or block the promotion of some 42 generals awaiting trial in connection with various alleged plots and conspiracies. It is the first time that the heads of the armed forces have resigned en masse, provoking an unprecedented crisis with civilian authorities.

In *Le Figaro* the same day, Laure Marchand reports that the Turkish armed forces have “lost their battle against Erdogan.”<sup>67</sup> The article opens with the observation that “in the history of the Turkish republic, it was traditionally the army which ousted governments. This time, the roles are reversed.” After a brief summary of events, Marchand cites a note sent by General Isik Kosaner to his “brothers in arms” in which the general explains his decision by regretting that he was unable to prevent the detention of some 250 members of the military. According to analysts quoted by Marchand, the collective resignation – coming after four coups in a half-century and attempts to have the AKP banned by the courts for “offence against secularism” – is the death knell of the army's influence in politics. Marchand also notes that the series of civilian trials against members of the military, initially applauded when it started in 2007, is now the subject of criticism, in part because of the vagueness of some of the accusations, and in part because five years after the first arrests, not a single sentence has yet been given. Nonetheless, the accusations have profoundly tarnished the reputation of the armed forces. Right after the generals' resignation, President Gul declared that the situation was “extraordinary” but that there was no “crisis,” and Prime Minister Erdogan rapidly named General Necdet Ozel to the position of deputy Chief of Staff – an announcement indicating that he will probably succeed Isik Kosaner.

The next day, 1 August, columnist Pierre Rousselin signs a piece in *Le Figaro* entitled “Game over for the Turkish Army.”<sup>68</sup> Rousselin notes that in the not-so distant past the standoff between the generals and the ruling politicians would “invariably have led to a coup.” Today, however, the army has lost its battle against the AKP. Rousselin explains that the AKP used reforms imposed by the EU to reduce the power of the army, and that the June 12 elections confirmed Erdogan's mandate, making him “the absolute master of Turkish politics.” According to Rousselin, the path is now clear for Erdogan to place his men at the head of the army and continue his project of changing the constitution and introducing a presidential regime. The departure of the “old guard” is both triumph of civilian rule and “a victory for the conservative Muslims of the AKP, who now hold all

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<sup>66</sup>“Démissions en série à la tête de l'arméeturque”, *Libération*, 30 July 2011. See: <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012351775-demissions-en-serie-a-la-tete-de-l-armee-turque>

<sup>67</sup>“L'armée turque perd son bras de fer contre Erdogan”, *Le Figaro*, 30 July 2011. See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/07/31/01003-20110731ARTFIG00198-l-armee-turque-perd-son-bras-de-fer-contre-erdogan.php>

<sup>68</sup>“Fin de partie pour l'armée turque”, *Le Figaro*, 1 August 2011, p. 19. See: <http://blog.lefigaro.fr/geopolitique/2011/07/fin-de-partie-pour-larmee-turq.html>

levers of power.” The only remaining problem, suggests Rousselin, could be an excess of self-confidence.