

Remembering Armenian genocide, AKP wins elections and Sarrazin's visit to Kreuzberg



Turkey through German Eyes

Highlights of the debate from April to July 2011

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May

2 May 2011 – Henryk Broder on remembering the Armenian genocide

In an article for the conservative daily *Die Welt*, the political commentator and well-known Turkey critic Henryk Broder suggests including the victims of the Armenian genocide in the Holocaust memorial located in Berlin, close to the German Bundestag. His suggestion comes in reaction to a demand by Germany's Armenian community that a similar memorial be constructed to commemorate the Armenian genocide and Germany's role "as the closest ally of Turkey," which "watched inactively and refused any kind of help."¹

Broder suggests that the inclusion of Armenian victims in the existing Holocaust memorial would be a "due correction of the formula of the 'singularity' of the Holocaust," which has led contemporary genocides, such as the one taking place in Darfur, to be overlooked.²

2 May 2011 – SPD introduces quota for immigrants

The plan by the Social Democratic Party to introduce a legal quota of 15 per cent for immigrants in all of the party's bodies triggers mixed reactions in the German press.

The move is announced jointly by party leader Sigmar Gabriel and General Secretary Andrea Nahles. The new rule should apply in a first step to all federal party bodies, but bodies at the Lander level will be invited to adopt the same immigrant quota.³ The liberal daily *Tagesspiegel* claims that the initiative is understood inside the party as an attempt to counterbalance the negative impact of the debate provoked by [Thilo Sarrazin](#), who published a controversial book on migrants in Germany.⁴ Several other papers echo this position.⁵ The procedure to exclude Sarrazin from the party ended with a written statement, in which Sarrazin backpedalled on some of his more radical positions on immigration.

According to party leader Sigmar Gabriel, immigrants make up 19 per cent of the total population in Germany, with the legal definition of migrants including all immigrants and their descendants up to the third generation. In a commentary that echoes criticisms made by many other parties, the left-wing daily *taz* ironically points out that "only Socialists need quotas."⁶ Both the Greens and the liberal FDP already boast significant numbers of migrants in their ranks and therefore consider the introduction of a quota unnecessary. Sevim Dagdelen, the Left Party's speaker on migration issues, rejects any type of quota outright. By taking migrants into consideration when devising their policies, parties would automatically increase the number of migrants among their membership, the *taz* article states.⁷

¹ *Die Welt* (Henryk Broder), Ein Armenier-Denkmal im Blickfeld des Reichstages, 2 May.

² Ibid.

³ *FAZ*, SPD-Führung für Einwandererquote, 2 May.

⁴ *Tagesspiegel*, SPD führt Quote für Migranten ein, 2 May.

⁵ *Die Welt*, SPD will sich eine Migrantenquote verordnen, 2 May; *FAZ*, SPD-Führung für Einwandererquote, 2 May; *Stern*, Sarrazin macht der SPD Beine, 2 May; *Die Welt*, Dank Sarrazin wird die SPD zur Einwandererpartei, 3 May; *Frankfurter Rundschau*, SPD: Reue nach Quoten, 9 May; *Spiegel*, Gabriel drückt Migrantenquote durch, 9 May; *Stern*, SPD im Sarrazin-Trauma, 15 May.

⁶ *taz*, SPD nach Sarrazin, 3 May.

⁷ Ibid.

According to Daniela Augenstein, head of the Berlin SPD's working group on migration, it makes little sense to include SPD delegates with a parent from another EU member state in the official quota. "We are not so much concerned with our European neighbours, but rather with those groups which have not been sufficiently included until now," she states.⁸

14 per cent of the Social Democratic Party's members have a migration background. However, according to the conservative daily *Die Welt*, the SPD's 45-member Executive Board (Vorstand) does not include a single person with a migration background.⁹ The conservative weekly magazine *Stern* calls this state of affairs "embarrassing."¹⁰

Thilo Sarrazin himself attacks the party's plans to introduce a quota for migrants. According to the conservative daily *Die Welt*, Sarrazin has claimed that the more migrant ("je migrantischer") a politician's background, the less objective he or she would be in deciding on migration-related issues.¹¹

Thorsten Denker, the Berlin correspondent for the major liberal daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, considers that by continuing to make claims regarding the genetic nature of intelligence Sarrazin "ridicule and humiliate" the SPD.¹² Paul Wrusch, a commentator with the left-wing daily *taz*, agrees with Denker's assessment. Wrusch also points out that during a public reading of his book Sarrazin claimed that he had not taken back any of the statements made therein – only a few days after the formal procedure against him was dropped.¹³ Interestingly, the article quotes a survey conducted by the Forsa research institute, according to which 49 per cent of SPD voters agree with Sarrazin's positions.

In a co-authored analysis, Eckart Lohse, editor of the conservative daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*'s Sunday edition, and Markus Wehner, the paper's political correspondent, claim that the SPD's failure to expel Sarrazin reveals a deep divide inside the party.¹⁴

While the SPD's decision to retain Sarrazin has provoked a backlash among some members of the party, the majority of the German population supports this move, according to the weekly magazine *Spiegel*. A survey conducted by the public television channel ARD found 54 per cent of Germans to be in favour of the decision, with only 35 per cent against.¹⁵

2 May 2011 – Gul attacks EU visa policy

The conservative daily *Die Welt* runs an article on Turkish President Abdullah Gul's criticism of the EU's visa policy towards Turkey, claiming that the EU's attitude is "weakening its credibility."¹⁶ During an official visit to Austria Gul condemned the fact that talks on visa liberalisation had been held with Russia and the Ukraine but not with Turkey, an EU candidate.

⁸ *Tagesspiegel*, 13 Prozent der Genossen sind Migranten, 4 May.

⁹ *Die Welt*, SPD will sich eine Migrantenquote verordnen, 2 May.

¹⁰ *Stern*, Sarrazin macht der SPD Beine, 2 May.

¹¹ *Die Welt*, Thilo Sarrazin giftet gegen Migranten-Quote der SPD, 3 May.

¹² *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Verhohnt und gedemütigt, 4 May.

¹³ *taz*, Sarrazin demütigt die SPD, 5 May.

¹⁴ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Sarrazin und kein Ende, 9 May.

¹⁵ *Spiegel*, Mehrheit der Deutschen halt SPD-Umgang mit Sarrazin für richtig, 5 May.

¹⁶ *Die Welt*, Türkischer Präsident attackiert Visa-Politik der EU, 2 May.

2 May 2011 – Press freedom under threat in Turkey

Gerd Hohler, the Athens-based Greece and Turkey correspondent for the liberal daily *Frankfurter Rundschau* critically assesses the deterioration of press freedom in Turkey in a report entitled “Erdogan’s thought police.”¹⁷ Hohler quotes OSCE numbers, according to which 57 journalists are currently imprisoned in Turkey. In a press freedom index compiled by Reporters without Borders, Turkey is in 138th place (out of 178 countries), behind Morocco, Ukraine, and Algeria.

Despite Turkey’s impressive economic development, Hohler warns that

“this is only one, the shiny side of Turkey. The other side is dark. For Erdogan’s critics, the destiny of Ahmet Sik and Nedim Sener [two imprisoned Turkish journalists] illustrates Turkey’s evolution towards an authoritarian state.”¹⁸

3 May 2011 - Integration problems of young German Turks

An article in conservative daily *Die Welt* addresses how young Turks in Germany often feel torn between their two identities. According to a psychologist who organises weekly meetings for migrants in the Berlin district of Neukolln, “these young people have no identity”¹⁹ and are often forgotten by society. Moreover, there is a legal dimension to this psychological challenge. While those young Turks who received German citizenship before 2000 may retain dual nationality, others must opt for either German or Turkish citizenship before they turn 23. This obligation results from the “option model” introduced by the Schroder government. Young Turks in Germany are thus forced into an uncomfortable balancing act between family and society.²⁰

3 May 2011 – German Turk to become Integration Minister in Baden-Wurttemberg

The nomination of German Turk Bilkay Oney as Integration Minister in the new Green-Red government in Baden-Wurttemberg is taken up by a number of German newspapers. The 40-year old Oney, born in Malatya, Turkey but raised in Berlin, was previously an SPD delegate in the Berlin Parliament.²¹ (When she first joined the Berlin Parliament in 2006 she did so as a representative of the Green Party and the party’s integration spokesperson. She switched to the SPD in 2009.)²² According to the left-wing daily *taz*, Oney once declared that she wanted to be “neither instrument nor victim” and that integration for her meant first and foremost the equality of opportunities.²³ Oney is only the second person with a Muslim background to be nominated as a minister at the Land level following Aygul Ozkan, who served as Minister for Social Issues in Hannover. According to *Spiegel*, Oney was selected by the head of the Baden-Wurttemberg SPD, Nils Schmid, who is himself married to a Turk.²⁴

Die Welt sees the move in the context of the introduction of the migrant quota, and claims that “party leader Sigmar Gabriel had no other chance but to act this way” following the uproar

¹⁷ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Erdogans Gedankenpolizei, 2 May.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Die Welt*, "In der Türkei der Deutsche, in Deutschland der Türke", 3 May.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Focus*, Deutsch-Turkin wird Integrationsministerin, 3 May.

²² *Spiegel*, Grün-Rot holt Deutsch-Turkin ins Kabinett, 3 May.

²³ *taz*, Die für den neuen Job, 4 May.

²⁴ *Spiegel*, Grün-Rot holt Deutsch-Turkin ins Kabinett, 3 May.

caused by Thilo Sarrazin's book.²⁵ Both *Die Welt* and *taz*, however, see the decision as a positive move towards more diversity among the SPD's top echelons.²⁶

The liberal *Tagesspiegel* is more critical, running an article describing Oney as an "alibi minister," with the newspaper's regular commentator Moritz Schuller considering the move as "counterproductive."²⁷ Concretely, Schuller claims that:

"The mistake is the fact that she was not made Minister of Interior or of Education or of Economy, but Minister of Integration. The message is: as a migrant, one automatically qualifies for this post. This implies a double humiliation. First, this post is so void of importance that no political but only [ethnic] background is required for it. Second: migrants can only do migrant issues."²⁸

Peter Hauk, head of the CDU group in the Baden-Wurttemberg Parliament, sees no need for an Integration Minister in the first place, since the state of affairs in the Land is not "like in Kreuzberg", a district in Berlin often cited as a symbol of integration problems in Germany.²⁹ Oney reacted by claiming that she did see a need for further integration efforts in the Land and underlined that the ministry had not been created for her but existed already as a sub-division in the Justice Ministry.

5 May 2011 – Escalation of Kurdish conflict

An article in the *Tagesspiegel* addresses the escalating Kurdish conflict in Turkey. Following the attack against Erdogan's election campaign convoy, it is suggested that the Kurdish PKK may be seeking to provoke a violent backlash by the state, which would hamper the ruling AKP's election prospects.³⁰ The article suggests that it will be interesting to see the reaction of the Kurdish party, the BDP, which has remained silent regarding the attack.

5 May 2011 – Fear of censorship in Turkey

In an article on censorship in Turkey, the *Tagesspiegel* quotes opposition groups as claiming that an imminent law on internet access (due to enter into force on 22 August) will make Turkey resemble China.³¹ The reform foresees the introduction of different filters to protect children from pornography and violent content. In the face of loud criticism, Tayfun Acarer, the head of Turkey's internet body, has insisted that the filters will not be extended to all users. Instead, the filter would only be activated at the explicit demand of an internet user, while others could continue to surf as usual. Acarer suggests that the criticism is politically motivated and aims to weaken the AKP ahead of the upcoming elections. However, media reports have mentioned the existence of a list of prohibited words, which include the words "naked" and "gay". Some articles have also alleged that the reform would give judicial bodies extensive competence to shut down websites overnight. According to the *Tagesspiegel*, many Turks worry that the new reform is an attempt by the Islamic-oriented Erdogan government to reduce internet freedom and freedom of opinion.³²

²⁵ *Die Welt*, Dank Sarrazin wird die SPD zur Einwandererpartei, 3 May.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Tagesspiegel*, Bilkay Oney - die Alibiministerin, 4 May.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Die Welt*, CDU halt Integrationsministerin Oney für überflüssig, 26 May.

³⁰ *Tagesspiegel*, Blutige Strategie, 5 May.

³¹ *Tagesspiegel*, Streit um angebliche Zensur in der Türkei, 5 May.

³² *Tagesspiegel*, Streit um angebliche Zensur in der Türkei, 5 May.

In an article for left-wing daily *taz*, Istanbul correspondent Jurgen Gottschlich addresses the youth protests triggered by the Turkish government's plans to restrict internet access. According to Gottschlich, as of 22 August every Turkish internet user from will be forced to subscribe to one of four packages ("children", "family", "domestic", or "standard"), each of which will restrict access to a number of websites.³³ Gottschlich mentions that the EU Commission and the OSCE have also expressed their concern over the envisaged measures. He concludes that:

"The announced censorship measures must be seen in the wider context of the politics of the ruling Islamic AK Party, which tries ever more strongly to impose its conservative-repressive social views."³⁴

The conservative daily *Die Welt* addresses the problem of censorship in the field of literature. The article observes that of the twenty bestselling authors in Turkey, four are currently in prison. Istanbul correspondent Boris Kalnoky points out that although writers have always lived a dangerous life in Turkey, the nature of the threat has changed:

"Until just a few years ago, one was tried for writing something in favour of the Kurds or the Armenians or for criticising ('insulting') the army or the state founder Ataturk. But none of the four imprisoned authors fit into this category. They are accused of being agents of the Ancien Regime, 'terrorists' of the old Kemalist elites. They are accused of belonging to an 'organisation' named 'Ergenekon' and of wanting to bring down the Muslim-oriented government."³⁵

12 May 2011 – Turkey-Syria relations

Turkey's relations with Syria lie at the heart of an article published by the *Financial Times Germany*. Istanbul correspondent Markus Bernath points out that "few people these days find as friendly words for the Syrian head of state as Recep Tayyip Erdogan."³⁶ According to Bernath, Syria has become a top priority for Turkish foreign policy. With a 900km shared border and the risk of a refugee wave from Syria, Turkey faces a huge dilemma. It has to choose between supporting an autocrat (compromising its own moral standing, in other words) and facing the consequences of a drawn-out, bloody chaos in its neighbour country. While Turkey has managed to establish good relations with Syria, the current crisis "makes it difficult for Turkey to support or influence [Bashar al] Assad."³⁷ Moreover, Turkey fears the rising strength of Iran, Turkey's "silent rival in the region."³⁸

According to the article, Turkey has tried to influence the situation in Syria through silent diplomacy. In late April, Erdogan sent a group of consultants to meet the Syrian leader and to propose some public sector reforms. This has not borne fruit.

Ulrich Pick, reporting from Istanbul for the main public news channel ARD, considers that the EU's clear position in favour of sanctions against Syria places Turkey in a tight spot. While Erdogan has publicly supported calls for reform in Syria, he hesitates to criticise his

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *taz*, Fass mein Internet nicht an, 22 May.

³⁵ *Die Welt*, Wer schreibt, lebt gefährlich, 10 May.

³⁶ *Financial Times Deutschland*, Syriens Freund in der Türkei, 12 May.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

friend Assad as openly as he did in the case of Egypt's Hosni Mubarak.³⁹ Moreover, Erdogan fears that the destabilisation of Syria might lead to broader unrest in the entire Middle East.⁴⁰

13 May 2011 – Dirty election campaign in Turkey

The appearance of videos showing members of opposition parties engaged in adulterous acts triggers a wealth of reactions in the German media. "With defamations and incriminating videos, the Turkish election campaign is entering the dirty phase," comments *Die Welt*.⁴¹ While Istanbul correspondent Boris Kalnoky declares the campaign to be largely "boring" because a change in government is unlikely, he points out that it is still "fascinating" as it is "the most pronouncedly religious campaign" since the AKP made its first bid for power at the beginning of the 2000s.⁴² Erdogan uses religion to intimidate the opposition, claims Kalnoky, which "works so perfectly that Kemal Kilicdaroglu, leader of the secular opposition party CHP, meekly tried to explain that he was a good Muslim."⁴³ The MHP, the nationalist opposition party, was badly struck by a series of sex videos featuring party members. Erdogan, reacting to claims that sexual relationships were part of the private sphere, contested that moral issues could not be considered private in a society that is 99 per cent Muslim.⁴⁴

Taking up the compromising sex videos, Jurgen Gottschlich, Turkey correspondent for *taz* suggests that the ruling AKP could profit from these developments.⁴⁵ Concretely, the MHP's failure to clear the 10 per cent threshold for entry into Parliament would give the AKP a majority large enough to allow it to single-handedly change the constitution. Gottschlich suggests that the AKP seeks to engineer the MHPs' by appealing to the party's nationalist base, for instance by tearing down a prominent memorial to Turkish-Armenian reconciliation in the city of Kars. Nick Brauns, Istanbul correspondent for the left-wing *Junge Welt*, concurs with Gottschlich's analysis and claims that "the ruling party wants an absolute majority in the June elections by all means."⁴⁶

An article in *Die Welt* describes the sex videos as having led to "political carnage in the Turkish opposition."⁴⁷ Besides the moral questions attached to a growing number of scandals among CHP and MHP politicians, the article points out that there remains the question of who is responsible for publishing the incriminating tapes. Indeed, the article suggests, the huge interest the AKP has in damaging its competitors makes their accusations (of AKP involvement in the tapes' release) sound plausible.⁴⁸

According to the liberal daily *Frankfurter Rundschau*, the nationalist MHP has only a slim chance of making the 10 per cent hurdle after a total of ten high-ranking party members had to resign over the compromising sex tapes.⁴⁹ *Tagesspiegel* concurs with the analysis but questions whether Erdogan would really have risked resorting to such dirty tricks.⁵⁰

³⁹ *Tagesschau*, Premier Erdogan in der Zwickmuhle, 23 May.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Die Welt*, Erdogan fuhr Opposition als Gotteslasterer vor, 13 May.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *taz*, Rechte stolpern über brisante Videos, 16 May.

⁴⁶ *Junge Welt*, Gasgranaten und Sexvideos, 26 May.

⁴⁷ *Die Welt*, Opposition vermutet Spionage hinter Sexvideo-Skandal, 23 May.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Parlamentspräsident nennt Politiker-Pornos "ehrlos", 23 May.

⁵⁰ *Tagesspiegel*, Sex-Videos mischen türkischen Wahlkampf auf, 23 May.

Kai Strittmatter, Istanbul correspondent for the major liberal daily *Sddeutsche Zeitung*, cites a counterargument made by government supporters. According to their version, the scandals were intended to strengthen the Kemalist CHP at the expense of the MHP, whose frustrated supporters were expected to spread chaos in the streets and render the work of the AKP government impossible.⁵¹

Istanbul correspondent for the conservative daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Michael Martens points out that given the sophistication of the video publications, their production must have been time-consuming and costly, so much so that they were likely to have been the work of professional secret services.⁵² Martens also looks at, and dismisses, a hypothesis cited by the AKP-leaning newspaper *Zaman* – that the people behind the tapes were part of Ergenekon, the network accused of planning to overthrow the Erdogan government.⁵³ Hypotheses such as this one, he concludes, are part of a dangerous tendency to group all political conspiracies, real or imagined, under the heading of Ergenekon.

“Those who arouse the discontent of the ones in power are arrested and tried under the accusation of belonging to Ergenekon. The technically necessary and initially credible judicial process against the dark backers of the ‘deep state’, who murdered for decades without sanction in the name of a secular Turkey, is becoming increasingly discredited by the arbitrary expansion of the circle of perpetrators.”⁵⁴

13 May 2011 – Turkish foreign policy

In a comment piece for *Die Zeit*, Istanbul correspondent Michael Thumann claims that “Turkey’s export-oriented foreign policy has been called into question by the Arab revolts.”⁵⁵ While Turkey’s “zero-problems-with-neighbours” approach created excellent conditions for Turkey’s exports, Thumann writes, the uprisings in the Arab world have cast doubts on the sustainability of its foreign policy. Although the AKP has traditionally adopted more progressive positions towards Greece, Armenia, and Cyprus than the opposition CHP and MHP, it is unlikely to undertake any important steps on these issues before the elections. Thumann concludes that “politicians read opinion surveys with much attention. And they speak in favour of nationalism.”⁵⁶

Tagesspiegel considers that Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu efforts to extend his country’s international role are beginning to reach their limit.⁵⁷ Aside from disagreements with the West over the handling of relations with Iran and Israel, Turkey’s uncertain response to the outbreak of the Arab revolutions has seriously undermined the foreign policy vision Davutoglu had sought to promote. With Turkey having changed its position on Libya quite dramatically, *Tagesspiegel* concludes the country is still scrambling to identify a long-term role in its neighbourhood.

“There will clearly be no return to the passive regional policy [...] exclusively centred on the US. Turkey has established itself as an independent and active actor in an important

⁵¹ *Sddeutsche Zeitung*, Sex, Politik und Videos, 23 May.

⁵² *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Das Paarungsverhalten der Wolfe: Szenen aus dem türkischen Wahlkampf, 26 May.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *Die Zeit*, Erdogan von Gegnern umstellt, 13 May.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *Tagesspiegel*, Mit "Blackberry-Diplomatie" zur neuen Regionalmacht, 13 May.

region. In times of change and uncertainty in the Middle East, the country is thus becoming ever more important for the West.⁵⁸

17 May 2011 – Alevis as model for integration

An article in *Die Welt* suggests that the Alevi minority among Turkish immigrants could represent a model for integration. Around 500,000 Alevi currently live in Germany, where they are officially registered as a religious community. They tend to be less strict about religious requirements, the article notes, and to integrate more easily into their host countries.⁵⁹

18 May 2011 – Second Gaza flotilla

According to an article in regional daily *Rheinische Post*, Turkey does not want to prevent the second “freedom flotilla” from making its way to Gaza.⁶⁰ In 2010, the first flotilla produced a major crisis when Israeli soldiers boarded the Mavi Marmara, a Turkish-flagged ship seeking to bring aid directly to the Gaza strip, killing nine activists. The Mavi Marmara is expected to take part in the second flotilla, which will count 15 different ships. According to *Rheinische Post*, FM Davutoglu has complained that by urging his government to stop the flotilla from going ahead several countries are suggesting that Turkey is not a fully-fledged democracy, a country where the state is able to retain control over non-governmental groups.⁶¹

19 May 2011 – Turkey against European IMF candidate

The weekly economics magazine *Handelsblatt* explains that Turkey is contesting the EU’s right to nominate Dominique Strauss-Kahn’s successor at the head of the International Monetary Fund. Instead, Turkey is suggesting Kemal Dervis, currently Vice President with the Washington-based Brookings Institute, as a possible candidate for the post.⁶²

20 May 2011 – Seehofer wants to include integration in Constitution

In an article for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, op-ed editor Patrick Bahners discusses a suggestion made by Bavarian Minister President Horst Seehofer to make integration a legal requirement in the Bavarian constitution. According to Bahners, Seehofer’s suggestion was not widely discussed when he made it on 9 March, but has now been sharply contested by Peter Michael Huber, a Constitutional Court judge.⁶³ Huber claims that a general obligation to integrate would be too vague to be legally effective, and would thus remain essentially symbolic. Bahners himself considers that the integration of migrants is incumbent on the state, and not the individual citizen:

“The notion of integration describes a socially desired state of affairs. If it [has any place] in a constitution, then it should figure there as a duty of the state and not as an obligation for citizens.”⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ *Die Welt*, Aleviten – eine verkannte Minderheit, 17 May.

⁶⁰ *Rheinische Post*, Türkei will zweite Gaza-Flotte nicht verhindern, 18 May.

⁶¹ *Rheinische Post*, Türkei will zweite Gaza-Flotte nicht verhindern, 18 May.

⁶² *Handelsblatt*, Türkei rüttelt an EU-Vorrecht auf IWF-Chefposten, 19 May.

⁶³ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Integrationspflicht: Ein waschechter Bayer gehört dazu, 20 May.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

20 May 2011 – EU reduces visa hurdles for Turks

According to the weekly magazine *Focus*, the EU has reduced certain visa hurdles for Turkish citizens in an attempt to make the process easier, faster, and less costly.⁶⁵ The move was announced by the Turkish paper *Hurriyet*, which referred to a declaration made by EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle. According to German diplomats in Turkey, however, most of the changes mentioned by *Hurriyet* have already been in place for a while.⁶⁶

22 May 2011 – Anti-Kurdish tones in the Turkish election campaign

In an article for left-wing daily *taz*, Istanbul correspondent Jurgen Gottschlich claims that Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan is using increased repression against minority representatives in order to win nationalist votes.⁶⁷ According to Aysel Tugluk, one of the most influential Kurdish politicians and a lawyer of imprisoned PKK leader Ocalan, the pro-Kurdish BDP is considering a boycott of the upcoming elections in reaction to the repressions. Most recently, dozens of Kurds were arrested following a skirmish with Turkish soldiers at the border with Iraq. Gottschlich draws two conclusions from these events. First of all, he writes, Erdogan has other priorities than the Kurdish question – notably, constitutional reform. Secondly, Erdogan’s anti-Kurdish policy is intended to win over voters from the national MHP.⁶⁸

22 May 2011 – Gottschlich on Erdogan’s dream of power

In a comment for *taz*, Istanbul correspondent Jurgen Gottschlich discusses “Erdogan’s dream of power.”⁶⁹ According to Gottschlich, Erdogan’s focus on improving his own position – and his goal of establishing a presidential system with himself at the top – has led him to neglect some of Turkey’s most serious problems Turkey, including the Kurdish question.

A few days later, in a comment for the weekly magazine *Spiegel* Gottschlich describes Erdogan as a megalomaniac, seeking to use the upcoming elections to cement his hold on power.⁷⁰ Gottschlich points out that ten leading Kurdish members of the BDP – which has its candidates run as independents in order to avoid the 10 per cent hurdle – have been banned from standing in the elections because they are facing prosecution. However, following mass demonstrations Turkey’s electoral commission reversed its earlier decision. As Gottschlich puts it, recent evidence, including the MHP sex scandal, suggests that “while the Arab neighbours are currently kicking out their dictators, Erdogan is striving to build a new autocracy.”⁷¹

23 May 2011 – Kolat for Ministry for Integration

At the inaugural meeting of the Federal Committee for Integration (Bundesbeirat für Integration), Kenan Kolat, head of the Turkish Community in Germany, demands the creation of a Ministry for Integration. The Federal Committee for Integration is composed of 32 members. Its creation was foreseen in Chancellor Merkel’s 2007 National Integration Plan. The body is intended to support the Commissioner for Integration in her work.

⁶⁵ *Focus*, EU baut Hürden für Türken ab, 20 May.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *taz*, Antikurdenpolitik soll Stimmen bringen, 22 May.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *taz*, Erdogans Traum von der Macht, 22 May.

⁷⁰ *Spiegel*, Sexvideos und Größenwahn, 27 May.

⁷¹ *Spiegel*, Sexvideos und Größenwahn, 27 May.

In an interview with *Deutschlandradio*, Kolat gives an overall positive assessment of the Committee's first session, but also sees room for improvement. The Committee's mandate should be extended to other ministries, he argues, and its consultancy role should include giving advice to the federal government.⁷² Moreover, Kolat sees the need to prevent the Committee from following the same path as the Integration Summits. (The summits, held annually from 2006, triggered initial enthusiasm but resulted in disappointment when, among other things, it became clear that participants did not have the right to discuss laws or legislative proposals.) Finally, Kolat believes that the competences of the Commissioner for Integration should be extended, particularly regarding their possibility to influence the legislative processes by suggesting for instance the adoption of concrete laws. A fully-fledged Ministry for Integration rather than a mere Commissioner would be a valuable institutional innovation, thinks Kolat. A ministry would help develop mutual responsibility for integration, which currently resembles, in Kolat's words, "participation instead of integration."⁷³

24 May 2011 – Fischer against Ozdemir as Chancellor

According to *Die Welt*, former Green Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer has declared that he does not consider current party leader Cem Ozdemir a suitable candidate for the Chancellery, mainly because the 45-year old politician is "too young."⁷⁴ As *Die Welt* points out, Fischer, who has recently fed speculations that he might himself like to run for Chancellor, would be 65 during the next Bundestag elections in 2013. Ozdemir himself reacted calmly, saying he considered the discussion about a Green Chancellor in 2013 "absurd."⁷⁵

June

3 June 2011 – President Wulff on integration

On the occasion of the Protestant Church Day in Dresden, Federal President Wulff takes up the topic of integration, reaffirming his belief, first articulated on 3 October 2010, that Islam is part of Germany. Repeating his statement, Wulff insists that he made it "in order to give the Muslims living with us a sign." "We are advancing in terms of integration," Wulff says according to *Tagesspiegel*. "Not fast enough, but we are making progress."⁷⁶

Wulff acknowledges that Germany suffers from a lack of full-time schools, which makes it difficult for young children from migration backgrounds to adequately learn the German language.⁷⁷ At the same time, he does not hesitate to be critical towards Muslim countries. If Germany is educating Muslim clergy, he says, "it should be normal that Christian theologians are also educated in Turkey."⁷⁸ According to an article in *Tagesspiegel*, Wulff also underlines that everyone in Germany can contribute to integration, for instance by supporting migrant families.⁷⁹

⁷² *Deutschlandradio*, Kolat: Partizipation statt Integration, 23 May.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Die Welt*, Fischer halt Ozdemir als Kanzler für ungeeignet, 24 May.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Tagesspiegel*, Parallelgesellschaft rund ums Bellevue, 3 June.

⁷⁷ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Wulff fordert größere Offenheit gegenüber Fremden, 3 June.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Tagesspiegel*, Wulff sieht Erfolge bei Integration, 3 June.

Matthias Drobinski, a journalist specialised in religious issues with the liberal daily *Suddeutsche*, ironically comments that Wulff's plenary debate on "How much integration does democracy need?" is a "potpourri of agreement," where "whoever speaks receives a nod."⁸⁰

3 June 2011 – Media censorship in Turkey

An article published in *Tagesspiegel* by Turkish journalist Alper Gormus, former editor-in-chief of the magazine *Nokta*, tackles the question of censorship. The piece, entitled "Turkey – a country of imprisoned journalists," claims that "it is not criticism of the government that is dangerous, but criticism of the army."⁸¹ According to Gormus, most of the imprisoned journalists actually work for newspapers considered close to rather than critical of the government. The reason why they are tried, he argues, is because of their reporting on the Ergenekon trials.

Gormus complains that critics have tended to focus on infringements by the government and the police but not on those committed by the state and the military. He claims:

"The judiciary system is the closest ally of the army [...], thus two birds are killed with one stone. On the one hand, journalists attempting to communicate the truth about coup attempts by Ergenekon are intimidated. On the other, the government is damaged by the impression that it is using the judiciary to crack down on journalists."⁸²

The Ergenekon trials also feature prominently in an article in the weekly magazine *Focus*, which highlights accusations of abuse of power levelled against Erdogan in the current election campaign. In total, the article points out, almost 200 active and retired soldiers are standing trial on charges of planning an anti-government coup.⁸³

5 June 2011 – Turkish entrepreneurship in Germany

An article ("The bosses from the Bosphorus") in regional daily *Der Westen* informs that one in five self-employed workers in Germany most populous region, North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), have a migration background.⁸⁴ According to the NRW government, such workers make a considerable contribution to the local economy and labour market. However, the article also quotes a study conducted by the Future.org institute, according to which every third student of Turkish origin plans to leave Germany after graduation.⁸⁵

5 June 2011 – Renaissance of Turkish Social Democrats

Jurgen Gottschlich, Istanbul correspondent for *taz* describes a mass rally by the opposition CHP (500,000 people took part), calling it part of the "Socialists' renaissance." In Gottschlich's view, the CHP owes its turnaround to Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the party leader since last year. Kilicdaroglu has been able to overcome the party's ideological obsession with Kemalism and introduce new issues such as the minimum wage and family insurance into the CHP programme. Gottschlich speaks of a consensus among opposition parties that

⁸⁰ *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, Wulff und das Gute an Thilo Sarrazin, 3 June.

⁸¹ *Tagesspiegel*, Die Türkei – Land der gefangenen Journalisten, 3 June.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Focus*, Offiziere wegen Putschverdachts in Haft, 3 June.

⁸⁴ *Der Westen*, Die Bosse vom Bosphorus, 5 June.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

“Erdogan’s claim to power must be stopped.”⁸⁶ Only then, according to Gottschlich, “will the AKP be obliged to seek a consensus for the new constitution and Erdogan prevented from introducing a presidential system that would offer him legal cover for a temporary dictatorship.”⁸⁷

6 June 2011 – Erdogan’s dominance of Turkey’s political scene

In the run-up to the parliamentary elections of 12 June, a series of articles deal with Erdogan and his impact on the Turkish political system. In a commentary for *Die Welt*, Aydin Findikci, lecturer of sociology at Munich University, claims that “Turkey faces a choice between a democracy inspired by Western norms and an Islamic-fascist mentality.”⁸⁸ According to Findikci, under the AKP government the mentality of Turkish society is becoming “increasingly conservative, closed, and anti-Western.” Women are excluded from public and social life, while any critic of Erdogan is declared a coup-planner.⁸⁹ “Under Erdogan’s leadership, Turkey is becoming more authoritarian every day and is transforming into a police state,” Findikci writes. “It is not only in the interest of the Turkish people, but also of the West to prevent a constitution-changing majority for the ruling party under Erdogan in any case.”⁹⁰

Khalil Breuer from the *Islamische Zeitung*, a German-language newspaper for the Muslim community, assesses the “Erdogan phenomenon.” By showing himself open to cooperation with other parties, Breuer claims, Erdogan is diffusing possible criticism of an AKP-dominated government.⁹¹ However, with Turkey increasingly turning into a regional power, it remains to be seen whether it will develop in a Western or an Eastern direction. “It is absolutely possible that the European Union will soon have a historic mistake to regret” by not opening its doors to Turkey, Breuer concludes.⁹²

6 June 2011 – Kemal Kilicdaroglu demands more reforms

In an interview with the *Financial Times Germany*, CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu expresses his fear that Turkey is turning away from Europe. Regarding the Cyprus conflict, a major stumbling block for Turkey’s accession negotiations, Kilicdaroglu suggests a parallel approach where both sides fulfil their obligations at the same time. Echoing Findikci’s assessment of the transformation of Turkish society, he claims that “our society has become more conservative and introverted.”⁹³ Moreover, he claims that:

“Erdogan has created his own ‘deep state’ [the expression typically used to describe a secret power centre inside Turkey, usually associated with the army and the judiciary]. The AKP already has the judiciary, the police, the secret service, the provincial governors, and the district governors under its control.”⁹⁴

The recent arrests of journalists, Kilicdaroglu concludes, suggest that Erdogan’s party is currently dealing with one of the last centres of resistance – the media.

⁸⁶ *taz*, Auferstehung der Sozialisten, 5 June.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Die Welt*, Unter Erdogan wird die Türkei zum Polizeistaat, 6 June.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Islamische Zeitung*, Das Phänomen Erdogan, 28 June.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Financial Times Deutschland*, Zurück nach Europa, 6 June.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

In an article for *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, Turkey correspondent Kai Strittmatter portrays “the egomaniac Erdogan.” Strittmatter opens by remarking that “Turkey abounds with self-confidence. It is exceeded in this by a single person: its Prime Minister.”⁹⁵ While Erdogan likes to pretend that he has made sufficient progress in reforming the country, this is “an error,” Strittmatter claims, since “the real test for Turkey’s democracy is still ahead.” Acknowledging Erdogan’s achievements, Strittmatter points to the unprecedented stability he brought to Turkey, making the country a potential EU member, an inspiration for the region and an actor on the world stage.

Success has gone to Erdogan’s head, however. While the AKP used to rely on a broad coalition of social actors, the Prime Minister today surrounds himself with yes-men. To believe that Turkey had made sufficient reforms is a “fatal mistake,” writes Strittmatter. “Turkish democracy has made progress, but this progress and all this stability, as well as the economic boom and the foreign policy influence are built on sand as long as the old authoritarian structures are not done away with.”⁹⁶

In an article for *Die Welt*, Turkey correspondent Boris Kalnoky analyses Erdogan’s tendency to present his opponents as “enemies of God” in order to enhance his prospects for election. In Kalnoky’s view,

“religion [...] has become the main topic, almost the principle of politics, besides the Kurds.”⁹⁷ Meanwhile, the opposition parties are daring to speak out against Erdogan’s rhetorical strategy, with CHP leader Kilicdaroglu criticising that ‘Erdogan is exploiting religion for his own benefit.’”

Kalnoky therefore considers that the CHP appears to be on the way to becoming a modern, secular, social democratic party that could offer new hope for Turkey, “though not yet this coming Sunday” as the AKP is expected to receive 47 per cent of the vote.⁹⁸

Gerd Hohler, Turkey correspondent for the liberal daily *Frankfurter Rundschau*, draws a portrait of Erdogan entitled “the preacher from Istanbul.”⁹⁹ In 1998, as mayor of Turkey’s largest city, Erdogan was condemned to 10 months in prison for “Islamist agitation” and banned from politics for the rest of his life. However, he returned onto the political scene in 2001, founding the Islamic-conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP). Thanks to the AKP’s parliamentary majority, Erdogan’s ban was lifted and he became Prime Minister in March 2003.¹⁰⁰

In another contribution for *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Hohler addresses the key role of the Kurds in the upcoming elections. In order to win an absolute majority, Hohler insists, Erdogan needs votes from the neglected Southeast. In his trips to the Kurdish region, Erdogan tries to win over the population not only through political promises but by drawing a parallel between the discriminated Kurds and his former outfit, the fundamentalist Salvation Party, which was banned in the 1990s.¹⁰¹ At the moment, Hohler concludes, it looks more likely that the Kurds will give their votes to the BDP, which won 20 seats in the last elections.

⁹⁵ *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, Der selbstherrliche Erdogan, 8 June.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ *Die Welt*, Erdogan stellt seine Gegner als Feinde Gottes dar, 8 June.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Der Prediger von Istanbul, 9 June.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Kein Triumph ohne die Kurden, 10 June.

Michael Martens, Turkey correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, insists on Erdogan's desire "not only to win, but to triumph" and to obtain a parliamentary two-thirds majority that would allow him to change the constitution single-handedly.¹⁰² However, Martens cautions that "for such a triumph, the AKP would not only need to do exceptionally well but its opponents would need to do exceptionally badly." To begin with, the AKP would need to force the nationalist MHP, which received 14 per cent of the vote in the previous elections, below the ten electoral threshold and thus outside Parliament.

Similarly, the secular CHP would need to be kept at bay, Martens underlines. Following the resignation of its former leader Deniz Baykal – who stepped back following the publication of an incriminating video – Kemal Kilicdaroglu has been able to "move away cautiously from the hard-core Kemalism that shaped the CHP during the Baykal years and made it impossible even for Erdogan's opponents to vote for the party."¹⁰³

For Boris Kalnoky, writing in *Die Welt*, "Erdogan is destroying the old regime and its elites."¹⁰⁴ Kalnoky points to a discrepancy in the way the Turkish and foreign media cover the election. While in Turkey a new victory for the AKP is taken for granted, international media still see the country "at the crossroads". However, Kalnoky claims:

"Turkey has long passed the crossroads. The time when the decision was actually pending, in 2007, the question was: should the prevalent secular Kemalist system present since the foundation of the Republic be dismantled?"¹⁰⁵

In 2007, Kalnoky explains, the army tried to block the AKP's nomination of Abdullah Gul as Turkey's president. On previous occasions, the generals had used force, or the threat thereof, to overthrow governments. This time, they responded with nothing more than "a bizarre statement on the General Staff's website."¹⁰⁶ The AKP called the army's bluff and called early elections.

"This was the moment of decision. Everyone understood that the army with its intervention attempted to bring about a defeat for the AKP. If this failed, the system was as good as dead. It failed. The AKP won, with a large majority. [...] Since then, it has been wearing down the old regime and its elites without mercy."¹⁰⁷

10 June 2011 – Economic boom in Turkey

In the run-up to the elections, several German outlets discuss Turkey's booming economy. Rainer Hermann, Arab politics and economy correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, gives a positive assessment of the AKP's business-friendly economic policy. He points out that since the AKP first took power in 2002 the income per inhabitant has tripled.¹⁰⁸ For Hermann, it is thanks to Turkey's technocrats that the country is now well placed to comply with the Maastricht criteria. Nonetheless, Hermann still sees the "sword of Damocles of structural weaknesses" dangling above Turkey, with the negative trade balance being a major risk. Overall, the Turkish economy is in a healthy state, Hermann concludes, with a

¹⁰² *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Erdogans Lehr-, Gesellen- und Meisterjahre, 11 June.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *Die Welt*, Erdogan zerstört das alte Regime und seine Eliten, 9 June.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ *Die Welt*, Erdogan zerstört das alte Regime und seine Eliten, 9 June.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Blute am Bosphorus, 10 June.

relatively stable banking sector. As he observes, Turks have lost little money on the stock exchange market, having preferred to keep their savings in their bank accounts.¹⁰⁹

Susanne Gusten, a freelance correspondent in Istanbul, concurs with Hermann's assessment in an article for *Tagesspiegel*. For her, the booming economy is one of the key factors in the upcoming elections. In line with its slogan ("More stability for more growth"), the AKP is "scoring points on investment and growth rather than Islam."¹¹⁰

13 June 2011 – No two-thirds majority for the AKP

After the AKP's third consecutive triumph in the polls – in the parliamentary elections of 12 June the party obtained 49.8 per cent of the vote and 326 of 550 seats in Parliament – German media offer their analysis of the results, focusing on Prime Minister Erdogan's failure to obtain a two-thirds majority.

For Michael Martens, writing in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Erdogan's victory is "a success and a failure at the same time."¹¹¹ Erdogan's victory speech was surprisingly moderate and conciliatory, calling for broad dialogue with all interested parties. Indeed, Martens points out, the AKP's failure to retain even the three-fifths majority it had received in 2007 means that "Turkey will only get a new constitution if Erdogan finds partners in parliament."¹¹² Even if he does not manage to establish a presidential system, Erdogan could be elected president in 2014 and theoretically remain in power until 2024, writes Martens. However, Martens concludes, it is questionable whether Erdogan would be interested in such a position under the current institutional framework. A lot depends on the partners on which Erdogan will have to rely in drafting the new Constitution.¹¹³

Stefan Kornelius, head of the foreign policy desk of the *Sddeutsche Zeitung*, focuses on Turkey's relations with Europe. He believes that:

"Turkey does not want to move East or West, but up. Is Ankara [becoming] fed up with NATO and the European Union? The country has matured into an important regional power and has alienated itself from its Western allies – Turkey might soon be too proud for EU accession."¹¹⁴

At the same time, Kornelius quotes the European Stability Initiative's recent report on EU-Turkey relations, according to which ["the relationship between Turkey and the EU is like a Catholic marriage – divorce is not an option."](#)

Thomas Seibert, Turkey correspondent for the *Tagesspiegel*, offers a rather positive assessment of the AKP's victory, pointing out that aside from being a success for Erdogan "it is also a sign of political maturity of a country that only ten years ago was chronically unstable and unpredictable."¹¹⁵ Seibert considers that the AKP was rewarded for its strong economic performance and the demilitarisation of Turkish politics.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ *Tagesspiegel*, Türkei ist ein Tigerstaat am Bosphorus, 11 June.

¹¹¹ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nicht in allerbesten Verfassung, 13 June.

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Ibid .

¹¹⁴ *Sddeutsche Zeitung*, Die Nase voll von Europa, 12 June.

¹¹⁵ *Tagesspiegel*, Erdogan und ein Sieg, der ausstrahlt, 13 June.

“Should Erdogan really search for a compromise with the other parties regarding the constitutional question, this will be much more difficult than with a two-thirds majority. But the country deserves a new constitution. A politics of compromise would also be appreciated abroad – not only in Europe, which only interests a few people in Turkey nowadays, but also in the Middle East.”¹¹⁶

Boris Kalnoky, writing in *Die Welt*, focuses on the results themselves. He points out that the overwhelming victory of the AKP, which obtained 3 per cent more votes than in the 2007 elections, appears all the more impressive when viewed on a province-by-province basis. The secular CHP, despite obtaining 25.9 per cent of the overall vote, came in first only in seven of 81 Turkish provinces, most of them in the country’s “European West.”¹¹⁷ The six Southeastern provinces, inhabited mainly by Kurds, went to the “independent” candidates belonging to the Kurdish BDP. Despite a sex scandal that caused the resignations of several of its members, the nationalist MHP managed to obtain 13 per cent of the overall vote. It won outright in only one province.¹¹⁸

In a commentary for *taz*, Istanbul correspondent Jurgen Gottschlich explains that the election results have prevented Erdogan from becoming a “temporary dictator.”¹¹⁹ While Gottschlich considers it questionable how much energy Erdogan will be prepared to invest in a new constitution, he considers that the more important mission consists in addressing the conflict with the Kurdish minority. By finding a real compromise between the army and the Kurdish nationalists, Gottschlich believes, Erdogan could secure his place in history.¹²⁰

Gerd Hohler, Istanbul correspondent for the liberal daily *Frankfurter Rundschau*, welcomes the election results and suggests that “Turkey needs a strong democracy, not an almighty man at the head of the state.”¹²¹ Regarding the drafting of a new Constitution, Hohler believes that the head of state needs “not more, but fewer competences,” pointing out that from 2002 to 2007 numerous democratic reforms fell victim to then-President Ahmet Sezer’s vetoes. Instead of seeking to increase his own power, Hohler adds, Erdogan should focus on economic and financial policy so as to prevent the Turkish economy from overheating. Moreover, foreign policy remains an important area of concern, not least because of the dramatic escalation of the situation in Syria and the resulting influx of thousands of refugees into Turkey.¹²²

In an article for *Der Spiegel*, Maximilian Popp, previously a freelance correspondent in Istanbul, focuses on Erdogan’s need to clarify his relations with Europe. Popp considers that while Erdogan’s declared aim eight years ago was to lead Turkey into the EU:

“He has never been further away from this goal than today. The two partners have grown apart. They simply do not dare to pronounce what everyone else knows: that Europe and Turkey no longer have much to say to each other.”¹²³

The weekly magazine *Focus* reports that EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and Council President Hermann van Rompuy congratulated Erdogan on his victory in a joint

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ *Die Welt*, Erdogan ist in der Türkei nicht mehr aufzuhalten, 13 June.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ *taz*, Erdogans Platz in der Geschichte, 13 June.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Vernunftiger Dampfer, 14 June.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ *Spiegel*, Warum Erdogan Europa braucht, 13 June.

statement in hopes of building up trust between Turkey and the EU member states.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, SPD foreign policy expert and member of parliament Dietmar Nietan insisted that Erdogan must now prove that he is capable of implementing democratic reforms and thus of leading Turkey closer to Europe. Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, head of the FDP in the European Parliament, concurred that the AKP's victory "must mark the beginning of further reforms in Turkey." Claudia Roth, head of the Green Party, pointed out that Erdogan's failure to obtain a two-thirds majority should calm anxieties about "Erdogan's megalomania."¹²⁵

Meanwhile, members of the CDU/CSU coalition warned of "exaggerated nationalism and Islamist positions."¹²⁶ Bavarian Minister of Interior Joachim Herrmann (CSU) deplored that "Turkey is turning more and more towards Islamic-conservative nationalism." In her official congratulatory letter, Chancellor Merkel emphasised that "the results reflect [the government's] consequently pursued modernisation policy over the last years."

However, Ruprecht Polenz (CDU), head of the Bundestag's Foreign Affairs Committee, considered that the EU has a role to play in Turkey's future evolution:

"If one is afraid that Turkey is moving away from Europe, one must do everything in order to prevent this. The EU also has a responsibility towards Turkey. [...] There are regular statements critical of Turkey being made by European politicians. These are, of course, counterproductive."¹²⁷

In an article for *taz*, Turkey correspondent Jurgen Gottschlich points out that Kurdish deputies were the surprise winners of the parliamentary elections, obtaining 36 mandates, 16 more than in the previous elections.¹²⁸ For Gottschlich, these delegates will have a crucial role to play in pushing through more rights for ethnic minorities in the negotiations on the new Constitution.

In another article, Gottschlich speaks of a "sobering victory for Erdogan."¹²⁹ Not only did the AKP obtain fewer mandates than in 2007 (despite winning a larger share of the vote), but its attempts to weaken the nationalist MHP and the Kurdish BDP backfired. The Kurdish delegates actually benefited from their "victim status" and almost doubled their representation in Parliament. According to Gottschlich, the most striking feature of Erdogan's electoral triumph is his self-appointment as a regional leader, with the Prime Minister declaring the AKP's victory as a victory for everyone – from the people of Sarajevo to the people of Baku to his "brothers" in Damascus, Beirut, Jerusalem, and Cairo.¹³⁰

15 June 2011 – Avi Primor on Turkey

In an op-ed for the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Avi Primor, former Israeli Ambassador to Germany and President of the Israeli Society for Foreign Policy, claims that "Erdogan has transformed Turkey in an irreversible way. [...] Kemalism is dead, long live the Islamic CDU [i.e. the AKP]."¹³¹ Although a newly self-confident and democratic Turkey is unlikely to remain the "favourite child" of the West, Primor claims, it could be useful nonetheless as a

¹²⁴ *Focus*, EU gratuliert Erdogan zum Wahlsieg, 13 June.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Die Welt*, Union warnt vor "islamistischen Abwegen" der Türkei, 14 June.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *taz*, Überraschungssieger Kurden, 13 June.

¹²⁹ *taz*, Ernüchternder Sieg für Erdogan, 13 June.

¹³⁰ *taz*, Ernüchternder Sieg für Erdogan, 13 June.

¹³¹ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Die Türkei - ein ehrgeiziger Freund, 15 June.

“model for the masses in the Muslim world.” This includes Israel, where Turkey could play the role of an efficient moderator in the peace process with Palestine.¹³²

15 June 2011 – Successful test for Kilicdaroglu

In the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Michael Martens analyses the election results from the viewpoint of the secular CHP and its new leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu. With the CHP having improved on its 2007 result by 5 percentage points, Martens considers that despite remaining far behind the AKP the party could eventually turn into something “Turkey urgently needs: a serious, modern alternative to Erdogan’s politics.”¹³³

Kilicdaroglu, born in 1948 in the Alevi-dominated province of Tunceli, drew on the Alevis’ long-silenced heritage during the election campaign to win over Kurdish voters, traditionally neglected by his party. As Martens finds, Kilicdaroglu, having won almost 37 per cent of the vote in Istanbul, has made the first step in modernising his party and improving its appeal to Turkish voters.¹³⁴

15 June 2011 – Turkey as a democracy promoter in its neighbourhood

In an article for *Tagesspiegel*, Istanbul correspondent Thomas Seibert assesses Turkey’s commitment to democratisation in its neighbourhood. In his victory speech Erdogan announced that Turkey would more actively promote freedom, peace, and democracy, explicitly addressing the people of the Middle East. It appears that the AKP is being flooded with requests by Muslim conservative parties who seek to emulate its success – in other words, to thrive in a democratic system without giving up their Islamic credentials. With regards to Syria, Ankara has sharpened its tone, with Erdogan speaking of the Damascus government’s “inhuman” approach.¹³⁵ According to Seibert, Erdogan’s new attitude is not only causing tensions with Syria, but also with Iran.

In an article for *Die Welt*, Dietrich Alexander analyses what he calls Erdogan’s “determined Ottoman foreign policy:”

“Ankara has undergone a reorientation and in particular has recognised the changes in the Arab-Muslim world earlier than others and has known to use them to its advantage. Turkey acted wisely. It has not stood by former friends and Arab autocrats like Tunisia’s Ben Ali, Egypt’s Mubarak or Syria’s Assad. Instead, cautiously, but clearly enough, it has sympathised with the protest movements and called for reforms.”¹³⁶

Alexander considers that “Erdogan has advanced to the status of superstar from Syria to Morocco.”¹³⁷ At the same time, he warns that too much self-confidence can lead to hubris, with many in Turkey considering that Erdogan wants “too much too quickly.” Besides, the democratisation of the Arab world could lead to the rise of alternative democratic role models, with Turkey losing its unique position as a Muslim democracy. Overall, Alexander concludes, Turkey is becoming ever more important for the EU, which could play a much more direct role in the transformation processes in the Arab world by cooperating with Ankara.¹³⁸

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Bestanden, 15 June.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ *Tagesspiegel*, Der unheimliche Nachbar, 15 June.

¹³⁶ *Die Welt*, Erdogan ist der Superstar der arabischen Welt, 28 June.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

A further article in *Tagesspiegel* directly addresses Ankara's engagement in Syria. Turkey, hosting some 9,000 Syrian refugees, has once again requested President Assad to stop the inhuman crackdown by his security forces.¹³⁹

Jurgen Gottschlich, Istanbul correspondent for *taz*, points to a growing divide between Turkey and the Syrian regime. During a visit to the Syrian refugee camps, Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu reassured the refugees that Turkey would not consider closing its border. However, Gottschlich claims that Turkey is considering a possible military intervention to set up a buffer zone on the Syrian side of the border should the number of refugees climb above 100,000. Ankara, he believes, fears that the violence in Syria could evolve into a religious conflict between Sunnis and Alevis.

In an article for *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Turkey correspondent Gerd Hohler points out that Erdogan's efforts to assuage Assad's violent repression of protests in Syria has not yet yielded any concrete results. According to Hohler, Erdogan finds himself in a dilemma:

“On the one side, Turkey is interested in political stability. On the other side, it knows that the era of dictators is over. For many Arabs, Turkey is a model of how Islam, democracy, and economic prosperity can be reconciled. If the Turks want to pursue their economic interests in the region in the long term, they would do well to practice solidarity with the people rather than the leaders.”¹⁴⁰

In Syria, Hohler claims, the situation is particularly complicated. With 1.5 million Kurds living in Syria and having been refused citizenship for decades, there is a risk that they might join the militant PKK, “which would take Turkey's Kurdish question to a whole new dimension.” Moreover, Syria is the only Iranian ally in the region. Assad's downfall would further isolate the regime in Tehran, with possible consequences for Turkish-Iranian relations. For Hohler, a change of power in Damascus would have an impact on the entire Middle East, forcing Turkey to seriously rethink its strategy of navigating between East and West.¹⁴¹

Die Zeit reports that – following an advance by Syrian troops into the village of Chirbet al-Djoos, located only 100 metres from the Turkish border – the Syrian and Turkish armies are now within sight of each other.¹⁴²

23 June 2011 – Berlin Mayor thanks gastarbeiters

On the 50th anniversary of the bilateral agreement encouraging Turkish workers to come to Germany, Berlin mayor Klaus Wowereit (SPD) thanked immigrants for their contribution to economic reconstruction and political integration. At the same time, he criticised German politics for failing to recognise the challenges of integration. According to *Die Welt*, which reported the story, around 105,000 Turks currently live in Berlin.¹⁴³

24 June 2011 – Prevention Summit in Germany

At the Integration Summit in March, Minister of Interior Hans-Peter Friedrich had announced his intention to hold a Prevention Summit (“Präventionsgipfel”) with Muslim representatives

¹³⁹ *Tagesspiegel*, Ankara wirbt für Reformen in Syrien, 16 June.

¹⁴⁰ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Guter Freund am Bosphorus, 21 June.

¹⁴¹ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Guter Freund am Bosphorus, 21 June.

¹⁴² *Die Zeit*, Syrien und Türkei verlegen Truppen an die Grenze, 24 June.

¹⁴³ *Die Welt*, Wowereit dankt den zugewanderten Arbeitern, 23 June.

in order to strengthen the fight against Islamic extremism. His aim was to establish a “security partnership between Muslims and the state that would encourage Muslims to be more aware of possible radicalisation in their communities.”

In an article for *Tagesspiegel*, Andrea Dernbach points out that Friedrich’s arguments in support of a new summit have been rather vague. The summit, Dernbach fears, will essentially amount to “even more networking, even more exchange.”¹⁴⁴

Tilman Steffen, writing for *Die Zeit*, notes that Germany’s Islamic community, which already complains of feeling under general suspicion, has received this idea with scepticism. With different Muslim associations having been cooperating with the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesverfassungsschutz) and the Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt) since 2005, writes Steffen, Minister Friedrich has been hard-pressed to point out which concrete changes he suggests to the existing system.¹⁴⁵ With around 4 million Muslims living in Germany, the authorities estimate that around 36,000 are members of Islamist organisations. 1,000 are under police surveillance, while 130 are considered a potential security threat. Given these numbers, criminologist Christian Pfeiffer points out that right-wing extremists pose a much higher risk than young people attracted by Islamism. Those most at risk of radicalisation are second- or third-generation Turks and Germans who have converted to Islam. This particular group is very small, however.¹⁴⁶

In a *Tagesspiegel* article, Aiman Mazyek, head of the Central Council of Muslims, warns of a climate of suspicion towards Muslims. The Council has asked for increased funding for prevention work in the form of education and programs to combat extremism.¹⁴⁷

According to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the Left Party has been particularly critical of Friedrich’s Prevention Summit, claiming that it threatens to reduce relations between the state and Muslims to security aspects.¹⁴⁸ Thomas Oppermann from the SPD, quoted in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, thinks likewise.¹⁴⁹

In a comment for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the head of the paper’s national desk, Heribert Prantl, claims that Friedrich has his priorities wrong. The minister of interior, he argues, has a “narrow, very regulative understanding of prevention” essentially limited to the surveillance of potential suspects. The key to combating Islamism, Prantl writes, is not focusing on Salafists but investing in education.¹⁵⁰

“Today and more than ever, the old mantra that social policy is the best criminal policy remains valid. [...] Radicalisation can thus be countered by offering youths at risk opportunities [to develop]. This is no call for naivety, but an appeal to begin prevention earlier.”¹⁵¹

In *taz*, Wolf Schmidt, head of the paper’s national desk, takes stock of the political reactions to Friedrich’s initiative. Serkan Toren, FDP integration politician, complains that “Friedrich

¹⁴⁴ *Tagesspiegel*, Migration und Integration: Von Gipfel zu Gipfel, 24 June.

¹⁴⁵ *Die Zeit*, Friedrichs umstrittener Präventionsgipfel, 24 June.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Tagesspiegel*, Zentralrat der Muslime warnt vor Generalverdacht, 24 June.

¹⁴⁸ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "Muslime müssen mit der Polizei zusammenarbeiten", 25 June.

¹⁴⁹ *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Friedrichs Vorsorge, 24 June.

¹⁵⁰ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Prävention heißt weiterdenken, 24 June.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

suggests that potential radicals can be recruited in every mosque.” The Greens, meanwhile, criticize the minister’s approach for lacking subtlety.¹⁵²

Martin Lutz, writing in *Die Welt*, describes Friedrich’s plan to establish a website to strengthen cooperation between different Muslim associations. He also cites experts who doubt whether prevention work can have any impact upon persons who have already been radicalised.¹⁵³

July

3 July 2011 – Multicultural party running in Berlin

An article in *taz* reports that the BIG party (Bundnis für Integration und Gerechtigkeit, Alliance for Integration and Justice), which the paper calls an Islamic party, will run in the Berlin municipal elections. At its first press conference, the party complained that schools spent too much time teaching about homosexuality while doing too little to address discrimination against Muslims.¹⁵⁴ BIG already ran for the Landtag elections in North Rhine-Westphalia and obtained 0.2 per cent of the vote.

3 July 2011 – Westerwelle for closer relations with Turkey

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle spoke out in favour of closer relations with Turkey. According to *Die Welt*, Westerwelle described Turkey as one of the world’s new power centres and expressed his personal support for further progress in Turkey’s integration with the EU.¹⁵⁵ The current stalemate in the EU accession negotiations harms all sides, Westerwelle insisted. The minister, having recently returned from a meeting with his Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Davutoglu, emphasised that if EU countries rejected Turkey because of domestic considerations, the country might change its orientation, which would be detrimental to Europe. Dieter Zetsche, head of the Daimler car company, concurred with Westerwelle’s assessment, claiming that “we need to open the door to Europe very wide for Turkey.”¹⁵⁶

In an interview with the online portal of *Die Welt*, Westerwelle underlines Turkey’s role as “a bridge to the Muslim world” and commends the impressive political and economic changes Turkey has undergone over the past years. He describes himself as an “unbiased advocate for Turkey” and insists that “if Germany and Turkey agree on something together, this has a huge weight.” With that in mind, he argues, the two can be a force for positive change in the Arab world.¹⁵⁷

14 July 2011 – Germany has the most foreigners in the EU

Germany hosts the largest absolute number of foreigners in the EU, with 7.1 million inhabitants holding a foreign passport according to Eurostat, the European Statistical Office. While 35 per cent of these persons are from other EU states, the remaining 65 per cent come from outside the bloc. In relative terms, foreigners comprise 8.7 per cent of the German

¹⁵² *taz*, Gipfel gegen Gewalt, 24 June.

¹⁵³ *Die Welt*, Friedrich schließt Sicherheitspakt mit Muslimen, 24 June.

¹⁵⁴ *taz*, Gerechtigkeit innovativ, 3 July.

¹⁵⁵ *Die Welt*, Westerwelle fordert engere Anbindung an die Türkei, 3 July.

¹⁵⁶ *Die Welt*, Westerwelle fordert engere Anbindung an die Türkei, 3 July; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Zetsche fordert EU-Beitritt der Türkei, 4 July; *Die Welt*, Daimler-Chef wirbt für Türkei-Beitritt der EU, 3 July.

¹⁵⁷ *Die Welt*, "Es schadet Europa, wenn die Türkei sich abwendet", 4 July.

population, the eighth highest ratio among EU countries. The EU national average lies at 6.5 per cent.¹⁵⁸

14 July 2011 – Kurdish question remains unsolved

Several German media discuss the on-going fighting between the Turkish army and Kurdish PKK rebels. The weekly magazine *Focus* reports on the deaths of 20 Turkish soldiers in a recent attack, the highest death toll in a single strike in almost three years, which have prompted Prime Minister Erdogan to call an extraordinary meeting with the heads of intelligence, the General Staff, and the Minister of Interior.¹⁵⁹ *Spiegel* points out that Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, has threatened civil war should negotiations on a settlement fail to recommence by 15 June.¹⁶⁰

According to *taz*, NATO, of which Turkey is a member, has strongly condemned the attacks by Kurdish rebels. As the paper notes, 40,000 persons are estimated to have been killed since the beginning of the conflict.¹⁶¹ In a comment for the same newspaper, Istanbul correspondent Jurgen Gottschlich points out that on the same day that 13 Turkish soldiers were killed the Kurdish BDP announced an autonomy programme. This, writes Gottschlich, shows how deep the split between the Kurds and the rest of the population has become.¹⁶² Criticising the Turkish government's reaction, Gottschlich concludes that:

“While Erdogan is trying to profile himself as a negotiator in Libya, his own house is in flames. But Erdogan only does what several other Turkish politicians before him have already done: he sends in the army.”¹⁶³

Jan Keetman, an Istanbul-based correspondent for the left-wing daily *Neues Deutschland*, concludes that Erdogan is playing the nationalist card following the parliamentary elections held on 12 June.¹⁶⁴ Five of the BDP's 35 elected delegates remain in prison, he points out. A sixth was denied the chance to take his seat immediately after the elections. As a result, all BDP delegates have refused to take their oath. According to Keetman, Erdogan seems determined to impose a strictly nationalist line in his upcoming constitutional project. “Thus, the Kurds are reminding him in a drastic way that the Kurdish problem, already declared resolved by Erdogan, still exists.”¹⁶⁵

Nick Brauns, Istanbul correspondent with the left-wing daily *Junge Welt*, writes about an autonomy plan drafted by a congress of 850 BDP members and representatives of civil society organisations. The declaration calls for self-governance in Kurdish parts of Turkey and a federation of municipal councils. Negotiations between the AKP and the BDP on an end to the latter's parliamentary boycott have failed, Brauns points out.¹⁶⁶

15 July 2011 – Buruma: Turkey needs accession perspective

¹⁵⁸ *Die Welt*, In Deutschland leben EU-weit die meisten Ausländer, 14 July.

¹⁵⁹ *Focus*, 20 Tote bei Kämpfen, 14 July.

¹⁶⁰ *Spiegel*, Viele Tote bei Gefechten mit kurdischen Rebellen, 14 July.

¹⁶¹ *taz*, Achtzehn Tote nach PKK-Angriff, 15 July.

¹⁶² *taz*, Der Alptraum kehrt zurück, 17 July.

¹⁶³ *taz*, Der Alptraum kehrt zurück, 17 July.

¹⁶⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, Kurden proben den Bruch mit Ankara, 18 July.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Junge Welt*, Kurden rufen Autonomie aus, 16 July.

In an article for *Die Welt*, Ian Buruma, Professor for Democracy and Human Rights at Bard College, explains that Turkey needs a credible EU accession perspective in order to prevent Islamic populist tendencies from prevailing in the country.¹⁶⁷ The widespread fear of Turkish membership, declares Buruma, is “excessive.” Turkey’s integration would send a positive signal to Turkish citizens already living in EU member states. It would also provide a boost to the EU’s policy vis-à-vis the Middle East. “Without Turkey,” Buruma writes, “the EU’s engagement in the Middle East still appears as Western imperialism.”¹⁶⁸

17 July 2011 – Sarrazin in Kreuzberg – a media event

“Chased out of Kreuzberg” is the title of an article published by Thilo Sarrazin in the Sunday edition of *Die Welt*, the *Welt am Sonntag*. Sarrazin, who caused an uproar by warning of the demographic impact of less educated Turkish and Arab immigrants to Germany in a book published last autumn, describes the reception he was awarded when being interviewed by the public news channel ZDF at the Turkish market in the district of Kreuzberg in Berlin.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, Sarrazin’s visit caused a very emotional reaction, with passers-by shouting for him to leave Kreuzberg, a Turkish restaurant owner refusing to serve him, and the Alevi Community Centre cancelling a prearranged discussion event.¹⁷⁰

According to *Die Welt*, the mayor of Neukolln, Heinz Buschkowsky, criticised the demonstrations against his party colleague and decried the “lack of political maturity of civil society” and the “triumph of psycho terror and the power of the street mob.”¹⁷¹

Spiegel reports on criticism – voiced by the German Cultural Council (Deutscher Kulturrat) and Turkish organisations – against ZDF for organising Sarrazin’s controversial visit to Kreuzberg.¹⁷² Olaf Zimmermann, Executive Director of the German Cultural Council, speaks of the visit as a “planned spectacle,” while the Turkish Alliance (Turkischer Bund) of Berlin-Brandenburg considers it a “provocation.” The editorial team of “Aspekte”, the ZDF programme that organised the Kreuzberg interview, claims that the aim of the broadcast was to “launch a conversation” rather than provoke a row.

19 July 2011 – Erdogan announces freeze in relationship with EU

Several German media report on Erdogan’s announcement that Turkey will freeze relations with the EU once Cyprus takes over the bloc’s rotating Presidency in the second half of 2012. *Die Welt* reports Erdogan as saying that Turkey is much less prepared to make concessions than it used to be. While the country had in principle accepted the return of Guzelyurt, a town in the northern part of the island, and the removal of Turkish troops from Cyprus back in 2004, such steps are now unthinkable, Erdogan says. Instead, everything will have to be negotiated from scratch.¹⁷³

According to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Erdogan’s comments were made in an interview with Turkish newspaper *Milliyet*. Erdogan had claimed that “in no case” would

¹⁶⁷ *Die Welt*, Die Türkei braucht echte Beitrittsperspektiven, 15 July.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ *Welt am Sonntag*, Aus Kreuzberg verjagt, 17 July.

¹⁷⁰ ZDF aspekte: Darf man das? Mit Sarrazin in Kreuzberg, 22 July 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQ0CpENZ0E>.

¹⁷¹ *Die Welt*, Buschkowsky kritisiert "Triumph von Psychoterror", 18 July.

¹⁷² *Spiegel*, Kritik an Provo-Tour mit Sarrazin, 18 July.

¹⁷³ *Die Welt*, Erdogan kündigt sechsmonatige Funkstille mit EU an, 19 July.

Turkey speak to the EU during the Cypriot Presidency and that “relations to the EU will be frozen.”¹⁷⁴

In a comment for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Istanbul correspondent Kai Strittmatter explains that Turkey is using Cyprus as a means to exert pressure on the EU and to speed up the sluggish talks with the Greek Cypriots.¹⁷⁵ This might not be the worst of strategies, Strittmatter believes.

“Maybe the ultimatum is not a bad thing: the EU and Turkey could finally make clear to each other what they want from one another. Is Ankara still serious about the accession process? Then it might as well speed up the process by a sign of goodwill and open its ports to the Greek Cypriots. And is Brussels serious? Then the big EU member states should stop hiding behind Cyprus. In the end, the dispute over Cyprus is just shadowboxing, a comfortable pretext for all of Turkey’s opponents to hold it at bay.”¹⁷⁶

Cyprus’ admission into the EU in 2004, Strittmatter thinks, was “one of the EU’s greatest mistakes in the past decade.”

According to *taz*, Cypriot President Dimitris Christofias condemned Erdogan’s statements as “cynical” and warned that “should Turkey continue on this course, there will be absolutely no possibility for even nominal progress.”¹⁷⁷ Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots aim to conclude the ongoing talks under UN auspices before the second half of 2012. Should this fail, Erdogan is reported as saying, “we will go our own way.”¹⁷⁸

Thomas Seibert, Istanbul correspondent for the *Tagesspiegel*, points out that Erdogan’s statements “demonstrate the extent to which the EU has lost its importance in Turkish politics. With its new, uncompromising position in the Cyprus conflict, Ankara is accepting the possibility of a backlash in the its EU accession process.”¹⁷⁹

Seibert explains this by referring to Turkey’s growing awareness that its accession bid – opposed by EU members like France – stands little chance of bearing fruit. Hence, Seibert figures, there is no longer a reason for Turkey to give in to the EU’s demands.¹⁸⁰

Jurgen Gottschlich, Istanbul correspondent for *taz*, views Erdogan’s statements as an ultimatum and as the “harshest criticism of the EU since the AKP assumed office almost ten years ago.” EU Enlargement Commissioner Fule, according to *taz*, has described Ankara’s position as “not helpful.”¹⁸¹

Spiegel reports that new disagreements have erupted within the CSU/CDU coalition regarding how to deal with Turkey. The CSU has suggested countering Erdogan’s warnings with an equally hard line, while the Christian Democrats have rejected the idea of bringing the negotiation talks with Ankara to a halt.¹⁸² According to CDU MP Ruprecht Polenz, head of the Bundestag’s External Affairs Committee, such a step would limit both sides’ strategic

¹⁷⁴ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Erdogan: Keine Beziehungen zur EU, 19 July.

¹⁷⁵ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Zypern als Druckmittel, 20 July.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ *taz*, Erdogan droht mit Funkstille, 19 July.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ *Tagesspiegel*, Erdogan pfeift auf die EU, 19 July.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ *taz*, Erdogan stellt der EU ein Ultimatum, 20 July.

¹⁸² *Spiegel*, Union streitet über Abbruch der EU-Beitrittsgespräche, 21 July.

options.¹⁸³ In contrast, CSU General Secretary Alexander Dobrindt has claimed that Turkey “definitely has nothing to do inside the EU” if it decides to break off its relations with Brussels during the Cypriot Presidency. The EU must no longer accept Erdogan’s “threats and attempts at blackmail”.¹⁸⁴

21 July 2011 – Erdogan’s new style

In a comment for *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Wolfgang Gunter Lerch, the paper’s politics editor, comments on Erdogan’s governing style following the 12 June elections. According to Lerch, Erdogan’s clear victory has led to expectations of a strong government, particularly when it comes to dealing with the planned constitutional reform. The boycott of Parliament by two opposition parties, the CHP and the BDP, has paralysed the assembly’s work. Both parties oppose the imprisonment of some of their elected representatives and a series of controversial probes into anti-government conspiracies.¹⁸⁵

25 July 2011 – 22 years for Hrant Dink’s murderer

Several German newspapers discuss the 22-year sentence handed down to Ogun Samast, the underage murderer of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who was shot in Istanbul in January 2007. Samast was condemned by a juvenile court in Istanbul, but will only have to spend 11 years behind bars because of his age and his already having spent four years in custody.¹⁸⁶

Hrant Dink had attracted the hate of Turkish ultranationalists for referring to the massacre of the Armenians by the Ottoman Empire as genocide and by working towards the reconciliation of Turks and Armenians.¹⁸⁷ After the sentence was announced, lawyers of the Dink family decried that those who really stand behind the murder have yet to be found and tried.¹⁸⁸ In 2010 the European Court of Human Rights found that the Turkish state was partially responsible for the murder because it failed to protect Dink despite assassination threats by right-wing radicals.¹⁸⁹

25 July 2011 – Debate about integration test and citizenship law

Suddeutsche Zeitung discusses the planned abolition of the integration test for immigrants seeking to acquire German citizenship. The test – which sought to assess immigrants’ level of integration through questions about German history and culture and individual moral convictions – was introduced by the CDU-FDP government in Baden-Wurtemberg in 2006, triggering significant criticism.

Bilkay Oney, the new Integration Minister for Baden-Wurtemberg (SPD), stated that the current integration test had no value for security policy: terrorists would never answer the questions posed to them truthfully.¹⁹⁰ As Oney pointed out, in five years not a single applicant was rejected on the basis of the test. The best solution, the minister argued, would be to replace the test with a personal interview.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, „Verschwörung“ und Boykott, 21 July.

¹⁸⁶ *Die Zeit*, 22 Jahre Haft für den Mörder von Hrant Dink, 25 July.

¹⁸⁷ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Lange Haftstrafe für Mörder von Hrant Dink, 25 July.

¹⁸⁸ *taz*, Mörder zu fast 23 Jahren Haft verurteilt, 25 July.

¹⁸⁹ *Die Zeit*, 22 Jahre Haft für den Mörder von Hrant Dink, 25 July.

¹⁹⁰ *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, "Gesinnungstest" für Ausländer vor dem Aus, 25 July.

Matthias Kamann, head of the politics desk for *Die Welt*, discusses Oney's plan to propose a law – this time, at the federal level – enabling immigrants to retain double citizenship. Until now, migrants have had to choose between German citizenship and that of their country of origin after turning 23. For Kamann, “citizenship is overrated [...]. Integration today is no longer a question of citizenship. Instead, it is about how our country manages to attract skilled immigrants.”¹⁹¹ Therefore, he argues, assuming that society is open to anyone who respects its rules, a single citizenship should suffice, regardless of whether it is German or not.

Eva Volpel, editor for social and labour market issues with *taz*, also addresses the proposed abolition of the citizenship option. In practice, the German state accepts double citizenship in 53 per cent of cases. Among those who can benefit from double citizenship are citizens of the EU and Switzerland. It is precisely because the situation is different for Turks that the Turkish community in Germany has spoken out against the existing regulations.¹⁹²

According to *taz*, Oney has justified her proposal by claiming that problems with integration are related less to citizenship and more to the social and economic conditions and the level of education. Double citizenship has been supported for a long time by the Green Party, the SPD and the Left Party. However, these parties' votes in the Bundesrat would not be enough to ensure the bill's passage.¹⁹³

27 July 2011 – German politics without migrants

In an article for *Die Welt*, Matthias Kamann complains that German politics disregards immigrants.

“In parliaments, immigrants hardly play a role. Mostly, they are pushed into the integration policy corner, and other competences are overlooked.”¹⁹⁴

In the Bundestag for instance, only 20 of 620 delegates have a migration background. At the municipal level, the statistics are similar. Like Kamann, Bilkay Oney believes that migrants are often considered experts on integration and their countries of origin, but seldom get to have their say on other topics.¹⁹⁵

29 July 2011 – Erdogan on Christian terror

In an article for *Tagesspiegel*, Istanbul correspondent Thomas Seibert looks at Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's comments on the terrorist attacks in Oslo. Erdogan criticised the initial assumption that the attacks had been carried out by Islamists and pointed to the perpetrator's ideological affiliation with Christian fundamentalism. Erdogan expects a debate in Europe on “Christian terror” and announced that mirroring European politicians' assessment of the human rights situation in Turkey, a committee of the Turkish Parliament would now investigate “Islamophobia” in Europe.¹⁹⁶ According to Seibert:

¹⁹¹ *Die Welt*, Das Staatsbürgerschaftsrecht wird überschätzt, 26 July.

¹⁹² *taz*, Neuer Anlauf zum Doppelpass, 26 July.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ *Die Welt*, In Deutschland wird Politik ohne Migranten gemacht, 27 July.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid..

¹⁹⁶ *Tagesspiegel*, Erdogan will Debatte über „christlichen Terror“, 29 July.

“These plans reflect Turkey’s new self-confidence towards the West and the EU. The country’s rise as a Middle Eastern regional power and the year-long economic upswing have led to a decline in the EU’s importance in Ankara’s foreign policy.”¹⁹⁷

In a short piece, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* quotes Erdogan as saying that a “racist current” in Europe contributed to the Oslo attacks.¹⁹⁸

30 July 2011 – New army chief in Turkey

In *Tagesspiegel*, Thomas Seibert comments on the changes atop the Turkish military. Following the resignation of leading military commanders, Necdet Ozel, previously head of the gendarmerie, is slated to become the new chief of staff. According to Seibert, Ozel’s promotion was decided rapidly in order to avoid a power vacuum in the top echelons of the military and to submit the army to stronger political control.¹⁹⁹

The step became necessary following the surprise resignation of army chief Isik Kosaner and three other high-ranking commanders. Their collective resignation was considered an acknowledgment of defeat in a power struggle with the political leadership. Referring to a wave of indictments which link top soldiers to a conspiracy to overthrow the AKP government, Kosaner criticised the tendency to present the military as a “criminal organisation.”²⁰⁰

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¹⁹⁷ Ibid..

¹⁹⁸ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Erdogan ruft "rassistische Stromung", 30 July.

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