

## **Sarkozy in Ankara, Erbakan's Death and Turkish Foreign Relations in the Middle East and Africa**



### **Turkey through French Eyes**

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

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## January

### 5-7 January 2011 – A wall between Greece and Turkey?

In a brief piece on 5 January, the communist daily *L'Humanité* reports on the Greek government's decision to build a 12,5 km long wall to protect its border with Turkey from illegal migrants.<sup>1</sup> Two days later the story is picked up by *Le Monde*. Brussels correspondent Jean-Pierre Stroobants and Istanbul correspondent Guillaume Perrier co-author an analysis, from which it follows that the projected wall “embarrasses Brussels.”<sup>2</sup> A spokesperson for the European Commission is quoted as saying that “walls and fences are short-term measures,” far from the “structural answers needed to handle boundaries and asylum.” Athens is ready to denounce the “hypocrisy” of such discourse, Stroobants and Perrier write, while France and Germany worry about the future of the Schengen zone. The project is also the object of criticism in Turkey. Beril Dedeoglu, a professor of international relations at Galatasaray University in Istanbul, tells *Le Monde*:

“The wall means that Turkey is physically notified that it stands outside Europe. It will probably not curb migration flows, but it might annihilate trust between the two neighbors.”

The Turkish government is careful not to fan the flames of the debate, however, in part because Turkey itself is confronted with significant flows of undocumented migrants, and because Ankara is already under pressure from Brussels to sign a readmission agreement with the EU.

On 20 January the conservative weekly *Le Point* picks up the story, noting that Prime Minister (PM) Erdogan “understood” Greece's project after Greek PM Georges Papandreou showed him figures on undocumented border crossing between the two countries. The same week, left-leaning weekly *Marianne* carries a story entitled “Greece-Turkey: high-tech fence,”<sup>3</sup> where the Greek project is compared to the French Maginot line and to the fence built by Spain around its enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. The article, written by the magazine's correspondent in Greece, cites PM Papandreou's estimate that 200 to 300 people illegally enter Greece across the Evros River every night. It ends with sceptical remarks made publicly by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, who mentioned that a mere 0.3 per cent of 52,000 asylum seekers in Greece had obtained refugee status in 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> *L'Humanite*, “La Grece veut construire un mur a la frontiere turque contre les migrants.” See: [http://humanite.fr/04\\_01\\_2011-la-grece-veut-construire-un-mur-a-la-frontiere-turque-contre-les-migrants-461385](http://humanite.fr/04_01_2011-la-grece-veut-construire-un-mur-a-la-frontiere-turque-contre-les-migrants-461385)>

<sup>2</sup> *Le Monde*, “Le projet de mur a la frontiere entre la Grece et la Turquie embarrasse Bruxelles .” See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1145007](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1145007)

<sup>3</sup> *Marianne*, “Grece-Turquie: Cloture High-Tech.” The article is reproduced here :[http://www.amb-grece.fr/articles\\_presse/2011/j-janvier%202011/j-22\\_01\\_2011.htm#4](http://www.amb-grece.fr/articles_presse/2011/j-janvier%202011/j-22_01_2011.htm#4)

### **13 January 2011 – Pamuk: “The souring of Turkey's European dream”**

*Courier International*, the weekly magazine which translates and publishes articles and excerpts from foreign newspapers and magazines, reprints a text – originally published in *The Guardian* in December 2010 – by Turkish novelist and Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk. In “The souring of Turkey's European dream,”<sup>4</sup> Pamuk speaks of the “disenchantment” felt by Turkey and many non-European countries confronted by a Europe that is “turning in on itself” and showing no sign of the “fraternité” it once seemed to stand for. He concludes,

“...being callous about the sufferings of immigrants and minorities, and castigating the Asians, Africans and Muslims now leading difficult lives in the peripheries of Europe – even holding them solely responsible for their woes – is not ‘brotherhood’”

### **13 January 2011 – A Turk under threat of deportation**

In *Ouest France*, France’s most circulated regional newspaper, covering Western France, including Brittany and Lower Normandy, Patrick Croguennec reports on Kenan Gedik, a Turkish citizen who arrived in France in 2006 without a visa, opened a restaurant, and married a French woman in 2009. Arrested during a routine traffic check – after he was unable to produce any French ID – Gedik was taken to an administrative court and faced deportation. The event triggered expressions of solidarity from the regional association of business owners.<sup>5</sup> The deportation order was cancelled five days after it was issued.<sup>6</sup>

### **13 January 2011 – Suleiman the Magnificent on TV**

Both *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* report on the controversy surrounding “The Magnificent Century,” a TV series on the life of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, which aired in Turkey for the first time on 5 January. The program, which depicts a hedonistic, wine-loving ruler well versed in the arts of seduction, provoked the ire of some Islamist groups. Over 75,000 formal complaints were lodged in the space of a week. Young members of the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi, founded and directed by Necmettin Erbakan until his death in February 2011) organised a demonstration outside the TV station and threw eggs at the building.

Both articles underline the context of the controversy:

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<sup>4</sup> *The Guardian*, 10 December 2010, see : <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/dec/23/turkey-european-dream-migrants-minorites>

<sup>5</sup> *Ouest France*, “Guingamp : un Turc menace d'expulsion – Bretagne.” 13 January 2011, <http://www.ouest-france.fr/2011/01/13/bretagne/Guingamp-un-Turc-menace-d-expulsion--59698601.html>

<sup>6</sup> *Ouest France*, “Guingamp : le marchand turc ne sera pas expulsé.” See : [http://www.ouest-france.fr/region/paysdelaloire\\_detail\\_-Guingamp-le-commerçant-turc-ne-sera-pas-expulse\\_40798-1659873\\_actu.Htm](http://www.ouest-france.fr/region/paysdelaloire_detail_-Guingamp-le-commerçant-turc-ne-sera-pas-expulse_40798-1659873_actu.Htm)

“if the Kemalist Republic long turned its back to Ottoman history, the Islamic-conservative government led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan has rekindled the imperial myth.”<sup>7</sup>

“[Yet] in the midst of this nostalgia for an Ottoman ‘golden age’, the commotion triggered by ‘The Magnificent Century’ has led some to fear a new rewriting of history – targeting Ottoman history, this time.”<sup>8</sup>

*Le Figaro* concludes by citing the “great level of ignorance” about the Ottoman period among Turks. Many conservative historians have remained silent about the fact that many sultans drank alcohol, for instance. *Libération* runs a similar story on 15 January, which concludes that “Islamic correctness” is slowly imposing a new “moral order.”<sup>9</sup>

### 14 January 2011 – Istanbul Beyond Istanbul

A long piece by Guillaume Perrier in *Le Monde* presents the problems linked to the fast-paced urban development of Istanbul, which grew from four million to 15 million inhabitants in the space of just 30 years.<sup>10</sup> The article goes over several aspects of this “chaotic” development: the “mushroom effect,” where entire new neighbourhoods surface in the space of months; the inequalities generated by booming real estate prices; the impression that historical sites have lost their cachet and have become de-humanised for the sake of profit; the gentrification of the centre and the driving out of Roma or Kurdish minorities; the anarchic pace of urbanisation; and construction of buildings without proper permits, which leads to fears of a large-scale disaster when a major earthquake hits Istanbul. Kadir Topbas, the mayor, will “use the seismic risk to renovate Istanbul” to the utmost pleasure of giant construction companies, the article concludes.

### 19 January 2011 – A controversial sculpture

*Le Monde*’s Guillaume Perrier reports on the controversy surrounding the “monument of humanity,” a sculpture built near Kars and intended to encourage reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia. During a visit, PM Erdogan called the monument a “monstrosity” and denounced its location next to the mausoleum of Abou Hasan Harakani, an important figure of Turkish Islam in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> The mayor of Kars, a member of the AKP party, promised he would see to it that the monument is destroyed and replaced with a

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<sup>7</sup> *Le Monde*, “Une serie tele ecorne l’image de Soliman le Magnifique.” See [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1145491](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1145491)

<sup>8</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Une serie turque sur Soliman le Magnifique fait scandale.” See this link for the text of the article : <http://acturca.wordpress.com/2011/01/13/une-serie-turque-sur-soliman-le-magnifique-fait-scandale/>

<sup>9</sup> *Liberation*, “Soliman le Magnifique islamiquement incorrect.” See <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012313813-soliman-le-magnifique-islamiquement-incorrect>

<sup>10</sup> *Le Monde*, “Istanbul n’est plus dans Istanbul.” See [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1145610](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1145610)

<sup>11</sup> *Le Monde*, “A la frontiere armenienne, l’affront a M. Erdogan.” See : [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1146025](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1146025)

“pretty park”. The monument, a 30 metre-tall statute of a human figure cut in half, with the two sections facing each other, had been built in 2005 after a decision by Kars’ former mayor, Naif Alibeyoglu, a proponent of reconciliation. PM Erdogan’s reaction is analysed in the article as a game of nationalist one-upmanship between the AKP and MHP before the coming elections. (The MHP’s local leader had called the statute “Armenian” and claimed that Turkey “should not be ashamed of anything.”) A short article on the same issue, also by Perrier, appears two days later in the weekly *Le Point*. The process of normalisation between Turkey and Armenia, Perrier writes, has come a standstill.<sup>12</sup>

## 20 January 2011 – No justice for Hrant Dink?

In *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand, the paper’s Istanbul correspondent, reports on a demonstration that gathered several thousand people near the headquarters of *Agos*. The protesters called for justice exactly four years after Hrant Dink’s assassination and denounced the trial as “a parody of justice.”<sup>13</sup> Lawyers of the victim’s family published a report on the four years of proceedings, in which they listed a number of irregularities, including “falsified evidence”, and demanded that the trial be restarted on a new basis. In particular, they requested that a number of high level police officials and intelligence officers be called to testify.

In an op-ed piece published in *Le Monde* on 20 January, a large group of French lawyers, jurists, philosophers and intellectuals such as Bernard Henri-Lévy and Alain Finkielkraut, demand “justice for Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink.”<sup>14</sup> The piece mentions a 14 September 2010 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which determined that Turkish authorities (police and gendarmerie in Trabzon and police in Istanbul) knew about plans for the assassination and did not try to stop it. The ruling denounced the “concerted action [on the part of members of the gendarmerie] to hamper the capacity of the investigation to establish who was responsible..”

The op-ed ends with an appeal to the 14<sup>th</sup> chamber of Istanbul’s criminal tribunal to take all necessary measures to ensure that justice is done to Hrant Dink.

On 9 February, *Le Monde* reports that in the wake of Turkey’s condemnation by the ECHR an inquiry has been opened against 30 high-ranking civil servants.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Le Point*, “La " monstrosité " d'Erdogan.” See : [http://www.lepoint.fr/la-monstrosite-d-erdogan-20-01-2011-1325789\\_19.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/la-monstrosite-d-erdogan-20-01-2011-1325789_19.php)

<sup>13</sup> *Le Figaro*, “*Turquie : le meurtre du journaliste armenien impuni.*” See : <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/01/19/01003-20110119ARTFIG00719-turquie-le-meurtre-du-journaliste-armenien-impuni.php>

<sup>14</sup> *Le Monde*, “Justice pour le journaliste Hrant Dink.” See [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1146161](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1146161)

<sup>15</sup> *Le Monde*, “Assassinat de Hrant Dink: ouverture d'une enquête sur 30 fonctionnaires.” See : [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1148013](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1148013)

## 27 January 2011 - Turkish leaders on France and the EU

Two dailies run comprehensive interviews with senior Turkish officials. *Le Figaro* publishes an interview with the Turkish President Abdullah Gul and *La Croix*, a Catholic daily, with the Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. Both interviews are about Turkey's stalled candidacy to join the European Union; both also touch on Turkey's strategic foreign policy orientation. President Gul makes several references to French President Nicolas Sarkozy's visit to Ankara, scheduled for 25 February (not an official state visit, but a visit linked to France holding the G20 presidency).<sup>16</sup> Pierre Rousselin, the interviewer, goes over a number of classic issues related to Turkey, France and the EU: the state of public opinion in France, Europe, and Turkey regarding Turkish accession; the extent to which the French administration's position vis-à-vis Turkey may have hurt mutual economic interests; and Turkey's foreign policy under Davutoglu. Gul's answers are measured. Asked about the prospect of national referenda on Turkish EU accession, he responds:

“If the people say no, we shall respect their decision. But one must be honest. Everything depends on how things are presented. If one says that Turkey will take a share of Europe's cake, of course the people will say no. But if one explains that Turkey will make the cake bigger, then it is different. Turkey has a very large potential.”

The article ends with a question on Tunisia: “Can Turkey be a model for Tunisia?” Gul answers: “We have had a long relationship of fraternity with Tunisia, and we wish that democratic opinions can be openly expressed in Tunisia.”

Davutoglu's interview in *La Croix*, by Francois d'Alencon, goes over roughly the same themes, with the addition of a question on Turkey's priorities in the fight against discrimination in Europe. (Turkey chairs the Council of Europe's committee on the issue.) D'Alencon also cites a series of attacks against Christians in the Middle East, most recently in Iraq and Egypt.<sup>17</sup> Davutoglu advocates a “global solution,” linking local and national politics in Europe to the situation in Europe's neighbourhood. Only such an approach can be successful, he explains, given the increasing diversity of European societies. Davutoglu's answers on Cyprus and on EU integration are more pugnacious than Gul's. He affirms the principle of “pacta sunt servanda” regarding Turkey's EU candidacy, and rhetorically asks whether Cyprus is a member of the EU or if the EU is simply a tool in the hands of Greek Cypriots who use it to “blackmail” Turkey. At the end of the interview, Davutoglu reaffirms Turkey's EU aspirations. “The EU is *the* strategic objective of our foreign policy, a historic choice that we have made,” he says.

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<sup>16</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Abdullah Gul : «Le monde ne s'arrete pas a l'UE» .” See <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/01/26/01003-20110126ARTFIG00770-abdullah-glle-monde-ne-s-arrete-pas-a-l-ue.php>

<sup>17</sup> *La Croix*, “Ahmet Davutoglu : «La Turquie demande le respect des valeurs europeennes».” See <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/Ahmet-Davutoglu-La-Turquie-demande-le-respect-des-valeurs-europeennes- NG -2011-01-26-562506>.

Likewise, he denies the notion that Turkey might have “de-aligned” itself from the West. The country is firmly anchored in NATO and the West, he says, and any additional foreign policy initiative it might take is undertaken “not as an alternative, but complementary with NATO and the EU.”

### **29 January 2011 – A Turkish film irritates Israel**

In *Libération*, film critic Felix Gatier reports on the new episode of the film series “The Valley of the Wolves” (Kurtlar Vadisi), in which a Turkish secret agent, Polat Alemdar, investigates Israel’s attack against the Gaza flotilla.<sup>18</sup> Alemdar’s mission in the film is to find and kill the Israeli officer responsible for the assault. Gatier ends by mentioning that the film premiere took place on 27 January – the annual day of remembrance for the Holocaust.

### **30 January 2011 – Jacques Delors’ European lessons**

*Le Monde* reports on a speech by Jacques Delors, a former president of the European Commission, given in Berlin at the invitation of the German Green party. The article by *Le Monde*’s Berlin correspondent – headlined “The European lessons of Jacques Delors” (Les leçons d’Europe de Jacques Delors) – reports that Delors, known for his significant contributions to European integration, lamented the current EU leaders’ lack of ambition.<sup>19</sup> At the end of his intervention Delors was very critical of current French-German tactics in the accession negotiations with Turkey. “We were wrong to say ‘no’ before we really negotiated”, he claimed. He asserted that letting Turkey in would prove wrong those who believe in the theory of a “clash of civilization.” Finally, Delors argued that a proper conduct of the negotiations would allow for a solution of the Cyprus problem. “That this question has to be dealt with by the UN is a shame for Europe”, he said.

Delors’ speech was an important public statement of support both for the Turkish accession process and for enlargement as such. However, the story was not widely picked up or discussed elsewhere.

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<sup>18</sup> *Libération*, “Un film turc agace Israël.” See <http://next.liberation.fr/culture/01012316703-un-film-turc-agace-israel>

<sup>19</sup> *Le Monde*, “Les leçons d’Europe de Jacques Delors.” See [http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2011/01/30/les-lecons-d-europe-de-jacques-delors\\_1472793\\_3214.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2011/01/30/les-lecons-d-europe-de-jacques-delors_1472793_3214.html)

### **31 January 2011 – Turkey and Poland most attractive**

The business daily *La Tribune* reports that, just like in 2010, Turkey and Poland are the two most attractive destinations for bank acquisitions in Europe<sup>20</sup>. Particularly in Turkey Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria (BBVA) entered Garanti Bank's capital, and others are projected to follow.

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<sup>20</sup> *La Tribune*, "La Pologne et la Turquie resteront les pays les plus attractifs." See <http://www.latribune.fr/journal/edition-du-3101/industrie-financiere/1111765/la-pologne-et-la-turquie-resteront-les-pays-les-plus-attractifs.html>

## February

### 1 February 2011 – Turkey’s economic ambitions

A long piece published in the weekly *L’Express* entitled “Turkey: following the footsteps of the Ottoman Empire,” draws the picture of a country eager to use its strong economic growth to enlarge its zone of influence – even if this should be at the expense of its relations with the EU.<sup>21</sup> “The country no longer hides its ambitions to be a strategic actor in the region, even if this means playing out of tune [with its European partners],” the article says. The author, Yves-Michel Riols, quotes Davutoglu as saying that “Just like the Ottomans were at the centre of world politics in their time in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we will make the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East and Turkey the new centre of world politics.” Riols appears to take this claim literally. As he sees it, this “Ottoman nostalgia” – abundantly used by the AKP in its domestic political strategy – is an expression of Turkey’s ambitions. It is also part of a “change in tone” and a “drift to the East” under the current administration.

Generally, a picture emerges of a country whose growing economic might gives it leverage with its neighbours. Turkey’s “zero problems” diplomacy furthers its economic advantage, for instance by encouraging private investment in neighbouring countries. The article ends with a quote from Turkey’s trade minister, Zafer Caglayan:

“For Turkey, the world is not limited to the European Union. Within a four-hour flight, we can reach 56 countries and a fourth of the world’s population. We want to be the world’s tenth largest economy by 2023. For the rest, it’s up to Europe to decide.”

The journalist translates this as: “If you do not want us, soon we will no longer need you.”

### 1 February 2011 – The AKP: an example for the Arab world?

Recent developments in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere have reignited the debate on the possibility of anchoring democracy in Muslim countries, with Turkey presented as a reference point in many such discussions. The return of Rached Ghannouchi to Tunisia after a long exile in Britain – and the possibility of his party’s participation in government – has also encouraged analyses on the AKP as a role model. On 1 February, *La Croix* publishes an article entitled “A view from Turkey: the AKP, an example for the Arab world,” by the paper’s Istanbul correspondent Delphine Nerbollier.<sup>22</sup> The article describes the appeal of the AKP, as a Muslim conservative party, to Arab businessmen and investors, and the acclaim PM Erdogan received for criticising Israel. The article tries to understand the “fragile balance between Islam and secularism” – essential to

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<sup>21</sup> *L’Expansion*, “La Turquie sur les traces de l’Empire ottoman.” See [http://lexpansion.lexpress.fr/economie/la-turquie-sur-les-traces-de-l-empire-ottoman\\_247660.html](http://lexpansion.lexpress.fr/economie/la-turquie-sur-les-traces-de-l-empire-ottoman_247660.html)

<sup>22</sup> *La Croix*, “L’AKP, un exemple pour le monde arabe”, 1 February 2011

democracy, but hard to maintain. Nerbollier concludes by saying that in Turkey the balance is somewhat precarious at the moment, with the opposition questioning the AKP's commitment to democracy.

A much longer article, "Turkey-Tunisia: the AKP's filiation" by Ariane Bonzon, published on *Slate.fr* on 3 February, offers a more detailed analysis.<sup>23</sup> First, it draws a parallel between Habib Bourguiba, who drew inspiration from Ataturk, and Rached Ghannouchi's Ennahdha party, which has drawn inspiration from Erdogan and his AKP. The article focuses on Ghannouchi's political trajectory, and on his close ties with Erdogan and Erdogan. (Many of Ghannouchi's books are translated into Turkish. He is also a regular visitor to Turkey.)

"The Turkish example is reassuring," Bonzon explains, particularly for those who might otherwise feel anxious about Ghannouchi's return to Tunisia. But the comparison between Ennahdha and the AKP has its limits, warns Bonzon. While the AKP is a conservative party, Ennahdha is progressive, its support base consisting of workers, petits bourgeois, and students.

At the end of the article, Bonzon reverses the question, and asks whether Tunisia could actually be an example for Turkey. In Tunisia, unlike in Turkey, Islam was never considered a threat. Religion might therefore prove to be the glue that ensures peaceful relations between a revived Ennahdha and other political forces in the country.

## **1 February 2011 – Restricting alcohol**

Laure Marchand in *Le Figaro* mentions the controversy over a new law restricting alcohol sales in Turkey, seeing it as a tool to boost support among AKP voters ahead of the forthcoming elections.<sup>24</sup>

## **4 February 2011 – Ergodan lagging behind?**

*Liberation* publishes a longer article entitled "In Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan out of pace."<sup>25</sup> Marc Semo, one of the paper's foreign affairs correspondents, discusses Erdogan's initially lukewarm support for the revolution in Egypt. Even the traditionally vocal Davutoglu has remained very discreet, Semo writes. The relatively slow reaction of the Turkish government, he explains, is partly a factor of its "zero problems" foreign policy. In the short term, the turmoil created by the Arab spring and the toppling of former rulers creates a situation for which Turkish policy is ill adapted. In the middle and

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<sup>23</sup> *Slate.fr*, "Turquie-Tunisie, la filiation de l'AKP." See : <http://www.slate.fr/story/33527/turquie-tunisie-filiation-akp>

<sup>24</sup> *Le Figaro*, "L'AKP manœuvre pour amener les Turcs a la sobriete." See : <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/01/31/01003-20110131ARTFIG00723-l-akp-man339uvre-pour-amener-les-turcs-a-la-sobriete.php>

<sup>25</sup> *Liberation*, "En Turquie Recep Tayyip Erdogan a contretemps." See : <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012317932-en-turquierecep-tayyip-erdogan-a-contretemps>

long term, however, Turkey stands to reap the rewards of political evolution and (possibly) democratisation of the region.

### **5 February 2011 – A Turkish model?**

A piece published in *Le Figaro*, “The Turkish model, hope for the Arab revolution,” by Turkey correspondent Isabelle Marchand, presents Turkey as the only country in the region that has managed to reconcile democracy and religion.<sup>26</sup> As such, it could serve a beacon of hope. Can the model be exported? In Morocco and Tunisia, the Justice and Development Party and Ennahdha claim an affinity to the AKP. In Egypt, meanwhile, a possible split within the Muslim Brotherhood between hard-liners and moderates might allow the latter model itself after the AKP. Moreover, the current situation in Egypt offers the possibility of a “Turkish-style” solution, which would see the military return to the barracks and hand over power to a civilian government.

### **7 February 2011 – Towards closer relations with Syria**

Business daily *Les Echos* reports in a brief article that PM Erdogan visited Syria and laid the corner stone a “friendship dam” between the two countries, signalling a move towards closer relations.<sup>27</sup> The story is picked up by *Le Monde* the next day.<sup>28</sup> Guillaume Perrier sets the “Ankara-Damascus Axis” against the background of the Arab Spring, with both President Assad and Erdogan expressing their hope that the Egyptian people “see their aspirations fulfilled.” In addition, the visit of the Turkish PM is presented as a welcome smokescreen for Assad, who crushed the first movement of peaceful dissent in Syria in 2003.

### **8 February 2011 – Pinar Selek faces life sentence**

In an op-ed published in the communist daily *L’Humanité*, political activist and sociologist Pinar Selek claims, “I am facing a life sentence.”<sup>29</sup> In the piece, she reflects upon her life in exile and cites successive accusations that have been levelled against her. The next day, *Le Figaro* publishes a long piece by Laure Marchand, entitled “Turkish justice relentlessly going after Pinar Selek,” which illustrates Selek’s “road to hell” since her first trial in 1998.<sup>30</sup> Turkish intellectuals such as Orhan Pamuk have criticised the

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<sup>26</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Le modele turc, espoir de la revolte arabe.” See : <http://www.lefigaro.fr/mon-figaro/2011/02/04/10001-20110204ARTFIG00618-le-modele-turc-espoir-de-la-revolte-arabe.php>

<sup>27</sup> *Les Echos*, “Le Premier ministre turc developpe ses relations avec la Syrie.” See : <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-politique/monde/actu/0201129861668-le-premier-ministre-turc-developpe-ses-relations-avec-la-syrie-155835.php>

<sup>28</sup> *Le Monde*, “La Turquie soigne ses relations avec son voisin syrien.” See : [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1147901](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1147901)

<sup>29</sup> *L’Humanite*, “« Je suis menacee de prison a vie ».” See : <http://humanite.fr/node/9133>

<sup>30</sup> *Le Figaro*, “La justice turque s'acharne contre l'opposante Pinar Selek.”

evidence gathered against Selek as “bogus,” denouncing her case as a “political trial.” The article also quotes MEP Helene Flautre, President of the EU Turkey Commission of the European Parliament, who made the trip to Istanbul on the day of the trial:

“[The trial] shows that the power in place lacks the courage to rid the judicial system of ultranationalist criminal networks, the networks which threaten Orhan Pamuk, and which, perhaps, assassinated [Armenian journalist] Hrant Dink.”

## **8 February 2011 – Erdogan and the Arab street**

In a long interview with *Le Monde*, Paris-based political scientist and former Lebanese minister Ghassan Salame argues that Turkey only triggered the interest of the Arab world after Erdogan’s spat with Shimon Peres in Davos in 2009.<sup>31</sup> (Erdogan stormed out of a panel with Peres to show his indignation over Israel’s military operations in Gaza.) It was after the incident that Turkey acquired the status of a model country, impressing other Muslim states with its accomplishments in democracy, economic growth, and civil-military relations.

## **9 February 2011 – Egypt: a choice between Iran and Turkey?**

In “Un Nouveau Moyen-Orient,” columnist Jean Daniel presents the alternatives in Egypt as a choice between Iran and Turkey.<sup>32</sup> (Daniel obviously favours the latter choice.) The end of the piece mentions Tunisia and Ennahdha, where, again, a Turkish solution would be a best-case scenario.

On 11 February *La Charente libre* publishes a critical article by Dominique Garraud on current developments in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere. The author’s take on the AKP’s continuous struggle with the Turkish army is best captured by the title of his article: “Radicals laying in ambush.”

## **9 February 2011 – Towards a Middle Eastern Schengen zone?**

Laure Marchand suggests in *Le Figaro* that Turkey is preparing for the creation of a free trade zone in its neighbourhood (“Turkey dreams of a ‘Schengen space’ in the Middle East”).<sup>33</sup> The free trade zone would extend to Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The project,

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See : <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/02/08/01003-20110208ARTFIG00782-la-justice-turque-s-acharne-contre-pinar-selek.php>

<sup>31</sup> See : [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1147937](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1147937)

<sup>32</sup> *Le Nouvel Observateur*, “Un Nouveau Moyen-Orient.” See : <http://jean-daniel.blogs.nouvelobs.com/archive/2011/02/09/un-nouveau-moyen-orient.html>

<sup>33</sup> *Le Figaro*, “La Turquie reve d'un «espace Schengen» au Moyen-Orient.” See : <http://www.lefigaro.fr/conjoncture/2011/02/08/04016-20110208ARTFIG00791-la-turquie-reve-d-un-espace-schengen-au-moyen-orient.php>

made official last year, has already resulted in visa free travel in the region. In the long run it may be extended to Egypt, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula.

### **13 February 2011 – The Arab Spring and Turkish EU integration**

In the wake of the uprising in North Africa and the Middle East, *Le Monde* publishes an article headlined “Turkey hopes that Arab rebellions will accelerate its accession to the EU,” written by Brussels correspondent Jean-Pierre Stroobants.<sup>34</sup> Anonymous sources close to Turkey’s representation in Brussels explain that the country hopes that the crises will show the country as a force for stability and thereby increase its accession prospects. An unnamed French diplomat echoes the idea: “Recent events reinforce Turkey’s strategic importance and its role as a thriving democracy.” Yet the same diplomat adds: “However, this does not fundamentally modify the current positions” regarding Turkish accession. This diplomat is also quoted as wondering whether Turkey will be welcomed in Egypt, and the extent to which it can actually exercise leverage in the country.

Stroobants describes the different positions of EU member states with regard to Turkey’s accession, mentioning that they are reflected in the European Parliament. During a 10 February debate on Turkey in the Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, the conservative EPP group had proposed amendments supporting a “privileged partnership” between Turkey and the EU. The Socialists, meanwhile, wanted to mention “the common goal of Turkey’s accession.” (Both sets of amendments were rejected.)

In the end, Stroobants concludes that the divided EU is trying to do two things at the same time. On the one hand, it wants to benefit from the constructive role that Turkey can play in Iran, the Maghreb, and the Balkans. On the other, it does not want to meet Turkey’s demands in terms of accession. European, and particularly French, diplomats are ready to reap the benefits of Turkey’s intermediation but do not see a link between this and the accession process – a process that, as Soli Ozel calls it, is comatose.

### **15 February 2011 – Tourism after the Arab Spring**

A piece published in *La Croix* mentions the difficulties experienced by Tunisia and Egypt, two countries heavily dependent on tourism, in the aftermath of their respective revolutions.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, a number of countries, including Turkey, hope to attract new tourists and benefit from the uncertainties afflicting other countries of the region.

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<sup>34</sup> *Le Monde*, “La Turquie espere que les revoltes arabes accelereront sa candidature a l’UE.” See : [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1148442](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1148442)

<sup>35</sup> *La Croix*, “Tunisie et Egypte se battent pour retrouver leurs touristes.” See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/Tunisie-et-Egypte-se-battent-pour-retrouver-leurs-touristes- NG - 2011-02-14-563432>

## 16 February 2011 – Routes of undocumented migration

An article published in *La Croix* on “How Europe deals with irregular migration” mentions that following Italy’s agreement with Libya the main route for illegal migration to Europe now runs through Turkey.<sup>36</sup> According to the article, the flow has increased because Turkey had “concluded facilitated movement agreements with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq.”

## 16 February 2011 – “Democracy in Turkey is an example to follow”

*Le Monde* carries several new pieces on Turkey’s potential role as a model for countries like Tunisia and Egypt. An article entitled “A Turkish model for the Arab revolution”<sup>37</sup> appears on 16 February, followed a day later by a two-page dossier, “Is Turkey a model of Arab Revolutions?”<sup>38</sup>

In the first piece, Guillaume Perrier, the paper’s Istanbul correspondent, mentions a recent poll by TESEV, in which two thirds of respondents across several Middle Eastern countries affirmed that Turkey was an example for the way it represented “a successful marriage between Islam and democracy.” 78 per cent of those surveyed agreed that Turkey should play a more important role in the region. The idea is echoed by several Muslim intellectuals, notably Tariq Ramadan, grandson of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, who is quoted as saying that “a democratic Turkey is an example to follow.” The political leadership in Turkey remains cautious, however. President Gul says that Turkey does not consider itself a model; at most it is an example, “a north star for the Middle East.”

The 17 February dossier covers the slow evolution of the Turkish army and reports on the perception of the AKP as a “conservative democratic party”, insisting on the party’s pragmatism. The leading piece in the dossier highlights the tension between the great hope placed in Turkey by Arab societies and the persevering shortcomings of Turkish democracy. The Turkish reform process itself is far from over. Some of the most pressing issues, including the relations with Armenia and the fate of the Kurds, remain unresolved. Recent and more longstanding difficulties “should encourage the official advocates of the ‘Turkish model’ to remain modest,” the article concludes, quoting from *The Observatory of Turkish political life*, a blog by a French professor of political science.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *La Croix*, “Les migrants toujours aux portes de l’Europe.” See : <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Europe/Les-migrants-toujours-aux-portes-de-l-Europe-NG-2011-02-15-563541>

<sup>37</sup> *Le Monde*, “Un « modele turc » pour les revolutions arabes?” See : [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1148710](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1148710)

<sup>38</sup> *Le Monde*, “La Turquie est-elle une reference politique pour les peuples arabes?” See : [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1148816](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1148816)

<sup>39</sup> The blog can be found here : <http://ovipot.blogspot.com/>

## 18 February 2011 – Nisanyan defies Ankara

Another piece by Laure Marchand in *Le Figaro* entitled “Nisanyan, the Armenian who defies Ankara” profiles an Armenian intellectual who lives in Sirince, in Western Turkey. Nisanyan is accused of building guest houses without proper permits and faces 14 separate indictments.<sup>40</sup>

## 22 February 2011 – Reassessing the Turkish model

In an op-ed published in *Le Figaro*, Dorothee Schmid, a researcher at the Institut Francais des Relations Internationales (IFRI) and Turkey specialist, discusses the “shortcomings” of the Turkish model.<sup>41</sup> While the context might seem favourable to Turkey’s being perceived as a model, Schmid argues, “all the elements making up this Turkish model are fragile, if not potentially harmful.” Turkey has yet to achieve its own transition, and there is still a conflict between “the orientation of the ruling AKP and the spirit of democracy,” so much so that following the June 2011 legislative elections the possibility of “an authoritarian turn should not be excluded.” In addition, the relations between the army and civilian authorities have not been stabilised, which complicates certain difficult issues (the Kurdish question, Cyprus). Finally, while economic growth is heralded as Turkey’s main success, the quality and durability of this growth are put into question as well, given the fact that Turkey ranked 89<sup>th</sup> in the world on the human development index in 2009. Turkish growth is heavily dependent on foreign investment and on “decently-priced natural resources provided by countries which are not always easy to deal with (Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Algeria).” The current Turkish administration’s dream of a large integrated market in the Middle East is a risky one. The increase of bilateral relations with Iran threatens to ride roughshod over international sanctions decided against the country. The change in Turkish foreign policy has been impressive but has failed to bear fruit when it comes to conflict resolution. “Turkey cannot single-handedly stabilise the Middle East,” writes Schmid, and should not be expected to do so. “If developed in the Middle East, Turkey’s neo-Ottoman dream might well end in a dead-end.”

In an op-ed published in *Le Monde* on 25 February, Jean-Sylvestre Mongrenier, researcher at the Thomas More Institute, suggests that “the Turkish model should not mislead [Arab nations].”<sup>42</sup> The author questions the so-called Turkish model, insofar as it is meant to stand for a model in which the army plays a central role “in a peaceful and orderly transition towards democracy and a prosperous market economy.” On the one hand, in the Arab world giving a central role to the army has had disastrous consequences: “Arab socialism” and “pan-Arabism.” On the other hand, Turkey’s

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<sup>40</sup> *Le Figaro*, « Nisanyan, l'Armenien qui tient tete a Ankara. » See : <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/02/17/01003-20110217ARTFIG00735-nisanyan-l-armenien-qui-tient-tete-a-ankara.php>

<sup>41</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Les embarras du modele turc.” See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/mon-figaro/2011/02/21/10001-20110221ARTFIG00544-les-embarras-du-modele-turc.php>

<sup>42</sup> *Le Monde*, “Le « modele turc » ne doit pas faire illusion.” See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1149474](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1149474)

“controlled democracy” is currently moving away from the guardianship of the army and towards the guardianship of the AKP’s “Islam-conservatives.” The concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister is also a cause for worry. Finally, while the author recognises a certain fascination with Turkey among Arab populations, “it does not go beyond consumerism and Israel-bashing,” which can not be the basis of a powerful foreign policy.

## **24 February 2011 – Sarkozy disappoints Erdogan**

French President Nicolas Sarkozy’s very brief visit to Ankara is first reported in *Le Journal du dimanche*, the Sunday newspaper, which simply claims: “Sarkozy disappoints Erdogan.”<sup>43</sup> Even before Sarkozy’s arrival, Erdogan regrets that the French leader’s visit, as head of the G20, “does not live up to the friendship that exists between France and Turkey... Turkey and French-Turkish relations deserve much better than this.” The piece ends with a disclosure made by a high-ranking diplomat that the visit would “only last 5 or 6 hours.”

A second piece in the same newspaper offers some clarifications on the eve of the visit: “Before the visit, the polemic,” reads its title.<sup>44</sup> Erdogan is quoted as regretting that Sarkozy never paid an official visit to Turkey as President, while both Turkish Gul and Erdogan have paid official visits to France. To account for the alleged snub, the article mentions that “even before his election [as President of the Republic], Sarkozy was one of the fiercest opponents to Turkish entry into the EU.” Finally, a box next to the article mentions that in a recent poll 53 per cent of the French oppose Turkey’s EU integration.<sup>45</sup>

## **25 February 2011 – Sarkozy’s visit to Ankara**

In the context of President Sarkozy’s visit to Ankara, several newspapers run stories describing the status of the Turkish EU accession process. In business daily *Les Echos*, staff writer Catherine Chatignoux writes an article entitled “A Compromised Path to Accession,”<sup>46</sup> in which she characterises the negotiations as “deadlocked” (“au point mort”). The main reasons, she explains, are the Cyprus conflict and a lack of political will among European leaders, particularly in Germany and France. The article notes that Turkey is making progress in some areas but lagging behind in others, including freedom of the press, religious minorities, and the condition of women. “Only a comprehensive

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<sup>43</sup> *Le Journal du Dimanche*, “Turquie: Sarkozy decoit Erdogan.” See :

<http://www.lejdd.fr/International/Depeches/Turquie-Sarkozy-decoit-Erdogan-273515/>

<sup>44</sup> *Le Journal du Dimanche*, “Sarkozy en Turquie: Avant la visite, la polemique.” See :

<http://www.lejdd.fr/International/Actualite/La-visite-de-Nicolas-Sarkozy-en-Turquie-sera-trop-courte-au-gout-de-Recep-Tayyip-Erdogan-273849/>

<sup>45</sup> *Le Journal du Dimanche*, “Turquie/UE : 53% des Francais contre.” See :

<http://www.lejdd.fr/International/Depeches/Turquie-UE-53-des-Francais-contre-274177/>

<sup>46</sup> *Les Echos*, “Le chemin vers l’adhesion compromis.” See: <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-politique/monde/actu/0201161476391-le-chemin-vers-l-adhesion-compromis-158016.php>

constitutional reform” could remedy the situation, she writes, quoting a European Parliament report.

In the same edition of *Les Echos*, staff writer Massimo Prandi notes that “the door to Europe is still closed [for Turkey].”<sup>47</sup> The article quotes an interview with Sarkozy in *Posta*, a Turkish newspaper. “I remain convinced that Turkey and the European Union must continue to weave closer relations, without going as far as integration, which would benefit neither Turkey nor the European Union,” says Sarkozy. Later in the interview, Sarkozy explains: “Turkey must be a bridge between the Orient and the West... Turkey must keep the special position that it now occupies.”

Several publications describe the Turks’ disappointment with the very short visit (five hours in total). Laure Marchand, in *Le Figaro*, cites Turkey’s “disgruntled hopes” and notes that the visit did not generate a lot of coverage in the Turkish press.<sup>48</sup> While Erdogan expressed disappointment over the absence of a state visit (see above), Turkish analysts go further in their criticism of the French president. European affairs specialist Cengiz Aktar suggests that “the Elysée palace still has an orientalist mind-set, and cannot accept having to interact with Turkey as an equal partner.” Murat Mercan, President of the Turkish parliament’s foreign affairs committee, is quoted as saying that “the current situation [in the Middle East] will encourage [Sarkozy] to adopt a better opinion on Turkey.” The article ends on a negative note, citing the Turkish government’s ‘go at it alone’ policy in the Middle East. In Libya, largely on account of Turkish economic interests (over 200 factories and some 20,000 expatriates), PM Erdogan publicly took a stance against the sanctions advocated by Brussels and the US.

The same day, regional daily *L’Est Républicain* runs a story on “Turkish Wrath,” quoting Erdogan saying, “I am not a diplomat, I am a politician!”<sup>49</sup> The rest of the article, signed by staff writer Philippe Jarrassé, reviews the difficult negotiations between Turkey and the EU and the contested role of Turkey as a model for the Arab Spring. Jarrassé draws a contrast between Sarkozy’s five-hour trip and Obama’s two-day visit in 2009. “Let’s face it”, Erdogan is quoted as saying, “we are getting tired of Europeans.”

The same journalist, in another piece, considers Erdogan “a (not so) moderate Muslim” and a politician with an authoritarian streak.<sup>50</sup> He brings up several examples. The first is Erdogan’s reaction at the 2009 Davos World Economic forum (see above). The second is Erdogan’s claim, made during a 2008 speech in Cologne, Germany, that “assimilation is a crime against humanity.” The final example is his public outburst against Turkish

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<sup>47</sup> *Les Echos*, “Porte fermée à l’entrée dans l’Europe.” See: <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-politique/france/actu/0201174114730-porte-fermee-a-l-entree-dans-l-europe-158345.php>

<sup>48</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Les attentes déçues de la Turquie qui accueille Sarkozy.” See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/02/24/01003-20110224ARTFIG00756-les-attentes-decues-de-la-turquie-qui-accueille-sarkozy.php>

<sup>49</sup> *L’Est Républicain*, “La colère turque.” See: <http://www.estrepublicain.fr/fr/france/info/4675935-Diplomatie-Le-premier-ministre-Erdogan-s-en-prend-vivement-a-Nicolas-Sarkozy-qui-lui-rend-visite-aujourd-hui-La-colere-turque>

<sup>50</sup> *L’Est Républicain*, “Un musulman peu modéré.” See: <http://www.estrepublicain.fr/fr/france/info/4676008-Un-musulman-peu-moderer>

Cypriots who demonstrated against Turkey's military presence on the island. "Who are these people who spit on the hand that feeds them?" Erdogan said at the time. "We shed our blood for them. They [the demonstrators] should be brought to court."

The next day, Jarrassé files a second article on the visit, entitled "Sarkozy and the New Ataturk," in which he describes the tense atmosphere during the visit. He also mentions the discussions between Sarkozy and Erdogan on Turkey's chances to join the European Union.<sup>51</sup> The article goes back to Sarkozy's interview in *Posta*, questioning the choice made by Sarkozy's entourage to grant it an interview. "Maybe next time French diplomats will choose another publication than *Posta* [...]," he writes. "On the front page, a picture of Sarkozy stood between two scantily clad women, the first one promoting a guide of sexual positions, and the second gossiping about her fling with a football player. Turkish Islamism is really moderate!"

*Le Parisien* runs a similar story on Sarkozy's visit to Ankara, entitled "Sarkozy irritates the Turks."<sup>52</sup> Reporter Frédéric Gerschel quotes Sarkozy's interview in *Posta* and describes reactions in the Turkish press, which range from disappointment with Europe's "impossible" expectations to allegations of "deceit."

On 26 February *Libération* mentions Sarkozy's "quick dash," which "irritates the Turks."<sup>53</sup> The article – co-written by reporter Marc Semo and Ragip Duran, the paper's Istanbul correspondent – provides interesting background information. Sarkozy's visit to Ankara was the first visit by a sitting French president to Turkey since Mitterrand in 1992. The "300 minute visit", as Turkish scholar Cengiz Aktar ironically put it, is another further foreign policy mishap by the Sarkozy administration, coming on the heels of the problematic handling of the uprising in Tunisia<sup>54</sup> and the diplomatic row with Mexico.<sup>55</sup> At the end of the article, a quote from Aktar summarises the Turkish mood in the wake of this visit: "After 20 years, a French president only comes to claim that he's not here for an official visit. It's humiliating." An article published in *Le Monde* on the same day by Guillaume Perrier and Arnaud Leparmentier, the paper's Brussels bureau chief, provides

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<sup>51</sup> *L'Est Republicain*, "Sarkozy et le nouvel Ataturk." See: <http://www.estrepublicain.fr/fr/france/info/4681459-Europe-Le-president-francais-en-visite-a-Ankara-n-a-pas-bouge-sur-l-adhesion-Sarkozy-et-le-nouvel-Ataturk>

<sup>52</sup> *Le Parisien*, "Sarkozy irrite les Turcs." See: <http://www.leparisien.fr/politique/sarkozy-irrite-les-turcs-25-02-2011-1330890.php>

<sup>53</sup> *Libération*, "La visite éclair de Sarkozy irrite la Turquie." See: <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012322353-la-visite-eclair-de-sarkozy-irrite-la-turquie>

<sup>54</sup> Then Foreign Minister Michelle Alliot-Marie proposed in December 2010 to send French police to train Tunisian riot police in law and order enforcement techniques (Find quote). It was later revealed that she and her Partner (also a minister in PM Fillon's cabinet) had spent their Christmas vacation in Tunisia and had benefited from the largesse of a close associate of the Ben Ali inner circle. She was thereafter forced to resign.

<sup>55</sup> *Le Monde*, "L'annulation de l'Annee du Mexique en France enterinee." See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2011/03/08/l-annulation-de-l-annee-du-mexique-en-france-enterinee\\_1490306\\_3246.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2011/03/08/l-annulation-de-l-annee-du-mexique-en-france-enterinee_1490306_3246.html)

the same background and several of the same quotes, including Aktar's.<sup>56</sup> This second article also quotes French parliamentarian Francois Hollande, a former chairman of the Socialist Party and a potential candidate for the 2012 presidential election. If the visit has damaging effects, explains Hollande, it is due to Sarkozy's "systematic use of Turkey for domestic politics."

"For him, Turkey represents everything one must protect oneself from: a welcoming land for outsourcing companies, a transit country for migrants, the incarnation of the Muslim religion in Europe..."

Although he notes that Turkey has become an "indispensable" partner and a model for Arab societies, Hollande does not go so far as to advocate its integration into the EU. He merely underscores the difficulties Sarkozy will face in restoring good relations with Turkey.

On 26 February, *Ouest France*, France's most read daily newspaper, runs an article on the "Manly dialogue between France and Turkey."<sup>57</sup> The controversy aside, the brief visit was also an occasion to discuss the crisis in Libya, which is of particular interest to Turkey given the economic stakes, the article points out.<sup>58</sup> The previous day, *Ouest France* ran a detailed story by *Figaro* correspondent Laure Marchand on "Turkey's increasing influence,"<sup>59</sup> as well as an editorial by Bruno Dive entitled "Turkey is Back,"<sup>60</sup> in which the author compares the AKP party with Christian conservative parties in the West and claims that former French President Chirac had been "a visionary when he pushed to make Turkey a key political actor again." Now that the country has acquired such importance, "it is a good thing that Sarkozy engages with [its] heads of state." Still, this engagement will not lead to EU accession, which Dive deems "utterly unrealistic."

Sarkozy's visit to Ankara unleashed yet another minor diplomatic incident when it was revealed the French President had been chewing gum during his visit. The story is picked up by several publications, including *Le Journal du dimanche* on 26 February,<sup>61</sup> *Le Point*,<sup>62</sup> *Marianne*,<sup>63</sup> and *Les Dernières nouvelles d'Alsace*.<sup>64</sup> Ankara mayor Melih Gokcek reported that he had chewed gum himself during Sarkozy's speech as a qui pro

<sup>56</sup> *Le Monde*, "Visite « non officielle » delicate de M. Sarkozy en Turquie." See:

[http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1149638](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1149638)

<sup>57</sup> *Ouest France*, "Dialogue muscle entre Paris et Ankara", 26 February 2011.

<sup>58</sup> See also: *Sud Ouest*, "La Turquie ne masque pas ses espoirs decus",

<http://www.sudouest.fr/2011/02/26/la-turquie-ne-masque-pas-ses-espoirs-decus-327674-755.php>

<sup>59</sup> *Sud Ouest*, "Le rayonnement croissant de la Turquie." See: [http://www.ouest-france.fr/actu/actuDet\\_-Le-rayonnement-croissant-de-la-Turquie-3632-1706410\\_actu.Htm](http://www.ouest-france.fr/actu/actuDet_-Le-rayonnement-croissant-de-la-Turquie-3632-1706410_actu.Htm)

<sup>60</sup> For a reprint, see here: <http://www.collectifvan.org/article.php?r=4&id=52120>

<sup>61</sup> *Le Journal du dimanche*, "Turquie : un chewing-gum pour Sarkozy", 26 February 2011.

<sup>62</sup> *Le Point*, [http://www.lepoint.fr/politique/sarkozy-en-turquie-un-chewing-gum-a-la-bouche-selon-le-maire-d-ankara-26-02-2011-1299910\\_20.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/politique/sarkozy-en-turquie-un-chewing-gum-a-la-bouche-selon-le-maire-d-ankara-26-02-2011-1299910_20.php). See: [http://www.lepoint.fr/politique/sarkozy-en-turquie-un-chewing-gum-a-la-bouche-selon-le-maire-d-ankara-26-02-2011-1299910\\_20.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/politique/sarkozy-en-turquie-un-chewing-gum-a-la-bouche-selon-le-maire-d-ankara-26-02-2011-1299910_20.php)

<sup>63</sup> *Marianne*, "Turquie: le chewing-gum présidentiel fait honte a la France." See:

[http://www.marianne2.fr/Turquie-le-chewing-gum-presidentiel-fait-honte-a-la-France\\_a203346.html](http://www.marianne2.fr/Turquie-le-chewing-gum-presidentiel-fait-honte-a-la-France_a203346.html)

<sup>64</sup> *Dernieres nouvelles d'Alsace*, "Le chewing-gum de Sarkozy." See: <http://www.dna.fr/fr/infos-generales/monde/info/4684278-Le-chewing-gum-de-Sarkozy>

quo for the French president's alleged "lack of respect" to his Turkish counterpart earlier that day. "Mr. Sarkozy walked off his plane with gum in his mouth.... He stopped chewing for a moment, and then he started again. Personally, I felt offended. [...] As we parted, I kept my gum in my mouth. Somebody had to react and I think I did so in a diplomatic way. In these things, there is something called reciprocity." Most newspapers refrain from commenting – with the exception of *Marianne*, which likens Sarkozy's demeanour to the attitude of the youths of the French suburbs ("banlieues"), whom the President himself once called "yobs" and "rabble."<sup>65</sup>

## 28 February 2011 – Obituaries for Necmettin Erbakan

The first obituary for former prime minister Necmettin Erbakan, who passed away on 27 February, is published in *Le Figaro* the following day. In a long article, Laure Marchand reviews the milestones in Erbakan's political career.

"With his passing, a new actor in the struggle between political Islam and the army disappears, at a time when the generals have started retreating from public life."<sup>66</sup>

The article concludes with a statement by Erdogan, in which the PM calls Erbakan "an example of teacher and leader for young generations." Marchand explains that Erdogan and Gul actually distanced themselves from Erbakan when they founded the AKP, "claiming they had renounced traditional Islamism, and invoking a Muslim identity both democratic and pro-European."

On the same day, Catholic daily *La Croix* publishes a short piece enumerating the main highlights of Erbakan's tenure as Prime Minister – from his rise to power in 1996 to his resignation a year later and the banning of his party, Refah, in 1998.<sup>67</sup> It ends by noting that Erbakan had become chairman of the "extremist Islamist" party "Saadet" in October 2010. *Le Bien public* publishes a similar piece, which notes that Erbakan favoured closer links with countries such as Iran or Libya.

Erbakan's obituary ("A pioneer of Turkish political Islam") appears in *Le Monde* on 3 March.<sup>68</sup> The piece, by Guillaume Perrier, is by far the most detailed of the several obituaries. It is rich in background information as well as analysis. Erbakan, Perrier writes, "advocated a form of anti-Western pan-Islamism and favoured closer ties with Arabic countries." The article sees Erbakan's 2010 election as chairman of Saadet as emblematic of "the old lion's" entire career:

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<sup>65</sup> For background information on this episode, see *The Guardian*, 17 Nov, 2005, Sarkozy challenges Chirac over race Policy, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/nov/17/france.jonhenley>

<sup>66</sup> *Le Figaro*, "Necmettin Erbakan, ex-premier ministre turc." See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2011/02/27/97001-20110227FILWWW00080-deces-d-un-ex-premier-ministre-turc.php>

<sup>67</sup> *La Croix*, "Mort de Necmettin Erbakan, ancien premier ministre islamiste." See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Semaine-en-images/Mort-de-l-ancien-premier-ministre-turc-Erbakan- NG -2011-02-27-564156>

<sup>68</sup> *Le Monde*, "Pionnier de l'islam politique turc." See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1150088](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1150088)

“supplanting the ambitious Numan Kurtulmus, carried to the floor by bodyguards, [Erbakan] was acclaimed on that day by his devotees and elected quasi-unanimously, but he cast the pathetic image of an unyielding old man and of a movement on its last legs.”

The article concludes with Erbakan’s sharp criticism of PM Erdogan for his betrayal of Islamist politics.

Business daily *Les Echos* uses the occasion of Erbakan’s passing to note: “Turkey opens a debate on political Islam.”<sup>69</sup> Writing from Istanbul, Jacques-Hubert Rodier cites the tens of thousands of people who attended Erbakan’s funeral and describes how different Turkish media outlets covered the event. In Rodier’s reading, *Today’s Zaman* argues that Erbakan’s passing has re-opened the debate on Islam and democracy, particularly with a view to Turkey’s position as an example for the Arab world. (However, the same publication notes that in Turkey itself Erbakan’s death will not have a “significant political impact.”) *Hurriyet*, while reminding the reader of the many disagreements it had with the founder of the Refah party, claims that the Turkish leader “never stopped being a democrat.” Finally, the article notes that Erbakan’s importance is exemplified by the fact that the very same generals who had removed him from power in 1997 were in attendance, alongside Gul, at his funeral.

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<sup>69</sup> *Les Echos*, “La Turquie ouvre un debat sur l’Islam politique.” See: <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-politique/monde/actu/0201186399599-la-turquie-ouvre-un-debat-sur-l-islam-politique-161101.php>

## March

### 1 March 2011 – Controversial visit by PM Erdogan to Germany

In Catholic daily *La Croix*, Berlin correspondent Michel Verrier reports on Erdogan's visit to Hanover, Germany, on the occasion of the an IT fair.<sup>70</sup> Before arriving in Hanover Erdogan gave a speech in front of "over 10,000 compatriots in Dusseldorf," during which he took a stance in the German integration debate.

"They call you migrant workers, foreigners or German Turks, but this is all the same to me. You are, dear compatriots, by brothers and sisters. You belong to Germany, but also to the great Turkey. [...] Yes to integration, No to assimilation."

As *La Croix* points out, while Erdogan called on German Turks to learn German, he also asked them to learn Turkish first.

The article covers the speech both in the German context, with chancellor Merkel declaring "the death of *multikulti* society" and former Bundesbank official Thilo Sarrazin depicting the damaging effects of Muslim migration to Germany in a popular book, and in the context of Erdogan's previous visit to Germany in 2008, when he argued against assimilation during a speech in Cologne. Immediately after the Hanover speech, several German political leaders responded to Erdogan's rhetoric. Foreign minister Guido Westerwelle asserted that "giving priority to the learning of German is key to successful integration."

Verrier mentions that Erdogan also had the forthcoming Turkish elections in mind during his visit. In Dusseldorf the Turkish PM had mused about the possibility of giving Turks living in Germany the right to cast their votes from there; he had also spoken of plans to create a "blue card," equivalent to a national ID card, to help Turks who acquired German nationality bypass the German ban on "double nationality." In a short article, business daily *Les Echos* mentions the "bickering" between Berlin and Ankara merely as a quid pro quo between Westerwelle and Erdogan.<sup>71</sup>

Frederic Lemaitre, *Le Monde*'s Berlin correspondent, presents the visit from a different angle ("In Germany, PM Erdogan pleads for Turkish entry into the EU").<sup>72</sup> On the eve of his visit – which was supposed to be followed by a trip to Brussels, the latter having been cancelled because of Erbakan's funeral – Erdogan gave an interview to German daily *Die Rheinische Post*. In it, the Turkish PM complained about the special treatment accorded to Turkey during its EU accession process. "Such political shackles against a candidate

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<sup>70</sup> *La Croix*, "Le premier ministre turc attise le debat allemand sur l'immigration." See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/Le-premier-ministre-turc-attise-le-debat-allemand-sur-l-immigration- NG -2011-03-01-564227>

<sup>71</sup> *Les Echos*, "Prises de bec entre Berlin et Ankara." See: <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-politique/monde/actu/0201183023247-prises-de-bec-entre-berlin-et-ankara-160183.php>

<sup>72</sup> *Le Monde*, "En Allemagne, M. Erdogan plaide pour l'adhesion de la Turquie a l'UE." See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1149830](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1149830)

country have never been seen before,” he said. Lemaitre moves on to the controversial statements on assimilation and integration, assessing Erdogan’s position as slightly more accommodating than during his 2008 visit.

### **3 March 2011– Demonstrations in Nicosia against the Turkish “protector”**

Both *Le Figaro* and *La Croix* cover the demonstrations organised on 2 March in Nicosia among Turkish Cypriots to protest against strict measures imposed by Ankara. In *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand, writing from Nicosia, presents the demonstration as “gathering one out of every seven Turkish Cypriots,” i.e., around 20,000 people.<sup>73</sup> After a brief overview of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as a “protectorate” of Turkey, where the local Turkish ambassador controls the enforcement of “orders” from Ankara, Marchand mentions the impact of demographic changes that have taken place over the past decades. Native Cypriots are now outnumbered by Turkish settlers (workers, students and military personnel) and fear the cultural changes that have come as a result. Despite the fact that the natives are generally not very religious, the number of mosques in northern Cyprus has skyrocketed from 20 to 47 since the AKP arrived in power. “We are in between Turkey and Greek Cypriots,” neither of which want to go forward with the reunification of the island, says Guven Varoglu, chairman of the teachers’ union co-organising the demonstration.

This dilemma is also central to Delphine Nerbollier’s piece for *La Croix*. The paper’s Istanbul-based correspondent begins her article with a quote from a banner seen at the demonstration: “Neither hostage to Turkey nor swallowed by Greek Cypriots.”<sup>74</sup> A journalist from a newspaper called *Afrika* is quoted as saying, “We are about to be extinguished as Turkish Cypriots”. Massive flows from Anatolia keep tilting the balance and making natives feel “more vulnerable,” according to Kemal Baykalli from the chamber of commerce. “I feel like a member of a people that nobody understands,” explains Ahmet, a civil servant who declined to be identified. “That’s the reason why we need to take our fate into our own hands.”

### **7- 12 March 2011– Journalists in custody**

The 3 March arrest of journalists Nedim Sener and Ahmet Sik, well known for their criticism of the Turkish government, is reported only now. *La Croix* first publishes a short unsigned article about the journalists’ arrest “in relation to yet another round-up

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<sup>73</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Chypre du Nord se dresse contre le « protecteur » turc.” See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/03/02/01003-20110302ARTFIG00766-chypre-du-nord-se-dresse-contre-le-protecteur-turc.php>

<sup>74</sup> *La Croix*, “Le ras-le-bol des Chypriotes turcs face a Ankara.” See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Archives/2011-03-04/Le-ras-le-bol-des-Chypriotes-turcs-face-a-Ankara- NP -2011-03-04-623032>

connected to the hatching of an alleged military coup.”<sup>75</sup> Another article reports that two men have been arrested and charged with plotting an anti-Christian attack in Istanbul.<sup>76</sup>

On 8 March, Marc Semo files a story in *Libération* on the arrest of Sener and Sik, detailing the charges pressed against them, notably the accusation of conspiracy against Erdogan’s government.<sup>77</sup> Semo interviews Ahmet Insel, a Turkish scholar teaching between Paris and Istanbul and a regular columnist for the daily newspaper *Radikal*. Insel explains the two journalists were researching the alleged infiltration of the Turkish state apparatus by members of the Fethullah Gulen community, which assisted the AKP in coming to power. He also defends the idea that the charges were brought to intimidate potential opponents. To make this point, he mentions that another famous Turkish journalist, Mustafa Balbay, has been imprisoned for 27 months on extremely thin evidence for a crime that could at most be described as intellectual connivance with some of the Ergenekon indictées. Insel argues that the AKP currently enjoys a monopoly of power and tends to abuse it.

In communist daily *L’Humanité*, reporter Damien Roustel files a brief story mentioning the arrest of five journalists in the context of the Ergenekon case.<sup>78</sup> The article mentions protests against the arrests by the EU and the US and reports that even Turkish president Gul has expressed “concern” about developments that threaten to undermine his country’s image. An opinion piece by Hassane Zerouki published in *L’Humanité* on 18 March casts doubts over Gul’s position, as he is not only President of the Republic but also vice-president of the AKP... and “he knows what he is talking about,” as he was once the target of similar tactics.

On 9 March, Laure Marchand writes in *Le Figaro* that “Turkish authorities gag the press.”<sup>79</sup> The article suggests that the arrests of Sener and Sik could perhaps be “two arrests too many,” having unleashed a wave of criticism and talk of a “republic of fear.” Erdogan rejects these allegations, arguing that “the government has nothing to do with the charges” as they were filed by the state prosecutor. The exact charges against the two journalists remain unclear. Marchand reports that Sik was among the journalists who first unveiled the attempted coup against Erdogan in 2003-4, while Sener recently published a book suggesting police connivance in the assassination of Hrant Dink in 2007. While they can hardly be suspected of cozying up to organised crime, the two journalists share a critical stance towards the Fetullah Gulen community and its influence on government activity. The article closes by noting that Hanefi Avci, a former police chief who also

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<sup>75</sup> *Le Croix*, “Les journalistes turcs dénoncent un climat de censure.” See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/Les-journalistes-turcs-denoncent-un-climat-de-censure- NG - 2011-03-08-564591>

<sup>76</sup> Article reproduced here : <http://www.collectifvan.org/article.php?r=4&id=52517>

<sup>77</sup> *Libération*, « Turquie : «L’AKP veut intimider ses opposants». » See : <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012324297-turquie-l-akp-veut-intimider-ses-opposants>

<sup>78</sup> *L’Humanite*, “Haro sur la presse turque.” See: [http://humanite.fr/08\\_03\\_2011-haro-sur-la-presse-turque-467054](http://humanite.fr/08_03_2011-haro-sur-la-presse-turque-467054)

<sup>79</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Le pouvoir turc bâillonne la presse.” See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/03/08/01003-20110308ARTFIG00778-le-pouvoir-turc-baillonne-la-presse.php>

published a book on Fetullah Gulen, is also in jail. All this is feeding fears of a new wave of McCarthyism in Turkey – fears that are allegedly shared even by (unnamed) close advisors to president Gul, the article claims.

In *La Croix*, Delphine Nerbollier presents the story from the angle of journalists, who “denounce a climate of censorship” in Turkey.<sup>80</sup> According to his lawyer, Sik was arrested while he was about to publish a book on Fetullah Gulen. “Only totalitarian countries charge people for books that have not even been published,” the lawyer says. Several journalists, such as Gila Benmayor from *Hurriyet*, link the arrests to Ergenekon only to claim that the case is becoming increasingly opaque to the point where “we do not know where this is going to end.” The article ends by noting that professional associations estimate that 61 journalists are currently detained in Turkey.

On 10 March, Guillaume Perrier explains in *Le Monde* that “justice is accused of colluding with power in the Ergenekon case.”<sup>81</sup> Just like Nerbollier, Perrier reports that state prosecutor Zekeriya Oz claims to have evidence against the journalists who have been arrested but will not offer any detail. After mentioning Fetullah Gulen, the article concentrates on the Ergenekon case and quotes an analysis given by political scientist Ali Bayramoglu. “There are two aspects to this trial,” argues Bayramoglu. “I have no doubt that the accusations levelled against the military, including coup plots and terrorist attacks, are real. However, some groups in the police are starting to use justice [to pursue their own ends], which opens the door to the settling of scores.”

The following day, Rosa Moussaoui writes in communist daily *L'Humanité* that “Ankara uses ‘antiterrorism’ as a weapon of war against freedom of the press.”<sup>82</sup> Moussaoui reviews the controversy that has followed the recent arrests, “just three months before forthcoming legislative elections.” The tone of the article is well summarised in its first sentence: “The Islamo-conservatives in power in Ankara are disgruntled about freedom of the press.” Similarly to Nerbollier, Moussaoui ends her piece by mentioning that 61 journalists are currently “behind bars,” while “thousands of others are subject to legal proceedings.”

On 11 March Jean Marcou, a French political science professor and research associate at the French Institute of Anatolian studies in Istanbul, writes an op-ed in *Libération* entitled “A Turkish model? More effort needed to reach perfection.”<sup>83</sup> In an era of “Turkomania,” there is a risk that a newly emancipated civilian power will lose the

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<sup>80</sup> *La Croix*, “Les journalistes turcs denoncent un climat de censure.” See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/Les-journalistes-turcs-denoncent-un-climat-de-censure- NG - 2011-03-08-564591>

<sup>81</sup> *Le Monde*, “En Turquie, la justice est accusee de faire le jeu du pouvoir dans l'affaire Ergenekon.” See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1150785](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1150785)

<sup>82</sup> *L'Humanite*, “Ankara fait de « l'antiterrorisme » une arme de guerre contre la liberte de la presse.” See: [http://humanite.fr/10\\_03\\_2011-ankara-fait-de-«-l'antiterrorisme-»-une-arme-de-guerre-contre-la-liberte-de-la-presse-467](http://humanite.fr/10_03_2011-ankara-fait-de-«-l'antiterrorisme-»-une-arme-de-guerre-contre-la-liberte-de-la-presse-467)

<sup>83</sup> *Liberation*, “Le fameux «modele turc» ? Encore un effort pour etre parfait.” See: <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012324878-le-fameux-modele-turc-encore-un-effort-pour-etre-parfait>

chance to engage in the profound reforms needed to achieve a real transition, as the party in power becomes too dominant and restricts democratic space. Marcou mentions the Kurdish question, Pinar Selek, and Ergenekon as symbols of the “dysfunctions” besetting the “Turkish model.” He concludes saying that by recently denying access to the popular blogspot blogging platform, the Turkish state continues to limit the freedom of the press. “At this pace, as far as the internet goes, soon Egypt might well be seen as a model on the shores of the Bosphorus...”

On 12 March, *Le Figaro* files a short story about Erdogan’s “anger” at the authors of a new European Parliament report on Turkey, which decries “the deterioration of freedom of the press.”<sup>84</sup> Erdogan is quoted as saying that “these are not level-headed individuals.” No other publication picks up the story.

### **14 March 2011 – The Mor Gabriel monastery threatened**

In *La Croix*, staff writer Céline Hoyeau reports that the last monastery in Turkey still occupied by monks is in danger of being closed as a result of a series of legal proceedings.<sup>85</sup> Local Kurdish villagers and the Turkish forestry administration claim ownership of some of the land occupied by the monastery. Accusations of missionary activity have been brought forward, as have claims that the monastery was built on the foundations of a former mosque.<sup>86</sup> Christian churches in Switzerland, Germany and beyond have tried to intercede, notably by calling upon the Council of Europe to persuade Turkey, where religious minorities have no formal rights to practice their religion, “to recognise all Christian ethnic groups in the country.” For its part, the Catholic Church has deplored “these new attacks against a multiculturalism which used to characterise the Ottoman Empire.” The article closes by noting that today only about 3,000 Syrian Orthodox Christians live in Eastern Anatolia, as compared to 130,000 in the 1960s.

### **18 March 2011 – Nuclear projects in seismic zones**

In *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand reports that Ankara has decided to stick to its plans to develop civilian nuclear power despite the catastrophe that hit Fukushima in Japan.<sup>87</sup> The plan to build three nuclear plants by 2016 is still in place. According to Erdogan, “our country is indeed located in a dangerous seismic zone, but we shall securitise the sites we are about to build.” He went as far as to state that the plants would be able to withstand

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<sup>84</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Erdogan s'emporte contre le Parlement européen”, p. 7.

<sup>85</sup> *La Croix*, “En Turquie, le monastere Mar Gabriel est menace.” See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/S-informer/Actualite/En-Turquie-le-monastere-Mar-Gabriel-est-menace- NG -2011-03-13-584742>

<sup>86</sup> An accusation debunked by David Gelen, President of the Armenian foundation, who argued that the monastery was founded in 397, several centuries before the birth of Prophet Mohammed...

<sup>87</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Ankara maintient ses projets nucleaires en zone sismique.” See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/03/17/01003-20110317ARTFIG00790-ankara-maintient-ses-projets-nucleaires-en-zone-sismique.php>

earthquakes of a magnitude of 9.0 on the Richter scale. The choice of a Russian company, Rosatom, to build the plants in Akkuyu were also met with criticism – in part because of the location and in part because a similar plant built by Rosatom in Iran, launched only six months earlier, had to be stopped in the wake of several security alarms. The Turkish government allegedly decided in favour of Rosatom because the plant would be built “without any Turkish lira spent.”

In *Le Monde*, Guillaume Perrier files a similar story the same day, in which he quotes Taner Yildiz, the Turkish energy minister: “The earthquake in Japan will not modify our decision. We must learn from the tragedy and we are working in this direction.”<sup>88</sup> Both articles add that a second plant was to be built in Sinop on the Black Sea. Just before Fukushima, a deal was about to be signed with Japanese groups Toshiba and Tepco.

## **22 March 2011 – A new BNP subsidiary in Turkey**

Business daily *Les Echos* reports that French bank BNP-Paribas launched a new subsidiary in Turkey, TEB, after a merger with Turkish Fortis. Staff writer Rejeane Reibaud writes that the new bank counts some 10,000 employees and 600 branches.<sup>89</sup> With the acquisition, Turkey becomes the fifth largest market for BNP-Paribas, after France, Italy, Belgium, and the US. The Turkish market is shown as flourishing due to healthy economic growth, the relatively weak level of bank penetration (20 per cent), and a yearly growth of about 22 per cent in credit.

On the same day, *Le Figaro* runs a similar story by Anne de Guigné from Istanbul. The article explains that the developments in Turkey, which have seen the BNP double in size in the country, are merely a by-product of the acquisition of the Fortis group.<sup>90</sup> The French group’s objective is to control 5 per cent of the Turkish banking market by 2014 – it now represents 3.8 per cent of the lending market and 2.8 per cent of deposits.

## **24 March 2011 – Turkish reservations in Libya**

In *Le Monde*, Guillaume Perrier reports that Turkey will not participate in military operations against Libya. Turkey “will never point a rifle against the Libyan people,” Erdogan tells the Turkish parliament, arguing that change must come from within and not as a result of foreign intervention.<sup>91</sup> Fearing “a new Iraq,” as well as further civilian

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<sup>88</sup> *Le Monde*, “Malgré les risques, Ankara campe sur ses projets.” See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1151559](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1151559)

<sup>89</sup> *Les Echos*, “BNP Paribas lance sa nouvelle banque en Turquie.” See: <http://www.lesechos.fr/investisseurs/actualites-boursieres/0201240675889-bnp-paribas-lance-sa-nouvelle-banque-en-turquie-124228.php>

<sup>90</sup> *Le Figaro*, “BNP Paribas met les bouchees doubles en Turquie.” See: <http://lequotidien.lefigaro.fr/epaper/viewer.aspx?issue=2526201103220000000001001&page=25&article=4c9fa90e-ad32-4110-b134-716afb8313a8&key=Znk0i3yTW4OwhKP45IMHnQ==&feed=rss>

<sup>91</sup> *Le Monde*, “Les reticences de la Turquie sur les operations militaires.” See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1152158](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1152158)

casualties, the Turkish government criticised the French military initiative. Foreign minister Davutoglu is quoted as saying: “We believe that this operation did not respect all rules of procedure.” By the same token, the Turkish government expressed reservations about an increased NATO role in the operations, drawing the line at a no-fly zone, a naval blockade, and humanitarian aid. At the same time, Gul explains that Turkey was never a close ally of Libya. “[Gadhafi] was never hosted in Ankara,” says the Turkish president.

The next day Laure Marchand reports in *Le Figaro* that Turkish MPs have given the green light to the dispatch of five naval ships and a submarine to participate in the naval blockade (“Turkey reluctantly joins the operations”).<sup>92</sup> The article uses similar quotes as the previous one, and draws attention to Gul’s thinly veiled criticism of France. (Gul deplored that “some countries have fallen to opportunism.”) Marchand adds that Ankara is hoping to play a mediating role between Tripoli and the international community and has already intervened to free several reporters from *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* captured in Libya.

On 26 March, *Le Midi Libre* mentions a “political cacophony” over Libya and quotes Erdogan as saying that the transfer of military command to NATO in the operations against Libya was a “very positive” development as it “disqualified” Paris.<sup>93</sup>

## **29 March 2011 – Tense Turkish-French economic relations**

In a story for *Le Figaro* economic reporter Marie Visot follows French trade minister Pierre Lellouche on his visit to Turkey to reduce tensions between Paris and Ankara.<sup>94</sup> The “self-proclaimed friend of Turkey” has ambitions to increase the trade volume between the two countries from 10 to 15 billion Euros by the end of 2012. While Lellouche came to promote trade, “he was soon caught up by recent political developments” and was forced to act as a diplomat, writes Visot. Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, in charge of economy, stated: “We cannot just pretend that nothing happened.” Noting the high number of French companies who have lost contracts to foreign competitors in Turkey, such as EDF to Rosatom, Lellouche privately confides that “these days, our companies’ best chance to win a contract is to hide behind another flag.” With China increasingly present (and welcome) on the Bosphorus, the competition will only grow stiffer.

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<sup>92</sup> *Le Figaro*, “La Turquie s'engage a reculons dans les operations.” See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/03/24/01003-20110324ARTFIG00786-libye-la-turquie-s-engage-a-reculons-dans-les-operations.php>

<sup>93</sup> *Le Midi Libre*, “Cacophonie politique a Paris, Ankara prefere l'Otan a la France”, 26 March 2011.

<sup>94</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Les relations economiques franco-turques tendues.” See: <http://lequotidien.lefigaro.fr/epaper/viewer.aspx?issue=25262011032900000000001001&page=22&article=541d95b0-5253-4d43-a173-82db9cc7207f&key=ZO+rYrg/71Teyr2VgTbZ7Q==&feed=rss>

## April

### 2 April 2011 – A historical visit to Northern Iraq

On 29 March, PM Erdogan paid a historical visit to Iraqi Kurdistan, where he inaugurated the new airport in Erbil, built by a Turkish company, reports Guillaume Perrier in *Le Monde*.<sup>95</sup> Erdogan also became the first Sunni political leader to visit the tomb of Imam Ali. Iraqi President Nouri Al-Maliki invited Turkish companies to invest in Iraq. The two countries hope to double the volume of bilateral trade. Erdogan's visit is analysed in the context of both Turkey's new foreign policy (Foreign Minister Davutoglu was also part of the trip) and the "Arab Spring", which is leading Turkey to enlarge the networks of its alliances. For the same reason, Turkey has recently increased its engagement with Syrian President Bashar Al Assad – just a few days before the trip the head of Turkish secret services, Hakan Fidan, met with Assad in Damascus.

### 7 April 2011 – Turkey still believes in EU integration

In *Les Echos*, the business daily, Yves Bourdillon reports on Turkey's EU minister Egemen Bagis' visit to France during which he "pleaded the cause of a country heralded as a model in the Arab world."<sup>96</sup> After meeting with his French counterpart Laurent Wauquiez, Bagis jokingly remarked that "the EU is a bit like our coach and our nutritionist," referring to the important economic reforms undertaken by Turkey to achieve EU standards. Noting the obstacles on Turkey's path to EU integration, the article closes by reviewing the notion that Turkey's proximity to countries like Iraq, Iran or Syria could endanger its chances of EU membership. "On the contrary," says Bagis, "we would be all the better placed to encourage the transition of these countries towards the western model."

### 7 April 2011 – Turkey invests in Africa

In *Le Monde*, Guillaume Perrier reports from Accra and Libreville on President Gul's visit to Africa, including a carefully staged early morning discussion with fishermen, which made headlines both in Turkey and in several African countries.<sup>97</sup> It was Gul's fourth visit to Africa in four years. Turkey has opened ten new embassies in sub-Saharan Africa since 2009, almost doubling its diplomatic presence in the region. The article highlights the diversity, in terms of sectors and geography, of Turkey's economic ties with Africa. Trade relations have grown at a yearly pace of 10 per cent. Turkey is a source of foreign investment and an exporter of manufactured goods, textiles and food

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<sup>95</sup> *Le Monde*, "Visite de M. Erdogan en Irak, contraint de revoir ses alliances au Proche-Orient." See: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1153178](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1153178)

<sup>96</sup> *Les Echos*, "Ankara affirme encore croire en l'adhésion à l'Union" See: <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-politique/monde/actu/0201284255268-ankara-affirme-encore-croire-en-l-adhesion-a-l-union-130705.php>

<sup>97</sup> *Le Monde*, "Les entrepreneurs turcs misent sur le potentiel de l'Afrique." See:

products. Its political and cultural presence is also visible. The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), with offices in Dakar and Nairobi, is currently working on projects in thirty-seven different African countries. Tüskon, a confederation of Turkish entrepreneurs and businessmen close to the Fethullah Gullen network, manages a vast network of schools across Africa and provides scholarships for African students to study at Turkish universities.

### **8 April 2011 – A pragmatic mediator**

In *La Croix*, staff writer Agnès Rovinel writes an analysis on Turkey's "zero problems" foreign policy, presenting Turkey as a "pragmatic mediator" in the Middle East.<sup>98</sup> An unnamed Turkish diplomat is quoted as saying that the so-called "Arab street" sees Ankara as an honest broker in the current crises in Libya and Syria, "because they see in us a source of inspiration." The article also mentions that Turkey has important economic interests in the region, in particular in Libya.

### **12 April 2011 – Turkish Christians claiming for recognition**

In *La Croix*, staff writer Francois-Xavier Maigre files a report on the claims for recognition put forth by Turkish Christians on the occasion of a visit to France by Bartholomew I, the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>99</sup> After presenting the respective positions of different Christian denominations in Turkey, the article situates the difficult situation of religious minorities in Turkey in the context of a power struggle between the AKP and ultranationalist groups. "The Islamo-conservative party in power in Turkey since 2002 is paradoxically more open to the fate of religious minorities than the staunchly secularist administrations that preceded it," says an unnamed diplomat.

### **16 April 2011 – Playing the Turkish card?**

In an op-ed published in *Le Figaro*, columnist Alexandre Adler defends the Turkish model as a viable example for the transitions in the Arab world.<sup>100</sup> The piece argues that the foundations of Turkish development and democratisation are to be found in what the author describes as the four pillars of Kemalism ("separation of mosque and state", "bi-partism" followed by multiparty democracy after 1980, curbs on inflation, and European integration). It then goes on to assert that Turkey should be understood as a model for the

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<sup>98</sup> *La Croix*, "La Turquie, mediatrice pragmatique." See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/La-Turquie-mediatrice-pragmatique- NG -2011-04-08-586435>

<sup>99</sup> *La Croix*, "Les chretiens de Turquie en mal de reconnaissance." See: <http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/S-informer/Actualite/Les-chretiens-de-Turquie-en-mal-de-reconnaissance- NG -2011-05-06-586514>

<sup>100</sup> *Le Figaro*, "Ne negligions pas la carte turque!" See: <http://lequotidien.lefigaro.fr/epaper/viewer.aspx?issue=2526201104160000000001001&page=21&article=06f303af-b493-4f4d-904d-77179e66370c&key=Xo88fl+kTMSZO+iCt3vK2w==&feed=rss>, also available here: <http://acturca.wordpress.com/2011/04/16/carte-turque/>

Arab world and as a bridge between Europe and a region whose people aspire to development and public liberties. Finally, the piece lashes out at the French socialist party, whose senators have defended a law proposal for France to criminalise public denial of the Armenian genocide. This is terrible timing, Adler claims, and an attempt to score political points in the short term while remaining oblivious to the bigger picture. What is more, Adler adds, the Socialist project is not intended to soothe the terrible pain of the Armenian community in France but to send a signal to potential voters of the anti-immigrant National Front.

### **19 April 2011 – Turkish painter Bedri Baykam stabbed**

*Libération* reports that Turkish painter Bedri Baykam, “the Turkish Andy Warhol,” was stabbed in Istanbul, but that his life is not in danger.<sup>101</sup> Baykam, 53, is known for his criticism of the AKP and his defence of secularism and democracy, as well as the Armenian community. The next day *Le Monde* picks up the story, noting that the aggressor had yet to be found.<sup>102</sup> *Le Figaro* carries a similar story.<sup>103</sup>

### **19 April 2011 – Turkish investments in the Middle-East**

Following up on his [7 April article](#) on Turkish investments in Africa, Guillaume Perrier writes a similar story on Turkey’s economic relations with the Middle East.<sup>104</sup> He provides a brief overview of Turkey’s economic achievements since 2001, when the country benefited from the intervention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The 2001 reforms allowed Turkey to invest in research and development and to increase exports of high-tech products. Beyond Europe, which absorbs about 50 per cent of Turkish exports within the framework of the Customs Union, Turkey is now competing for new markets. It has a strong presence in Libya and has concluded free trade agreements with Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, as well as visa-free travel agreements with several of these countries. Iraq could be next. The article does not discuss how the Arab spring might affect Erdogan’s “Schengen of the Middle East” project, however.

### **20 April 2011 – A Kurdish boycott?**

In *La Croix*, correspondent Delphine Nerbollier reports on the decision by Turkey’s electoral commission (YSK) to ban seven out of 77 candidates of the pro-Kurdish party

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<sup>101</sup> *Liberation*, “Le peintre turc Bedri Baykam poignarde.” See:

<http://next.liberation.fr/monde/01012332517-le-peintre-turc-bedri-baykam-poignarde>

<sup>102</sup> *Le Monde*, “Bedri Baykam, peintre turc et militant laïc, poignarde a Istanbul”, 19 Aril 2011, p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> *Le Figaro*, “Un peintre pro-laïcité poignarde.” See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2011/04/18/97001-20110418FILWWW00469-turquie-un-peinte-pro-laicite-poignarde.php>

<sup>104</sup> *Le Monde*, “Le Moyen-Orient, nouvelle terre de conquête d’une Turquie en forte croissance.” See:

[http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1154619](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1154619)

BDP (Party for Peace and Democracy) from running for the parliamentary elections.<sup>105</sup> The commission explained its ruling by arguing that several of these candidates had previously been arrested. Among the banned candidates is Leyla Zana, who was elected in 1991 but stripped of her parliamentary immunity after she addressed the assembly in Kurdish during her swearing-in ceremony. Zana subsequently received a 15-year prison sentence for alleged links with the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Her return to politics in Diyarbakir for the forthcoming elections was acclaimed as a sign of reconciliation. The banning of her candidacy was therefore particularly noted.

After the electoral commission's decision was made public, a demonstration took place on Taksim Square in Istanbul. The chairman of the BDP, Selahattin Demirtas, denounced the decision as "a fascistic posture, a political conspiracy." Meanwhile, columnist Cengiz Candar commented in *Radikal* that "the YSK invites the Kurds to go back to the mountains." Nerbollier explains the significance of the ban for the BDP. The party, whose vote is concentrated in the East, has never been able to reach the 10 per cent threshold required to enter the National Assembly. As a consequence, and to bypass the threshold, its candidates have traditionally run as independents. However, when individual candidates are barred from running, they cannot be replaced. The BDP leadership has announced they would appeal the decision. If their appeal should be unsuccessful, they say, they would be ready to boycott the elections. This "could have dire consequences for the country," concludes Nerbollier, "as the new legislature is expected to take on the difficult task of drafting a new constitution and to find a solution to the Kurdish question."

The same story is picked up on 21 April by *Le Figaro*.<sup>106</sup> The first sentence of the article sets the tone. "Turkey is having a hard time respecting the same advice of democratic good conduct it has been lavishing on rebellion-ridden Arab countries," writes Laure Marchand. She goes on to argue that the judges' decision "imperils the precarious integration of Kurds in politics" while the longstanding conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state remains unresolved. The article reports that the decision has been criticised by members of other political parties. Even Mehmet Ali Sahin, speaker of the Parliament and member of the governing AKP, declared that "this decision weakens the Parliament's mission."

## 20 April 2011 – Strategic Rivalry

In *La Croix*, Heather Grabbe, director of the Brussels bureau of the Open Society Institute, and Sinan Ulgen, visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe, publish an op-ed suggesting that France and Turkey are engaged in a strategic rivalry in the Middle East,

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<sup>105</sup> *La Croix*, "Le parti pro-kurde de Turquie pourrait boycotter les élections de juin", 20 April 2011. See also: [http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/En-Turquie-la-candidature-de-deputes-kurdes-menacee-\\_NG\\_-2011-04-19-565389](http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/Monde/En-Turquie-la-candidature-de-deputes-kurdes-menacee-_NG_-2011-04-19-565389)

<sup>106</sup> *Le Figaro*, "Les Kurdes de Turquie privés de candidats." See: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/04/20/01003-20110420ARTFIG00687-les-kurdes-de-turquie-prives-de-candidats.php>

particularly in countries undergoing social and political movements.<sup>107</sup> Their differing stance on the Libyan opposition, more than a mere difference in perspective, is emblematic of a genuine strategic competition that extends to North Africa and the Middle East. According to the analysis, France is searching for new contacts in a region where it has important economic, political, and energetic interests. It is struggling with the notion, however, that “emerging political tendencies consider Turkey to be a much more interesting model and a much more appreciated partner for the transition.”

If Turkey and the EU could work together, the article continues, their cooperation could bear fruit, with Turkey “playing a positive role in these transitions and adding to the means provided by Europe.” The rationale is clear: “While the EU can provide financial support, it can not lead the way and show how to associate political Islam and democracy.” At the same time, despite its economic dynamics, Turkey lacks Europe’s technological capabilities and has a much smaller domestic market. In order for this cooperation to work, Turkey and Europe should engage in “high level political dialogue in foreign policy.” Because Turkey’s accession negotiations are now almost at a standstill, such dialogue is not possible. The piece ends with a series of recommendations. “The EU must put in place a foreign policy allowing Turkey to be a partner in spite of differences and the difficult accession process” and “strategic dialogue must replace strategic competition so NATO can ensure a calmer regional order and the EU can strengthen its neighbourhood policy with the Arab world.”

## **21 April 2011 – A report on the Malatya trial**

In *La Croix*, Turkey correspondent Delphine Nerbollier reports on progress in the Malatya trial.<sup>108</sup> The article quotes Susanne Geske, the widow of Tilman Geske, one of three members of the Protestant community of Malatya who were tortured and murdered in 2007. “Little by little, the truth will emerge,” Geske declares. Thanks to a confession by a former member of the Gendarmerie intelligence services, who revealed he had infiltrated the Protestant community and sought to intimidate its members, new arrests have been made. One of the new detainees is a Muslim theologian, Zekeriya Beyaz, who gave numerous speeches denouncing the “dangers of Protestants” in Anatolia. According to the Geske family’s lawyers, links between the Malatya murders and the Ergenekon trial are now clear. However, the lawyers remain prudent, Nerbollier explains, in part because the prosecutor in charge of the Ergenekon case has recently been transferred to another position. “He was prevented from going any further. It is in fact a sanction, not a promotion,” says Erdal Dogan, one of the Geskes’ lawyers. At the end of the article, Susanne Geske is quoted once again, encouraging everyone to be patient: “My three children and I have our friends and our lives. Every Sunday, we gather for worship with about twenty other adults. Our community is blossoming.”

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<sup>107</sup> *La Croix*, “La Turquie contre la France, une rivalité stratégique”, available at: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=show&id=43691>

<sup>108</sup> *La Croix*, “L’enquête sur l’assassinat de trois protestants en Turquie avance”, 21 April 2011.

## 25 April 2011 – Armenians stepping out of the shadows

In *Le Figaro*, Turkey correspondent Laure Marchand reports on the wave of religious conversions (from Islam to Christianity) by members of the Turkish Armenian community. The forefathers of many Turkish Armenians were forced to convert to Islam and “forget” their Armenian culture in order to escape the genocide of 1915.<sup>109</sup> The recent wave of conversions was made possible by the (so far modest) opening of Turkish civil society to discussions of the genocide, and by the progress of democracy in Turkey. The article includes several life stories, including that of 50-year-old Mirhan Perguitch Gultekin of Istanbul, originally from Dersim in Anatolia. Gultekin was permitted by a court decision to change his status to “Christian” in his identity papers. He explains:

“My conversion [to Christianity] is a way for me to pay tribute to my people who were assassinated. As I read books, I realised the atrocities that had been committed, and my decision started to unfold. My grandfather was Armenian, but the first name written on my father’s birth certificate is Hüseyin. In these troubled times, my family had to choose between death, exile, and conversion.”

Gultekin further recounts childhood memories, including instances when members of the family partially revealed their hidden ancestry. Each year, the children would paint eggs in the spring to continue the tradition of Christian Orthodox Easter. “It is strange, we always knew we were Armenian, but without it being ever said,” says Gultekin.

An unnamed member of the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul confirms the recent trend among Turkish Armenians. “Ever more of them emerge from silence and knock on our door.” Noting that the topic is still politically very sensitive, he adds that the Church conducts no evangelical activities in Anatolia in order not to be confused with missionaries who are very active in the region and targeted by Turkish ultranationalists. “In a society formed by Turkish and Muslim propaganda, to leave the majority is seen as treason,” he says.

The final part of the article focuses on Fethiye Cetin, a lawyer for Hrant Dink’s family, who first lifted the veil on these “invisible survivors of the genocide,” as Marchand puts it. In 2004 Cetin published a bestselling book entitled *My Grandmother*, a biography of her own grandmother – “a devout Muslim who would pray five times a day,” as Cetin recalls – who revealed her Armenian roots shortly before her death. (Cetin’s grandmother was adopted by a Turkish military official in 1915 and so escaped the grim destiny that befell her entire family.) Cetin published a second book called *The Grandchildren*, co-authored with Ayse Gul Altinay, an academic active in the campaign to recognize the genocide. For this book, the pair collected the testimonies of the grandchildren of twenty-five survivors of the atrocities of 1915, who recount their experience of discovering their real origins and coming to terms with the difficulty of having both Armenian and Turkish

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<sup>109</sup> *Le Figaro*, “En Turquie, les Arméniens cachés sortent de l'ombre”, 25 April 2011, see: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/mon-figaro/2011/04/24/10001-20110424ARTFIG00141-en-turquie-les-armeniens-caches-sortent-de-l-ombre.php> .

blood. The book has been translated and published in France by Actes Sud, a publishing house specializing in the translations of quality novels, in May 2011.

The article notes that “when they reached France, the US, or Lebanon, members of the Diaspora left those who remained behind for dead.” “The silence was also present in Armenian historiography, which considered that their conversion annihilated their Armenian identity,” declares Ayse Gul Altinay, a sociologist at Sabanci University in Istanbul. Altinay notes at the very end of the article that Armenian converts were “forgotten” by both sides, because their experience breaks the “illusion of purity on which nations are built.”

### **27 April 2011 – Friendship in pieces**

In *Libération*, Istanbul correspondent Ragip Duran reports on the destruction of the “monument for humanity” in Kars, near the Armenian border.<sup>110</sup> The destruction comes in the wake of Prime Minister Erdogan’s visit on 8 January. The article analyses the decision to proceed with the demolition as a political ploy ahead of the legislative elections on 12 June:

“Everything is fair game when it comes to winning the far right vote... including this destruction carried out just two days after 24 April, the date when Armenians commemorate the memory of the massacres of 1915-17.”

The sculptor who built the monument, Mehmet Aksoy, comments that “I created this monument against war and for peace. If they destroy it, it is a crime against humanity.” On 23 May, 200 artists organised a demonstration in front of the monument to protest against the plan to destroy it. Aksoy’s lawyer, Turgut Kazan, sent a letter to his former prison cellmate Ertugrul Gunay, who is now Turkey’s Minister of Culture, in which he warned that by going ahead with the demolition “you would be accused of being the enemies of peace, of the arts, and of culture.” The authorities did not budge, however. The destruction was prevented on 24 April by strong winds and was to take place the next day. The monument is to be cut into 25 pieces and stored in a warehouse belonging to the municipality.

### **29 April 2011 – “Canal Istanbul”**

In *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand reports on the announcement made by Prime Minister Erdogan to build a canal between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, meant to relieve traffic on the Bosphorus and “eclipse Suez and Panama.”<sup>111</sup> The canal is planned to be between 45 and 50 kilometres long, about 150 metres wide, and 25 metres deep.

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<sup>110</sup> *Libération*, “L’amitié turco-arménienne en morceaux”, see:

<http://www.liberation.fr/monde/01012333956-l-amitie-turco-armenienne-en-morceaux>

<sup>111</sup> *Le Figaro*, “« Canal Istanbul »: projet du siècle pour la Turquie”, see:

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/conjoncture/2011/04/28/04016-20110428ARTFIG00787-canal-istanbul-projet-du-siecle-pour-la-turquie.php>

Describing the plans as “Pharaonic,” Marchand notes that the announcement was made during the electoral campaign leading to the 12 June elections. Heralded as a “magnificent and crazy project” by Erdogan, the canal is meant to divert heavy ships from the Bosphorus. (Due to increasing traffic on the straits, the rate of accidents is high. In 1999, an oil slick burst into flames after a Russian-flagged tanker broke in two near the mouth of the Bosphorus.) According to Erdogan, only recreational vessels will use the Bosphorus when the project is completed and all other commercial traffic will use the new canal, thereby preventing possible accidents.

While it is said that the project will be completed by 2023, many uncertainties remain. The exact location of the canal has yet to be announced. Financial estimates and the possible costs of transit have not been made public. (Crossing the Bosphorus is free today, as the strait is in international waters.) Erdogan has simply claimed that private investors would help foot the bill. Korhan Gumus, the former urban planning director for the city of Istanbul, criticises the announcement: “this is a political demonstration of force that does not answer the crucial issues of development.” According to Gumus, the real priorities for Istanbul lie elsewhere. With the city bracing for a major earthquake, “70 per cent of the buildings are at risk and there is to this day no concrete plan to do anything about it.”

*Le Monde* carries a similar story by Istanbul correspondent Guillaume Perrier on 30 April.<sup>112</sup> The aim of the canal project and its context are presented in a similar fashion as in the article published in *Le Figaro*. Perrier offers a couple of new details, however. The project is estimated to cost at least 10 billion dollars (6,7 billion euros), according to Kadir Topbas, the mayor of Istanbul. It will be offered as a “BOT” (Build, Operate, and Transfer) concession with private companies. If the actual location has not been made public yet, it is, according to Erdogan, “in order to avoid speculation.” The project will redefine Istanbul’s urban landscape, with plans for the construction of a nearby international airport with a capacity of 60 million passengers per year. Perrier also reports on the reactions to Erdogan’s announcement. The leader of the opposition, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, has declared the project is merely “a vote-winning ploy which will mainly enrich supporters of the AKP.” Environmentalists have warned of the consequences of building the new canal. Some 168 million cubic metres of soil will have to be moved, “which will cause an environmental disaster and a massacre of forests,” according to Murat Tasdemir, an engineer.

### **30 April 2011 – Economic effects of the Arab Spring**

In *Le Monde*, Guillaume Perrier reports on the difficulties generated in Turkey by the insurrection in Libya, which theretofore represented the second largest market after Russia for Turkey’s construction companies: since the beginning of the events, economic activity in Turkey has been “at a standstill.” Over 25,000 Turkish workers have been repatriated from Libya, and numerous projects have been halted until the situation

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<sup>112</sup> *Le Monde*, “La Turquie lance le projet géant « canal Istanbul »”, see: [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=1155576](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1155576)

stabilises. Turkish companies were building airports, highways, and other projects, for some 30 billion dollars in contracts already signed. While Turkey's trade relations with Tunisia or Egypt were not substantial, the country had developed some important business relations with Syria, which are jeopardised by the current situation. Turkey is also closely monitoring developments in the Arabic peninsula and in Iraq, where it has been very active in constructing homes and other infrastructural projects, including the Kurdish north. Altogether, the Middle East now represents 22 per cent of Turkish exchanges, to compare with the 60 per cent share represented by Europe. While Turkey's goal was to increase trade with the Arab world in 2011, due to these circumstances it is now turning to other markets: Russia and Africa.

### **30 April 2011 – Assad worries Turkey**

In *Le Figaro*, Laure Marchand reports on the complications for Turkey's foreign policy generated by the atrocities in Syria.<sup>113</sup> With Damascus having previously been considered a key ally, Turkey has found it difficult to respond to the crisis. Turkish emissaries, including the head of the MIT (Turkish secret service), were sent to Damascus to convince President Asad and his Prime Minister, Adel Safar, to stop using force against demonstrators. Despite a series of high-level discussions, including three phone conversations between Erdogan and Asad, Turkey has failed to appease the situation. According to Beril Dedeoglu, an international relations professor in Istanbul, Ankara is particularly worried that a collapse of the Syrian regime could trigger unrest in the country's Kurdish areas, spilling over into Turkey. Although Ankara is not withdrawing its support for Syria for the time being, the Turkish National Security Council has considered a number of different scenarios and responses. In addition, plans to set up refugee camps near the border with Syria have moved forward.

### **30 April 2011 – Authoritarian turn in Turkey**

In the weekly *Marianne*, staff writer Martine Gozlan reports on the evolution of the AKP and of Turkish Islamism, which she describes as having turned from "moderate" to "authoritarian."<sup>114</sup> The article argues that caution should be *de rigueur* before Turkey is heralded as a model of transition in the Arab world. "Reality is not as rosy" as often described, writes Gozlan. "After the army and judges, now the press is under attack," she reports. The long piece expresses shock at the round up and arrest of several journalists, using the French word "rafle" – normally used to refer to the arrests of Jews in France and elsewhere during the Second World War – to describe the police raids. It introduces the reader to the work of Nedim Sener and Ahmet Sik, including Sik's book on Fethullah Gulen, and mentions that Turkey was ranked 138<sup>th</sup> out of 178 countries in the 2010

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<sup>113</sup> *Le Figaro*, "Inquiets, les Turcs tentent de réfréner Assad", see: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/04/29/01003-20110429ARTFIG00665-syrie-inquiets-les-turcs-tentent-de-refrener-assad.php>

<sup>114</sup> *Marianne*, "Turquie. L'islamisme "modéré" devient autoritaire", n. 732, 30 April 2011.

freedom of the press index by Reporters without Borders. On the link between the arrests and the Ergenekon trial, the article takes a clear stand:

“There is both truth and deceit in this story. Truth: the conspiracy. Deceit: three quarters of the accusations. Indeed, Ergenekon has become the hotchpotch into which they throw any Turkish citizen who did anything the authorities did not like.”

The article continues by reporting on restrictions on alcohol consumption, and on the numerous stories promoting a pious Muslim way of life, including veiling, published in newspapers close to the AKP. It quotes the waiter at a bar in the neighbourhood of Beyoglu in Istanbul, who calls Erdogan “padishah,” a name reserved for the sovereign king during the Ottoman Empire, to emphasise the Prime Minister’s hubris. The AKP has “put the army on its knees” and is allegedly responsible for the dismissal of a number of overly critical journalists, writes Gozlan, citing a European Parliament report on “the deterioration of freedom of the press in Turkey.”

Turkey “is not yet a pluralistic democracy,” Gozlan concludes. Erdogan’s reaction to the EP report is also quoted: “Those who put together such reports are mentally disturbed.” Erdogan’s attitude toward the press, Gozlan adds, is reminiscent of Mubarak or Ben Ali. Towards the end of the article, she notes that the exercise of power in Turkey is increasingly personal, if not familial. According to Ali Bayramoglu, a scholar and a columnist, “Erdogan is stuck between Oriental paternalism and the need to reform. We shall absolutely not support his authoritarian attitudes. If he continues, I move to the opposition!”

The Turkish model is in bad shape, concludes the article.

“Isn’t it secular and Kemalist democracy which trained and transformed the AKP and the Turkish Islamists by imposing on them its laws and its red lines? If Erdogan treats democracy harshly, as he is now doing, Islamism will simply turn back to itself.”

If the AKP is to continue down this road, then “with a few more people sent to prison, Turkey and the Imperial Erdogan would simply find themselves in a pre-revolutionary situation. Just like the Arab world.”