

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bomb attack hits Turkish checkpoint near Syrian border- Yeni Şafak.....	1
Erdoğan criticizes Obama’s silence over three Muslims’ killing- Yeni Şafak .....	1
Turkey welcomes cease-fire agreement for Ukraine- Anadolu Agency.....	2
Turkey determined to abolish minority concept in social life- TRT.....	2
Davutoğlu: Istanbul's 3rd airport to have vast green area- Anadolu Agency .....	2
Turkish Prime Minister congratulates new IEA director- Anadolu Agency .....	3
Erdoğan concludes Cuba contacts- TRT .....	3
Turkish FM praises country's efforts towards Kurds- Anadolu Agency .....	3
Erdoğan: Trade volume between Turkey, Colombia to reach \$5bn- Anadolu Agency.....	4
Turkey condemns Israel's illegal settlements in Jerusalem- Anadolu Agency .....	4
Foreign policy by proxy- Taha Özhan, Daily Sabah.....	4
Hollywood scriptwriters should take a look at Turkey- Markar Esayan, Daily Sabah.....	6
An Erdoğan-Davutoğlu family portrait- Abdulkadir Selvi, Yeni Şafak .....	7
ISIS at NATO borders- Mohamed Jusic, Turkey Agenda .....	10
Dialoguing Turkish-Egyptian Relations- Yosra El Gendi, Turkey Agenda.....	12
Irony of Karma: Charisma of Erdogan- Etyen Mahcupyan, Turkey Agenda.....	16

### **Bomb attack hits Turkish checkpoint near Syrian border- Yeni Şafak**

**13 February 2015**

A bomb in a trash dumpster detonated by remote control hit the Turkish police checkpoint in Sanliurfa’s Suruc district on Friday, February 13, wounding two people including one police officer. The wounded were rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment. The attack occurred in Sanliurfa’s Suruc district some 15 km (9 miles) north of the Syrian town of Kobani.

### **Erdoğan criticizes Obama’s silence over three Muslims’ killing- Yeni Şafak**

**13 February 2015**

Speaking in a press conference in Mexico City on February 12, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasized the senseless killing of three young Muslim students in North Carolina on February 11, criticizing the US leaders and wanted them to show their stance against the killings. He said, “No statements have been made by President Obama or his officials Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State John Kerry since the three youths were killed. They were not terrorists, they were Syrian Muslims.”

## **Turkey welcomes cease-fire agreement for Ukraine- Anadolu Agency**

**13 February 2015**

Turkey has welcomed the cease-fire agreement for Ukraine that brings an uneasy calm in the volatile country.

"We are very pleased with the agreement that was reached after the negotiations of Russian, Ukrainian, French and German leaders," the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement late Thursday. The statement referred to the recent talks in Minsk, Belarus, for a settlement of the conflict in the Donbass region of Ukraine, which included Russian President Vladimir Putin, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande, as well as participants of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The Turkish Foreign Ministry said Turkey supported the measures outlined in the agreement and expected them to get implemented.

"Our most sincere wish is the permanent solution of this conflict which threatens not only the regional peace and stability, but also the credibility of the international system," the statement said. Turkey will continue its support for long lasting solution and peace in Ukraine, it added.

## **Turkey determined to abolish minority concept in social life- TRT**

**12 February 2015**

Addressing the representatives of non-Muslim minorities and opinion leaders at a dinner in Ankara Davutoğlu said, "The era

of resentments and exclusions has been left behind. I perceive this table as a conversation circle where new Turkey, new Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East will be built altogether. You are the original children of these territories, you have not come from outside, you will not go out", Davutoğlu said. These traditions have been living in these territories and will continue to live on these territories. While everyone has been taking shelter in ones own neighbourhood and when the idea of PEGIDA and a Europe cleansed of Muslims has emerged in Germany where Muslims are being isolated, I want you to know that whoever would try to build a Turkey cleansed of religious communities would first of all find us before them."

## **Davutoglu: Istanbul's 3rd airport to have vast green area- Anadolu Agency**

**12 February 2015**

Turkish PM Ahmet Davutoglu said Thursday that the largest part of Istanbul's third airport area will be reserved as a green zone, where they will plant 5 million trees.

"15 million square-meters of the overall 80 million m2 area will be allocated for the facilities and the other 65 million m2 will be arranged with trees or landscape designs," he told the press after he examined the ongoing construction works for Istanbul's third airport, which will be the most important center of world air traffic in Turkey's largest city.

Boasting a 150-million passenger annual capacity, the airport is expected to become

one of the biggest in the world and the biggest air transfer hub in Europe.

Davutoglu stated that around €10 billion has been invested in the airport project at the construction phase, and it will total up to an amount of €32 billion with another €22 billion in the other phases.

"It is a great indicator of the level which Turkey's economy, companies and the construction sector has reached that such a project of such a big scale was undertaken by Turkish firms," he said.

### **Turkish Prime Minister congratulates new IEA director- Anadolu Agency** **12 February 2015**

Fatih Birol, the chief economist and director of global energy economics at the International Energy Agency has been appointed executive director of the agency, the Turkish Prime Minister announced on Thursday.

"Birol is an important energy expert for us. When I was the foreign minister of Turkey, I followed the IEA. He was elected by acclamation which shows Turkey's weight in the international organization. I congratulate him on this appointment," Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said.

### **Erdoğan concludes Cuba contacts- TRT** **12 February 2015**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the first Turkish leader to have visited Cuba, began his visit in Cuba by laying a wreath at Jose Marti Memorial in capital Havana, and was

welcomed in an official ceremony by Cuban Head of State Raul Castro at the presidential palace. Afterwards, Erdoğan visited the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk bust in the capital and laid a flower wreath bearing an inscription saying "Peace at home, peace in the world".

Erdoğan said that regional countries will also be taken into account as the Turkish Airlines decides to launch flights to new destinations.

Erdoğan said the low level of Cuba-Turkey trade volume stems from various sanctions on the country, which they disapprove of in a lot of ways.

On Thursday, Erdoğan will begin his contacts in Mexico, the last leg of his Latin America tour. President Erdoğan will inaugurate the first coordination Office of Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency in the American continent.

### **Turkish FM praises country's efforts towards Kurds- Anadolu Agency** **12 February 2015**

The Turkish foreign minister has praised Thursday Turkish efforts towards the Kurdish community. In an interview to German newspaper "Die Zeit," Mevlut Cavusoglu drew attention to support provided to the Kurdish peshmerga forces as well as the solution process for Kurds in Turkey.

"The rights that have been given to Kurds for 10 years could not be even dreamed (before)," said Cavusoglu. Cavusoglu also said that the Kurds could not be mixed up with members of the Kurdistan Workers'

Party, or PKK, which is listed as a terrorist group by Turkey, the U.S. and the European Union.

"PKK is a (...) terrorist organization but Kurds are not terrorists," said Cavusoglu.

"We are the most important supporter of Kurdish peshmerga who fight against (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant)," he said.

Turkey allowed Kurdish peshmerga forces from northern Iraq to enter Kobani through its borders in October.

"We are providing equipment to Kurdish peshmerga and we train them," added the Turkish foreign minister.

Iraqi peshmerga forces, as well as other Kurdish fighters, the Free Syrian army, and the U.S.-led international coalition have all been battling the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, through ground and air campaigns.

### **Erdogan: Trade volume between Turkey, Colombia to reach \$5bn- Anadolu Agency**

**11 February 2015**

Trade volume between Turkey and Colombia will rise to \$5 billion by 2023, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said during a speech at the Turkey-Colombia business forum in Bogota Tuesday. At the event Erdogan said that Colombia was one of Turkey's most important trade partners in Latin America and the Caribbean, adding that the current \$1.4 billion trade volume was significantly low.

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon invited Turkish businessmen to invest in his country and said he believed Turkish companies would do good work in the construction sector. Calderon said Colombia will evaluate its opportunities to strengthen relations with Turkey.

"Turkey is a country that achieved great success in recent years," said Calderon. "The country has realized phenomenal growth."

### **Turkey condemns Israel's illegal settlements in Jerusalem- Anadolu Agency**

**10 February 2015**

Turkey condemned on Tuesday Israel's approval for the construction of new settlements in East Jerusalem.

"We condemn Israel's activities which affect the region's stability, and expect Israel to cease as soon as possible these illegal acts which have no validity under the international law," the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a written statement. Israel continues to destroy the fair, permanent and comprehensive solution in the region with its illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, the statement said.

The statement read: Israel's plan to expand four illegal settlements in the West Bank, its approval of the construction of 64 settlement units in East Jerusalem and the announcement of a tender on 580 houses in the seized land in East Jerusalem, all show that Israel disregards international law.

---

### **Foreign policy by proxy- Taha Özhan, Daily Sabah**

**13 February 2015**

Opposition's sole tool for politics:  
Complaint

Since the second U.S. invasion of Iraq, a new wave of foreign policy has emerged in Turkey and across the region. Washington's post-9/11 policies arguably formed the basis of increasingly intense crises. During the same period, the political and economic outlook turned negative.

The rise of oil prices following the U.S. invasion of Iraq spoiled a great many projections by 2005. Over the following years, developed nations around the world began to stagnate, which evolved into full-blown recession in 2008. Shortly afterward, financial troubles turned into economic crises. The total reversal between the beginning of the 21st century and the very end of the 20th century proved just how quickly the waves of global capitalism could change. At this point, we have yet to find a way out of the vicious cycle of financial turmoil as world economies face a range of troubles.

The manifestation of the abovementioned developments in the realm of foreign policy proved more intense than originally imagined. To everyone's surprise, the priorities of competing power players ended up changing. Interestingly enough, the way pundits describe various actors has radically changed over the past decade. At the turn of the century, the U.S. occupied two countries and launched a global war on terror to face charges of fighting a crusade. More recently, the country has emerged as an indecisive power in the region. Meanwhile, Europe -which looked more consolidated than ever before in the early 2000s - has earned a reputation as the sick man of the world. This structural change in

the status of actors that designed the entire 20th century has led to major consequences, not only the West but also the economic partners of the Global North had to endure this outcome. As such, all actors under the Western military and economic umbrella as well as the West's adversaries found themselves in an extremely unclear setting. The suffering and costs that these countries have had to bear do not fall into the scope of this piece, but it is important to take a look at the ways in which the West adapted to changing circumstances.

The United States and European countries, in particular, opted for proxy diplomacy and proxy wars instead of tackling the ongoing crisis head-on. This tendency manifested itself most clearly in the Middle East and North Africa in addition to all points of confrontation with Russia. They wanted to compensate for assuming unveiled political positions with the failed U.N. system, mobilize global economic institutions dominated by the Global North to keep a lid on the global financial crisis and the rise of new powerhouses, and field proxy forces to avoid the threat of military confrontation on the ground.

The outcome merely amounted to creating new areas of conflict and worsening existing problems. Today, the world faces a range of crises in Syria, Ukraine, Egypt and Libya with regard to a number of issues including the global balance of payments and energy policy. That the "no boots on the ground" strategy exceeded the limits of military tactics and came to define political and economic tendencies added fuel to the fire.

There are two ways out of the current situation. The first is to avoid immediately

convenient yet eventually crippling approaches. As the case of Russia suggests, it is possible to act decisively and break the deadlock by rapidly mobilizing one's troops. In the longer run, however, such a game plan does not yield results - for instance, see Syria and Ukraine. The second is to dare to replace the status quo based on a clear perspective and realpolitik - which requires the ability to concentrate on root causes rather than proxy troubles. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Turkey has done everything to follow the latter path.

### **Hollywood scriptwriters should take a look at Turkey- Markar Esayan, Daily Sabah**

**13 February 2015**

Strange things are happening in Turkey. A series of strange events began on Feb 7, 2012. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was prime minister at the time, had undergone a critical operation a few months earlier. In order to have a follow-up procedure, he was on his way once more to a hospital, the location of which was kept secret from the public. On the way there, something occurred to him - he had promised to pay a visit to someone, but had not managed to drop by. As the location was close to his route, Erdoğan's gave the order for the driver to turn around and take him where he wanted to visit. A 30-minute delay in the operation would not matter.

Meanwhile, a prosecutor calculated the time when Erdoğan was supposed to be anaesthetized, and called the chief of the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), Hakan Fidan. When Fidan asked his reason for calling, the prosecutor said they were waiting for him to testify, but did not mention what the subject was. Fidan called Erdoğan but could not reach him. Then he explained the

situation to his advisers. A few minutes later, Erdoğan was on the line and Fidan related the story and asked him what he should do.

Erdoğan's order was clear: "Don't go." Not only Fidan, but the former intelligence chief and his assistant were also "invited." Erdoğan postponed the date of the operation. For 10 days, Turkey lived through a nightmare. The prosecutor attempted to reach Erdoğan via Fidan to arrest both for treason based on their negotiations with the PKK in Oslo. The prosecutor issued a warrant. The MİT offices in Istanbul and Ankara were besieged by police officers. Erdoğan, meanwhile, ordered MİT officers to shoot if necessary. If police officers had used force to detain Fidan, MİT officers would have entered into a conflict. Within one week, the law was altered and the prime minister was granted authority to try MİT counselors.

The same police officers and prosecutors also bugged two of Erdoğan's offices a few months prior to this incident, but were eventually detected by the MİT. The Oslo talks were also leaked during the same period in September 2011. It was then revealed that the leaks were organized by police officers linked to the "parallel structure." Recently, some hard drives containing the telephone conversations of 101 prominent public figures, including the president, prime minister, chief of the General Staff, ministers, members of the press, business people and artists were seized as part of an investigation. The relevant police officers were detained.

According to data the Interior Minister Ekan Ala released, the telephones of 250,000 people were illegally tapped by parallel structure-linked police officers in 2012 alone. This corresponds to a total of 5 million people. Why would state officials such as prosecutors, police and judges engage in such an extensive

wiretapping operation without drawing the attention of their superiors, and justifying their actions on false charges? Even receiving an anonymous letter in the post was apparently sufficient grounds to warrant wiretapping or arrest. Why was the prime minister's office bugged? Why would the engineers and bureaucrats working on confidential projects be wiretapped? Why was the safe room in the Foreign Ministry wiretapped and why were its records released on YouTube?

Why was a videotape operation conducted against the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) just before the elections in the spring of 2011? Why was Deniz Baykal, the former CHP chairman, forced to resign from his position due to a sex tape scandal? And why would the CHP act hand in hand with this parallel structure after that date as if they were joined at the hip?

There are numerous other investigations and case files resembling this case. The strange aspects of the Dec. 17 operation, which was conducted under the guise of a corruption investigation, but was actually to reach Erdoğan's family and target the government, are reminiscent of the Feb. 7 MIT crisis. The common target is Erdoğan. The common goal is to control the country via an organization that illegally uses state authority and politics. The opposition is busy with legitimizing this target and trying to create an impression that such anomalies are actually normal. Turkey has lately been experiencing a series of intrigues that could inspire writers in Hollywood for a century. Scriptwriters should take a look at Turkey for their own bright future.

## **An Erdoğan-Davutoğlu family portrait- Abdulkadir Selvi, Yeni Şafak**

**12 February 2015**

It was the election campaign of 1987.

We were heading to Bingöl in the company of Turgut Özal listening to the Turkish song “Arım balım peteğim” on the campaign bus that belonged to ANAP (Motherland Party).

It was during the days when every word uttered by Özal became the top news item.

Özal had brought his “theory of a fluid center” to the agenda.

We asked Özal how this would work.

He pursed his lips and explained, “There will be a center. This center will have a focal point. But it will flow in the direction of where a gap exists and plug that gap. If there is a gap on the right, it will flow in that direction; and if there is a gap on the left, it will flow toward the left.”

The fluid center didn't catch on. Anyway, there was no longer a party called ANAP after Özal.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's response of “my view remains unchanged”, when asked if he had changed his mind about MIT (National Intelligence Organization) Undersecretary Hakan Fidan, moved me to share this anecdote about Özal.

In the past, a politician meant a person with superficial sincerity whose main

principle consisted of “today is a new day and the past is behind us.”

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan shattered this perception. He did not hold back from voicing the truth, even if he knew it would work against him.

To date I have not seen Prime Minister Davutoğlu say, “No, that was not what I meant to say,” either.

That is why it didn’t come as a surprise to me when he replied “I haven’t” upon being asked whether he had changed his mind about the Hakan Fidan matter. It would have been surprising if he had said the opposite. In that case, Ahmet Davutoğlu would have contradicted himself.

The cadres of the AK Parti (Justice and Development Party) have brought some nice traditions to management of the state. For instance, the prime minister can visit the president and his family accompanied by his wife. Or the president can take his grandchild along to a dinner with the prime minister.

Although it was quite recent, I do not believe that the picture depicting the close family bonds between President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu, as witnessed through their reciprocal visits, has been sufficiently assessed.

The system in Turkey is not based upon the president and the prime minister operating in harmony. It needs to be questioned whether this system will create a problem. It needs to be asked whether this system, which is a problem in itself, will allow this relationship to proceed without creating obstacles.

Erdoğan managed to run the country without transforming these problems into crises, even during the tenure of someone like Ahmet Necdet Sezer. Bülent Ecevit, who had chosen Sezer and posted him to the presidential mansion in Çankaya, himself failed to accomplish this. The Sezer-Ecevit fight during a meeting of the National Security Council (MGK) led to one of the most severe crises in Turkish political history.

But Erdoğan managed not to get involved in a fight with the very same Sezer and succeeded in running the country. The relationship between Abdullah Gül and Erdoğan was a great example in terms of showing what the country stood to gain from compatibility and stability. Was it totally problem-free? There were times when the list of cabinet ministers was altered and changes made to legislation before it was passed, following consultations with the president beforehand. But all this was never transformed into a management crisis.

Would such a situation have been possible during Ahmet Necdet Sezer’s tenure?

Did we ever see Tansu Çiller take Mr. Özer along and visit the [Süleyman] Demirel family?

Or did Mesut Yılmaz have Mrs. Berna accompany him and visit the Özal family for a cup of tea?

Both President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu paid visits to former President Abdullah Gül, accompanied by their spouses.

Family bonds are just as important as the law of politics and state. People from AK Parti cadres have become presidents and prime ministers. They have become ministers and party administrators. But they never severed these family bonds. I believe that these bonds prevented many issues from becoming problems in affairs of state and during political processes.

Despite saying he is not keen on Hakan Fidan's candidacy for a parliamentary seat, I doubt if President Erdoğan has changed his opinion of him. Is Erdoğan going to say, "I don't think along those lines anymore" if reminded of past remarks he has made about Hakan Fidan?

Erdoğan is someone who, even on the matter of the parallel structure, did not hesitate to say "What did they want that we did not provide" and confessed that he had been "mistaken and conned." (The parallel structure is a term used to refer to the Fethullah Gülen-led movement.) Just like he didn't hold back on his criticism regarding Hakan Fidan's leaving the MIT Undersecretariat, he won't hesitate in voicing his opinion if he has changed his opinion of Fidan personally.

The AK Parti is facing a crucial election in regard to its political future.

1-For the first time the AK Party will take part in an election without Erdoğan at the helm. The AK Party, which made the leader who won nine elections as party president, will face its first election test without Erdoğan at the helm.

2- It will be the first election test for Ahmet Davutoğlu, who took over as AK Party chairman and prime minister, and

who follows in the footsteps of a leader as charismatic as Erdoğan.

3- Erdoğan took over the duties of the Prime Ministry and Presidency when Abdullah Gül, who is a founder of the AK Party, was active. Davutoğlu, however, will not just have to pass an external test during the elections, but an internal one as well.

4- This will be a critical election that will determine the future of a presidential system, and affect Erdoğan and Davutoğlu's positions.

During these elections, the AK Party will compete against opposition parties. Whether the nation gives it a mandate in the form of a majority enabling it to change the constitution will only be known when the votes are counted.

But even more importantly:

The AK Party won't be competing against the opposition, but against itself in these elections.

The AK Party's rival in these elections will be the AK Parti.

It will mean something if the AK Party continues to maintain around 50 percent of the votes despite a change in leadership.

This will show that the President Erdoğan-Prime Minister Davutoğlu model has gained acceptance.

It will mean that the Erdoğan-Davutoğlu harmony has created a synergy in society.

It will show the belief that exists in political stability being maintained via the President Erdoğan-Prime Minister Davutoğlu relationship.

What the AK Party needs to do is protect this magical atmosphere.

It should not damage this model.

It should not smash this valuable vase.

## **ISIS at NATO borders- Mohamed Jusic, Turkey Agenda**

**12 February 2015**

The brutality of the ISIS toward its enemies in Iraq and Syria is as terrifying as the silence and ignorance by those who helped create it.

But, let's start from the beginning. The cruelty of ISIS toward Iraqi and Syrian minorities -Arabic Christians, Yezidis and Kurds- as well as Sunni Muslims who refuse to obey them, threatens to leave a dark and lasting stain on the history of Islam, in whose name they proclaim to act. The silence of Muslim religious leaders, intellectuals, and those who call on to Islam or at least their adherence to the Muslim community in their political dealerships, with rare exceptions, is indeed so shameful.

The very least they could do is to clearly proclaim "not in our name", as do many young Muslims through various social network outlets. Let us remember how Muslims appreciated and admired the Jews who protested against the violence in Gaza, and the many citizens of world metropolis who also stood against their own

government's decision to attack Iraq, which will later produce ISIS, saying "not in our name". Unfortunately, today we are not witnessing such mass reactions from the "Arabic and Muslim streets" that would speak up to protect Christians and Yezidis in Iraq, who are now being persecuted and whose children are being traded as slaves. These people had lived there peacefully in the times of the rightly guided caliphs of Umayyads and Abbasids to those from Ottomans descent, who for sure were better and more just Muslims than today "self-proclaimed caliph" had.

In fact, the so-called "Islamic State" uses brutality to compensate for its small number of soldiers and lack of military equipment. By combining terror and cruelty over civilians and those who stand up to them, they are trying to run a vast area in Syria and Iraq with a smaller number of soldiers. This area goes from Aleppo, almost at the Mediterranean coast, all the way to the suburbs of Baghdad. In the meantime, they are trying to win over new cities, military barracks, and to gain booty and gradually enlarge their soldier basis, recruited from conquests of towns and villages, with newcomers often being children who join their forces in a desperate attempt to keep their heads on their shoulders and protect the lives of their family members.

The West's responsibility

Well-produced videos of brutal executions and other forms of cruelty are an important part of the "caliphs' soldiers" war tactics. It has so far produced significant results. These, as well as other unconventional war techniques, are not something traditional

armies are used to, especially if they lack serious political and other support.

This brings us to those who are much more responsible for what is happening in Iraq and Syria today. We should not easily dismiss the responsibility of neoconservative ideologists and their political offspring in Washington, as well as allies in London and worldwide, who once endeavored on a careless and poorly planned adventure in Iraq. No one has ever advocated for Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, but everybody was aware that the collapse of the Iraqi state and its institutions would bring no good to anyone.

We need to keep in mind that the dissolution of Iraqi army and the subsequent creation of Shia paramilitary formations supported by the coalition forces, who were intended to suppress the Sunni rebellion against the central Iraqi government, as well as an all too swift withdrawal whilst ignoring many of the problems in order to minimize political damage on American soil, are mistakes that resulted in ISIS.

Obama is obviously not prepared to correct the mistakes of Bush Junior these days. He instead takes this opportunity to point out that those who criticize him for his inefficient and confusing foreign policy have themselves made even bigger mistakes. Bear in mind that, Obama was not the one who pulled out troops from Iraq prematurely. It was, in fact, a contract signed by George Bush Jr. before leaving the White House and Obama, were only sticking to what was previously agreed upon.

However, Obama cannot afford to have a genocide or ethnic cleansing happen on his watch or to see radical militants, denounced by Al-Qaida itself, become a regional factor for continuous instability. This is why his hand has been forced and he is now trying to send a message that Washington is actually doing something simply by lobbing a few projectiles of the targets of ISIS.

It is certainly true that there are now no easy solutions, although many wish for them.

Targeted air strikes by the US on ISIS will only strengthen ISIS position. Anti-American sentiment continues to be prevalent all over the Arabic world. Unless it is a systematic military action with serious allies in the field, not just Kurds and Iraqi Shia, but, Sunni tribes that would replace American infantry, air attacks cannot and will not have serious effects other than sending a soft message that "something" is being done and that United States is not idly watching ISIS brutality and crimes against humanity.

Global duel (OR – Geo-political chess)

After the Iraqi army's breakdown and its submission to Shia paramilitary formations, with influence and influx of Iranian experts and volunteers, fighting against the ISIS can only deepen the Sunni-Shia conflict that has been largely a forced one.

America is now fighting with Iran against Iraqi Sunni's who are fighting with ISIS while in Syria it is the other way around—where America finds itself supporting the Sunni's struggle against the Assad regime.

That is why the key to unraveling this Gordian knot is in Baghdad, where a common government must function, equally representing Iraqi Sunnis and Kurds, and to regain control over the Iraqi army again.

The one thing that simply cannot go on is ignoring the suffering of civilians caught up in the brutality of geo-political rivalries by world and regional powers. ISIS would not exist today if there was a timely intervention in Syria; if regional power circles, first and foremost those of the so-called Islamic world, did not do all they could to break-up the unity of the Syrian opposition for the sake of their own petty interests; and if the global duel between Russia and the West did not have a new cold war aura to it.

On second thought, they can go on doing so if they are prepared to accept ISIS at NATO borders, which is now the case, and wait until they consolidate control over that area.

## **Dialoguing Turkish-Egyptian Relations- Yosra El Gendi, Turkey Agenda**

**11 February 2015**

Comparing Turkish political experiences with the Egyptian experiences has its limitations. In Turkey, democratic procedures are consolidated, while Egypt has a long way to go in that respect. On the one hand, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) rule started out as a force of further democratization against the rigid Kemalist establishment. On the other, the will of the Egyptian people is manipulated by both military interventions and by

religious groups, which are other side of the coin of authoritarianism in Egypt.

On January 21, 2015, in the Davos World Economic Forum, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu stated addressing opinion makers from Arab countries that “instead of reciprocal accusations, we should come together and talk; we should try to understand each other.” Yet, the Prime Minister assured that Turkey explained that would not recognize the ‘military coup’ in Egypt out of “respect for its own values” yet also argued that stability can only be attained through legitimacy obtained through the will of the Egyptian people. Similar statements have led to the expulsion of the Turkish and Egyptian ambassadors from Cairo and Ankara earlier, and the downgrading of diplomatic ties to the level of charge d’affaires. Indeed, the political situation in Egypt is still undergoing much flux. However, the intervention of the military in Egyptian politics is one side of the story. The will of the Egyptian people is often also manipulated by religious groups, which are other side of the coin of authoritarianism in Egypt.

In 2011, Ahmet Davutoglu saw the “Arab Spring as a Turkish Spring” perceiving the uprisings against the authoritarian rulers as a replication of their own Turkish experience against the military-backed westernized caste. Similarly, Davutoglu has perceived the military intervention in Egypt, in July 2013, as one that is against Turkey’s own experience. As Turkey has successfully reduced the privileges of the military and halted their intervention in political affairs, it is understandable that it would see a military intervention in Egyptian politics in a negative light.

In a similar sense, Turkish leaders have perceived the Islamist leaders in Egypt as a force of democracy. Erdogan's speech at the UN focused on Mohammed Morsi's success at the ballot boxes and urged for respecting democracy. Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc also explained the same idea by stating that Turkey "doesn't accept" the overthrow of an elected person and government by what he called "a coup". For that reason, Turkey has hosted members of the dissolved Egyptian parliament, which has convened in Turkey in December 2014. Turkey perceives the situation in Egypt, understandably, through its own lens and political history.

The Egyptian political context, however, is very different from the Turkish one. It is important to note how political Islamic parties in Turkey and in Egypt interacted with elections, democratic processes and secular regimes. Political Islamic parties in Turkey came to power through institutional democratic means, after Turkey had developed consolidated democratic institutions over decades. In Egypt, Islamist parties rose to power in the aftermath of a revolution, after a long period of being excluded from power. Egypt had not yet developed fully democratic institutions and political pacts were the order of the day.

In that respect, participating in electoral processes has made the Turkish parties more moderate. The AK Party had learnt from the experience of previous Islamic parties such as the RP (Welfare) party, which was banned from politics in 1998, for violating the separation of religion and the state. AK Party learnt the political

game based on that experience on developing a more moderate discourse. This was mainly out of fear that they would be dissolved, or having a military coup to take place against their rule. However, participating in elections in Egypt made the Islamists more extremist as they sought to have full control. This could be noted through the strict constitution adopted in 2013, which has given a strict interpretation of the Shari'a. It was also clear there that there was no compromise on their part in June 2013 protests that called for early presidential elections, leading to the army's action that deposed Mohammed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood rule.

Turkey is a secular state, which is clearly mentioned in the constitution as an irrevocable provision and the state controls the religious organizations (diyanet). The interpretation of this secularism, has previously removed images of religiosity from public space, including that of the Islamic veil. On the other hand, Egyptian constitutions of 1971, 2012 and 2014 all refer to the Shari'a as the main source of legislation, with light variations on what account as 'Shari'a'. Court cases can easily be filed to appeal laws that contradict the Shari'a. This has often maintained laws that discriminate against women in personal status issues as well as inheritance.

Accordingly, forces that endanger cultural freedom in Egypt are very different from those in the Turkish context. The AK Party has also granted more cultural freedom to the Kurds, allowing them to use Kurdish language in universities. Despite the long repression of the Alevi Sh'ite sect, it has had its places of worship "cemevis"

recognized by the Turkish government. This used to be seen by the Kemalists as an internal threat to Turkish nationalism and unity. In a way, political Islam in Turkey was a force of liberation against the restrictive secular forces, allowing for more civic rights, the case of the headscarf as a case in point. AK Party has called for more religious freedom, including that of displaying the headscarf in public, as well as allowing it in educational institutions. However, AK Party has not requested the intervention of religion in politics. As per a Pew Center Poll, carried out in 2013, the majority of Turkey's public, does not want the Islamic Sharia to rule Turkey.

On the other hand, forces of political Islam in Egypt have been highly restrictive through a more rigid interpretation of the Shari'a that they attempted to institutionalize. In 2012, Saad Al-Katatni, who chaired the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) after Morsi was elected as president, stated clearly that the aim of the Muslim Brotherhood and FJP was to institutionalize the Shari'a. This was ever so clear in the constitution that was drafted by a largely Islamist constituent assembly in 2012 which highlighted that sharia principles, which were highlighted by previous constitutions as the main source of legislation, would be redefined as the strict laws of the Shari'a. This article (Article 219) was adopted despite the withdrawal of the Church representatives and secular political figures amounting to about 40 withdrawals from the constituent assembly. Thus, while in Turkey political Islam was used as a liberating force from rigid Kemalism, in Egypt it is an attempt to seek control and practice repression against non-Muslims and secular forces. Even during his visit to Egypt during September

2011, Erdogan argued that Egypt should adopt a secular constitution, which "respects all religions". The speech ignited much criticism from within the Muslim Brotherhood ranks.

Similar to the case of political Islam, Islamic political parties rarely represent the same issues in both countries. In Egypt Islamist political parties are religious parties that are merely political arms of their groups and follow their religious guides. This does not only apply to FJP and the Muslim Brotherhood, but also the Nour Party of the Da'wah al-Salafiah and the Construction and Development Party of al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya. On the other hand, the AK Party in Turkey is separate from religious movements and not subservient to any. AK Party is not a religious party, as Erdogan stated in 2005 that 'we are not an Islamic party, and we refuse labels such as Muslim democrats'. In that sense, it accepts religion as a social fact, and is indeed conservative socially, but it does not rule in a religious ideological manner. For that reason, some have called it a post-Islamist political party.

While AK Party gradually was capable of reducing the power of the military and halted their intervention in political affairs, this took place as different political and social forces including liberals, leftists and conservatives rallied behind Erdogan against the Kemalist establishment's rigidity and the intervention of the military in politics. It was this unity, at that time that allowed AK Party to implement the constitutional reforms\* and the reforms in the National Security Council (Milli Guvenlik Kurulu) in 2003. The Muslim Brotherhood, on the other hand, broke lines with other political groups during the

early months of the revolution and established a pact with the military, to refuse to join the street protests and allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to run for the parliamentary elections. When Morsi sent SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) top generals Commander-in-Chief Mohammed Tantawi and the Chief of Staff Sami Anan to early retirement, yet giving them the role of presidential advisors, this gave both generals a safe exit, after more than a year of bloody confrontations between security forces and peaceful protesters.

As a result of these policies that protected the military, gradually, Morsi started losing his secular and revolutionary youth allies that were crucial for his election, and relied heavily on the extreme right Islamists, as he lost power and popularity\*\*. His allies that culminated in the National Alliance in Support of Legitimacy, have often waged war of words against secular counterparts, calling the June 30th protests a battle between “infidels” and “Muslims”. On the other hand, the AK Party did not resort to identity politics for its alliances, but its pragmatic policies, particularly in the economic domain have allowed it to ally with the liberals groups.

While Erdogan’s recent policies limiting the work of civil society and journalists have been dubbed by analysts a “slide towards authoritarianism”, I doubt that there will be a strong popular uprising against the AK Party, in the same way that a popular uprising developed against Mubarak’s or Morsi’s rule. Indeed, there is a breakdown in Erdogan’s former coalition, including the liberals that provided early support for the party as well as the Gulen movement, which used to

support Erdogan. In addition, the crackdown on the Gezi protests illustrates the agitation of many Turks today. Yet, I believe that the way to any form of change in Turkey is through the ballot box. Change is still possible through institutional means in Turkey. In Egypt, the ballot box proved illusive, as a way for a change, this is because elections are mostly used to legitimize incumbent who are already known to win in advance. The only case in which this was not the case, the 2012 presidential elections, a political pact with the military establishment quickly followed the election of Morsi. Thus in Egypt, elections are rarely, if ever, the sole process to guarantee agency over state institutions.

Viewing the “Arab Spring” as a “Turkish Spring” and comparing Turkish Islamist groups to Egyptian one has its limitations. Egyptian problems will not yield to Turkish solutions. In order to be true to dialogue, as Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu urged, a more open analysis is needed to know how Turkey can help Egypt to engage in a series of reforms. On the other hand, hosting the Muslim Brotherhood members, and allowing the disbanded parliament to convene in Turkey, will only be conducive to more tense relations, the effects of which will influence the economies of both countries negatively.

\*While the Turkish military’s role was established by the constitution, the Egyptian military’s role in politics is more diffuse. Earlier constitutions made the military responsible for the protection of the Turkish state from both “external and internal challenges.” This was reverted

constitutionally. However, there are no similar constitutional provisions in Egypt that has formally placed the Egyptian military in charge of political life.

\*\*Morsi came to power through an alliance with leftist revolutionary groups and Islamists, who rejected Shafiq as a candidate due to his affiliation to the Mubarak regime.

## **Irony of Karma: Charisma of Erdogan- Etyen Mahcupyan, Turkey Agenda**

**9 February 2015**

The politics creates areas for dramatic choices and the 'quality' of a politician emerges at those times. The factors that make up this 'quality' are not the character of a politician. The believed mission of a leader and his/her trust in those who accompany him/her is thus important to the highest degree. Considering this, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) is very advantageous. Despite the 'blur' that came with expansion, the core team emerged each time in a way that would protect the inner coherence. It goes without saying that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's courage and firm stance contributed to this. Nevertheless, it is not only limited to these since Erdogan displayed a leadership that doesn't seek an easy way out despite his unique charisma in the party. It is a form of leadership that is able to have an objective view of himself and his party. We had a chance to test this during the transformation period to his presidency. Erdogan understood what 'new' Turkey needed with his broad view and instincts.

All of these are pretty much self-explanatory why we now have a 'phenomenon' like Erdogan since he is not only a politician, leader or a President but also the 'voice of new and lasting reality' that even his opponents persist on take as a reference. This 'voice' is a threat to many but is an incarnational aspect of the 'branch of hope' for the others. Therefore, the charisma of Erdogan is not merely a quality about himself. It is related directly to how he is perceived both in positive and negative ways. The threats on the AK Party and Erdogan, the dirty strategies of the AK Party opponents and the biased views of intellectuals have all contributed to the transformation of this charisma to an independent 'politics', to a political stance.

It is apparent that the mentioned charisma plays a key role in the election successes of the AK Party. Since Erdogan is a leader who simplifies by embracing the entire AK Party mission and the politics for the meaningful segment of AK Party voters while also maintaining the humanistic side. If the opposition desire to decline AK Party votes, they would probably have to damage Erdogan's charisma. However, the nature of politics is always available for two different results. One might dream of the political scene without Erdogan and predict the corruption allegation would tear down prestige of Erdogan in any case. But one should also be able to predict how the leader would 'respond'. As a matter of fact, the charisma of Erdogan is better than ever before despite the salvo of 'corruption' and 'authoritarianism'.

It is unknown how informative it was for the opposition but prestige of Erdogan was boosted following Gezi and especially after Dec. 17 coup attempt. Base voters of the

AK Party repaired Erdogan's prestige and set the bar high because there was a threat, which was even more critical for the AK Party than the military coup. Military coups could leave a politician powerless but in the meantime legitimize the leader and the situation ultimately returns back to 'normal'. However, two factors also came to the forefront during Gezi Park protests and the Dec. 17 coup attempt. First one was the perception of a threat coming from the West. The support of the West to the military coup in Egypt played a significant role in this perception. It was a serious threat for Turkey as the West, which unexpectedly supported the coup, had easily placed itself in 'opposite camps' regarding Egypt. Since no plan would be realized without the approval of the West. The second factor was the fact that the actual threat was 'domestic' and the Gulen Movement being behind operations. Since it was not an easy task to differentiate conservative segment sociologically and it was impossible for the government to be sure of its own voters and even from members of the party without sorting people out. Furthermore, Erdogan saw this; if he could not settle the Gulen issue, the political administration would face a threat from military and not able to resolve the Kurdish problem. In this new and particular dealing with threats, the AK Party took steps in the opposite direction of its democratic reforms. Erdogan's language was also more rigid than ever since the party believed even a small loop carried a much bigger risk at that time.

Erdogan was able to explain this situation to his base voters. In fact, it was not really that difficult. AK Party voters have indeed a political view and feel exposed to the mentioned threat. In addition, these voters

knew the members of the Gulen Movement from their own lives and circles, contrary to the secular opposition. Within the bureaucratic circles, everybody knew who others are and what they do. Adding deliberate arrogance that contributes to Erdogan and the AK Party dislike of the West, the picture became clear for AK Party voters as the Gulen Movement actually waged a battle against the government over the West.

From the place of looking at what they say, that is how Erdogan became 'authoritarian'. However, he became more acceptable, more prestigious, and more charismatic among the AK Party voters who actually hate authoritarianism. Anyhow, it must be the irony of the Karma.