

**THE AGENDA:
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS,
REPORTS AND EVENTS IN
NOVEMBER 2009-FEBRUARY 2010**

By Richard Giragosian

1. “CHRONOLOGICAL REVIEW”

25 February 2010: A Turkish court brought criminal charges against more senior military officers for their involvement in the so-called “Ergenekon” case, a conspiracy allegedly involving a plot to overthrow the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government. With a growing group of senior officers now jailed, including five admirals and three generals, the court heard wiretap evidence and other documentation related to the discovery of alleged military coup plans originally drafted in 2003, which prompted the detention of about 50 commanders, including former chiefs of the Turkish Navy, Air Force and Special Forces.

25 February 2010: On the sidelines of the inauguration ceremony of recently elected Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in Kiev, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu met with Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian in Kiev to discuss the Turkish-Armenian normalization process and other developments in the Caucasus. Speaking to reporters following the meeting, the Turkish foreign minister explained that he raised the issues of the “anxieties and the obstacles we face” and reviewed “the activities of the Minsk Group as related to the Karabakh issue.” Davutoğlu noted that the discussion was the first meeting with the Armenian president since the Armenian Constitutional Court issued a decision in January that endorsed the diplomatic “protocols” signed in October 2009 by the Turkish and Armenian foreign ministers. The statement of the Armenian Constitutional Court was interpreted in Turkey as an Armenian attempt to invoke new preconditions in the normalization effort and virtually halted the diplomatic process.

25 November 2010: In a formal ceremony at the White House, newly-appointed Turkish Ambassador to the United States Namık Tan submitted his credentials to U.S. President Barack Obama. Ambassador Tan, who replaced Nabi Şensoy as Turkey’s ambassador in Washington, graduated from Ankara University’s Faculty of Law before joining the Foreign Affairs Ministry in 1982. He previously served as the first secretary and counselor at the Turkish Embassy in Washington, headed the U.S. Desk at the Foreign Ministry, and was a one-time spokesman and deputy undersecretary for the Ministry, as well as being posted to the Turkish Embassy in Israel.

24 February 2010: Turkish Cypriot President Mehmet Ali Talat and Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias resumed a series of talks brokered by the United Nations seeking to negotiate a settlement to the division of the island. The two leaders met at the buffer zone splitting the island and were joined by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's Cyprus advisor Alexander Downer and his special envoy Taye Brook. Talat and Christofias last met on 1 February, when the United Nations Secretary General visited the island to extend his "personal support" to the negotiation process. Although the talks did not forge any concrete development, the two leaders agreed to continue negotiations and to meet again on three separate days in March. Talat and Christofias first launched negotiations in September 2008.

23 February 2010: Turkish State Minister Faruk Nafiz Özak arrived in Damascus, Syria accompanied by Justice and Development Party (AKP) Deputy Chairman Kürşad Tüzmen to meet with senior Syrian officials and to attend a series of events aimed at promoting Turkey's southern province of Mersin.

23 February 2010: In a response to a press query on the recent arrests in Turkey, as part of the Ergenekon case, U.S. State Department spokesman Philip Crowley stated that Washington had no concerns over the recent arrests of senior former generals, adding that "these issues in the evolution of politics and society in Turkey are not new. I don't think we have any specific concerns. Obviously, any action taken should be in accord with Turkish law and should, you know, be transparent." Crowley described the alliance between Turkey and the U.S. as "the most successful alliance in history," adding that the two countries had been working closely on such diverse and complex issues as the Middle East peace process, Cyprus, Iraq, and Iran.

22 February 2010: Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero announced that Spain "supported and would continue to support" Turkey's bid to attain full EU membership. Speaking at a press conference with visiting Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Madrid, Zapatero said that Spain, during its EU Presidency term, was working on opening four new chapters in Turkey's EU membership negotiations. Zapatero said that one of those four chapters was energy which was blocked by the Greek Cypriot administration. Zapatero added that the Spanish government was exerting efforts to reach an agreement regarding the Cyprus issue. Noting Turkey's role in the Middle East, topics such as Iran, unity for Mediterranean as well as cultural, political and economic

relations were discussed during the bilateral talks in Madrid. Zapatero said that the scale of Spanish corporate investment and business in Turkey has expanded significantly and added that Spanish companies were in particular interested in infrastructure investments in Turkey.

15 February 2010: Speaking at a press conference in Baku with the visiting OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mamedyarov announced that Azerbaijan “generally approves” the updated and modified version of the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement principles. The foreign minister added that after a series of negotiations, “the updated settlement principles, which the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen put forward in Athens, are acceptable [...] and we generally acknowledge these principles, but there are certain aspects that require further coordination.”

9 February 2010: Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian urged Turkey to move forward to adopt the two “protocols” to normalize relations with Yerevan, warning that a continued delay would threaten the “historic” rapprochement between the two countries. In a message sent to Turkish President Abdullah Gül, Sarkisian stressed that “the time has come to manifest determination to take the next major step and leave to future generations a stable and secure region.” The Armenian President went on to tell his Turkish counterpart that “we can achieve results only if there is trust, resolve, and an unfaltering stance.” Sarkisian had earlier threatened to walk away from the agreements if Turkey failed to ratify them within a “reasonable time frame.”

29 January 2010: The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry opened an investigation of a shooting rampage on a military base that left six dead. The violent incident was the second reported at the base this month. In the most recent case, military sources said two Azerbaijani soldiers opened fire with automatic weapons at the Dashkasan base in Central Azerbaijan. Four officers were slain and the alleged gunmen then killed themselves, and two other soldiers were injured. Earlier in the month, at the same base, six officers were killed in a similar attack.

29 January 2010: Azerbaijani officials expressed concern over recent legislation before the U.S. Congress authorizing new sanctions on “countries and/or companies” engaged in the sale of natural gas to Iran. The Azerbaijani officials noted that the sanctions could be used to target the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), which is already involved in energy sales to

Iran. According to the new U.S. legislation, if adopted, U.S. President Barack Obama would be granted “the authority to sanction persons or other entities that sell gasoline or refined petroleum products to Iran.”

22 January 2010: The Russian energy group Gazprom announced an agreement to double its natural gas purchases from Azerbaijan in 2010 and again in 2011. Gazprom officials said that it plans to purchase some 35 billion cubic feet of natural gas from Azerbaijan in 2010 and 70 billion cubic feet in 2011. The agreement came during a Moscow meeting between Gazprom chief Alexei Miller and Rovnag Abdullayev, the President of the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR). Azerbaijan has emerged as a regional energy player and Europe is looking to Azerbaijani gas for its planned Nabucco pipeline, which is intended to overcome the Russian monopoly on regional energy infrastructure. Gazprom previously signed a purchase and sale contract for more than 1.7 billion cubic feet of gas from SOCAR in October 2009.

18 January 2010: Speaking to reporters in Baku, Vladimir Dorokhin, the Russian Ambassador to Azerbaijan, expressed Moscow’s opposition to the proposed Nabucco gas pipeline project, adding that because the South Stream and Nabucco natural gas pipelines may not be enough to meet European energy demands, Russia is seeking to diversify its energy transit options to Europe with its South Stream natural gas pipeline through the Black Sea to Southern Europe. The European community, meanwhile, looks to Nabucco to bring non-Russian gas to its consumers through Turkey. The South Stream pipeline is designed to carry 2.2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas per year, while Nabucco has a design capacity of 1.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Europe, however, might require an additional seven trillion cubic feet of natural gas per year by 2025, exacerbating its need for increased gas imports.

13 January 2010: In comments to reporters, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan announced Russia and Turkey have started working towards visa-free travel between the two countries. The Turkish premier, speaking after holding a meeting with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, added that the decision on visa-free travel could be made in spring/summer this year, possibly timed with the state visit of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to Turkey.

18 December 2009: Turkish President Abdullah Gül met with his Israeli counterpart Shimon Peres in Copenhagen and “agreed to restore normal, positive and

stable relations between Turkey and Israel,” according to an official statement released after the meeting by the Israeli Presidential Office. According to the Israeli source, Peres thanked Gül for Turkey’s efforts to develop peace in the Middle East, while President Gül accepted Peres’ invitation to visit Israel at some unspecified future date.

18 December 2009: According to a new report prepared by the Turkish Foreign Affairs Committee assessing the proposed Nabucco natural gas pipeline, financing for the 11.3 billion dollar Nabucco project is “a challenge,” although “ties with Azerbaijan could benefit from the project.” The report warned of unspecified “uncertainties” regarding the financial support for the gas pipeline, which the committee felt posed “a serious risk.” For his part, Taner Yıldız, the Turkish Energy Minister, expressed his optimism over the prospects for Nabucco, pointing to gas deals with Azerbaijan as a sign of progress. Europe seeks to diversify its energy ties by pursuing Nabucco that would transport gas from Central Asia and the Middle East along a key Turkish route.

18 December 2009: In a formal address to the summit of the heads of state and government of the 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference, Turkish President Abdullah Gül urged all countries to undertake responsibilities to deal with climate change, saying that “there shouldn’t be any country who hasn’t shouldered responsibility.” President Gül added that humanity has “entered a new era when fate of all societies were interrelated strongly” and stated that “nobody has the right to say ‘I only live in my region’ as global incidents and tendencies do not recognize international borders. Global problems require global solutions. This is in the spirit of the global cooperation that improved in the past two years.” The Turkish President further announced that Turkey expected a comprehensive document to be issued in the Copenhagen Conference that should reflect main goal of the Framework Agreement and the Kyoto Protocol which is set to expire in 2012.

17 December 2009: The European Council’s Committee of Permanent Representatives issued an official decision giving its permission for Turkey to open the policy chapter on environment in Ankara’s accession negotiations. The environment chapter is set to open on 21 December during an inter-governmental conference meeting. The number of chapters Turkey has opened so far increases to 12 out of a total 33 policy areas. In 2006, the European Union suspended the opening of eight chapters and the closing of several others due to Turkey’s refusal to allow Greek Cypriot vessels into Turkish ports.

16 December 2009: According to new figures released by Eurostat, the statistical agency of the European Union, over 2.4 million Turkish citizens are currently residing in the European Union and represent the largest group of foreigners residing in the EU. The total number of foreigners residing in the EU is 30.8 million, or six percent, of the EU's total population of 500 million. Turkish citizens are followed by Moroccans, Albanians, Chinese, Ukrainians, Algerians, Russians and Indians. Germany is home to the largest population of Turkish citizens, estimated at 1.83 million, or more than half of the total population of Turkish citizens in the EU. Other EU countries where Turkish citizens reside include France, with 221,000, Austria with 109,000, Holland, 94,000, Belgium, 40,000, and the UK, with 36,000 Turkish citizens.

6 December 2009: In comments to reporters prior to a visit to Washington, Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan said that Turkey would not contribute additional troops to Afghanistan, explaining that "Turkey has already done what it can do by boosting its contingent of soldiers there to 1,750 from around 700 without being asked." Turkish troops are not engaged in combat operations and Ankara has long resisted pressure from Washington to offer more combat troops, although Turkey has pledged to continue training of Afghan security forces.

3 December 2009: Turkish Minister of Energy Taner Yıldız announced that Turkey "will allow gas transit to Europe from any country, including Iran, stating that "the main direction of our policy consisting in the diversification of energy sources and transit routes will be put into effect along the same line." The position differs from United States policy, which opposes the transport of Iranian natural gas to Europe through Turkish territory until U.S. relations with Tehran were normalized and until the problem of the Iranian nuclear program was settled. But the Turkish energy minister explained that "it is Iran that makes decisions on gas transportation from Iran, while Turkey makes decisions connected with gas transportation by its territory," promising that "we shall permit the transit of any gas."

2. REPORTS OF INTEREST & NEWS FROM THE “THINK THANK” WORLD

New Report: *“Troubled Partnership. U.S.-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change.”* is the title of the new RAND Corporation report on Turkey, released on 3 February 2010. It was written by Stephen Larrabee. The following is the abstract of the report: “A strong security partnership with Turkey has been an important element of U.S. policy for the last five decades. However, in the last few years, U.S.-Turkish relations have seriously deteriorated, and today they are badly in need of repair. The arrival of a new administration in Washington presents an important opportunity to put Washington’s relations with Ankara on a firmer footing. Turkey plays a critical role in four areas of increasing strategic importance to the United States: the Balkans, Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf. In each of these areas, Ankara’s cooperation is vital to achieving U.S. policy objectives.”

The RAND report is available at: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG899/index.html>

Event of Note: *CSIS HOSTS TURKISH PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION.* The Washington-based think tank CSIS hosted a group of parliamentarians from the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 2 March 2010. The meeting, chaired by CSIS Turkey Project Director Bülent Alirıza, assessed the latest developments in U.S.-Turkish relations, including the Armenian issue and the genocide bill before the U.S. Congress.

For full coverage of the event, go to:

<http://csis.org/event/meeting-turkish-grand-national-assembly-delegation>

Event of Note: *BROOKINGS INSTITUTION EXPERT PUBLISHES ESSAY ON “TURKEY’S DIFFICULT TRANSITION”* Ömer Taşpınar, a non-resident fellow with the Foreign Policy program of the Washington-based Brookings Institution published an essay entitled, “Turkey’s Difficult Transition,” on 15 February 2010. According to the expert’s essay, “on February 4, the Turkish government shelved the controversial Protocol on Cooperation for Security and Public Order (EMASYA). This protocol was used by the military each time it wanted to take charge of internal security when law and order broke down. In many ways, EMASYA’s purpose was to provide the legal framework and justification for

a military intervention. No doubt, the abrogation of this protocol is a step in the right direction for Turkish democracy. Yet, there are other regulations and by-laws that the Turkish military can use if it decides to intervene in politics.”

For more information, go to: http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/0215_turkey_democracy_taspinar.aspx