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leave to come back

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YOUR WAY OF UNDERSTANDING TURKEY

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DIPLMACY

TURKISH-ARMENIAN RAPPROCHEMENT MIGHT CAUSE BREAKTHROUGH IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

LAMIYA ADİLGİZİ, İSTANBUL

The recent rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey for the normalization of relations between the two countries might cause a breakthrough in the Nagorno-Karabakh stalemate, regional analysts agree.

S. Enders Wimbush, senior vice president of international programs and policy at the Hudson Institute, states: "This [the opening of borders between Armenia and Turkey] will require intense and delicate diplomacy with Azerbaijan. [However], both Turkey and Azerbaijan will benefit if they succeed."

The normalization efforts between Ankara and Yerevan have shaken Turkish-Azerbaijani friendship for a short period. In 1993, after the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan, post-Soviet countries in the South Caucasus, the diplomatic ties between Armenia and Turkey became strained. Supporting its strategic ally Azerbaijan, Turkey closed its borders to Armenia to force the latter to respect the borders of neighboring countries (as Armenia has territorial claims on Turkey as well). **CONTINUED ON PAGE 17**

STABILITY

GEORGIA MOVES FROM SUSPICION TO CAUTION OVER CAUCASUS PLATFORM

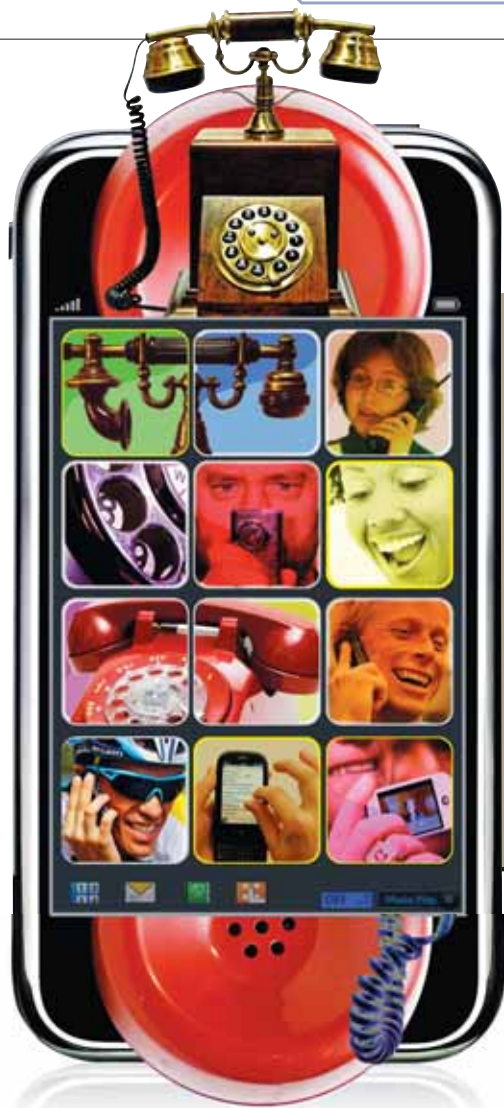
YONCA POYRAZ DOĞAN, İSTANBUL

When Turkey first proposed establishing a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform following a brief war between Georgia and Russia in August of last year, Georgia was suspicious about it, but after a few meetings and a the passage of a year they are warming up to the idea even though there are yet to be definite results.

"A year ago, perceptions were based on fear. As time goes on, fears subside and rationalism prevails," Aleksandre Kukhianidze from the Tbilisi State University told Sunday's Zaman during his participation in the Turkey-Georgia Relations Workshop organized by the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) in Istanbul on July 22-24.

However, Kukhianidze added that Georgians have been cautious about what such a platform could bring, although their initial doubts have diminished. "Georgia is small and between two big powers. The Russian and Ottoman Empires' dominance do still occupy the memories of Georgians. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 17**

COLLAGE/SALIH TEKİN



THE STORY OF CONSTANT CHANGE: THE TELEPHONE

Maybe Alexander Graham Bell was unaware that he was about to break new ground in the field of communication when he called his assistant into another room and uttered the historic words, "Mr. Watson -- come here -- I want to see you." It has been 133 years since Bell transmitted the first message through cables, and the telephone has gone through an interesting journey from its beginnings to the latest development of 3G technology. When the telephone was born on March 10, 1876, it created great excitement all over the world, and of course, in Turkey. Not so far away, but just three years later, in 1879, though not the telephone itself but its idea appeared in Istanbul. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 20**

By ZEYNEP KALKAVAN

RISING ANTI-AK PARTY ATTITUDE TAKES TOLL ON COUNTRY'S FUTURE

Opposition parties seem to be united in their opposition to the ruling Justice and Development Party on all fronts and are determined to not give the ruling party any credit for introducing legislation that may be seen as a positive development for the country

ALİ ASLAN KILIÇ / ABDULLAH BOZKURT, ANKARA

While Turks struggle to pay food and utility bills and make the minimum payments on their credit cards amid rising unemployment due to economic hardships caused by global economic turmoil, their representatives in Parliament are unable to stop bickering, leaving the country's long-standing problems unsolved.

It has become obvious that opposition parties are united in their opposition to the government on all fronts and are determined to not give the ruling party any credit for introducing legislation that may be seen as a positive development for the government. The deep division running between the government and opposition parties has come to a point that hurts the economy and the country's national interests.

The lack of communication and trust is also preventing legislation such as the commercial code and other laws on technical reforms required by the European Union from coming to the floor of Parliament for debate and discussion. What is troublesome here, analysts say, is that the reforms have nothing to do with party ideologies and would benefit all in the country if adopted.

A case in point is the government's recent initiative to solve the decades-old Kurdish problem. Justice and Development Party (AK Party) deputies complain the opposition is not behaving responsibly on this issue of national interest but rather criticizing the government for the sake of criticism instead of presenting a positive contribution through counter proposals. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 15**

TRIAL OF PRO-COUP GENERALS A MILESTONE FOR IMPROVED DEMOCRACY

BETÜL AKKAYA DEMİRBAŞ, İSTANBUL

Turkey witnessed a first in its history on July 20 when retired generals accused of plotting to overthrow a democratically elected government appeared before a judge, a move analysts believe stands as a milestone in the improvement of Turkish democracy, which had sustained several fatal blows when the military stepped into the political realm.

The arrests of retired generals last year as part of an ongoing trial into a clandestine group known as Ergenekon boosted hopes that Turkey was finally turning its face toward a stronger democracy. However, there were concerns that those generals would manage to escape trial as no high-ranking member of the military had been put on trial on such charges before. "The trial of military generals on charges of plotting a coup d'état is an extremely important development for Turkey. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 04**

3G to spur market growth, bring wireless to millions

DAVID NEYLAN, İSTANBUL

At long last, Turkey is getting the long-awaited third generation (3G) mobile phone technology, which will increase Turkish cell phone operators' data speed tenfold and bring the country up to

speed with the world's hundreds of millions of 3G users. If all goes as planned, come July 30 3G technology will be fully functional. The technology promises to revolutionize the ways in which Turks see telephony and is likely to contribute considerably to mobile providers expanding the telecom-

munications market. Many telephony analysts view Turkey as one of the most promising markets for mobile technology. At present, there is a penetration rate of about 84 percent, or 64 million subscribers, making it one of the countries with the highest proportion of mobile users. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 06**



KATHRYN SCHALOW

PHOTO: SUNDAY'S ZAMAN, MEVLUT KARABULUT

A US DIPLOMAT FINDS HER HOMETOWN IN SAMSUN

EMINE KART ANKARA

She is an American diplomat who describes the Black Sea province of Samsun as her Turkish hometown. Kathryn Schalow's journey took her to back to Turkey in 2006, after her first arrival in this country some 29 years ago, when she was a 16-year-old teenager.

With 19 years of experience in the US Foreign Service, Kathryn Schalow, the former press attaché of the US Embassy in Ankara, recently left the Turkish capital to start a new chapter in her career, studying at the National Defense University in Washington.

"I grew up in a small town in the Midwest and had barely been out of the state and never been out of the country, and my high school rival decided to apply for AFS [American Field Service] for student exchange, something I've never thought of. Because she was my rival, I said, 'I have to do it, too.' She ended up not going, and I got in," Schalow recalls in an interview with Sunday's Zaman, frankly admitting that she had to open a map to find out where Samsun was when she was told that she would go there.

"I stayed with a family for three months. We had a house on Altinkum, and so basically, I spent my summer on the beach with a lovely family, and it changed my life," Schalow says, explaining how it was difficult to reintegrate into her own culture after going home since her perspective on life had changed since she left the US.

"It happened gradually, but towards the end, you realize you are a different person. Everybody changes throughout life, but I think this is a major change in a teenager's life. You come back home, and you go: 'Wow, I want to go back and look someplace else again. How can I find somebody to pay me to do this?' I think that's when I got the thought in my head, 'What kind of job can I get to get overseas,' and the State Department seemed like the best option. I didn't go in right away; I did other things, but it was always in the back of my head," she explains.

Schalow's last job before entering the State Department in 1990 was working as a lobbyist for reproductive health rights.

Considering the fact that her posting to Ankara began in July 2006, it's not difficult to imagine that she must have had a difficult time in Turkey, particularly during the first half of her three-year post here, as bilateral relations between the two NATO allies were tense due to Ankara's charge that the US did not take action to address the presence of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq.

Dealing with anti-Americanism

"Maybe sometimes hurt," Schalow replies when asked whether she ever felt offended due to pressure by the Turkish media during those tense times. And when asked whether she felt that her country was an easy target in Turkey, she says: "Because we are a big country, yes, we are an easier target; because of our size and our influence in the world, it is easier to hit a big target than a little target and it's probably more fun."

"Being the voice of the United States Embassy, especially in those years, when the relationship was not so good, was hard. Every time I had to talk to a journalist, it was a very frightening experience: 'Please don't let me say anything wrong to make

Noting that serving in Turkey is her most difficult job, Kathryn Schalow, the former press attaché of the US Embassy in Ankara, reveals her experiences in her job in Turkey

things worse.' And the anti-Americanism was jarring. I'd never lived in a country before that had this level of anti-Americanism," she continues, while emphasizing that she never faced anti-Americanism in her daily life.

"We have many American visitors, and every group I've spoken to, I said, 'Look, there is a problem with anti-Americanism here, but it appears to be about the policies, not about the people.'"

"Turks love American people, and I never felt anything but welcomed and loved in this country. When people find out you are an American, they want to talk to you. They are curious; they want to invite you to their homes. And that's the wonderful part of Turkish culture that I retained all these years; that's why I wanted to come back. And that didn't change, it is still there. Turks are always generous to us," Schalow explains. "Turks are also very frank, you get into a taxi, and a Turk will tell you everything that's wrong with the US government, and that's fine. Criticism is fine, and I always tell friends and colleagues in the Turkish press that America is a big country, we have big shoulders, we can take the criticism as long as you criticize us on the facts. It's more interesting when you get into a taxi, and you hear the conspiracy theories. They are harder to encounter. I've been amazed at some of the things there, some of the stories that are out there about America. It's disappointing, but it is what it is."

Gorilla in the room and giving the US a chance

Yet Schalow says she also observed concrete progress in regards to changing anti-American sentiments in Turkey.

"Polls are certainly better, and I think things started to change in November 2007," Schalow suggests, referring to a White House meeting between former US President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, since which the US has supplied real-time intelligence to Turkey to help accurately pinpoint PKK targets in northern Iraq.

"And that really started to take the pressure off the relationship, and it helped because the PKK was so dominant in our conversations, it was hard to talk about other things. And that was true with the press as well, with my job," Schalow says.

"I could guarantee that no matter which official I sat down with in front of a journalist, a PKK question would come. It was the big gorilla in the room, and after November 2007, that started to change. We were able to start talking about other things. I could see by the types of the questions I was get-

ting from the press, or even not getting from the press, that people were starting to become relaxed. There was a relaxed feeling coming into the relationship. And with the election of President Obama, it really accelerated," she adds, noting that Obama's visit "was amazing; the reaction of the Turkish press was wonderful, as well as that of the Turkish people and the Turkish government; and you could see that there was this definite feeling of 'OK, we're going to give the US a chance.'"

Ankara forges a stronger Kathy

Schalow says that while coming to Ankara she knew this would be one of the most difficult jobs she would have.

"It turned out to be the most challenging job in my career, the hardest job of my career, but it was also the most compelling. I learned so much about policy-making, about how to do public affairs, about so many things that have advanced my professional career, and because it was so difficult, it sort of forged a stronger Kathy, a stronger diplomat. So I'm very grateful for that. For the last three years, I've seen remarkable things in Turkey, something I didn't think I would ever experience. Just one thing after another, snap elections, the election of the president, the e-memorandum, everything was a learning experience for me," she says.

"So it made me a better diplomat and better at my job. And on the personal level, it was a longer journey. Because I had a history in Turkey, I always wanted to come back here. I'd been here 29 years ago. And I had these wonderful memories of Turkey, the graciousness of Turkish people and my Turkish family. And I always wanted to come back as a diplomat. And then the last year was sort of wonderful closure. My family history here and my professional history here brought this wonderful level of understanding of Turkish culture -- I like to think, I hope."

Ceremonial closure

During her last days in the country, Schalow traveled to Samsun, for a kind of ceremonial closure of her time here.

"Actually, I almost had a nervous breakdown," Schalow says, while explaining how she drove into Altinkum, seeing the beach full of buildings and facing the reality that she would not be able to find "the old family house."

"For a minute, I was very upset because I thought it would really be great to go see the old house. There was no way I was going to find the old house. For a minute, I was very upset, and I was crying in the car. And yes, it was almost this moment of closure: I realized that 30 years had passed, I moved on, I'm a different person now than I was 30 years ago. Turkey has moved on, Samsun has moved on and so it was a closure -- like I came here in 2006 with the mindset of a 16-year-old girl who had lived here many years ago," she recalls.

"And now I am a 45-year-old woman who has a whole set of wonderful memories of Turkey and of Samsun; Samsun is still my hometown in Turkey. But it is the Samsun of 2009, not the Samsun of my teenage years. So it was actually a wonderful feeling of closure. Now I'm moving on to the next chapter of my life, and I'll come back, I'll be back. And it won't be in 29 years; it will be much sooner."

Judicial go-ahead to harsh insults, threats lead to of terror atmosphere

EMINE KART ANKARA

Two prominent professors of this country were asked at the time by the government to draft a report on minorities in Turkey. They did their job; the government-sponsored report criticizing the treatment of minority groups was released in the fall of 2004 by the Prime Ministry Human Rights Advisory Council (HHDK).

For doing their job, they were tried under several charges including "insulting Turkishness," "inciting people to hatred" and "openly belittling judicial organs" due to passages in the report.

Eventually, after a tortuous process in which higher courts quashed acquittal rulings by lower courts, the painful engagement of two prominent professors of this country appeared to have come to an end in March 2009 as they were acquitted of all charges stemming from the report. But that was not the case.

Ibrahim Kaboglu, a professor of law, and Baskan Oran, a professor of international relations, in the meantime, had to face public insults and threats which included expressions such as "shedding blood."

The idiom, adding insult to injury, must be an appropriate one for describing their situation. Below is the preface of "an open letter to some judges" written by Oran and also signed by Kaboglu.

"Honorable Judges, I will instantly come to the point. I'm a member of the Prime Ministry Human Rights Advisory Council. I wrote the Minority Report in 2004 as required by the peremptory rule of Article 5 of the council regulations. Some persons -- please do not get offended because I will say those words -- swore, using vulgar language, at my and council president Ibrahim Kaboglu's mothers and fathers. Don't get offended, because these swearwords have been cleared one by one via court rulings as being inoffensive," says Oran.

"But, since these are not insults, then what will happen if the same words are addressed to you? There are two possibilities: Either you will swallow them because you already ruled that 'there is no insult,' or you will open an insult case, but then you will fall into contradiction with yourself," Oran says, and lists in the rest of the letter the insults to which they were exposed and which they also are quoted later in this article since they are judicially declared as not being insults.

In 12 separate cases opened upon complaints by Kaboglu and Oran, none of the defendants were charged. Now the two professors have been planning to take these cases to the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights.

"Honorable Judges, after this entire judicial process, now I feel myself less secure. Living in a country where these abominable deeds can be comfortably practiced is not a very nice feeling. If a citizen, a retired professor whose hair has turned white is feeling such restlessness, then that country is finished. I'm helpless. I have nothing to do in this country, but leave you alone with your consciences -- which all people

have from birth. The only remedy is to apply to the European Court of Human Rights. After all, this is in itself a moment of sadness," Oran concludes the open letter.

Oran describes himself as a "lahastimüt," of Turkey, -- it's an abbreviation he created by getting inspiration from WASP, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. "La" is for "laik" in Turkish, which means secular; "ha" is for Hanafi, which is one of the four schools of thought of religious jurisprudence within Sunni Islam; "si" is for Sunni; "mi" is for Muslim; and "t" is for Turk.

Oran is a secular Muslim Turk with a Hanafi-Sunni background and thus is from the dominant part of society in this country.

"If a so-called WASP of this country is feeling himself to be insecure as I do now, then I wonder what a Kurd, a non-Muslim or a gay might be feeling in the same country," Oran told Sunday's Zaman.

Swearwords and Parliament's podium

One of the most striking insults against Kaboglu and Oran were at the time delivered by a deputy from Parliament's podium.

"The nation will drown in its spit those whoever wrote this report," Süleyman Saribas, now out of Parliament, then said, referring to the Minority Report. "Those who are looking for a minority should better ask their mothers who their fathers are," Saribas added, resorting to a harsh swearword in Turkish culture which implies that a person's mother is "an unfaithful prostitute" and his father is a "cuckold," and finally, that person is a "bastard."

In Turkey, swearwords like those ones above have been commonly accepted by courts as elements of severe provocation in criminal cases. Sometimes, they are accepted as an extenuating circumstance even in murder cases.

At first, a lower court in Ankara ordered Saribas to pay compensation to Kaboglu and Oran. But the same court later obeyed the decision of the High Court of Appeals when the latter quashed the payment of compensation. While reversing the initial ruling, the High Court of Appeals introduced no reasoning for doing so at all.

According to Oran, the absence of any judicial enforcement in the entire 12 cases opened by himself and Kaboglu is merely saying that there is the freedom to hurl insults and threats in this country.

"Judges in Turkey resemble the judges of the Weimar Republic, which acquitted at the time all kinds of insult cases against the Jewish people," Oran told Sunday's Zaman.

"In this country, when a president of the High Court of Appeals openly said that he could not be neutral when the issue is [the founder of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal] Atatürk. Another senior judge said that neutrality on every issue is a luxury for this country. The judges are trying to save the country instead of properly doing their jobs. But then, this situation takes us to the dicta of judges who issue decisions without taking any rules and procedures into consideration, but according to their own personal rules."



Ibrahim Kaboglu was put on trial after being accused of "insulting Turkishness," among other charges, in a report on minorities he prepared with another academic.

PHOTO: ZAMAN