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**Democratisation in
Turkey:
A Regional Model or
a Unique Case in the
Mediterranean?**

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Democratisation in Turkey: A Regional Model or a Unique Case in the Mediterranean?

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Turkey may be cited as a case of successful democratisation in its region. The long democratisation process in the country and the hurdles on the way may be explained by the time required for the evolution of background factors that form the backbone of a democratic system such as limitation and control of state power and the empowerment of the individual, the development of a pluralistic civil society, and of effective channels of political participation and democratic representation, respect for freedom of expression, association and other fundamental human rights and freedoms, and tolerance for alternative views. The Ottoman legacy that was based on a strong state ethos and a relatively weak civil society also influenced politics in the Turkish Republic. The overbearing role of the state in the economic life of the Republic and the tutelage of the military and civil bureaucracy and a relatively weak civil society hampered the development of a democratic system of government. The transition to multiparty politics after 1946 marked the start of a problematic process of democratisation which frequently experienced crises and breakdowns. The gradual development of democratic forces in Turkey proceeded in line with the modernisation of the society, and accelerated at a rapid pace after the 1990s. What is important to note is that Turkey is an example that shows that democratisation in a developing country coming from an authoritarian background with a predominantly Muslim population may be possible.

The paper aims to give an in-depth analysis of the democratisation process in Turkey and attempts to evaluate the lessons that may be learned from this experience. Being one of the aims of the Barcelona process, democratisation is a general theme of politics in the Mediterranean. The countries in the Mediterranean region are experiencing problems in establishing a democratic system of governance. The transition process in countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Jordan and Egypt run into similar problems experienced in Turkey. Thus being countries that share cultural and social commonalities they may benefit from Turkey's experiences. The paper attempts to examine whether Turkey's example of a democratic and secular country with a predominantly Moslem population can also be repeated in similar countries of the region. The main research question will revolve around the analysis of Turkey's process of democratisation, conditioned by the role of the state, state-society relations, secularism and development of civil society and answer the question whether Turkey's case is unique, i.e. that it rests on the existence of distinctive factors and cannot be replicated elsewhere, or it may serve as an example for other countries that share similar cultural and socio-economic factors and commonalities in historical development. It must also be emphasised that EU has been an important external stimulus for the democratisation process in Turkey. The paper also attempts to place the issue in the context of the EU's Mediterranean policy and the Euro-Mediterranean process and evaluate the impact that the EU factor may have on the prospects of democracy in the region.

Democracy in its literal meaning "rule by the people" can be seen as arguably the most rational regime that evolved in the course of world history. According to the Freedom in the World survey 2005, 89 countries were listed as free, 54 as partly free, and a remaining 49 as not free. Despite the rhetoric of democracy and democratisation that one hears more and more often in our day, less than half of the world population (44%) lives in free states¹. Definition and features of democracy as well as deciding whether and to what extent it exists in any given society is a controversial matter.

The literal meaning of the term cited above is very clear and simple but leaves many questions about the actual implementation of democracy unanswered. A more elaborate definition describes democracy as a "mode of decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies over which the people exercise control, and the most democratic arrangement to be that where all members of the collective enjoy effective equal rights to take part in such decision-making directly – one, that is to say which realizes to the greatest conceivable degree the principles of popular control and equality in its exercise"². In our day incidence of direct democracy is scarce and the form of democracy that is practiced worldwide is representative democracy, i.e. "government by the freely elected representatives of the people" and "for the people"³. According to Diamond, Linz and Lipset, democracy should meet three essential conditions:

- "Meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organised groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of governmental power

I. Democracy and Democratisation

1. *Freedom in the World 2005*, at www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2005/essay2005.pdf (20.06.2005).
2. David Beetham, 1993, "Liberal Democracy and the Limits of Democratization" in D. Held (ed.), *Prospects for Democracy: North, South, East, West*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 55-73.
3. Arend Lijphart, 1984, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-one Countries*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 1.

- through regular, free and fair elections that exclude the use of force”;
- “A highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, such that no major (adult) social group is prevented from exercising the rights of citizenship”; and
- “A level of civil and political liberties (...) secured through political equality under a rule of law, sufficient to ensure that citizens (acting individually and through various associations) can develop and advocate their views and interests and contest policies and offices vigorously and autonomously”⁴.

Modern democracy emerged in Western Europe and the United States in the 19th century as a form of government based on the election of the representatives of the people by the people through free competitive elections. The process can be traced back to the formation of the first assemblies in various countries of Europe such as the parliament in Britain, the *Riksdag* in Sweden and the *estates-general* in France. Although such assemblies evolved as a restraining factor on the absolute authority of the sovereign, one had to wait until the 19th century to observe the emergence of mass elections and the gradual extension of universal suffrage starting with adult males. This took place in the 1820s and 1830s in the United States, in 1848 in France, and in Britain where parliamentary government was attained in the 17th century, in 1867. Democracy further expanded as a form of government in the 20th century with successive waves of democratisation⁵.

Democracy, despite its merits, was criticised by various writers such as Pareto, Michels and Mosca, as leading to the tyranny of the majority or oligarchic rule⁶. Although the practical cases of democratic regimes display some imperfections and can never attain the ideal the relative efficiency of democracy is generally accepted. Both democracy theory and its implementation have become more sophisticated through the years. Robert Dahl coined the word “polyarchy” to denote a system of government that approaches the ideal of democracy. Thus in order to prevent democracy from turning into rule by the majority, respect for fundamental rights and freedoms including those of the opposition or minority groups is an indispensable aspect of democracy. In our time, the understanding of democracy has extended much beyond merely elections. Democracy has also evolved as a term applied not only to a specific form of government but also to relations in a society to denote a society in which there is a high incidence of vertical mobility and equality of opportunity for all citizens⁷. A society where citizens are highly organised in the form of associations is also usually depicted as a facilitating factor for the longevity of democracies⁸.

The study of how and why democracy is spreading around the world and is being adopted by an increasing number of countries is a research agenda that involves multifarious explanations and approaches. While democracy emerged as a form of government in the early democracies through intrinsic factors, democratisation in the rest of the world mostly took place as a result of both internal developments such as the effects of modernisation and empowerment of civil society and international influences such as imposition by a colonial power or conscious emulation. It is generally agreed that democratisation follows different routes and emanates from diverse factors in different historical, political and social settings. Theories of democratisation attempt to explain the causal relations that influence the emergence, development and consolidation of democracy. While trying to account for democracy and democratisation, it may be possible to discern three main categories: modernisation, transition and structural approaches to democratisation⁹. These approaches attempt to explain processes of democratisation with the use of different factors such as socio-economic development, class structure in the society, the emergence of a strong bourgeoisie, the role of the working class, role of the state in society, structural conditions created by world capitalism, elite conflict and particular strategies of actors. The transition approach aims to explain the steps before democratisation that a country goes through. In Dankwart Rustow’s seminal article, he described these stages as the emergence of national borders and a sense of national identity, severe political conflicts between old and new elites, the acceptance by political actors of the rules of democracy and finally the consolidation of rules and institutions of democracy¹⁰. The transition school mostly outlines these phases as an initial phase of liberalisation, transition and consolidation¹¹. It must be concluded that all such theories have explanatory value and complement each other in explaining different processes of democratisation. Both a level of socio-economic development, elite conflict and the agency of civil society groups have an influence in triggering processes of democratisation. In this vein the international context is also important in supporting democratic forces in society and providing models and standards of

4. Larry Diamond, J.J. Linz, and S. M. Lipset, 1995, “Introduction: What makes for Democracy?” in L. Diamond, J.J. Linz and S.M. Lipset (eds.), *Politics in Developing Countries*, 2nd edition, Boulder/London: Lynne Rienner, pp. 1-66, pp. 6-7.

5. Anthony Birch, 1993, *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy*, London: Routledge, p. 46.

6. See Edward McNall Burns, 1960, *Ideas in Conflict: The Political Theories of the Contemporary World*, New York: W.W. Norton and Co. Inc.

7. Birch, *op. cit.*, p. 46-7.

8. It should also be mentioned that fascist-corporatist systems may also be based on an organized society.

9. See D. Potter, D. Goldblatt, M. Kiloh and P. Lewis (eds.), 1997, *Democratization*, London: Polity Press, p. 10ff, cited in Rune Premfors, “The Contingency of Democratization: Scandinavia in Comparative Perspective”, paper presented at a conference titled “Contingency in the Study of Politics: A Conference in Honor of Robert Dahl”, December 3-5 2004, Yale University, USA, pp. 4-5.

10. Dankwart Rustow, 1970, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 337-363.

11. Premfors, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

democratisation.

The international context is all the more important considering that consecutive “waves” of democratisation are affecting political systems of the world. The resistance of authoritarian regimes to pressures emanating from such processes is declining whereas the confidence and hopes of democratic movements regarding the eventual democratisation of their countries are increasing. In the aftermath of the Second World War, democratisation took place in countries like Italy, Federal Republic of Germany and Japan. Transition to competitive politics also took place in Turkey under the influence of the global conjuncture. However there were states such as Spain and Portugal that could not adapt to that wave of democratisation. In the 1970s the third wave of democratisation in Samuel Huntington’s words affected southern Europe and Latin America. A further wave emerged in Eastern Europe following the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union. Some of these states succeeded in establishing functioning democracies which evolved on the basis of the support provided by the European Union’s enlargement strategy. However some others such as Armenia and Azerbaijan could not establish a democratic system. At the same time some countries in Africa also joined the wave of democratisation¹².

The current period is one where a new wave of democratisation may be discerned. After the demise of communism liberal democracy has become the dominant form of political system in the world. International pressures for democratisation are also being felt and major powers such as the United States and the European Union are propagating the cause of democracy in their foreign relations. Economic sanctions, diplomatic initiatives, making the conclusion of international agreements or economic aid conditional upon further democratisation as in the case of the political conditionality policy of the EU and even the use of force as in the case of the US occupation of Iraq are implemented as means of promotion of democracy throughout the world. Thus despite doubts about the effectiveness and even morality of such methods democracy is the norm; countries can no longer stay indifferent to waves of democratisation sweeping throughout the world and as Churchill has once said “it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried”¹³.

The present Republic of Turkey was founded on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Thus it may be said that it was one of the successor states that were founded on the territory of the Empire but it differs from the others in that it inherited the central state apparatus of the Ottomans. The new Republic was founded on a much different model and emulated the West European nation-state. However the new regime was also shaped by the social structure, political culture and institutional legacy of the Empire. The Ottoman Empire was an absolutist regime based on the rule of the Sultan¹⁴. The centre, which was institutionalised on the basis of a palace bureaucracy and military arm, did not allow the flourishing of local actors, hence the lack of an aristocracy in the European sense. Sultan owned the land and the people, and ruled the periphery through of his appointees. The centre was mostly closed to the society at large. The conversion (*devşirme*) system constituted the basis of the military and administration. Social organisations throughout the Empire were largely left to their own devices. Local actors could not use their resources or economic potential to gain access to public positions or gain an autonomous standing vis-à-vis the centre. Thus, according to Sunar and Sayari¹⁵ “the attitude of the centre toward the periphery was suspicious, combative and suppressive. From the point of view of the periphery, the centre was seen as alien, remote and burdensome... in the lack of autonomous, intermediate associative organisations with access to the centre, the relationship of the state to local communities was marked by control, cooptation and regulation, rather than by consultation, coordination and consociation”.

What is noteworthy in an analysis of the Ottoman Empire and its effects on the political understanding in the Turkish Republic is the strong state tradition as reflected by the relative autonomy of the state from civil society and an acceptance of the absoluteness of power held by the state. According to Heper underlying the preponderance of the state in Turkish society is a lack of “capacity of the civil society to create consensus, not by imposition from above, not arrived at once and for all, but progressively as a resolution of conflicts about fundamental claims”¹⁶. Thus the inability of the civil society and its institutions to create consensus to solve fundamental problems of the society led the state to re-exert its authority in a fierce manner as exemplified in the military takeovers when the military acted with the impulse of guarding the state and

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12. Laurence Whitehead, 1996, *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas*, Oxford: OUP, p. 4.

13. See www.quotationspage.com/quote/364.html (28.06.2005).

14. He was limited by the will of God and religious law, the Sheri'a.

15. İlkay Sunar and Sabri Sayari, 1986, “Democracy in Turkey: Problems and Prospects” in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Experiences in Southern Europe and Latin America*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

16. Metin Heper, 1985, *The State Tradition in Turkey*, North Humberstone: The Eothen Press, p. 19.

the national interest.

Absolutist rule could not be sustained forever and the influences of modern political doctrines arrived in the territories under the Ottoman Empire. The first stirrings for representative government took place in the 1800s under the influence of ideas propagated by the French revolution and Enlightenment. The declaration of the Tanzimat Edict in 1839 marked a new era of greater liberty and curtailment of the absolutist power of the state. The waning power of absolutism, secularisation of thought, influence of modern ideas about the individual and state-society relations and the emergence of opposition movements led to greater demands for political representation and opened the way for the 1st and 2nd parliamentary monarchy periods. However these attempts could not be sustainable due to the unwilling approach of the Sultan and the turbulence the Empire was in at the time.

The new Republic was in its formal design different than the Empire. It was a secular, republican and national state based on the will of the people. However, in terms of the social structure and state-society relations it was similar to the Ottoman era. As Sunar and Sayarı notes “the Turkish revolution was a ‘revolution from above’, intent not on social-structural transformation but on political and cultural change, itself largely confined to the centre”¹⁷. It was based on a Constitution outlining the duties of the main organs of the state and government as well as fundamental rights and liberties and a parliamentary system with the Turkish Grand National assembly embodying the will of the people. Elections were held every 4 years to determine the composition of the Assembly and the government. The Republic set out on the course of liberal representative democracy but the regime was based on one-party rule. The CHP founded in 1923 under the title of People’s Party (*Halk Fırkası*) by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – renamed as the Republican People’s Party in 1935 – was the one-party of the Republic. Experimentation with competitive party politics took place for brief periods during the early years of the Republic firstly under the Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*) – founded in 1924 and abolished in 1925 allegedly due to its anti-Republican activities – and later with the very short life of the Free Republican Party which was founded and then discarded itself in the same year, 1930¹⁸.

The new Republic although modelling itself upon Western Europe could not initially create a competitive democratic system. The idea of peaceful alternation of power and transfer of government to an opposition party was seen as a threat to the consolidation of the new Republic. Although Atatürk believed in the value of opposition as a controlling force over the executive, his priority was the consolidation of the new regime and protecting the secular nature of the Republic against fundamentalist and separatist currents. Any opposition party could be a natural target for anti-regime activities and seized by the enemies of the Republic especially religious fundamentalists and proponents of the Sultanate. The successful results obtained by the Free Republican Party in the local elections of October 1930 caused concern especially in groups within the CHP and led to extensive lobbying by CHP members for the closure of the party. It must also be said that parliamentary democracy was in trouble elsewhere in the world as may be evidenced by the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s.

The single party rule was described as authoritarian-bureaucratic, and based on a revolutionary elite consensus upholding tutelary control of society¹⁹. Single party regime lasted until 1946 at which time the first truly opposition party was founded upon the initiative of the single party and its ruler İsmet İnönü. The leader of RPP made a speech expressing that the lack of an opposition party was the most important weakness of the regime and declared that the 1947 elections would be open to opposition²⁰. The Democrat Party that successfully voiced the demands of large segments of the population including small farmers and workers was a political movement of the local gentry. It gained 53.4% of the votes in the elections held in 1950 and instigated a rapid process of economic development. However the party, especially in its last years in power deviated to authoritarian tendencies. Large scale agitation began in bureaucratic and political circles which finally culminated in the military intervention of 1960.

The takeover which aimed at setting the rules of the game and taking precautions against authoritarian tendencies of the executive also wrote one of the tragic chapters of Turkey’s political history, i.e. the execution of three members of the toppled government²¹. According to Dankwart Rustow, democracy in Turkey was achieved without a struggle. It was democracy from above²². Thus “it emerged out of a background where there had been no dispersion of power among a plurality of

17. Sunar and Sayarı, *op.cit.* p. 175.

18. See Feroz Ahmad, 1993, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, London: Routledge, pp. 52-71.

19. Heper, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

20. Erik J. Zürcher, 1997, *Turkey: A Modern History*, revised edition, London: I.B. Tauris and Co., p. 221.

21. Prime minister and leader of the DP Adnan Menderes, minister of foreign affairs Fatin Rü ü Zorlu and Minister of the Exchequer Hasan Polatkan.

22. Robert Ward and Dankwart Rustow, (eds.), 1964, *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

elites with different bases of power, and where no provision for the institutionalisation of conflict and compromise had been made"²³. This is provided as an explanation of the short life of the first experiment with competitive politics. The DP once in power seized the tools of the single party regime to govern the country and did not engage in any large-scale reform to create the institutional framework for democratic politics of accommodation among rival groups: "neither the new nor the old elite had struggled for democracy, negotiated for compromise; nor had they forged attitudes and institutions appropriate to them"²⁴.

The 1961 constitution was made by a constituent assembly and became the basis of the regime upon return to competitive politics. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s it may be possible to discern a growing pluralism in Turkish society and politics. The 1961 constitution provided the framework for a liberal political system which allowed for increased levels of political participation. The constitutional rights and freedoms allowed for the establishment of political parties of different political shades and civil society organisations, trade unions and ideological associations. The period was shaped by coalition governments of the left and right, under the leadership of the Justice Party on the moderate right and the Republican People's Party on the left of the political spectrum. The Turkish political system saw the emergence of radical parties for the first time such as the Turkish Workers Party, National Salvation Party and Nationalist Action Party. The proliferation of political movements opened up the channels of political participation and representation. However problems also began to emerge such as extreme polarisation of the political discourse, lack of stability in the coalition governments, inability to achieve compromise and lack of tolerance to alternative ideologies. The economic problems of the 1970s due to global economic downturn after the oil crisis and the economic embargo Turkey was faced with in the aftermath of the Cyprus intervention exacerbated the problems further leading to greater instability and confrontation among rival groups. The coalition governments found it even harder to deliver effective governance of the economy and society²⁵.

Thus the liberal atmosphere created by the 1961 constitution could not be long-lived; the fragmentation and polarisation in society could not be effectively managed by the political elite and the onset of an economic and political crisis could not be contained. The 1970s were years of extreme governmental instability, confrontation among both the elites and the masses, civil strife and anarchy, economic downturn, balance of payments problems, and shortages of food and other amenities. As Heper notes, discord among the coalition parties led to "immobilism" and created issues related to the effectiveness of the regime²⁶. The situation was getting worse yet and the political leaders could not display the resolve to come out of the impending crisis. The crisis reached a climax when the Parliament could not agree on a candidate for Presidency for seven consecutive months.

In this volatile and unpredictable political climate the military acting under the chain of command intervened and suspended democracy. All political parties were closed, political leaders were taken into custody and democratic rights and freedoms were put on hold. The military intervention was not a permanent seizure of power however. The military aimed to redefine the rules of the game by way of a new constitution and return power to civilian authority with the holding of elections. In the light of the pre-coup experience, the military, as well as supporting segments of the elite, wanted to make sure that a return to political fragmentation and instability would not take place again. Thus the 1982 constitution that was prepared by a national consultative assembly provided for a stronger executive, and while containing a catalogue of rights, placed strict conditions on the exercise of civil rights and liberties with the aim of protecting the "indivisibility of the state and the nation"²⁷.

The return to democratic politics was made possible by the constitutional referendum, the establishment of new parties and the holding of general elections. The new regime was based on a liberal economic philosophy and the restrictions on trade unions and labour rights benefited the industrialist and capitalist classes. Liberalisation of the economy and the adoption of a general export-oriented growth philosophy influenced Turkey's relations with the European Community since Turkey would now be in a more suitable position to complete its gradual abolition of customs barriers against the EC²⁸. The liberal opening however could not be matched by political liberalisation. The coalition government that took office in 1991 announced a democratisation package that entailed constitutional amendments. However these amendments that would improve the situation of human rights and democratic freedoms could not be realized due to several developments such as the Kurdish problem and the resistance from

23. Sunar and Sayarı, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Zürcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-261.

26. Heper, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

27. Bülent Tanör, 1986, *İki Anayasa: 1961-1982* [Two Constitutions: 1961-1982], Istanbul: Beta, pp. 130-145. See also Serap Yazıcı, 2004, "The Impact of the EU on the Liberalization and Democratisation Process in Turkey" in R. T. Griffiths and D. Özdemir (eds.), *Turkey and the EU Enlargement: Processes of Incorporation*, Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, p. 93.

28. The Ankara Agreement establishing an association between the European Economic Community and Turkey laid down a three-staged progress towards association. The last stage was to be based on a customs union whereby the parties would abolish all customs duties, quantitative restrictions and equivalent measures that restricted trade between each other.

certain segments of the elites and the military and bureaucracy.

All in all, the search for greater liberalisation was a major political issue in the first half of the 1990s. The two parties, the True Path Party and the Social Democratic Populist Party that formed a coalition government in 1991 were elected on the basis of programs which propagated democratisation. However despite several attempts amendment of the constitution with a view to easing the constraints on fundamental rights and freedoms could not be accomplished. Turkish political system was squeezed between a search for liberalisation and democratisation on the one hand and the extraordinary conditions caused by the fight against separatist activities and terrorism in the southeast of the country on the other. The extreme sensitivity of the military, parts of the bureaucracy, judiciary and intelligentsia regarding the territorial integrity of the country heightened the sensibilities about security. Thus perceptions about the security of the country and the state led to an overarching emphasis on protection against separatist claims and such tendencies were often underlying the hesitancy of the afore-mentioned groups in the face of demands for greater democratisation²⁹.

Under these conditions of stalemate a new factor that would tilt the balance in favour of liberalisation was necessary for the system to move forward. This proved to be an external stimulus for change and reform. The Turkish government of the Motherland Party had already applied for membership of the EC in 1987 in line with its liberal philosophy. This was followed by the Commission's *avis* regarding the application which expressed Turkey's "eligibility" for accession to the EC but added that Turkey did not yet qualify for actual membership. The ground-breaking change in Europe instigated by the ending of communism in Eastern Europe and demise of the Soviet Union led to a rethinking of European construction. The securing of security and stability in the East of the continent was mostly dependent on a policy to gradually include these countries in the process of European integration. Thus the enlargement policy began to take shape in the first half of the 1990s³⁰.

In 1993 the European Council adopted the Copenhagen criteria to determine the conditions that applicant countries had to fulfil to join the European Union (EU). These criteria were formulated with a view to the eventual accession of Central and East European countries to the EU. However they were valid for all countries that would apply to the EU from then on including Turkey. Thus the EC acquired a political character with the Treaty on European Union and liberty and democracy among others were recognised as the basic values common to the member states³¹. Turkey was already feeling the heat of the criticisms that the EC had directed to Turkey after the military coup. The Commission also noted problems in democracy and human rights in its report on Turkey's application to join the EC in 1987. Thus the Copenhagen criteria was the culmination of such developments and ascertained that increasing levels of cooperation and integration with the EU depended on Turkey's improving its record of democracy and human rights.

The Turkish government had to rethink its relations with the EU in the light of radical changes in the geopolitics of Europe and in EU policies as well. The new priority of Eastern enlargement relegated Turkey to a dubious position vis-à-vis the EU and necessitated the revitalisation of relations. Thus the realisation of the tasks outlined in the Ankara Agreement and the Additional Protocol with a view to the completion of the customs union became the new priority which the Turkish government espoused. This process resulted in the Decision No.1/95 of the Turkey-EEC Association Council that laid down the basic provisions of the customs union. Under the increased powers it had with the Single European Act and the Treaty on European Union, the European Parliament (EP) used its right of assent and took a vote on the customs union in December 1995. The EP was an organ of the EU that had been the most critical of Turkey's record of democracy and human rights. Thus the need to gain the assent of the EP proved to be an important factor that accelerated the democratisation process in Turkey and played an important part in the 1995 Constitutional amendment.

Getting ready for the customs union instigated both economic and political reforms in Turkey. On the economic side, the adoption of laws on competition and intellectual property rights was needed for the adaptation of Turkey to the standards of the European market. In addition to economic necessities political reform was also an important part of the path to the customs union. The 1995 constitutional amendments could be approved by the Assembly in an effort to ease the progress towards customs union and eliminate the obstacle that the EP could have created by rejecting the customs union decision. The constitutional amendment of 1995 unravelled the stalemate and abolished some of the constraints on political rights and civil liberties such as

29. Zürcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 306-9.

30. For a detailed account of Turkey-EU relations see A. Eralp, 2004, "Turkey and the EU" in L. G. Martin, D. Keridis (eds.), *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy*, Cambridge/Massachusetts: MIT Press, pp. 63-82; O. Mehmet, 2003, "Turkey and the EU: A Troubled Relationship or a Historic Partnership" in T. Y. Ismael, M. Aydın (eds.), *Turkey's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 41-57.

abolishing the ban on cooperation between political parties and associations. The customs union began to function as of 1.1.1996. This was a significant achievement in Turkey-EU relations. However it fell short of fulfilling Turkey's goal of becoming a member state.

The decision-makers and general public in Turkey, now a country in a customs union with the EC, understood that further democratisation was needed to sustain and develop the bonds with Europe. Although the EU and its member states were frequently accused of double standards, covert intentions and arrogance, it was grudgingly accepted that Turkey had deficiencies in its democracy and human rights record and had to engage in political reform which would not be confined only to legal changes. Thus the Turkish political system had to be reformed and persistent problems such as corruption, bad governance, nepotism, economic mismanagement had to be tackled in addition to legal reforms that would enhance the quality of democracy and lift restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms. The EU, carrying out its enlargement policy in an unwavering manner, declared that the accession process would be initiated with 11 countries and membership negotiations would start with 6 candidate countries as of 1998 in its Luxembourg European Council conclusions. The fact that Turkey was not included among the list of candidate countries with whom accession process would be started, and that negotiations with the Greek Cypriot government which Turkey did not recognise were due to start in 1998 caused indignation in Turkey. The government reacted by adopting a counter-strategy which included suspension of political dialogue with the EU, and the probability of gradual integration with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus³².

The EU reversed its policy towards Turkey in 1999 and declared Turkey as a candidate country "destined to be a member" which would be judged on the basis of the same criteria as the other candidate countries in the December 1999 Helsinki European Council conclusions. Several factors accounted for this policy shift and can be listed as the reaction of the Turkish government, the importance of Turkey for the EU, the Kosovo crisis of 1999 which displayed the fact that regional security in the South-East of Europe was still fragile and that the EU should implement inclusionary approaches rather than exclusionary ones, the Kocaeli earthquake of 1999 that increased general sympathy towards Turkey, and the capture of the PKK leader Ocalan which made it possible for Turkey to embark on a course of normalisation.

The result of the Helsinki decision was of crucial importance for Turkey. The status of formal candidacy to the EU would mean that the pre-accession strategy would be implemented for Turkey in line with the other candidate countries and that Turkey would be required to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria if it wanted to enter into membership negotiations with the EU. The coalition government that was in power at the time was made up of three political parties, one of which had a liberal outlook and supported EU membership, the others being on the left and right of the political spectrum, and yet sharing the trait of being quite nationalistic and against any sort of supranational integration that would entail a transfer of sovereignty. Moreover, these two parties namely the Democratic Leftist Party and the Nationalist Action Party had a quite sceptical approach towards the EU and suspected that the demands on the part of the EU such as democracy and human rights, resolution of Aegean disputes and the Cyprus issue would amount to a weakening of Turkey's status both internally and externally. Therefore the government found it quite difficult to achieve a consensus on political reforms. Despite disputes and arguments the prospect of membership was so powerful that no government could risk remaining passive and immobile confronted with it³³.

The formal candidacy to the EU had two important effects on the democratisation process. Firstly as noted in the above paragraph it broke the intransigence of the nationalist and security-conscious political elite to engage in democratisation and opened the way to further liberalisation of the system through legal amendments. Secondly and arguably more significantly, it contributed to a new dynamism in the society and increased activism of civil society organisations. This was a trend that was going on since the beginning of the 1990s. The gradual lifting of restrictive legal provisions such as the restrictions on the right of association and assembly, valuable efforts of civil society organisations in the 1999 earthquake in sharp contrast to the ineffectiveness of state agencies, and such events as the "one minute darkness for permanent brightness" action to which large segments of the population joined by turning off the electricity for one minute each evening in protest of a scandal that unravelled illegitimate relations between state officials, parliamentarians and

31. Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union declared the following: "the Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States".

32. *TUNAECES Newsletter*, No. 3, Fall/Winter 1997/8, p. 3.

33. For an account of the effects of the Helsinki process on the state see E. Fuat Keyman and Ziya Öng, 2004, "Helsinki, Copenhagen and Beyond: Challenges to the New Europe and the Turkish State" in M. Uğur and N. Canefe (eds.), *Turkey and European Integration: Accession Prospects and Issues*, London: Routledge, pp. 173-93.

convicted criminals contributed to the improving stature of civil society in Turkey. Turkey's inclusion into Community programs and agencies and the preference shown by the European Commission to work with civil society organisations in EU sponsored projects also helped the invigoration of civil society organisations.

All in all the prospect of EU membership acted as a powerful catalyst for change, helped and strengthened the already existing democratic forces in Turkey and weakened the resistance of conservative forces that were distrustful of further democratisation, liberalisation and integration to the EU. The 1982 constitution was significantly amended in 2001 and 2004 with a view to lifting the restrictions on political rights and civil liberties. The constitutional amendments were followed by harmonisation packages that revised related laws in line with the constitutional amendments. The legal reform process since 2001 was intensified after the 2002 elections and the Brussels European Council of the same year where the EU leaders declared that the European Council would make a decision regarding the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey in 2004 based on a report and recommendation by the European Commission.

The November 2002 elections staged a democratic coup in the sense that the coalition partners as well as all the other parties in the parliament could not attain the 10% threshold that was necessary to be represented in the parliament. Thus the set up of the parliament was radically altered with two new parties gaining majority of the votes. Justice and Development Party (JDP) emerged as the victor with 34.28% of the votes and 363 seats in the parliament and formed the government. Early on the JDP seized the cause of EU membership as a powerful political strategy and began to lobby EU member states and governments to determine a date for the opening of accession negotiations in anticipation of the December European Council.

The declaration of the December 2004 European Council meeting about the date when a decision will be made about the opening of accession negotiations hastened the efforts for further democratisation with the aim of fulfilling the political aspects of the Copenhagen criteria. Here the majority that the governing party commanded in the parliament and cooperation of the opposition party with regard to most legislative packages was the major reason underlying the success and speed of the process. The JDP was a recently founded political party in the line of former Islamist parties such as the National Salvation Party, Welfare Party and Felicity Party. It can be seen as a by-product of the "February 28 process" when the military arm of the National Security Council acting under the impulse of protecting the secular nature of the Republic forced the coalition government led by the True Path Party on the moderate right and the Welfare Party of Islamist orientation to resign by presenting it a list of demands. The Welfare Party was later closed by the decision of the Constitutional Court.

Those developments caused a reassessment on the part of the Islamist movement and directed the more progressive segments of the party to go their own way by forming a new party under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan³⁴. Made up of diverse groupings the leadership of the party upheld the policy of working for EU membership and engaged in a process of reform. This policy preference can be seen as contradictory since JDP originated from a political tradition that rejected close relations with the EU. However for the JDP, it was a way to increase the democratic freedoms in the country that would also mean greater freedom for religion and religious groups in the society. In addition forging close and amicable relations with the EU and working for the aim of EU membership acted as a shield for the government that protected it against harsh attacks from secularist circles and the traditional elite that mostly saw Islamist movements, even if they are moderate, as a threat to the basic values and security of the state. In a nutshell, the EU perspective provided legitimacy and freedom of action to the JDP government.

The result was a rapid legal and political reform process that lifted most of the anti-democratic provisions in the constitution and relevant laws. The democratisation process was linked by many to Atatürk's reforms that were realised in the first years of the Republic. The legal reforms had the profound effect of altering the parameters of Turkish democracy, although it may be rightly argued that the absorption of these reforms by all the actors in the system and implementation of the said reforms need more time. The most important changes introduced by the 2001 and 2004 constitutional amendments and the ensuing harmonisation packages led to an extensive liberalisation entailing many reforms such as the lifting of restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms both in the constitution and in related laws,

34. He could not become the formal chairman of the party due to his being convicted of inciting feelings of hatred among the people, and jailed. This was later reversed and he became the chairman of the party and prime minister.

the abolishing of the death penalty including acts of terror and in times of war, the redefinition of the role of the National Security Council as a purely advisory body with more civilian than military members, cultural rights including the right to learn and broadcast in languages other than Turkish used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives, and the abolishing of state security courts.

The world has witnessed various successful transitions to democracy over the last six decades since the ending of the Second World War. As has been discussed such transitions could take place as a result of mechanisms such as overhaul and reshaping of the political regime after a major event such as a revolution or war, and imposition of the democratic path by an outside force as in the case of West Germany and Japan, internal pacts between the government and the opposition forces such as in Spain and Chile, and the use of political conditionality and criteria for membership of international organisations as in the case of Central and East European countries that have become first liberalised and democratised and then members of the EU in 2004. However as often as success it is also possible to observe many cases of incomplete transitions which lead to the creation of electoral democracies where it may be possible to observe restrictions of basic rights and freedoms despite regular elections or where the executive still restricts free and fair competition by oppressing opposition forces. Fareed Zakaria, Thomas Carothers and Larry Diamond call such regimes “illiberal democracies”. Such regimes constitute the grey area between democratic and autocratic countries³⁵.

All in all it is not always the case that countries in transition end up as free democracies. The success of such transition processes is dependent on the existence of a number of factors. Usually autocratic leaders engage in seemingly democratic measures to maintain their hold over the citizenry and create a base of legitimacy. Since political power also embodies domination over economic resources the holders of power are reluctant to forego their grip over the society. They engage in half-hearted, superficial and often ineffective measures without any intention of liberalizing the regime³⁶.

One of the most important research topics political scientists study with regard to democratisation is the conditions which make it possible. Under what conditions do we have successful transitions to democracy? What are the determining factors that lie beneath the chances of a viable democracy? As argued by Sunar and Sayari “any historical circumstance is partly the outcome of objective conditions and partly such circumstances are shaped by politics as an area in which calculation, choice, learning and even *fortuna* have varying and uncertain roles to play”³⁷. Thus to explain the democratisation process in Turkey as well as other countries in the Mediterranean region, it is important to take into consideration both “structural determinants of political change” such as political disposition of the populace, level of socio-economic development and political institutionalisation as well as specific events, interplay among political forces, and the strategies and behaviour of political actors. Diamond, Linz and Lipset cite the following criteria as determinants of successful democratisation³⁸.

One of the most important conditions of democracy is the existence of a widespread belief among elites and masses in the legitimacy of the democratic system. Degree of legitimacy is related with the basic values inherent in the political culture of the citizenry and a judgment of the outputs of the system, i.e. its efficiency regarding the carrying out of its functions such as maintenance of law and order, delivery of justice through the court system, right and timely decisions and their execution by the state and economic welfare. History shows us that democracy is usually the first casualty in times of distress or crisis as seen in the interwar period in Europe. A basic consensus on the legitimacy of the democratic regime is vital for the maintenance and survival of the regime in such times of hardship since it leads the elite to find a solution to the crisis within the confines of democracy and guides the masses to support elite accommodation rather than espouse adventurous ways outside the contours of the democratic system.

The socio-economic and institutional structure has primary significance in shaping the viability of democratisation. However, the decisions and actions of political leaders are also vital for the transformation to succeed. “The more constraining and unfavourable the structural circumstances, the more skilful, innovative, courageous and democratically committed political leadership must be for democracy to survive”³⁹.

III. An Analysis of Turkish Democracy

35. See Thomas Carothers, 2002, “The End of the Transition Paradigm”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 5-21; Fareed Zakaria, 2004, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, New York: W.W. Norton and Co.; Larry Diamond, M.F. Plattner, D. Brumberg (eds.), 2003, *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

36. Larry Diamond, J.J. Linz and S. M. Lipset, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

37. Sunar and Sayari, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

38. Diamond, Linz and Lipset, *op. cit.*

39. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Legitimacy and performance

Political leadership

The commitment of political leaders to democratic values and their resolve to engage in democratic reforms or to maintain democracy in the face of hardship is an important factor that enhances the viability of democracy. Although it should be repeated that the structure of the political system have a constraining effect on the choices that are available for politicians, their skill, commitment to democracy and pragmatism may at times have a bearing on the maintenance of the regime.

Political culture

The viability of democracy is also closely linked with the political culture prevalent in a country. Such traits as tolerance, tendency to compromise, negotiation and bargaining, flexibility, restraint, trust and belief in the political institutions are strongly correlated with sustainable democracies. The perseverance of such values not only among the elites but the masses and their entrenchment in historical and cultural traditions are significant for democratic transitions. Political culture is not static however. It can change in accordance with historical developments and political institutionalisation.

Social structure and socio-economic development

A country that has attained a considerable level of socioeconomic development is generally shown more likely to have a sustainable democracy. In addition to the national income in a country, the standard of living as shown by indicators such as literacy, life expectancy and an equitable distribution of income determines the viability of democracy. A high level of socioeconomic development accompanied by a more or less equitable distribution of resources creates welfare, a high standard of living and economic security and decreases the likelihood of radicalisation and polarisation of politics. Socioeconomic development increases the size of the middle class which is seen as forming the backbone of democracy, the level of education, means of communication, development of civil society organisations that gain their autonomy vis-à-vis the state, and forging of globalised economic relations that increase the pressure from the democratic capitalist countries to engage in democratisation. All these factors exert a democratising influence.

Civil society

A dynamic and varied civil society is a determining factor for the sustainability of democracy. Civil society is a realm that is autonomous from the state. Civil society organisations on the other hand are formed with specific functions act in the public realm and mostly aim at influencing state and governmental policies and decisions in their respective spheres of activity. Thus autonomy of civil society from the state and existence of a plurality of civil society organisations act as an important constraint on absolute power and authoritarian rule. Since the 1970s increasing dynamism of civil society throughout the world led to the weakening of the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes. Civil society movements have emerged as the primary foci of opposition against authoritarian rule. They continue to play an important role after the transition to democratic regimes by checking state power by way of monitoring mechanisms, providing channels of participation and interest representation, socializing the population into democratic norms and culture, and lastly contribute to the consolidation of the regime by “enhancing the accountability, responsiveness, inclusiveness, and legitimacy of the political system”⁴⁰.

State and society

Stable democracies are usually those that can find a balance between political participation, representation of different societal groups and dynamism of civil society and the authority and governing capacity of the state. The tension between the twin aims of representative-ness and effectiveness necessitates this balance between deference to authority and political participation. State’s role in the economy is also a determining factor for the viability of democracy in that holding power in countries where the state has a dominating role in the allocation of economic resources becomes a source of clientelism and political patronage mechanisms leading to nepotism and corruption.

Political institutions

Institutions that bring cohesion, longevity and stability in to a system are vital for the durability of democracy. The existence of institutions that channel the demands of societal groups, organise political competition for power, and accommodate different interests create a framework within which the rules of the game are formulated and enforced.

Ethnic and regional conflict

It is difficult to institute and consolidate democracy in societies where ethnic divisions in the society lead to problems of discrimination, discord, polarisation and insufficient representation. The manipulation of ethnic demands by politicians and marginalisation of specific groups create threats for the durability of democracy. Thus the emergence of ethnic conflict in a society and the inability to find a solution within the regime such as devolution of power may increase the pressure of the regime and induce the

leaders to implement authoritarian methods.

The authors, referring to ten cases they have studied, point out that democratic breakdown was the result of military intervention that was justified on the basis of severe crises. The failure of the democratic regimes to deliver their functions such as law and order or economic development decreased the legitimacy of the regime in the eyes of the majority and provided an atmosphere where the military takes upon the duty to take power in its hands to protect the state or the national interest. Even after the handover of the state to civilian control the existence of strong militaries that has the potential to intervene into the regime exert a restraining influence on the government. Thus one of the primary problems of such fledgling democracies is to strengthen civilian control of the military and to limit the military's role to the provision of security.

Writers on democratisation attach importance to the impact of international factors upon democratisation at varying degrees. According to Diamond, Linz and Lipset political change is primarily a function of internal factors. However, they add that they do accept influences emanating from the international context through "colonial rule, intervention, cultural diffusion and demonstration effects from abroad"⁴¹. They give the examples of the effects of the implantation of democratic values in especially British colonies, the diffusion of democratic models and how they influenced the regime formation process in countries like Turkey and Thailand, and demonstration effects that have been called "snowballing" by Huntington which lead to a situation whereby the fall of authoritarian regimes in close-by regions hurt the self-confidence of authoritarian regimes and motivate opposition forces. Authoritarian regimes that are losing their support in society are being forcefully challenged by the opposition or where political actors emanating from civil society are mobilizing to liberalise the political system, international factors can exert a determining influence. Such factors may take the form of pressure and use of diplomatic tools or sanctions, assistance to opposition groups or democratic movements, and use of political conditionality by countries or regional organisations. Political conditionality is a tool that is effectively used by the EU with the aim of instigating changes in the direction of freedom and democracy in the countries it has relations with. Thus human rights clauses are being inserted in trade and associations agreements that bring the probability of the suspension of the agreement in case of serious and persistent breach of human rights and fundamental freedoms. This policy works even better where the EU's chances of influencing the country is higher, i.e. when the prospect of membership is dependent on "the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities."

Bearing in mind the preceding framework by Diamond, Linz and Lipset, an analysis of Turkey's democratisation process may be conducted. Thus in the context of Turkish democratisation it is possible to draw the following conclusions: Turkey's travails with democratisation have been long and arduous. Turkey has adopted a system of electoral competition and peaceful alternation of power quite early on in 1946. The ruling single party voluntarily ceded power to the opposition in the 1950 elections. Thus the history of electoral democracy in Turkey is not new. It dates back six decades. However, democracy could not be long-lived. The tendency of the Democrat Party to exploit its power and engage in practices that attempt to stifle the opposition led to the first downfall of the regime. The military in its self-conception as the guardian of the republican order and protector of the national interest intervened for the first time in Turkey's history of democratisation. As in other instances the military set the stage for competitive politics with a new constitution and returned back power to civilian governments. This pattern repeated itself with one other military takeover, one military intervention where the military did not assume effective rule and one imposition by the military of a list of demands. Democracy in Turkey displayed an unstable pattern whereby democratic rule deteriorates after a time and leads to intervention by the military on the ground of protecting the national interest. The military assumes an intrinsic duty of not only protecting the external borders of the state but also being the custodian of the internal order with emphasis on the primary principles on which the Republic is founded, meaning territorial integrity, and secularism. Thus it is a characteristic of the Turkish political system that those in power should always keep an eye on the attitude of the military and exercise self-control and self-restraint. Even after the handing over of administration to elected governments, the military remains an important political actor that watches the internal situation from the barracks.

The result of Turkey's long journey with democratisation so far displays a chequered record. Regarding Diamond, Linz and Lipset's condition of legitimacy and performance

The military

International factors

41. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

it must be said that democracy has become the only form of legitimate government in Turkey. Turkish democracy has frequently had problems with its performance meaning that democratically elected governments were not always able to govern the economy and society effectively. Corruption, clientelism, inability to find effective remedies to persistent problems such as internal migration, unemployment or the health or education systems diminished the general public's confidence in political parties and politicians. Thus one of the most important problems of democracy in Turkey is to gain the trust of the electorate and to effectively perform the functions that the populace expects from the government.

Related to this discussion political culture and disposition of political leaders are important determinants of successful democratisation. In Turkey aspects of political culture such as problems in elite accommodation and compromise, the preponderance of an organic understanding of state and society, lack of tolerance to dissenting views can be evaluated as obstacles on the way of a functioning democracy. The Turkish society is not a densely organised society and membership in associations is not high. Primordial and communitarian ties are still influential. For a long time political parties could not effectively represent groups in society and patron-client relations have dominated politics. The record of political leaders in dealing with crisis situations, achieving consensus and finding pragmatic solutions to deadlocks has not been positive either. Leaders have been prone to populism, polemical disputes and could not find solutions to crises within the confines of democracy. Recently the traditional problems of Turkish politics are being altered in the light of the grave situation of Turkish economy and the increasing dynamism of civil society. The economic spoils of government are decreasing due to strict budgetary discipline necessitated by economic bottlenecks and declining role of the state in the economy. Civil society is also raising its voice and exerting an effective constraint on the actions of government.

A persisting problem of Turkish democracy is that although the formal mechanisms of an electoral democracy are in place standards of freedom and liberty are problematic. As shown by the 2005 rating of Freedom House regarding political rights and civil liberties, Turkey is still considered as partially free, despite the recent democratic reforms. The main reason for this situation may be seen as the constraints on the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms that have recently been lifted with the 2001 and 2004 constitutional amendments and harmonisation packages. The dispersion of these rights and freedoms to the society at large and their effective enjoyment is a matter of time and is also dependent on the attitudes of various arms of the state such as security forces, judges and public prosecutors. The limitation of fundamental rights and freedoms has been mostly validated on grounds of security considerations regarding the maintenance of the regime, internal order and territorial integrity. The state defining an overwhelming threat to its integrity and security resorted to restrictions and violations of human rights such as banning of political parties, newspapers, associations, restricting political rights and civil liberties such as freedom of expression, and association, and ill treatment of those held in custody to protect what it saw as its vital interests. Since the 1980s, Kurdish separatism and religious fundamentalism have been perceived as the two principal threats that induced the state to restrain the enjoyment of rights and freedoms and that delayed the democratisation process. The need of the state to curb down what it saw as fundamental threats to its existence once again posed problems on the way of democratisation. Turkey is still struggling with alternative conceptions of fundamental issues: role of religion in the public sphere, definition of secularism, limits of cultural rights, articulation and accommodation of ethnic demands. One of the major problems of Turkish democracy remains as accommodating demands for political participation and expression of ethnic and religious groups, and allowing for the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms while implementing effective measures against threats to the regime such as terrorist activities.

Finally the effects of international factors on Turkey's democratisation should be mentioned here. The European context has been of crucial importance in shaping the development of the political system in Turkey since at least the 19th century. The dispersion of the ideas of the French revolution and Enlightenment within the Ottoman Empire had multi-faceted influences including demands for national autonomy and separation and parliamentary representation. The establishment of the Turkish Republic on the model of a European nation-state was a continuation of this trend. Turkey's participation in the western bloc after the Second World War, its inclusion into NATO and other West European organisations such as Council of Europe were

a continuation of Turkey's European orientation. Although Turkey's problems with socioeconomic development and democratisation widened the gap between West Europe and Turkey, the reference point has always been Europe for Turkey. In a similar vein, the rapid political reform process embarked on since 2001 has been spurred by the prospect of EU membership. This is not to underestimate the importance of internal factors in triggering democratisation and liberalisation in Turkey. However the European compass has been important in providing a catalyst for reform. Thus the credibility of the European vocation which will be dependent on the success of membership negotiations is critical for the continuation of the democratisation process in Turkey.

The European Union initiated the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in 1995 with the launching of the Barcelona process. This new policy initiative brought earlier policies and initiatives under a comprehensive framework by encompassing political, social, economic, and cultural relations between the member states of the EU and countries of the Southern periphery. The main aim of this effort was to establish a political and security dialogue in the region, trigger political and economic advances in the region through the creation of a free trade area, support the development of civil society, and promote democracy and social and cultural exchanges among the peoples of the participating countries. The Barcelona declaration that formed the backbone of this partnership expressed the aim of establishing "a shared zone of peace, prosperity and stability" in the region. In order to effectively carry out this process three baskets of measures were put forward. The first basket concerned political and security aspects of the partnership including democratic governance and respect for human rights and liberties, and intended to establish a Charter for peace and stability in the Mediterranean. The second basket was connected with economic cooperation and aimed at the creation of a free trade area through bilateral agreements with the participating countries. Finally the third basket involved social and cultural exchanges and aimed to support the empowerment of civil society and enhance cultural awareness among the peoples of the region⁴².

The Mediterranean as an adjacent and strategically important region is vital for the economic and political well-being and security of the EU. Political instability, emergence of militant movements, economic hardships, scarcities, the rise of fundamentalism, underdevelopment, social problems, ethnic discrimination and such problems may exert a destabilizing influence over Europe. Such sources of instability, poverty and chaos has a high probability of spilling over to Europe as a result of the boundary transcending nature of such problems, the existence of large numbers of immigrants in European countries originating from various parts of the Mediterranean, and the continuing migratory pressures. Thus the projection of EU values and standards including not only the discourse of democracy and human rights but conditions such as higher living standards that may contribute to the upholding of these values, to the South and East of the Mediterranean can be seen as one of the most important aspects of the EU's external relations. The EU supports the democratisation of the region and sees greater democracy as one of the most important factors that will enhance stability and security in the region.

Similarly to the EU, the United States supports democratisation in the region. In the view of the US administration, the so-called "Greater Middle East" including both the Middle East and North African countries constitutes a very significant region of the world in the sense that countries of the region share similar attributes such as religion, culture and political system. The region as a whole is mostly dominated by autocracies that repress their citizens and may engage in actions against both universal values and international law. In the rhetoric of the US such regimes are a serious cause of threat to the international system since they engage in militarisation, develop biological, chemical and nuclear weapons and even support global terrorism. Thus democratisation of such regimes is vital since a democratic system including free and fair elections leading to alternation of power, channels for the accountability of the executive and enjoyment of rights and liberties by the citizenry is expected to prevent the emergence of rouge regimes. In the Kantian sense democracies do not go to war with one another. Moreover liberalisation is seen as a very important development that will ensure the flawless integration of the region to the global economic and political system dominated by the advanced countries. One of the most crucial reasons behind the US intervention in Iraq was to free the Iraqis from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. Thus the US in supporting democratisation in the region even uses force to instigate its aims in the region.

IV. Democratisation in Southern Mediterranean and Turkey's Influence

42. George Joffé, 2005, "The Status of the Mediterranean Partnership", *EuroMeSCO Research Paper*, p. 1-2, http://www.euromesco.net/imgupload/the_status_of_the_emp.pdf.

Although the EU and United States have similar aims in the region, they define the region differently and use diverse methods which fall short of using force in the case of the EU. In any case the fact that the region is still not influenced by the waves of democracy that recently took hold of countries as Ukraine and Georgia is a cause for concern. According to Joffé, economic failure, political instability and unrest in the region cause anxiety in the EU due to increased pressures for immigration and threats to regional security⁴³. Increasing the welfare and standard of living in the South Mediterranean is linked with issues of democracy and effective governance. Success in democratisation is vital for the security and development of the region. Yet anticipated improvements do not materialise at the desired level and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership does not seem to be delivering the intended outcomes. In a survey conducted in 2003-2004 among 19 countries participating in the partnership, it was concluded among other judgments that “from the European point of view (...) integration across the Mediterranean is precluded by lack of political will”⁴⁴ Brumberg and Diamond ask the following question for the Middle East: “why is the Middle East the only region of the world to have been largely untouched by the third wave of global democratisation?”⁴⁵ It is possible to ask the same question for the East and South Mediterranean. What are the main obstacles to democratisation in the region and how can they be overcome?

It should be underlined that the region is not made up of static autocracies. Changes and transition processes are well underway in the countries of the region including Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. However there are still various obstacles on free and fair competition and the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. Despite the holding of elections the leaders usually hang onto power and prefer to leave their office to their son rather than cooperate with the opposition forces. The countries of the region are afflicted with authoritarian rulers, weak and restricted oppositions, difficulty in reaching political accommodation among rival forces, ethnic segregation and discrimination, state intelligence agencies that work to spy on the people, the state's hold over both political and economic power, nepotistic and clientelistic networks. Such problems hinder the transition process in the countries of Eastern and Southern Mediterranean due to a lack of forces that will own and foster democratisation. In the words of Brumberg and Diamond “both rulers and oppositions lack the means or incentive to negotiate a political accommodation or ‘pact’ that would ease their exit from a deeply rooted legacy of autocratic rule”⁴⁶. The ruler displays a tendency to hang onto the political power and economic resources he commands and opposition groups or civil society actors cannot exert enough pressure on the ruler to make concessions. Thus the channels of representation and political participation are mostly closed; some ethnic or religious groups are marginalised and the society, under the iron grip of the state's tools of repression, is largely depoliticised. The limited political reform process led to the evolution of “hybrid regimes” that are in the grey zone between liberal democracy and autocracy.

How will the countries in the East and South of the Mediterranean emerge out of this prolonged transition process? A thorough liberalisation of such regimes depend on the normalisation of political competition, alternation of power, lifting of restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms and the institutionalisation of the politics of accommodation and compromise. Judged in terms of the background factors enhancing democratisation, socioeconomic development, the strengthening of the private sector vis-à-vis the state and emergence of civil society organisations, the gradual weakening of communitarian structures and nepotistic relations, the use of economic power to buy off voters, increase in channels of political participations for all groups are necessary to support and sustain democratisation.

The Mediterranean is made up of countries that are quite diverse in terms of economic level of development, culture and political system. Smaller sub-regions exist within the larger Mediterranean such as Mashreq and Maghreb countries, South European countries. Thus France a Mediterranean country is worlds apart from another regional country, such as Jordan. However one should not underestimate the importance of geographical proximity and historical exchanges. The Mediterranean since ancient times has been an area of vibrant trade and cultural exchanges. The Roman Empire united the areas surrounding the Mediterranean. Later on the Ottoman Empire inherited this legacy and united areas around the Mediterranean excluding the North within one jurisdiction. Throughout history, the Mediterranean acted as a sea of interaction, communication and exchange among diverse peoples and cultures. The area was relegated to a secondary status after the geographical explorations that discovered alternative routes to the East and placed the Atlantic to a superior position.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

45. Daniel Brumberg and Larry Diamond, “Introduction” in Diamond, Plattner and Brumberg (eds.), 2003, *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. ix.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The Euro-Mediterranean initiative of the EU should be seen in this light as a resurrection and a revitalisation of the Mediterranean as a zone of peace and vibrant interaction. The countries of the Mediterranean have a lot in common despite the differences and are strongly interdependent since security, stability and well-being in the region can be attained as a whole. The countries have a lot to share and to learn from each other. The experiences of each can shed light on the developments in another. In the case of democratisation the experiences of countries that are in a better situation regarding the existence of sustainable democracy can serve as models for the other countries. Here the EU countries constitute specific models since each country has a specific regime that has been shaped over the years in accordance with the cultural and political constellation of that country. The experiences of a country like Turkey that has gone through hardships and downturns in its long journey towards democratic government may be instrumental for the other countries of Eastern and Southern Mediterranean. The social and cultural similarities between Turkey and countries such as Tunisia, Morocco or Egypt are all the more significant in displaying the sort of problems that these countries may go through as well as possible remedies and solutions.

One should also be alert to the distinctness of Turkey in comparison with the other countries of the East and South Mediterranean. Turkey is the political, social and cultural inheritor of an Empire that has been under the influence of current from the West since the 18th century. The ideas of democratic representation, secularism, liberty and will of the people began to influence the Turkish intellect since the 18th and primarily the 19th century. Thus emulation and conscious adoption shaped the process of democratisation in Turkey. Being situated in between continents Turkey has a distinct place in the south east of Europe. Thus it is influenced by currents in Western Europe and cannot shield itself from the effects of developments in the West. In addition, the path adopted by the new Turkish Republic meaning westernisation, adoption of European culture, legal and political system exposed the country further to the influence of the West since the liberal West European parliamentary democracy was accepted as the model for the new state.

Democracy was accepted as an ultimate aim to be achieved when the society is “ready” meaning when it reached a level of development that is conducive for a stable democracy. In the meantime the institutions of a European political system such as parliament, political parties, and modern associations were being shaped. In addition the new state engaged in a complete overhaul of the Empire by abolishing the sultanate and the caliphate, separation of religion and state affairs and the relegation of the former to the control of the latter, secularisation of law and education, adoption of the Latin alphabet, and western attire. It was not only a political change but a change of values and basic norms. Thus the national revolution led by Atatürk is usually described as a cultural revolution whereby the new Turkish state situated itself within western civilisation although the religion of the majority was Muslim. The republican elite saw secularism as one of the prerequisites of a modern republic for several reasons. One of them was the fact that religion could be used by the opponents of the regime to mobilise in favour of a return to the rule of the sultan. Religion could act as an ideology mobilizing anti-regime sentiments. The public role of religion and the weight it had in the political and social area was seen as one of the major causes of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and its difficulty in adapting to the advances in Europe by most of the westernised elite of the time.

Turkish democracy is based on the experience of an 85-year old Republic that laid down the institutional framework of a parliamentary system. Although it was not a democratic republic at the beginning, the institutions of a parliamentary regime were created and the Turkish society adapted to the institutional setup that would serve as the basic framework for a competitive democracy in the years to come. The adoption of secularism not only in state administration but also in the legal and judicial system and education was crucial since it diminished the influence of religious institutions and communitarian structures and prevented them from exerting influence in the regime. While opening the way to the formation of associations in the modern sense meaning based on individual choice, class, ideational or occupational ties and choices, it also had some detrimental effects since it severed one of the most important forms of social organisation that was existent in the society.

Turkish democracy went through several phases and experiments since its emergence in the aftermath of the Second World War. It endured two military takeovers, one intervention, and one ultimatum by the military. After the military intervention the military returned power to civilians but each time redefined the rules of the game. Thus

Turkey went through a long and arduous process before it reached its present state. Throughout the way political actors and the masses lived through a process of learning. The determining features of the political culture such as resistance to compromise, subservience to state altered somewhat to make greater room for accommodation and compromise. While Turkish democracy still has problems and deficiencies it may rightly be argued that democracy has become the generally recognised and accepted form of government in Turkey as a result of this painful and exhausting process.

A critical point to emphasise in this regard is the openness of Turkey to international influences and the determining weight that the EU had in the recent period. As argued above the rapid political reform that Turkey accomplished after 2001 was closely linked with the government's determination to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria. Thus the promise of EU membership had a major influence over the democratisation process. The EU posed as a prize to win and also served as a model by placing clear targets and standards in front of the Turkish government. However it should also be added that since the beginning of the 1990s democratisation and political reform was a priority item in the agenda and various groups in the society already began to mobilise with demands for freedom and rights. In this connection the EU acted as an external stimulus and supported those forces in Turkey that demanded democracy.

Whitehead explains the effect of the international context upon processes of democratisation under three categories which are contagion, control and consent. Thus democracy may spread within countries that are geographically situated near each other. It is also observed that the spread of democracy is closely linked to "the deliberate acts of imposition intervention" by foreign actors⁴⁷. Describing the first two paths as having limited explanatory value Whitehead goes to discuss a third category, consent. In addition to the above factors a consolidated democracy also requires the backing and reinforcement of social and political groups in the society. Thus the "consent" of critical groups in the respective societies has a determining influence on the transition process.

The approach of the EU is of crucial importance for further democratisation in the South of the Mediterranean. As implied by Turkey's experience the international context is acting as an important catalyst for triggering domestic developments in the direction of political reform and social progress. Turkey has faced and is currently facing similar problems with countries in the region such as role of the military, place of religion in politics, ethnic accommodation, protection of the individual against state authoritarianism, and weakness of civil society. Thus the interaction, communication and cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region can support processes of transition in these countries. Here what is vitally important is the genuine desire of the European partners to foster change and progress in the region by setting standards of democratic governance and by instigating credible and meaningful efforts at cooperation and exchange. The link between living standards and socioeconomic indicators of human development with the adoption of democratic values and standards is part of the comprehensive approach to security and stability in the Mediterranean.

The lukewarm and hesitant approach of some EU countries to the merits of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership is a reason for concern. The partners have different expectation from the process. The European partners mostly see the endeavour in terms of economic benefit, as a means whereby trade relations in the Mediterranean will be strengthened and threats to regional security will be contained. However, the Southern partners anticipate economic aid and some concessions from the European partners such as liberalisation of visa requirements. Mutual understanding between the partners is necessary for the effective implementation of the partnership. Economic development and democratisation in the region can be enhanced by the Euro-Mediterranean process. It may be said that Turkey as a successfully democratising country can be a model in the region. It should be emphasised, however, that the influence of the prospect of EU membership had a determining influence on political reform in Turkey. Thus the credibility of EU policy towards the Mediterranean is dependent on increased links between the EU and the countries of the Mediterranean even if they fall short of membership.

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