

## **Some expected and some not-so-expected Benefits of Turkey's EU Membership for both Parties**

©

Birol A. Yeşilada  
Mark Hatfield School of Government  
Portland State University  
([Yesilada@pdx.edu](mailto:Yesilada@pdx.edu))

Paper prepared for presentation at the European Union Studies Conference in Montreal, Canada, May 17-20, 2007.

## **Introduction**

The decision of the European Union (EU) to start formal accession talks with Turkey in October 2005 marked a historic point in relations between the parties. As a candidate for membership, Turkey attained recognition from its European neighbors that it belongs in the European club of states – a status sought by Turkish and Ottoman governments for almost 150 years. However, unlike in the case of other accession, eventual membership still face certain unknown that might derail the whole exercise – e.g., Austrian and French uncertainty of granting Turkey membership, Germany’s worries over freedom of movement of labor, and the Greek Cypriots’ desire to use its veto card to obtain concessions from the Turks in Cyprus. Despite uncertain future of EU-Turkey relations, one thing remains clear. Without EU membership aspirations, it is questionable whether Turkish political elites would have moved so quickly to reform Turkey’s political system and bring it closer to those found in liberal representative democracies of the EU. Yet, despite these reforms on the economic and political fronts, events of recent months surrounding the election of the new president in 2007 demonstrated the delicate nature of Turkish democracy. Furthermore, series of reports published by different think tanks and the European Commission, outlined challenges and benefits of Turkey’s membership. In light of these considerations, this paper evaluates the effects of EU-accession reforms and membership on consolidation of democracy in Turkey, and assesses the benefits of Turkish membership for the EU.

## **Eastern Enlargement of the EU and Turkey’s Place**

At the Essen meeting of the European Council during December 9–10, 1994, the EU leaders agreed to prepare six central and eastern European countries (CEEC: Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania) for accession to full membership.<sup>1</sup> While the EU made this commitment, it also stated that accession negotiations with these countries would not start until after the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference to review the state of the Maastricht Treaty. Since that time, the EU proceeded ahead with a complex set of assistance policies aimed at preparing CEEC states for membership and increased the number of eligible candidates to 12 (added Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, and Slovenia). Road to their membership, however, was full of political maneuvering around reports issued by the EU Commission.

These 12 countries were the ones identified at the Luxembourg 1998 summit of the European Council in a two-phase enlargement plan. The first phase included Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, and Slovenia. The second phase included Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovakia. Malta reentered the picture in February 1999, and at the Helsinki summit in December 1999, the European Council invited Turkey to be a candidate but without committing to accession talks until the Turks meet the Copenhagen criteria for membership. At the EU summit in Nice (December 4–6, 2000), the member states reaffirmed their commitment to enlargement and outlined

institutional changes that will take place after enlargement.<sup>2</sup> The Nice Treaty initially ran into a problem in Ireland when the Irish voters rejected it in a national referendum in 2001. After a yearlong intense campaign by the Irish government, the voters revisited the Nice Treaty in a new referendum on October 19, 2000 and gave it a 63 percent thumbs up. While accession process moved ahead with 12 candidates, Turkey did not get a green light on start of formal membership talks until December 2004 when the EU agreed to start such talks on October 3, 2005 if the Commission provided a favorable recommendation. The period between 1999 and 2005 marked intensive political reforms in Turkey to satisfy EU’s Copenhagen political criteria. These criteria can be viewed as outside-in pressures for political reform in Turkey and provide a good comparison to other reform processes in similar countries with growing democratic systems.

### ***Assessing the reasons behind enlargement.***

As stated earlier, when we assess the reasons behind this ambitious enlargement plan, it becomes clear that, with the end of the Cold War, the EU and CEECs had no real alternative but to reach out to each other. The CEECs needed to achieve market reforms, integrate their economies with global financial markets, and build democratic institutions. EU membership provides the easiest possible way to achieve these objectives. On the other hand, the CEECs represent new market opportunities that would increase the EU’s sole power in the new international economic order by making it the largest economic bloc. Agenda 2000 further elaborates on these issues by identifying three challenges facing the EU at the end of the current century:

1. How to strengthen and reform the EU’s policies so that they can deal with enlargement and deliver sustainable growth, higher employment, and improved living conditions for Europe’s citizens
2. How to negotiate enlargement while at the same time vigorously preparing all applicant countries for the moment of accession
3. How to finance enlargement, the advance preparations and the development of the EU’s internal policies<sup>3</sup>

The EU citizens generally supported these plans. According to the *Eurobarometer* survey number 56, 51 percent of EU citizens supported eastern enlargement. The highest level of support was in Greece with 74 percent followed by Denmark and Sweden with 69 percent respectively. In five countries, the level of support for enlargement was below the EU average. These were Belgium – 49 percent, Germany – 47 percent, Austria – 46 percent, Britain – 41 percent, and France – 39 percent.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, 68 percent believed that enlargement would make the EU a more important actor in world affairs and 64 percent viewed enlargement as contributing to the cultural richness of the EU and more peace and security in Europe.<sup>5</sup> However, their view of candidate countries varied greatly. Support was highest for Malta and ranges from 72 percent in Greece to 36 percent in France. The next highest support was for four other first-wave countries (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, but not for Slovenia). Support for Hungary ranged from 65 percent in Denmark and Sweden to 36 percent in France, while for Poland support ranged from 70 percent in Denmark to 23 percent in Austria. The support for Cyprus was highest in Greece, as expected—88 percent. France and Germany

presented the lowest support for Cyprus at 32 percent. Support for Turkey was the lowest among all of the candidate countries. Only 34 percent of EU citizens were in favor of Turkey’s membership, and the support ranged from 44 percent in Ireland to 20 percent in Germany.<sup>6</sup>

Support for Turkey’s membership in the EU remains problematic today. According to a special Eurobarometer on enlargement (no. 255) The majority of Europeans interviewed (52%) saw the accession of Turkey as mainly in the interest of the country itself. 20% would see a mutual interest to both the EU and Turkey for its entry in the European Union. Moreover, Turkey’s accession generated the most disapproval by respondents at 48%.<sup>7</sup> Among the member states and candidate countries The Turkish Cypriot Community (67%) was most in favor of Turkey’s joining the EU, even more than Turkey itself (54%). The strongest opposition of the accession of Turkey was observed in Austria (81%), Germany (69%) and in Luxemburg (69%). Cyprus (68%) and Greece (67%) were also fairly against Turkey’s membership in the European Union, even though they support the accession of countries in general.

## EU Accession Requirements and the candidates

Membership criteria as outlined in various EU documents are summarized as the Copenhagen Criteria.

1. *Europeanness*: The applicant country has to be a member of the European family of states.
2. *Political criteria*: The political system must be characterized by democracy and the rule of law, respect of human rights, and protection of minorities.
3. *Economic criteria*: The country must have a strong market economy that encompasses the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people.
4. *Other obligations*
  - a. The aims of political, economic, and monetary union.
  - b. Adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, the rights and obligations derived from EU treaties, laws, and regulations over the years.<sup>8</sup>

*Acquis communautaire* is one of the main requirements for membership in the EU. The requirements are quite specific about what conditions candidate countries must meet prior to accession. Furthermore, the EU leaders are quite clearly committed to preparing these countries for membership.

### *The Turkish Case.*

The case of Turkish application for membership is a complex one and deserves special attention because of its significance to the EU’s other interests—the Cyprus problem for one, and the future of the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI). Turkey applied for EU membership in 1987, and on May 18, 1989, the European Commission concluded that the EU was not ready to enter into accession talks with Turkey because the Turkish economy was not as developed as the EU’s, the Turkish democracy lacked extensive individual civil and political rights, and unemployment in Turkey posed a serious threat to the EU markets.<sup>9</sup> An additional and very serious

problem in Turkey’s case was the ongoing Greek-Turkish conflicts over Cyprus, territorial waters, the Aegean airspace, the continental shelf, and the rights of the Greek and Turkish minorities in their respective countries. Given the extent of this conflict, Greece would veto Turkey’s membership in the EU even if the latter were to meet all the conditions for membership.

However, not all was lost after this initial European response. Recognizing Turkey’s economic and political significance for the EU following the end of the Cold War, European leaders began a series of talks with their Turkish counterparts that eventually resulted in a compromise solution that neither shut the door on future membership nor granted the Turks immediate accession. The outcome was the customs union agreement of 1995 that went into effect on December 31, 1995.<sup>10</sup> This agreement gave the Turks closer economic ties with the EU than any other nonmember country at the time, with the exception of Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, and opened the Turkish market of 65 million consumers to EU companies. For the Turks, the customs union symbolized their membership in Europe and thus put Turkey on track for membership in the EU. For the EU members, however, the customs union was the most Turkey could expect from the EU for the near future.

The next crucial event in EU-Turkey relations came at the Luxembourg summit of December 1997. At this summit, the EU leaders decided on the list of candidate countries for membership in line with the recommendations of the European Commission outlined earlier in Agenda 2000. The announcement excluded Turkey as a candidate country. The Turkish government reacted harshly on several fronts. First, it announced that it no longer viewed the EU as a third-party mediator in Greek-Turkish affairs and the Cyprus problem. Second, the Turkish government vetoed European allies’ ESDI plans on agenda setting in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Finally, on the economic front Turkey decided not to purchase military hardware from EU states.

Relations between the two sides were extremely tense and it was clear that something had to be done to improve this situation. Not only was Turkey moving away from the EU; several important foreign policy and security matters on NATO’s agenda were deadlocked. These included lack of progress on Cyprus, the Aegean, and the future reformulation of NATO-ESDI relations. Greek-Turkish relations also reached a low point in early 1999 after the capture of the separatist Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan by Turkish special forces in Kenya as he was leaving the Greek ambassador’s residence.

The initiative for a possible solution to the EU-Turkish problem came from the Clinton administration. These efforts gained added momentum after the devastating earthquakes in Turkey in August 1999 and occurring to lesser degree, in Greece, when the peoples of the two countries began a series of bilateral goodwill initiatives. The governments of Greece and Turkey, led by their respective foreign ministers, seized this opportunity and started building cooperation in many technical areas such as tourism and drug trafficking. The first sign of improvement came when the Commission recommended to the Council that Turkey be included as a formal candidate but without any definite time set for the start of accession talks. The European Council meeting at

Helsinki in December 1999 followed these recommendations and invited Turkey to join the CEEC candidates. After intense diplomatic pressure the EU and Turkey came to an agreement, with the understanding that both sides will work in an atmosphere of goodwill to settle disputes between them. The lifting of the Greek veto was the most significant issue in this compromise. In return, Turkey agreed to the EU's statement that it would adapt to the *acquis* and work with Greece to resolve disputes between the two countries and Cyprus; and the EU agreed to review progress on these fronts by the end of 2004. The EU stated that if Greek-Turkish problems were not resolved by the set date, the Commission would consider recommending taking the problems to the Hague Court for resolution, though this is not a binding statement.

Turkey responded to the EU by presenting its National Program, a detailed report on economic and political reform plans, on March 19, 2001.<sup>11</sup> This five hundred-page document outlined how Turkey intended to carry out specific reforms to meet the requirements of the *acquis*. In this document, the Turkish government provided its plans for economic, social, and technical reforms to harmonize Turkey's policies with those of the Union. However, the response to EU's call for political reforms remained vague and raised concerns among European political circles.

In reality, the nature of the National Program reflected the delicate balance of the coalition government in Ankara at the time. While Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit (Democratic Left Party) and his junior coalition partner Mesut Yılmaz (Motherland Party) favored listing concrete reforms with deadlines, the other main coalition partner Devlet Bahçeli (Nationalist Action Party) and the powerful military argued in favor of a more gradual approach to satisfying political reforms. Another factor that took away the limelight from political reforms was the financial crisis of February-March 2001 that led to Turkey's adoption of an IMF sponsored economic program.

At the European Council summit of Göteborg in June 2001, EU leaders noted economic and political difficulties facing Turkey. The Council stressed the importance of the economic program agreed between Turkey and the IMF and urged its vigorous implementation for economic recovery. However, the EU leaders explained that in a number of areas, such as human rights and treatment of the minorities, Turkey's National Program left much room for improvement. The Council urged Turkish leaders to take concrete measures to implement the priorities in the Accession Partnership as this represents the cornerstone of the pre-accession strategy.<sup>12</sup>

The Turkish government responded recently in October 2001 in an unanticipated move by proposing 37 sweeping amendments to the Constitution. The National Assembly voted to pass 34 amendments that signals Turkey's commitment to meet democratization requirements of EU membership.<sup>13</sup> Despite these reforms, the road to membership, however, seemed not to be an easy one for both Turkey and the EU.

Despite sweeping political reforms, EU-Turkish relations once again took a turn for the worse with the recommendation of the Commission on enlargement that gave Turkey no definitive timetable for starting accession talks.<sup>14</sup> The report made up the bases of the

2002 accession assessment of the candidates and served as a guideline for the European Council summit in Copenhagen in December 2002. According to the Commission, the other 12 mostly ex-communist countries had substantial progress in their reforms efforts to warrant membership in the Union. Ten countries would become members in 2004 and two others, Bulgaria and Romania, in 2007.<sup>15</sup> This conclusion of the Commission drew criticism from Turkish officials for two reasons. First, the Turkish parliament had passed substantial reforms of the constitution to satisfy the EU's political *acquis* standards in September 2002 and they went unnoticed by the Europeans. Furthermore, Turkey's experience with liberal representative democratic system was far longer and richer than any of the other CEEC. Second, the Commission's position on Cyprus's membership was seen as a pro-Greek policy that ignored Turkey's and Turkish Cypriots' treaty rights over Cyprus's membership in international organizations/ institutions.

As stated previously, the final outcome of the 2002 Copenhagen summit was to invite ten candidates to join the EU in 2004, Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, and to reassess Turkey's progress in December 2004 with the understanding that if this country satisfies the *acquis*, accession talks would commence without delay.

Following this outcome, Turkey embarked upon intensive and substantial legislative reforms to meet the Copenhagen criteria. These EU led reforms aimed to bring Turkish democracy up to European standards by eliminating authoritarian aspects of the Turkish constitutional and legal system. The Commission's subsequent report highlighted significance of reforms for Turkey's democracy:

Political reforms, in line with the priorities in the Accession Partnership, have been introduced by means of a series of constitutional and legislative changes adopted over a period of three years (2001-2004). There have been two major constitutional reforms in 2001 and 2004 and eight legislative packages were adopted by Parliament between February 2002 and July 2004. New codes have been adopted, including a Civil Code and a Penal Code. Numerous other laws, regulations, decrees and circulars outlining the application of these reforms were issued.<sup>16</sup>

All these legislative reform packages aimed to bring the Turkish constitutional and legal system to the standards of the European democracies. Therefore, it is quite possible that getting a date to start the accession negotiations by fulfilling the political Copenhagen criterion (which in turn would eventually lead to EU membership) was the single most influential factor for the rapid and remarkable growth of democracy in Turkey between 2001 and 2004.

### **Where Does Turkey Stand with the Copenhagen Political Criteria?**

The political requirements for accession stipulate that any candidate country must have achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities."<sup>17</sup> In a previous study, I concluded that:

Despite positive developments, Turkey's prospects for membership still face a difficult road ahead. Reasons are complex and require delicate handling by the officials on both sides. First, the slow pace of democratization in Turkey remains a serious concern for the EU. The *acquis* calls

for complete harmonization of the legal systems and stresses adherence to European human rights declaration. Yet, there is progress being made albeit at snail pace. The Turkish military and conservative politicians fear that separatist groups would use extensive political freedoms to endanger the unity of the country. The two main parties they identify are the Kurds and the Islamists. Nonetheless, membership in the EU will cannot be achieved unless Turkey undertakes major political reforms that provide extensive individual civil and political rights to its citizens. To their credit, the Turkish leaders are facing these challenges as noted in recent amendments to the Constitution. While these reforms still do not meet the entire spectrum of changes expected by the EU, they are nonetheless impressive. In a matter of two weeks, the Turkish leaders have achieved more in democratization than they have in the previous two years.<sup>18</sup>

The positive developments referred to constitutional amendments that previous Turkish governments succeeded in passing through the National Assembly. Gradually, the Turks have been amending the 1982 Constitution to rid it of the authoritarian articles that restrict individual civil and political rights. In July 1995, the National Assembly passed amendments to 15 articles of the constitution easing the restrictions on individual civil and political rights. Among these, the important changes included:

1. The right of trade unions to engage in political activity (Arts. 33 & 52).
2. The right of civil servants to join trade unions (Art. 53).
3. The lowering of the voting age to 18 (Arts. 67 & 68).
4. Permitting professional organizations to engage in politics (Art. 135), and
5. Permitting university staff and students to engage in politics (Arts. 67 & 68).

However, six other amendments were defeated which drew criticism from the EP members and human rights groups and pro-democracy politicians in Turkey. These amendments would have made it more difficult for the government to ban strikes, allowed strikes by civil servants, and withdrawn the present immunity from persecution of former members of the military government of 1980-83.<sup>19</sup> More alarming was that the government failed to amend Article 8 of the Law for the Suppression of Terrorism. Until recently when the National Assembly passed sweeping reforms to the Constitution, this article made even a verbal support of Kurdish nationalism a crime against the state. It was this law that the State used as basis for punishing the six ex-DEP/HADEP (pro-Kurdish Democracy Party--closed down in 1994) members of the National Assembly. These parliamentarians received long prison sentences. Reforms of October 2001 eased this restriction on Kurdish identity and language but maintained strict ban on activities that threatened the country. In fact, these reforms strengthened guarantees in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms and limiting capital punishment. Furthermore, the Turkish National Assembly adopted a new Civil Code in November 2001 and three sets of comprehensive reform packages were adopted in February, March, and August 2002. Among these reforms, those adopted in August 2002 were far reaching: lifting of the death penalty in peace time, the possibility for Radio and TV broadcasting in Kurdish, the expanding of freedom of expression and greater freedom for non-Muslim religious minorities (particularly in expansion of their property rights). The National Security Council recommended lifting of the state of emergency in Southeastern Turkey. Other areas of substantial improvements in Turkish legal system included:

1. Reform of the prison system, creation of the Monitoring Boards and a new system of enforcement judges became operational.
2. Reduction in the length of pre-trial detention (police custody).
3. Provision for retrial of individuals whose convictions have been found by the European Court of Human Rights to be in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.
4. Change in Article 159 of the Penal Code meant that the expression of opinion without the “intention” of “insulting” public institutions would no longer face criminal sanction.
5. Changes to Article 312 of the Penal Code and to the Anti-Terror Law, the Press Law, the Law on Political Parties and the Law of Associations eased some restrictions on freedom of expression, association, the press and broadcasting.
6. The new Civil Code provides more gender equality and strengthens guarantees for the protection and rights of the child.
7. Turkey also ratified the 1969 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.<sup>20</sup>

The EU response to drastic improvements in Turkey’s constitutional and legal system through the above reforms has been “now we need to see implementation process.” Most recently, the EU identified several shortcomings in areas of individual rights, continued cases of torture and abuse by the police, continued prosecution of writers, journalists, and publishers, corruption in the public sector, and strong influence of the military in politics (as demonstrated most recently by the military memorandum of April 27, 2007).<sup>21</sup> Given these developments what can be said about the impact of EU’s political criteria for membership on consolidation of democracy in Turkey? This question begs clear operationalization of consolidation of democracy before it can be tackled.

### ***Criteria for Consolidated Democracy Defined***

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan define consolidated democracy in a three dimensions political development: behavioral, attitudinal, and constitutional:

*Behaviorally*, a democratic regime in a territory is consolidated when no significant national, social, economic, political, or institutional actors spend significant resources attempting to achieve their objective by creating a non-democratic regime or turning to violence or foreign intervention to secede from the states.

*Attitudinally*, a democratic regime is consolidated when a strong majority of public opinion holds the belief that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern collective life in a society such as their and when the support for anti-system alternatives is quite small or more or less isolated from the pro-democratic forces.

*Constitutionally*, a democratic regime is consolidated when governmental and nongovernmental forces alike, throughout the territory of the state, become subjected to, and habituated to, the resolution of conflict within the specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process.<sup>22</sup>

Specifying and narrowing down the concept of consolidated democracy in three dimensions enables the application of this theoretical model into the real world cases.

*Behavioral dimension* is an extremely important criterion for consolidation of democracy. No democratic regime can be stable and long lasting when significant actors engage in undemocratic behavior. The anti-democratic actors can be considered as significant when they are capable of disrupting the stability and the survival of a democratic regime. A common example of undemocratic actors are anti-system oriented political parties (or other organizations) that are disloyal opponents of the democratic regime.

Most anti-system actors make no secret about their political views and goals. Their disapproval of democratic norms and attempts to create an alternative form of governance (authoritarian, religious etc) is evident through their ideology or programmatic declarations. One can also identify undemocratic behavior in speeches or public statements issued by the elite of anti-system organizations. Using violence to achieve political purposes is an anti-democratic behavior par excellence. A common example is the use of violence by nationalist movements that aim separatist goals. Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), an armed Basque separatist organization in Spain, is a well known example. These kinds of separatist organizations are serious obstacles to democratic consolidation since they challenge the very legitimacy of a democratic regime and employ terrorist methods to achieve political goals.

*Attitudinal dimension* focuses on the values and belief system that citizens hold regarding democratic norms. This is very crucial because no democratic regime can be considered consolidated when a significant portion of citizens believe that democratic norms and procedures are not the best means of governance and regard other undemocratic alternatives as preferable. Thus, in order for a democratic regime to be consolidated there has to be a widespread consensus among the citizens that democracy as a type of governance is much more preferable and desirable than other types of governance such as authoritarian, religious totalitarian etc. In addition, it is important not only to observe the behaviors of anti-system parties but also to assess the support that citizens give to these anti-system parties (or to any other anti-democratic organizations). In order to decide whether “support for anti-system alternatives is quite small or more or less isolated from the pro-democratic forces,” one needs to know the number of citizens who give support to the anti-system parties and the degree of support that they give. By focusing on attitudes and values rather than behavior, attitudinal dimension explores the vital issues of consolidated democracy that behavioral dimension leaves out.

*Constitutional dimension* builds upon the two previous dimensions by emphasizing the necessity to respect the rule of law, constitutionalism, and the institutional norms and the procedures of the democratic regime. For a democracy to be consolidated, the actors in a democratic regime have to “obey the laws, the constitution, and mutually accepted norms of political conduct.”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the actors have to contain the political conflicts and their conduct within the boundaries of constitutional

democratic order. Deviating from this democratic paradigm would mean engaging in disloyal behavior to democratic regime.

However, in analyzing the consolidation of democracy, there are additional key factors to consider. First, process of democratic consolidation is neither an inevitable nor a linear process. During the last couple of decades, many countries, e.g., CEEC and Latin American states, have replaced their totalitarian and authoritarian political systems with democratic ones. However, this does not mean that these recently established democracies will inevitably march towards to the consolidation of their democratic regimes. Gunther, Puhl, and Diamandouros argue that democratic consolidation “is not and should not be conceived of as a linear process, moving inexorably towards successful completion. Empirical reality has amply demonstrated in recent years that protractedness, stagnation, temporary reversal, and, quite often, deconsolidation are equally, if not more likely outcomes.”<sup>24</sup> Second, even if a democratic regime becomes consolidated by fulfilling the criteria of Linz and Stepan, it does not mean that a democratic regime will be immune to de-consolidation, regression or even breakdown in the future because consolidation of democracy is a never ending process and must be constantly constructed and re-constructed.<sup>25</sup> And third, there is no set of universal obstacles (valid for every country and valid all the time) that must be resolved in order to consolidate a democratic regime. According to Guillermo O’Donnell, countries without a consolidated democracy face many different obstacles in their quest for a stable democratic system. As O’Donnell writes “The problems are not the same in each country, and their relative seriousness in different dimensions shows important variations from case to case.”<sup>26</sup> This is an important reminder, especially when one assesses the challenges to the consolidation of democracy in a given country.

### **Assessment of Democratic Consolidation in Turkey**

According to the Linz and Stepan’s model, Turkish democracy could satisfy the *behavioral criterion* for a consolidated democracy when political parties are system oriented (e.g., no significant political party tries to usurp democratic processes to undermine democracy for attaining fundamental systemic changes) and political actors like the PKK ceases to be a significant actor employing terrorist methods and receiving foreign aid in order to secede from the Turkish state. However one looks at the PKK, it is s significant factor in this regard. After his capture in 1999, Abdullah Ocalan called for a unilateral ceasefire on the part of the PKK. In April 2002, at its 8th Party Congress, the PKK changed its name to the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) and renounced the use of terrorist methods. One year later, KADEK renamed itself Kongra-Gel (KGK). Although the Kurdish separatist group has remained in self-imposed unilateral cease-fire since 1999, it did engage in violence periodically in the name of “self defense.” In August 2004, the PKK renounced the unilateral ceasefire and started to engage in guerilla warfare. During the last few months, there has been a considerable rise in separatist terrorist activities. Although the PKK at present is not a significant actor as it used to be in the 1990s, terrorist separatist activities are far from being eradicated. As long as the PKK is capable of launching attacks on Turkish security forces and civilians in the region, it has the potential of disrupting the stability of democracy in Turkey.

Given this, one can conclude that at present Turkish democracy does not completely satisfy the behavioral criterion for a consolidated democracy defined by Linz and Stepan.

On the second dimension of Linz and Stepan’s theoretical model, Turkish democracy could not fulfill the *attitudinal dimension* of consolidated democracy as long as any political party with an Islamic fundamentalist agenda (like the Welfare Party) or any other party with an anti-democratic agenda (such as authoritarian or totalitarian) continued to be a major electoral force in Turkish politics. Such parties would violate a fundamental task of political parties in functioning democracies – socializing citizens toward system consensus. Given this, one can argue that Turkey achieved considerable progress in fulfilling the attitudinal criterion of consolidated democracy when Necmettin Erbakan and his Felicity party, with its anti-democratic and Islamist orientation, received only 2.4% of the votes in the 2002 general elections. However, in order to satisfy the attitudinal criterion fully, one must also assess whether or not the AKP is loyal to the laicist democratic order in Turkey. This is very important since any political party that wants to be system-oriented has to abide by the unchangeable laicist characteristic of the Turkish Republic. Because AKP has its roots in the anti-system Islamic fundamentalist Welfare Party, a significant portion of laicist state elites (military, judiciary, etc.) and the populace looks at AKP with suspicion, arguing that AKP is engaging in religious dissimulation- *Takiye*.<sup>27</sup> Thus, compared to Necmettin Erbakan’s Islamist Felicity Party, one has to determine if the AKP genuinely believes in a democratic system, or if this reformist image of the AKP is nothing more than another *takiye*. The AKP claims to be a right wing, conservative and moderately religious but also system-oriented party similar to the Christian Democrats in Europe. During the last four years in power, although the AKP has been committed to Turkey’s EU membership and to the economic market reforms, the party elites sporadically tried to enact laws that would favor its religious base. For example, the AKP attempted to lower the university entrance examination requirements for the graduates of the Preacher and Prayer Leader Schools (Imam Hatip Okullari). The AKP also tried to enact a law in the new Penal Code that would have made adultery a crime. The AKP’s last anti-laicist attempt was to renew a law that would only punish organizers of illegal Koran courses from three, to, twelve months instead of punishing them for three, to, six years. These laws that the AKP tried to pass in order to satisfy demands of its Islamist constituents were vehemently opposed by laicist political elites, the judiciary, the Turkish military, and secular civil society. The current president of Turkey, Necdet Sezer, used his veto power to block their passage on the basis that these laws violated the laicist principles of the Republic.<sup>28</sup>

The third dimension of the Linz-Stepan model, *constitutional*, also shows mixed results. Although Turkey has made extensive legislative reforms, the implementation of these reforms remains uneven. These legislative reforms have to be nurtured and developed through continuous implementation until it becomes part of the democratic routine and takes hold deeply within societal forces. As the EU Commission observed “changes to the Turkish political and legal system over the past years are part of a longer process and it will take time before the spirit of the reforms is fully reflected in the attitudes of executive and judicial bodies, at all levels and throughout the country.”<sup>29</sup>

Given this, continuous and effective implementation of the reforms is necessary for Turkey in order to improve the quality and consolidation of democracy.

Finally, political parties’ role in consolidation of democracy shed some light on the above three attributes. For sure, among key institutions that play a key role in consolidation of democracy in any country are its political parties. According to Elmer Schattschneider and Robert Michels political parties provide a crucial link between elites and masses and between the government and public.<sup>30</sup> Following in the path of these monumental works, Samuel Eldersveld has argued that functioning democracies need parties to fulfill a number of important tasks that include organizing public participation in politics, control and recruitment of elites, conflict management, competition management, policy innovation, and socializing the public to system consensus.<sup>31</sup> As such, parties are central institutions in the survival of the political systems.

For over a century, political parties have played an important role in the development of the Turkish political system. Parties have been instrumental in transforming the Ottoman system, establishment of the modern Turkish republic, transition to multiparty representative liberal democracy, and progress towards the consolidation of this democracy. Yet, this process of adaptation has not been as smooth and stable, as one would have liked to see. Periods of political instability and military interventions (directly in 1960, 1971, and 1980, and indirectly in 1997 and 2007) have raised serious questions about the health of Turkey’s political party system, the nature of civil-military relations, and future of its democratic order. Among the overriding concerns of the secular elites in the country, the rise of religious fundamentalism along with organized religious political parties ranks high (see above). Other political parties have their shortcomings as well. The MHP (Nationalist Action Party) promotes ethnic-based nationalism that threatens Turkey’s heterogeneous make up. Moreover, hardly any political party in Turkey is democratically governed.<sup>32</sup> Further institutional reforms during the EU accession process would go along distance in improving consolidation of democracy in Turkey.

### **The Not-so-Expected Benefits of Turkey’s Membership for the EU**

The decision of the European Union to expand its membership to the Central and East European Countries (CEECs) represents the largest and perhaps the most difficult expansion proposal in the Union’s history. The implications of this enlargement are significant for the EU in terms of political, economic, and security interests, and for future stability of Europe. As EU positions itself to become a global actor in international system, its leaders and citizens contemplate future enlargement and implications of such enlargement (e.g., Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Turkey). Recent developments in France and Denmark where voters rejected the proposed EU constitution cast doubt over further deepening of economic and political integration. However, a series of reports from the Commission (Agenda 2000) state that future enlargement is needed if the EU wants to be able to compete economically and politically with other global actors. If this is the case, do European leaders realize that their future global challenger might be

someone other than the US? In a recent study Yeşilada, Efird and Noordijk examined how global power transition is expected to affect EU’s position in global affairs.<sup>33</sup> Based on power transition model developed by Organski, Kugler, and Tammen<sup>34</sup> In this study Yeşilada, Efird, and Noordijk evaluated how different enlargement scenarios of the EU would affect its future competitiveness vis-à-vis the US, China, and India. A reanalysis of the updated data set further reaffirmed earlier findings on this subject.

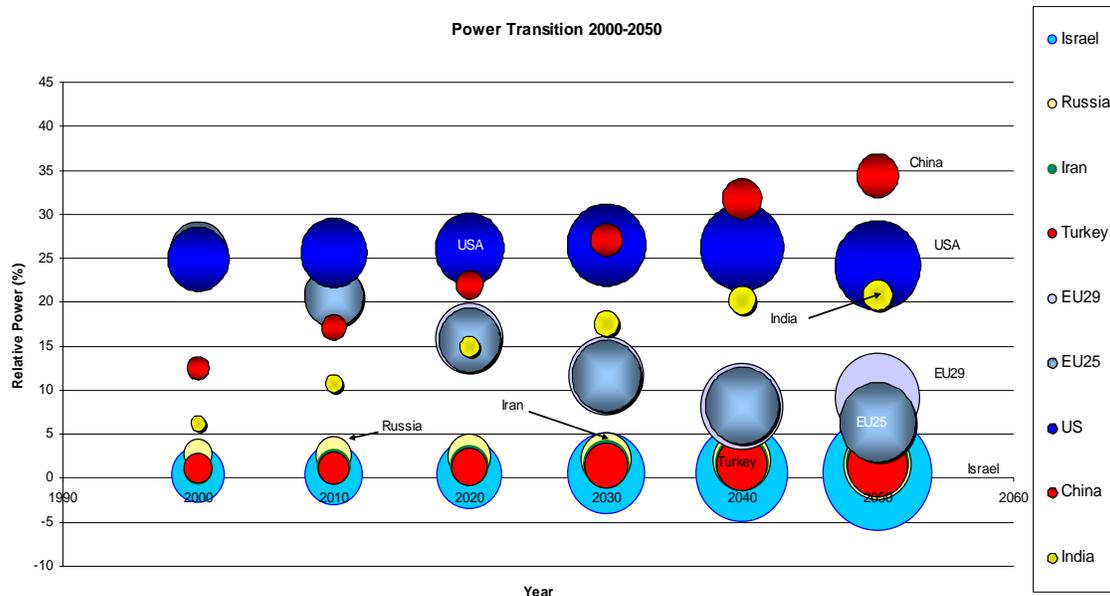
Table 1 provides the formulation of EU scenarios (composition of member states of the EU). The assumption of future EU enlargement include (1) EU25 remains the likely number for foreseeable future, (2) Bulgaria and Romania as of 2007 and Croatia and Turkey as of 2015-2020, and (3) a hypothetical super EU that includes the Russian Federation as of 2030, though it is rather unlikely that the latter would become a reality.

**Table 1. Different Configuration of Future EU**

EU25	EU29	EU29+RUSSIA
Current	Bulgaria	Bulgaria
	Croatia	Croatia
	Romania	Romania
	Turkey	Turkey
		Russia

With this formulation of future EU enlargement scenarios, we can estimate global power transition and assess its implication for the Union. The bubble chart in Figure 1 represent share of system productivity for major powers on the Y-axis with time shown on the X-axis. The size of each bubbles as represents “Productivity per capita” measured in purchasing power parity.

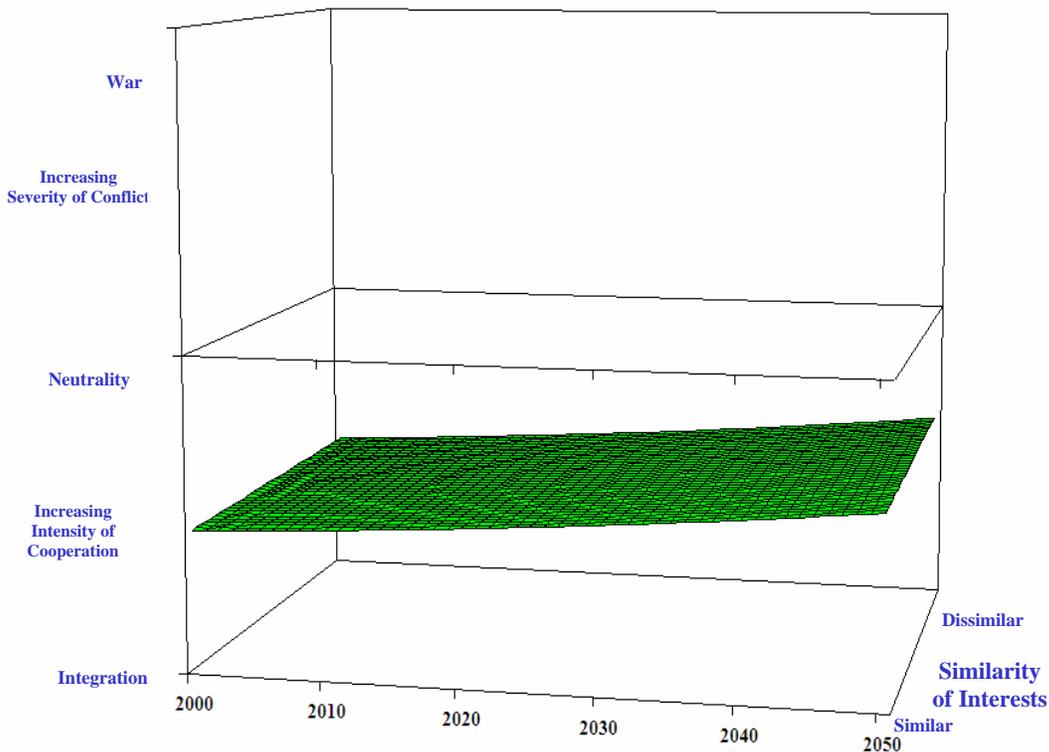
**Figure 1: Forecasting GDP Shares and GDP Per Capita for EU25, EU29 and Global Competitors: 2000-2050 (size of the bubble represents per capita productivity measured in PPP)**



Results are sobering. Over the next fifty years, the US and the EU economies will loose ground against China. No future enlargement plans by the EU could prevent it from REMAINING the third ranked player among the giants. The US will continue to have the largest per capita productivity for some time and will grow in relation to the EU. The enlarged EU 25 that includes Turkey would have a comparable per capita productivity to the US starting around 2040 and produce a steady increase in its share of the global GDP around 2050. In contrast to the EU25 and 29, the US loss of economic ground to China is less dramatic. The US and China will reach parity around 2025-2030, at which point China pulls ahead and is projected to become the world’s largest economy. Note however that the per capita productivity of China will be far lower than that of the US or the EU well beyond 2040. The international system in this century will be dominated for the first time in memory by a giant with low productivity.

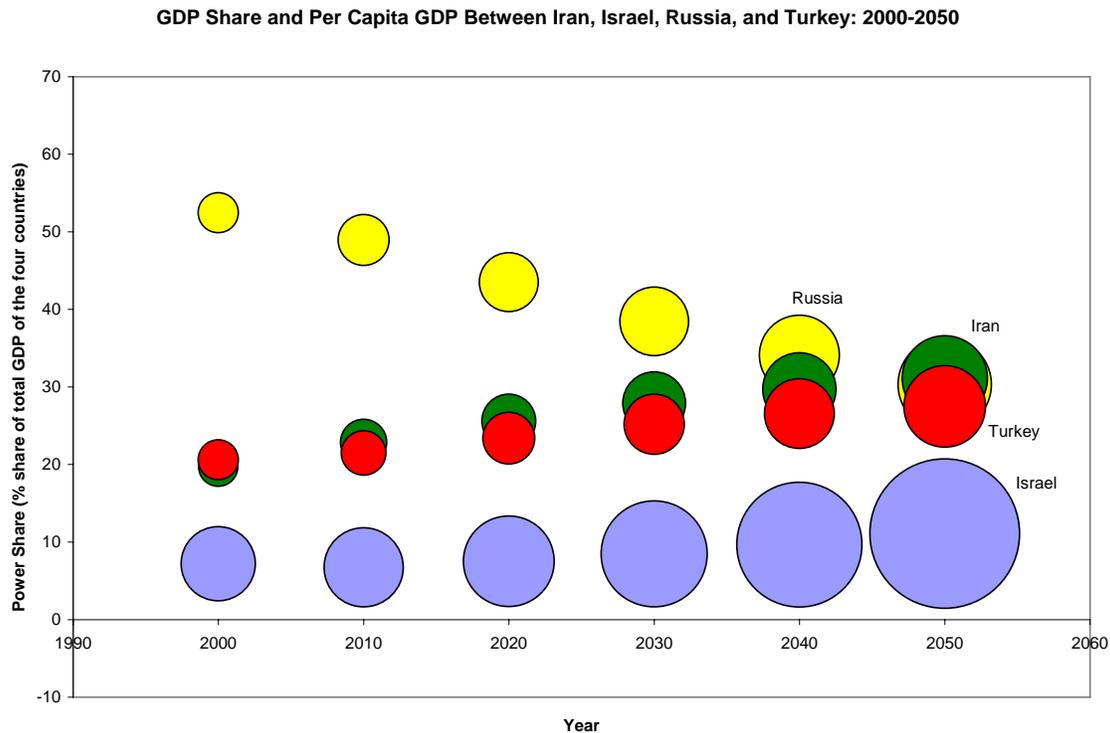
Given these projections, does it make sense for the EU to continue accession talks with Turkey to bring this country into the Union in 10-20 years? One important question deals with the probability of conflict. Does the current structure augur war or peace – and does the change because of integration reduce or increase such likelihood. First, Figure 2 details results from the power transition perspective of a conflict within the European regional hierarchy for the EU-Turkey dyad:

**Figure 2: Forecasting Conflict-Cooperation: EU25-Turkey, 2000-2050**



The simulation results indicate no conflict is likely between Turkey and the current EU, rather the possibility of further integration extends for the near future. This is consistent with reality. Turkey and the EU already have a customs union agreement with increasing bilateral trade and investment between their economies. Therefore, it is highly probably that integration will continue to deepen. The results in Figure 1 substantiate the expected positive contribution of Turkey on EU’s future growth within the global hierarchy. That result substantiates the Commission’s findings on this subject in 2004.

The more profound and unexpected finding of this study pertains to regional stability in the Middle East and Caucasus region. In an earlier study Yesilada, Efir, and Noordijk reported an increasing probability of conflict between Iran and Turkey in the Caucasus region as their political capacity increased.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, they reported that the probability of conflict with Russia declined. When this regional hierarchy is re-examined, the future relations between these three regional powers show important results for regional stability. Figure 3 shows regional power transition in this region during 2000-2050.

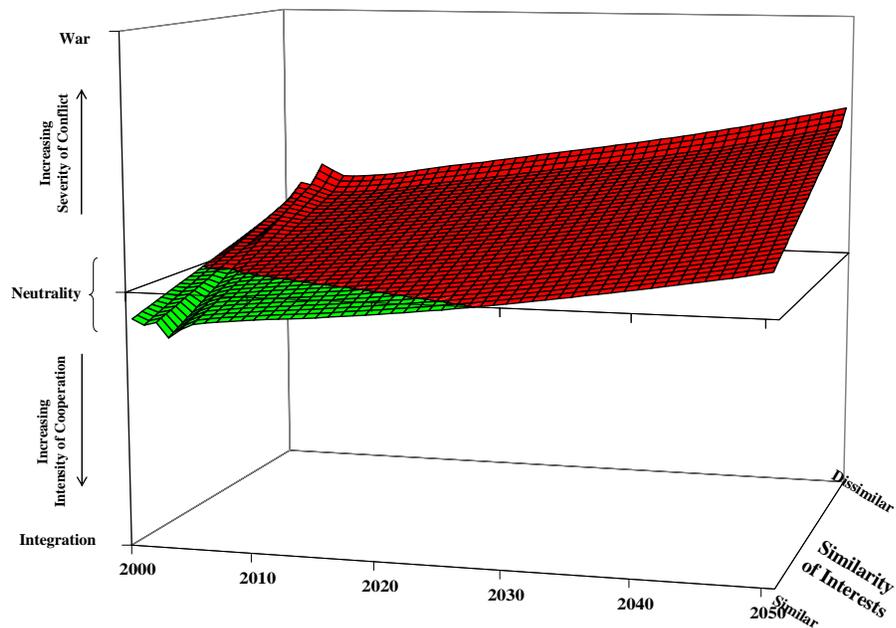


**Figure 3: Forecasting GDP Shares and GDP Per Capita for the Middle East-Caucasus Region 2000-2050 (size of the bubble represents per capita productivity measured in PPP)Power Transition in the Middle**

Russia is at the top of the hierarchy today followed by Turkey and Iran with equal capabilities. However, over time Iran will move slightly ahead of Turkey over time as Russia’s share declines. These three countries are expected to reach close parity starting in the 2030s. The pattern is consistent with a uniform hierarchy suggesting if these parties are mutually dissatisfied a rising probability of conflict between the defender and challenger(s). Thus, in this region unless the status quo is strongly supported, we anticipate increased tensions and the resulting potential confrontations that would be severe.

Serious implications for the regional hierarchy follow from these evaluations. The most alarming findings pertain to relations between Iran and Turkey. As Figure 4 shows these countries, power capabilities are converging and increasing the probability of conflict starting around 2010 and that the anticipated outcome is a steady and sharp increase in the likelihood of severe war. Thus, if their interests become more dissimilar, Iran’s challenge of Turkey in the region is likely to be in the form of military confrontation. This scenario is quite likely given Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons and its dissatisfaction with Turkey’s influence in Azerbaijan, Central Asia, and Georgia. The two are also in a state of “cautious” competition over the future political status of Iraq.

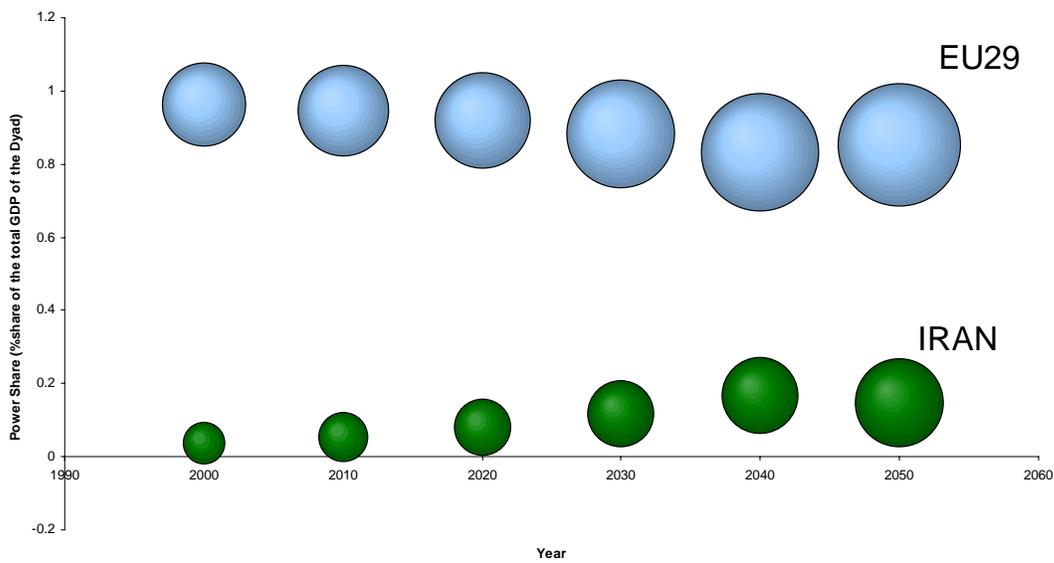
**Figure 4. Forecasting Conflict-Cooperation: Iran-Turkey, 2000-2050**



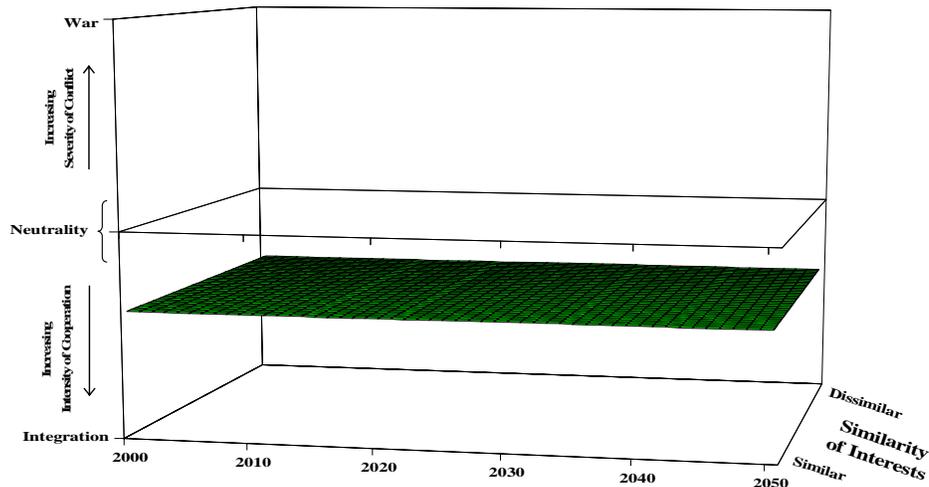
The unexpected finding pertains to Turkey’s membership in the EU and how that affects the future Iran-Turkey dyad. Unlike the global pattern that cannot be altered by

EU enlargement, interactions in the Middle East that have a doomsday scenario for Iran and Turkey can be altered. Turkey’s accession into the EU would dramatically stabilize the region. When Turkey is included in the EU parity between Iran and Turkey disappears as shown in Figures 5 and 6. With the addition of Turkey, the EU29 dominates power in the northern Middle East region. Given such changes in structures, Iran is highly unlikely to challenge Turkey that is now an EU member. Thus, one outcome of Turkey’s membership in the EU would be guarantee of stability in the Middle East – at least as far as competition between Iran and Turkey is concerned.

**Figure 5: GDP Shares and GDP Per Capita Between EU29 and Iran: 2000 - 2050**



**Figure 6: Forecasting Conflict-Cooperation: EU29-Iran, 2000-2050**



## **Conclusions and Prospects**

This paper provided an analysis of political reforms in Turkey as a function of its quest for membership in the EU. While political reforms have been ongoing since transition to civilian rule in 1983, their speed and magnitude, coincide with push to attain the customs union, candidacy for membership, and formal start of accession talks with the EU. While the scope of reforms has been quite extensive, it is still too early to conclude that democratic political system has been consolidated in Turkey. Based on the three criteria of Linz and Stepan, it would be pre-mature to state that Turkey at present is a fully consolidated democracy. The PKK’s continuing terrorist activities, As the largest political party in the National Assembly, the AKP’s ambiguity towards the laicist establishment and the ineffective implementation of the recent democratic reforms hinder Turkey to be considered a fully consolidated democracy. Achieving a fully consolidated democracy will largely depend on how Turkey resolves three challenges it faces: Kurdish separatism, Islamic fundamentalism, and implementation of democratic reforms found in EU reform packages. From the 1999 Helsinki summit to 2005, Turkey had to fulfill the political Copenhagen criteria in order to start the accession talks with the EU. From now on, Turkey will be expected to satisfy the other parts of the Copenhagen criteria in the hope of becoming a member state of the EU and implement the political reforms prior to accession.

The EU accession represents a significant catalyst for achieving the above goals. However, at the same time, inconsistency of EU member states over Turkey’s place in the Union could also work in opposite direction and undermine the reform process in Turkey. Anti-reformist and anti-EU forces could capitalize on European leaders’ mixed signals and attempt to stop or even reverse democratization in Turkey. That would be a tragic outcome since EU membership aspiration has been a much-needed catalyst for democratic development in other central and east European countries. Would Turkey be the one to prove this trend otherwise? It is in the hands of the Turkish political, business, and bureaucratic elites along with laicist forces (including its citizens) to move forward and secure consolidation of democracy with or without the EU. The EU served its function in providing the much needed external (outside-in) pressure that aided the domestic forces of reform to carry out the extensive reforms. And even if the EU turns its back on Turkey, the Turks will be in a much stronger and powerful position in the world with a representative liberal democratic system and a stable market economy. Failure to implement the reforms would mean turning away from Europe and joining the list of unstable Third World countries. That would be a tragedy since this path was not what the founder of the republic had envisioned for Turkey.

As for the EU, findings show some important policy implications. In the context of global power transition, the economic future of the EU, is not very promising. Regardless of its enlargement plans, the EU will fall behind the others giants (China, US, and India) becoming the third largest economy. Part of the expected decline in its GDP share could be offset by adding Turkey. Contrary to current public opinion in the EU, it is only after Turkey’s accession that EU’s economic decline levels off and starts to increase in its projected per capita productivity. This is one such “not-so-expected” outcome of

Turkey’s EU membership. The other such result pertains to how this membership could stabilize the volatile northern Middle East/Caucasus region.

At present, Russia’s dominance in northern Middle East will decline while Iran and Turkey will appear to be the regional challengers. At the same time, there exists parity between Iran and Turkey with the former slightly moving ahead in the next 40 years. This dyadic relationship between Iran and Turkey is one of high probability of conflict that intensify very quickly with time. These two countries are engaged in intense competition for influence in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Iraq. Moreover, they represent two polar opposite political systems of the region – Iran is a Shi’a theocracy while Turkey is a Western style secular democracy. With Iran pursuit of nuclear weapons, this dyad is likely to become more conflictual before Iran establishes clear superiority. However, findings show that Turkey’s membership in the EU would stabilize the volatile Middle East by removing Iran’s growing challenge in the region. With Turkey in the EU, parity between Iran and Turkey disappears and Iran could no longer project hostility against the later. If for no other reason, Turkey’s membership in the EU should be encouraged by leaders of the Transatlantic Alliance to stabilize this volatile region.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> “Essen Summit Endorses Eastern European Strategy,” *Eurecom* 6 (December 1994): 1.

<sup>2</sup> “Leaders Agree on Institutional Changes at Nice,” *Financial Times*, December 12, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, *Agenda 2000* (Brussels: European Commission, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, *Eurobarometer 56* (Brussels: European Commission, April 2002), p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer on Enlargement no. 255*, p. 69.

<sup>8</sup> David Wood and Birol Yesilada, *The Emerging European Union, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.*, (New York: Longman, forthcoming), Ch. 7

<sup>9</sup> European Commission. *Commission Opinion on Turkey’s Request for Accession to the Community*, Sec. (89) 2290 final (Brussels: Official Publications of the European Communities, December 18, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Birol Yesilada, “Turkey’s Candidacy to Join the European Union,” *The Middle East Journal* Vol 56, no. 1 (Winter 2002):94-112.

<sup>11</sup> *Ulusal Program* [The National Program] Vol. 1 & 2, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Yayınları, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Göteborg European Council: Presidency Conclusions, Press Release (15-06-2001) - NR: 200/01.

<sup>13</sup> Turkish dailies October 4, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Associated Press, “EU says Turkey not ready for accession talks,” October 7, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, *2002 Regular Report on Turkey’s Progress Toward Accession* (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> EU Commission’s Report, Page 165. For example, almost one- fourth of the original text of the 1982 Constitution was amended in three years. 34 articles of the 1982 Constitution were amended in 2001 and 10 articles were amended in 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Copenhagen European Council, June 1993. Since then, through the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam in May 1999, the political criteria defined at Copenhagen have become a constitutional principle in the Treaty of the European Union. Article 6(1) of the consolidated TEU reads, “The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.” Accordingly, Article 49 of the TEU stipulates “Any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6(1) may apply to become a member of the Union.” More recently, these

principles were emphasized in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union that was proclaimed at the Nice European Council in December 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Yeşilada, “Turkey’s Candidacy,”

<sup>19</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Reports, Turkey* (London: EIU Publications, 1997), pp. 10-11.

<sup>20</sup> 2002 Commission Report, pp. 15-47.

<sup>21</sup> European Commission, *Turkey 2006 Progress Report...*

<sup>22</sup> Linz and Stepan, Page 6.

<sup>23</sup> Larry Diamond, 1999, Page 69.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Gunther, Hans-Jurgen Puhle, and P. Nikiforos Dimandouros Page 312.

<sup>25</sup> Linz and Stepan, Page 6.

<sup>26</sup> See Guillermo O’Donnell, “Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes,” in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O’Donnell, and J. Samuel Valenzuela, eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 49.

<sup>27</sup> Birol Yeşilada, *Islam, Dollars and Politics*, Page 10-11. “As a strategy for political domination, takiye emphasizes the need to hide one’s true intentions in the hope of conquering the secular institution (the military and the state) from within. Furthermore, according to takiye rules, any action of a fellow member aimed at conquering the state, even if it violates Islamic code, is acceptable because a state of war (Dar ul-Harb) exists between the believers and enemies of Islam.” For example, the so called Reformist Erdogan, today’s prime minister of Turkey, was prosecuted for reading a verse from a poem (written by the nationalist hero Ziya Gokalp) in 1997, “The mosques are out barracks, the minarets are our spears, their domes are our helmets and the faithful are our army.” Erdogan was found guilty of inciting a religious hatred among masses and spent ten months in jail. Many argued that the imageries in the poem depict the worldview of a person engaged in Dar ul-Harb.

<sup>28</sup> At present, the Turkish Constitutional Court, the President and the Turkish military are the three bastions of laicist principles in Turkey.

<sup>29</sup> EU Commission Report, Page 55.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies in Modern Democracies* (New York: Dover, 1959, first published in German in 1911); and Elmer Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Wiston, 1941).

<sup>31</sup> Samuel J. Eldersveld, *Political Parties in American Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1982);

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed discussion of the shortcomings of Turkey’s political parties see Barry Rubin and Metin Heper, eds., *Political Parties in Turkey* (London: Frank Cass, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Birol Yeşilada, Brian Efir, and Peter Noordijk, ““Competition among Giants: A Look at How Future Enlargement of the European Union Could Affect Global Power Transition,” *International Studies Review* Vol. 8, no. 4 (December 2006):607-622.

<sup>34</sup> For example see Organski, A.F.K, and Jacek Kugler. 1980. *The War Ledger*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Tammen, Ronald, et al. 2004. *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Revised Chinese edition*. Chatham: Chatham House (now C.Q. Press); Efir, Brian, Jacek Kugler and Gaspare Genna. 2003. From War to Integration: Generalizing the Dynamic of Power Transitions. *International Interactions* 29(4); and Efir, Brian, and Gaspare Genna. 2002. Structural Conditions and the Propensity for Regional Integration. *European Union Politics* 3(3).

<sup>35</sup> Birol Yeşilada, Brian Efir, and Peter Noordijk, “Power Transition Analysis of the Caucasus Region,” Paper presented at the 2005 Annual Conference of the International Studies Association in Hawaii.