Dynamics of Political Reform in Turkey

Dr. Levent Gönenç

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Preface

This paper has been prepared as a contribution to the forthcoming conference publication “The European Union and Turkey: Problems and Prospects of the Accession Negotiations” which took place on 20 and 21 October 2005 at the Europa-Kolleg Hamburg (Schriftenreihe des Europa-Kollegs Hamburg zur Integrationsforschung, Nomos, Baden-Baden). The paper has been discussed and was finalized on the occasion of a visit of Professor GÖNENÇ as a guest professor at the Europa-Kolleg Hamburg and the University of Hamburg in January of this year, supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). The paper deals with basically two questions: the concept of political reform in Turkish political discourse from a historical perspective and the prospects for further political reforms in Turkey within the framework of the EU accession process.

Thomas Bruha

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The author, Dr. Levent Gönenç, is assistant professor at the Ankara University, Faculty of Law. He received his Ph.D. from Leiden University, the Netherlands, in 1998. He has written in the fields of political science and constitutional law. The focus of his current research is the dynamics of legal and political change in Turkey from a comparative perspective. His book, titled Prospects for Constitutionalism in Post-Communist Countries was published by Kluwer Law International in 2002. His recent publications in English include: “The 2001 Amendments to the 1982 Constitution of Turkey”, Ankara Law Review 1 (2004), pp. 241-259; “Recent Developments in the Field of Freedom of Expression in Turkey”, European Public Law 11 (2005), pp. 89-109.

Business Address:
Ankara Universitesi Hukuk Fakultesi
06590
Ceheci-Ankara
Turkey
e-mail: lgonenc@law.ankara.edu.tr
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction 1

2. Need for „Consolidating Reforms“ 2

3. Politics of Reform in Turkey: Putting Consolidating Reforms into Context 4
   - 3.1. Center-Periphery Relations in the Ottoman Times 5
   - 3.2. Ottoman Reforms 5
   - 3.3. Impact of Ottoman Reforms on Center-Periphery Relations 7
   - 3.4. Kemalist Reforms 8
   - 3.5. Impact of Kemalist Reforms on Center-Periphery Relations: Sources of De-Consolidating Problems 9
   - 3.6. Transition to Democracy and the Military Intervention of 1960 11
   - 3.8. The Military Intervention of 1980 and Subsequent Developments 14
   - 3.9. The 28 February Process and the Emergence of the AKP 15
   - 3.10. From EU Reforms to Consolidating Reforms 16

4. Actors of Reform Process 17
   - 4.1. The EU as the Reform Pusher 17
   - 4.2. Reformers: The AKP Government 18
   - 4.3. Veto Players: The Military, The Bureaucracy and the President 20

5. Reform Strategies: Predictions and Admonitions 23


7. Conclusion 26

BIBLIOGRAPHY 27
Dynamics of Political Reform in Turkey

Dr. Levent Gönenç

1. Introduction

The last decade saw the introduction of sweeping political reforms in Turkey, which were truly remarkable in terms of their scope and content. Although several attempts had been made at undoing the authoritarian-statist constitutional legacy of the 12 September 1980 military intervention, most of these were unsuccessful. Only after the European Union’s (EU) approval of Turkey’s official candidate status in 1999 Helsinki Summit, political reforms could gain momentum. The Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) adopted a series of constitutional amendments and “harmonization laws” between 1999 and 2004 to fulfill the “Copenhagen Criteria”, i.e. those political criteria, which had been introduced as the precondition of accession to the EU. Most of these regulations touched upon certain “taboo” issues in Turkish politics and they dramatically changed the authoritarian-statist face of Turkish democracy—at least on paper. This remarkable achievement was very welcomed by the EU and paved the way for the European Council’s decision of 17 December 2004 to open accession negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005. This was a long-desired goal and, needless to say, it was a direct result of recent path-breaking political reforms.

Although the reform process and its outcomes have been well documented and extensively analyzed in a growing literature (Oder, 2002; Özbudun and Yazıcı, 2004; Örücü, 2002, 2004), relatively less theoretical attention has been paid to the prospects of political reforms in Turkey. As the need for further political reform has been articulated by external as well as internal political actors, following questions remain unanswered at the theoretical level: Will political reforms continue in Turkey? If the answer is “yes”, what will be their content? What are the conditions of their continuation? Which strategies should be accepted to initiate and maintain a new reform campaign? This article will deal with these questions. That is, it is more concerned with “What should be done?” and “What can be done?”, than “What has been done?” Answering these questions seems even more important than it used be, particularly after the opening of accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU, during which the accomplished and to be accomplished political reforms will be under constant review.

The article begins with the presentation of the concept of “consolidating reforms”. Here, I shall invite the reader to go beyond “Copenhagen Criteria” and try to see political reforms through the lens of two related concepts; “quality of democracy” and “consolidation of democracy”. In the second section, I shall try to put the concept of “consolidating reforms” into context: First, I shall provide an analytical framework to analyze the meaning of “political reform” in the prevailing Turkish political discourse. Here, I shall mainly rely on a frequently used dichotomy in social sciences, center-periphery. Second, I shall discuss the characteristics of major reform movements in Ottoman-Turkish history. Within this context, I shall emphasize the impact of political reforms on center-periphery relations. Third, I shall draw the contours of consolidating reforms by comparing them with Ottoman and Kemalist reforms; I shall argue that consolidating reforms should be periphery-led, society-centered and inclusive in nature. The third section of the article shall be devoted to the actors of consolidating reforms. Here, I shall develop the following argument; although the support and propulsion of the EU will be decisive for upcoming consolidating reforms, inherent limitations of the EU conditionality should also be taken into account, when discussing its role as the reform pusher. Having analyzed the possible contribution of the EU to
consolidating reforms, I shall turn to incumbent reformers, namely the AKP Government (AKP, [Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi], “Justice and Development Party”), and explore the meaning of political reform from the perspective of domestic politics. By doing so, I shall try to show that internal political dynamics are more relevant than external political dynamics in many cases. This observation will force us to answer the following question: Even if we assume that the AKP wishes to initiate further consolidating political reforms, are they able to do it? Those political actors, whose approval is required for policy change in a given political system, i.e. “veto players”, may halt the further reform process by using their de jure or de facto powers. The Military, the Constitutional Court and the President shall be analyzed as powerful veto players in Turkish politics. Taking into account the fact that such political reforms as consolidating reforms require a well-planned scheme; I shall conceive of a “reform strategy” in the fourth section. Here, I shall speculate on do’s and don’ts of the future reform process. The fifth section shall cover my arguments for making a totally new constitution through deliberative mechanisms, as the most appropriate technique for consolidating reforms. Finally, I conclude this article by summarizing the possible contribution of consolidating reforms to Turkish democracy.

2. Need for “Consolidating Reforms”

The European Council, on the basis of the report and recommendation of the European Commission, declared in its decision of 17 December 2004 that: “…Turkey sufficiently fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria to open accession negotiations provided that it brings into force these specific pieces of legislation.” The Council, in its decision of 3 October 2005, providing the negotiating framework, reiterated the same point by saying that: “Negotiations are opened on the basis that Turkey sufficiently meets the political criteria set by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, for the most part later enshrined in Article 6(1) of the Treaty on European Union and proclaimed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights.” But the Council, as it had done in its previous decisions, underlined the importance of the effective application of new regulations and the continuation of the reform process. Within this context, the Council made reference to such general principles as “liberty”, “democracy”, “the rule of law” and “respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” and provided an example list of further reforms, most of which had been included in several progress reports of the European Commission. Accordingly the EU’s expectation from Turkey; “…to consolidate and broaden legislation and implementation measures specifically in relation to the zero tolerance policy in the fight against torture and ill-treatment and the implementation of provisions relating to freedom of expression, freedom of religion, women's rights, ILO standards including trade union rights, and minority rights.” was mentioned in the “Negotiating Framework”. In short, at every occasion and opportunity, the EU has called for further political reforms in Turkey, along with the effective application of the already accomplished ones. This need also articulated domestically by political parties and civil society organizations and accepted by the incumbent AKP government. Accordingly, it is unanimously agreed by domestic and international political actors that reform process should not stop in Turkey. Now, it is reasonable to ask: What would be the content and direction of new political reforms? Should there be priorities? More importantly, what should be the ultimate goal of further political reforms? In this section, I shall attempt to answer these questions by promoting the concept of “consolidating reforms”.

1 Recently, the European Commission, in “2005 Progress Report”, dated 9 November 2005, pointed out that: “…the pace of change has slowed in 2005 and implementation of the reforms remains uneven.”
A leading Turkish journalist once wrote that: “Our general attitude towards the EU is equal to that of students who do their homework only because the teacher wants them to. They do not appreciate that the homework may teach them something; they are only scared of the punishment the teacher will give them otherwise.” (Ülsever, 2000) Indeed, there have been ample evidence of such attitude of governing elites in the past; hastily-prepared drafts, poorly-written texts, last-minute insertions, superficial parliamentary negotiations, etc. If domestic decision-makers continue to see these reforms as means, not an end, then reforms’ prospects seem bleak. Accordingly, reformers ought not perceive political reforms as “homework”. Rather they should be seen as a way to exit from authoritarian-statist legacy of the so-called 12 September regime, i.e. as a way to “normalizing democracy” in Turkey (İnel, 2003). This being so, what Turkey needs, I think, is “consolidating reforms”, i.e those reforms, which would improve the “quality of democracy”\(^2\), then, ultimately, contribute to the “consolidation of democracy”\(^3\). As I shall try to explain below, such reforms basically entail “inclusive policies”, with the capacity to appease the tension between the center and the periphery by integrating the latter into the system—more correctly, its elements, who are willing to be integrated in the system. As Özbudun puts it: “Turkish democracy is still in the process of consolidation and its full consolidation depends upon the achievement of a reasonable degree of consensus on such fundamental issues as Islamic fundamentalism and Kurdish nationalism.” (Özbudun, 1996: 137; 2000: 141-145) Consolidating reforms, therefore, should first and foremost address these issues and priority should be given to these reforms in upcoming reform campaign.

Two examples can be given to flesh out the concept of consolidating reforms. The model of “Turkey deputy”, for example, may provide a proper mechanism to integrate ethnic-nationalist forces into the political system as legitimate elements of a functioning participatory democracy. Indeed: “Removing the possibility of a democratic outlet for Kurdish sentiment will only fuel new illegal movements or enable the PKK to regain some strength.” (Cornell, 2001: 45) Electing a certain portion of the members of parliament (e.g. 150 out of 550 deputies) as “Deputy of Turkey”, on the basis of a single [country] electoral district, proportional representation and lower [or no] threshold, may enable those ethnic-based political parties to be represented in parliament and have a say in the legislative organ. This, in turn may give them a chance to operate through constitutional channels, who had no way but to make unofficial election alliances with other political parties to enter into the TGNA\(^4\). This also may function as a filter to distinguish between political forces, who are willing to fulfill their opposition function within the parameters of liberal-democratic regime and those political forces, who totally reject to be a part of the current political system.

The application of the principle of the “neutrality of public service”, in turn, may provide another example of “inclusive policies”, which would provide solution this time for the “headscarf issue” in Turkey. On the basis of the latter principle, a constitutional amendment can be drafted to allow those benefiting from public service to freely choose their garments and costumes and; for those providing public service, a ban may be placed on carrying or wearing any political or religious symbols. Such a solution may integrate those Muslim women, who wear headscarf because of their sincere religious beliefs. This may again

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2 The “quality of democracy” is measured on the basis of the score of a particular regime in the following areas: the rule of law, participation, competition, vertical accountability, horizontal accountability, freedom, equality and responsiveness (Diamond and Morlino, 2004).

3 Linz and Stepan defined the concept of consolidation as a process in which a broad and deep legitimation is achieved, when all significant political actors, at both elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is better than any other regime that might have been established. Put in another way, we may speak of a “consolidated democracy” when democracy becomes the “only game in town.” (Linz and Stepan, 1996a)

4 See for such an election alliance between SHP (Social Democrat Populist Party) and HEP (People's Labor Party), (Watts, 1999: 644-645).
provide a filter to identify those who have intention to propagate any particular religious ideology within the public sphere. As put by Gülalp succinctly: “...forcible removal [of university students’ headscarves] will certainly not change their religious beliefs or their political commitments (whichever is the real cause of their insistence on wearing the scarf). Worse, their non-admittance to the universities might backfire both in the short-term by making them more resentful, and hence more stubborn in their commitments, and in the long-term by leaving them devoid of an educational opportunity which might even possibly win them over to Kemalist or other non-Islamist ideology.” (Gülalp, 2005: 367)

Apparently, these examples are not exhaustive; one may conceive other reforms, which would contribute to the consolidation of democracy in Turkey in other ways. What is important here to note is that one should be aware of the fact that consolidating reforms refer to a “certain kind of mentality”, rather than “ready-made prescriptions”. Without losing sight of the main goal, other measures can always be proposed by the actors concerned. However, to be able to concretize the essence of such an “outlook”, we should put consolidating reforms into context, i.e. we should clarify their meaning by comparing them with other reform movements in Ottoman-Turkish history.

3. Politics of Reform in Turkey: Putting Consolidating Reforms into Context

For the students of Turkish politics, the term of “political reform” is not new. It has been widely used to connote, on the one hand, the modernization attempts in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, the restructuring of the polity at cultural and institutional levels after the War of Independence. This term, however, has acquired a new meaning during the recent democratization campaign in Turkey, which is closely connected with the EU membership process. Those reforms, which can be termed “EU reforms”, appear to mark a new phase of the concept of “political reform” in the prevailing Turkish political discourse. Within the context of this section, I shall analyze the characteristics of “EU reforms” in comparison with “Ottoman reforms” and “Kemalist reforms”. Then, I shall put these and “consolidating reforms” side by side and try to delineate the peculiarities of the latter. To be able to carry out this task, I shall reconsider a well-known dichotomy in social sciences, center-periphery (Shils, 1975; Shils, 1998; Greenfeld and Martin, 1988), which has also been frequently used to explain political dynamics in Turkey (Mardin, 1975; Özbudun, 1976; Tachau, 1984, Heper, 1985; Kalaycıoğlu, 1994)[5]. To be able to use this conceptual tool for our purpose, however, I shall propose to develop a new sub-categorization within the main periphery category, namely “near periphery” and “far periphery” and to reevaluate center-periphery relations within the framework of “civil society-political society”[6] distinction.

My main arguments will be as follows: The relations between center and periphery had already been tense in the Ottoman Empire. Reforms in the 18th and 19th centuries made matters worse. In the same vein, Kemalist reforms brought no peace between these antagonistic elements. On the contrary, they were responsible for further alienation and exclusion in center-periphery relations; increasingly, Kemalist transformative polices and their implementation through semi-authoritarian methods were the source of today’s de-consolidating problems of Turkish democracy. EU reforms were a step forward towards appeasing this conflict, yet they were not sufficient. Future political reforms may open door to

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[5] According to certain authors, after the emergence of new pattern of cleavages in the Turkish society, center-periphery dichotomy lost its salience (Sunar and Sayar, 2004: 87). This might be true for certain cases, yet I think, this conceptual tool regained its explanatory power particularly after the normalization of politics in the post-1980 period.

[6] Civil society refers to: “…that arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomous from the state, attempt to articulate values, create associations, and advance their interests.” (Linz and Stepan, 1996b: 7) and political society means: “…that arena in which the polity specifically arranges itself to contest the legitimate right to exercise control over public power and the state apparatus.” (Linz and Stepan, 1996b: 8).
the consolidation of democracy in Turkey, provided that they are conceived as “consolidating reforms”.

3.1. Center-Periphery Relations in the Ottoman Times

According to American sociologist Edward Shils, “every society has a center.” (Shils, 1975: 3) The center, in Shils’ analysis, is not a geometrical or geographical term. It rather refers to a “genetic code”, which provides the basis of society’s integrity (Greenfeld and Martin, 1988: ix). Thus the center, in Shilsian sense, points mainly to a “central value system”, i.e. societally-accepted beliefs and values. This cultural connotation, however, constitutes only one dimension of the concept of the center; it, at the same time, refers to the “central institutional system”, i.e. a network of structures, within which social actors assume their roles and perform their activities. The central institutional system is legitimated by the central value system. When we depart from the center through the periphery, the impact of the central value system gets weaker. To put in another way, the periphery becomes the realm of alternative, even counter value systems. This, in turn, undermines the legitimacy of the central institutional system. Shils argues that today the central value system is accepted as widely as ever in modern societies, particularly in the West. The situation is completely different in pre-modern or modernizing societies, which are characterized by protracted conflicts between center and periphery. Şerif Mardin, in his widely quoted essay about Turkish politics, extends Shils’ argument to the Turkish case by pointing out that: “Until recently, the confrontation between center and periphery was the most important social cleavage underlying Turkish politics and one that seemed to have survived more than a century of modernization.” (Mardin, 1975: 9) Indeed, the actors in Turkish politics has trapped in a vicious circle: The center always approached the periphery with suspicion and the periphery confirmed this suspicion by seizing in every opportunity to challenge the center. This, consequently, continuously bred a mutual distrust between the center and the periphery.

The roots of the above-mentioned cleavage hark back to the Ottoman polity. Islam, the backbone of the Ottoman central value system, provided a “loose” framework, within which several ethnic and religious groups lived together. However, although Islam functioned as a collective identity for centuries, this did not mean that the Ottoman society had been integrated around a single coherent value system; there was a thick dividing line between the “Great Culture” of the élite and the “Little Culture” of the people (Heper, 2000: 66). This dichotomy also found its expression in the institutional structure of the Empire; those resided in and out of the “house of power”\(^7\) stood aloof from each other for centuries. In other words, while culturally distinct incumbents (i.e. the Sultan, the bureaucracy and the Military) made up the center, those excluded from the state located in the periphery (Akarlı, 1975: 139). Reform movements of the 18th and 19th centuries made matters more complex. I shall return to the impact of reforms on center-periphery relation in the Empire later, but now a certain amount should be said about the nature of Ottoman reforms.

3.2. Ottoman Reforms

As early as the end of the 16th century, Ottoman rulers began to feel that things were not going well. While the Empire was losing its unrivalled position in the region both politically and strategically, the European states were forging ahead. Reform was the answer given by the Ottoman elites to the question of how to arrest the decline of the Empire and compete with

\(^7\) I borrowed the term of “house of power” from Giovanni Sartori, which basically signifies the “state”, (Sartori, 1995: 102).
the European powers, particularly in the military field. At this time, however, reform simply meant restoring old institutions and practices. According to that kind of thinking, the main reason of the Empire’s decay was the deviation from the great tradition and in order to return to the old glorious days, ancient institutions and practices should be reinstated in their purest form. What is important for our analysis is that during the reign of Selim III (1789-1807), particularly with the creation of a new European-style army, called Nizam-ı Cedit [New Order], such concept of reform was radically changed in the Ottoman Empire. From then on, reform assumed the meaning of creating new institutions and practices, which would replace the old ones (Shaw, 1965: 292). Moreover, the creation of this modern army clearly pointed to the chosen model or the inspiration source of the upcoming reforms: Europe. Accordingly, Ottoman reformers took their eyes from the Ottoman past and turn to Europe to find solutions for the Empire’s approaching tragedy. This concept of reform maintained, even consolidated, during the reign of Mahmut II (1808-1839), who revolutionarily abolished the Janissaries and organized a new modern army, called Asakir-i Mansure-yi Muhammadiye. Tanzimat reformers also understood “reform” in this way. It would be, then, interesting to compare the reforms of Selim III and Mahmut II and Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876) at this point of analysis in terms of their similarities and dissimilarities.

First, the motive of the above-mentioned reforms was mainly to strengthen the state against external powers, whereas the Tanzimat reformers was trying to find a workable solution to the weakness of the central authority vis-a-vis local forces. Accordingly, while the former had been limited to bringing military-technical innovations to the Empire, the scope of the latter was expanded to importing administrative mechanisms and political institutions, which were deliberately designed to boost the authority of the center over the periphery, more correctly over one particular segment of the periphery, i.e. the revolting local notables (Heper, 1985: 37). For example, even the inclusion of guarantees for security for life and property in Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu of 1839 (Imperial Rescript of Gülhane) was a tactical move of the elites at the center to gain the support of the masses against local notables (Karpat, 1972: 258). Nevertheless, in spite of this change in scope, the aim of the reforms in both periods were the same; “saving the state”. Hence, Tanzimat reformers, just as their predecessors, did not conceive these reforms as means to improve the conditions of the periphery; these were mainly “state-centered” reforms, aiming at restoring the dominant position of the center.

Second, while the impulse to previous reforms came from the Sultan, the initiative was passed to the bureaucracy in the new period. Leading statesmen of the age, such as Reşid, Ali, Fuat, and Midhat, held the belief that the monarchy should be preserved, however through the reforms with the bureaucracy at the helm (Heper, 1985: 43-44). Change in actors, however, did not change the nature of reforms in the Tanzimat period. Tanzimat reforms, just as the reforms in the previous period, were all “center-led” reforms, designed and implemented exclusively by the elites at the center. As Ali Kazancigil put it: “…the transformation of the Ottoman state in the nineteenth century could hardly result from the impulses coming from the civil society.” (1981: 45) It is important to note that, this was particularly true for the passive, powerless and relatively larger segments of the periphery (namely, peasants; reaya). Although in some cases they appeared in the scene as the supporter of the ayans (Özbudun, 1976: 32), they were basically out of the reform game. When it comes to the active, powerful and relatively smaller elements of the periphery (namely, local notables; ayans), the story was slightly different.

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8 The classical work on Ottoman reforms is Roderic H. Davison’s well-known book. It can be consulted for the details of all the reforms mentioned in this article, (Davison, 1963).
9 The real contribution of Mahmut II to the Ottoman reform process, in fact, should be seen somewhere else. The first military school in the Empire was founded by his order in 1834. Putting aside the question of whether the school was useful for the army, one may point out that the officers, educated according to a European-style curriculum, became the reformers of the next generation (Levy, 1971).
By taking only into account the fact that the pressure of local notables on the Sultan set the scene for political reforms in certain cases, one may get the impression that the driving force behind several reforms was this segment of the periphery. Although it may seem so at first glance, it would be misleading to consider ayans as the “leaders of the change” in the Ottoman Empire. The concern of the local notables, in fact, was to preserve their local interests, not to change the status quo. To this end, they did not hesitate to make bargain with the central authority. When they could not get what they wanted, they simply became over-defiant. The center, in turn, was ready to give concessions to these active and powerful elements of the periphery to maintain its control over society. Discussion about a document of this period, Sened-i İttifak (Deed of Agreement), is particularly relevant within this context. This document, signed by the Sultan Mahmut II in 1808 to officially guarantee certain rights and liberties of the ayan, was seen by some authors as the “Ottoman Magna Carta”, however, it was in fact by no means the victory of the periphery (here practically means ayans) over the center. Under the agreement, the ayan expressed its allegiance to the center; the center, in return, promised not to interfere with the ayan’s certain local powers. Accordingly, what the ayan had wanted was to maintain its exploitation monopoly in the localities and it got it what it wanted by contributing to the restoration of central authority (Heper, 1985: 38-39). Consequently, the relatively powerful and influential position of ayans in some cases did not make Ottoman reforms “the reforms of the periphery”; apparently, they were still “center-led” reforms.

Consequently, one may argue that, despite variations in goals and actors, both pre-Tanzimat and Tanzimat reforms shared basic characteristics; that is, these reforms were designed and implemented by the elites at the center with the aim of stopping the disintegration of the already crumbling Empire. This summation has brought us to the third characteristics of the Ottoman reforms; they were basically entailed the modernization of the “central institutional system” in Shilsian sense, hence their impact on the value system of the Ottoman society was highly limited. To flesh out this argument, one should look closer at the value system of the Empire. Here center-periphery dichotomy is still relevant to understand and explain the cultural dimensions of Ottoman reforms.

3.3. Impact of Ottoman Reforms on Center-Periphery Relations

As we have mentioned above, Islam was the basis of the Ottoman value system. However, although Islam was unifying framework for the Ottoman society, there were, in fact, two Isams in one shell. That is, Islam was understood and practiced differently at the center and the periphery. As Sunar and Toprak put it astutely: “…at the center [Islam] appeared as a scripturalist, shari’a-minded, ulema-governed orthodoxy; at the social periphery as a primordially embedded heterodoxy permeated by sects, religious orders (tarika), ‘saints’ (sheik) with supernatural powers, and as a latitudinarianism tinged with ‘mysticism’ (tasavvuf)… An alliance, a bargain, an accommodation, if you like, had been struck between the center and peripheral Islam in which the sharp edges of both had been rounded off and a degree of overlap achieved. This imbricative pattern minimized the gap between the two worlds.” (2004: 156)

Reform movements in the Ottoman Empire disturbed this balance. First, Westernization or Europeanization brought about intra-elite conflict. In other words, as Europe became the main source of emulation for reformers, European values got penetrated into the Ottoman central value system. From then on, traditional-modern, Islamic-European values stood side by side. The confrontation between the ulema (the students of the Shari’a) and the bureaucracy-intelligentsia alliance depicted such bifurcation within the elite political culture. The ulema demanded the strict application of the Shari’a, i.e. back to roots; the
bureaucracy, in turn, saw the salvation in the secularization and introduction of Western institutions (Kazancıgil, 1994). If this was not enough, pro-European forces got internally divided. Those, aiming to import European institutions within a more secular framework, faced with the reaction of those defending Europeanization without compromising traditional Islamic values. For example, Young Ottomans were the first “modern Islamist intellectuals” (Güllalp, 2002) and they propagated a version of modernism reflecting Islamic overtones. In this respect, they differed from—and in fact were reacting to—the Tanzimat reformers, who were in favor of a more secular modernization project. As those modernist forces with secular tendencies prevailed over other groups with the Young Turk Revolution, the tension between center and periphery rose. The more the reformers turned their face to Europe, the more they isolated themselves from the rest of the population, whom they had found “unsophisticated”, at the least.

Consequently, modernist reforms, unlike Western societies, did not bring about convergence between central and peripheral value systems in the Ottoman Empire. On the contrary, particularly after the introduction of the concepts of Europeanization and Westernization, the chasm between the center and the periphery became more visible at the cultural level. Due to the exclusionist nature of Ottoman reforms, as it were, these two worlds got apart showing no sign of convergence for decade.

3.4. Kemalist Reforms

Kemalist reforms, just as Ottoman ones, state-centered and center-led reforms, i.e. these reforms also bore the stamp of a small elite group at the center and their main goal was to save, even rebuild the state. When it comes to the third characteristic, i.e. exclusionist nature, Kemalist reforms went even further. Needles to say, the natural consequence of this excessive exclusionism was more tension between center and periphery and this was the source of today’s “de-consolidating problems” in Turkey. Then, before defining the latter concept, it would be appropriate to focus on this third characteristic of Kemalist reforms in detail.

Ottoman reformers were more concerned with taking measures to overhaul the Ottoman polity’s superstructure, i.e. renovate the central institutional system to compete with Europe, than with creating a new central value system. As a consequence, cultural change was limited to a small group at the center, particularly to military elites, and the new republican regime was founded by them. It is therefore important to note that although there was cultural change at the elite level, this was limited and not an outcome of a deliberately planned social-cultural transformation program. When we turn to Kemalist reforms, however, it is apparent that the aim of the reformers was not only to reconfigure the old central institutional system, but also to create a new value system, both at elite and mass levels. To put it in another way, the Kemalist elite fought in institutional and cultural fronts in the founding years of the republic and it was harder to defeat the foe in the latter front. Looking particularly at this

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10 Although Kemalist reforms and Kemalist principles refer to different aspects of the Kemalist project, i.e. its dynamic and static elements respectively, these two concepts are merged into one (Atatürk ilke ve inkilapları) in the prevailing Turkish political discourse.

11 Some of the revolutionary measures, bringing about institutional reconfiguration, were; the establishment the National Assembly in Ankara (1920), the abolition of the Sultanate (1922), the proclamation of the Republic (1923), and the abolition of the Caliphate (1924).

12 Attempts at creating a new value system was based on a comprehensive cultural transformation program. Some of the reforms in this program was highly symbolic in nature (such as the hat reform), yet most of them were designed to effectively cut ties with Islam in public life, such as abolishing the office of Şeyh-ül Islam, banning religious orders, and closing shari’a courts and creating a modern legal system. Undoubtedly, the backbone of the cultural program was to establish a new educational system, which would cultivate citizens in accordance with the values of the newly-emerging republic. To this end, measures were taken for the unification of education and Arabic script was replaced by Latin script. For the educational policies in the early years of the republic and its critics, see: (Salmoni, 2004)
point, some authors argue that the Turkish Revolution was primarily a “revolution of values,” (Mardin, 1971: 209) aiming at modifying the “legitimating system of symbols,” (Sunar and Sayarı, 2004: 69) i.e. the central value system.

3.5. Impact of Kemalist Reforms on Center-Periphery Relations: Sources of De-Consolidating Problems

Islam, to repeat again, was the cement of the central value system in the Ottoman Empire. With the proclamation of the republic, references to Islam were gradually erased from the public realm and Islamic value system was supplanted by a set of modern principles, which became to be known as “Kemalism” (Yavuz, 2000a). Here, particularly one of the principles of Kemalism, i.e. secularism, played an important role. According to Gareth Jenkins: “…secularism in Turkey has come to mean not to removal of religion from the public sphere, but the replacement of one creed with another.” (2003: 47) However, in spite of diligent efforts of the Kemalist elite, Kemalism could not take place the traditional value system, particularly at the periphery. As we have mentioned above, peripheral value system already proved to be immune to modernization efforts during the Ottoman reform process; it even survived the republican revolution.

This growing incongruence between Kemalism, as the newly-imposed central value system, and traditional value system, resulted in the further exacerbation of the center-periphery relations. This tension burst into armed confrontation between local forces and central government in some cases. These mass movements were quashed immediately by the Kemalists and their leaders were prosecuted by extra-ordinary courts. Menemen incident (1930), led by fundamentalist reactionary groups, was one of the best known examples of such destabilizing events. It is important to note that these reactionary movements were sporadic and exceptional in nature; Islam at the periphery generally continued to live within the demarcations of the isolated locality. The larger segments of the periphery, in other words, remained silent. They simply retreated into their private realm, inherently shaped and psychologically protected by their traditional value system. Consequently, the false submissiveness of the masses made the new regimes elites’ task easier in the early years of the republic, but of course this did not mean that the deep-seated conflict between the center and the periphery died out.

Extracting Islam from the social fabric had another, yet equally important consequence: The emergence of Kurdish nationalism. The glue, sticking Turks and Kurds, in the Ottoman times was again Islam. There were naturally minorities in the Empire, but these were defined along religious lines, not ethnic lines. Those non-Muslim communities, such as Jews and Christians were the only recognized minorities by the Empire. Thus, the sole division in the Ottoman society was between the Muslims and non-Muslims. Turks, Arabs and Kurds were all the members of the Muslim community and neither of these groups were attributed a separate ethnic identity. As a consequence, Kurdish tribal groupings within the borders of the Ottoman Empire were relatively comfortable as part of the Sunni Muslim community. Kurdish tribal chieftains got along well with the center and even they were allowed to enjoy certain degree of autonomy. However, the relations between the Palace and Kurdish peripheral elements deteriorated because of the imperial rulers’ attempts at centralization. This resulted in a series of Kurdish revolts in the last decades of the Empire. With the proclamation of the republican things got worse. The new central Kemalist value system, particularly the principle of civic nationalism\(^\text{13}\), was not based on ethnicity or

\(^{13}\) In fact, there had been several attempts in the Ottoman times at creating a more solid framework for the collectivity in the face of growing nationalist movements among the multi-ethnic population of the Empire. In this sense, first Ottomanism, then Islamism were the solution found by the Ottoman elites to keep multi-ethnic communities within the borders of the
religion; its basis was “Turkishness”. The latter was principally a politico-legal status, based on citizenship tie with its rights and obligations, and it had nothing to do with ethnic or religious identity. Such a concept of collectivity required the Kurds to leave their ethnic identity aside, if they wanted to live within the borders of the Turkish Republic. This was simply unacceptable for certain Kurdish groups, who were increasingly developing ethnic awareness (Barkey and Fuller, 1998: 5-19). Accordingly, Kurdish revolts, starting in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, continued after the proclamation of the republic. Ağrı (1930-1931) and Dersim (1937-38) revolts, fomented by Kurdish tribal groupings, were the examples of the latter. Here, it is important to note that Kurdish revolts in the Ottoman Empire were not nationalist movements (Özoğlu, 2001); whereas those erupting in the infancy of the republic assumed apparently a nationalist character (Yavuz, 2001: 6-9).

It is I hope now clear that the partially successful Kemalist cultural transformation program was the main source of today’s de-consolidating problems. In many cases, these problems overlapped and bred each other. Within this context, the Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925 deserve particular attention. The leaders of the rebellion, strongly opposing Kemalist nationalistic policies, called for the restoration of the Caliphate. As put by Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller: “This rebellion had both a religious and nationalistic character: It was as much a revolt against the secularist and anti-Islamic tendencies of the new regime as it was the first stirrings, albeit regionally circumscribed, of Kurdish nationalism.” (1998: 11)

Although this rebellion was quashed immediately by the Kemalist government, it alarmed the ruling elites about the emerging twin-trouble for the Turkish Republic, namely ethnic nationalism and religious fundamentalism. These and other similar events convinced Kemalist elites that the Kemalist reforms and principles had not been internalized by the bulk of the population. From then on, the central elites were more intolerant towards such peripheral opposition. However, the source of the problem was deeper than it seems; so, suppression did not work in many cases. On the contrary, action triggered reaction; this, in turn, brought about more exclusion/alienation in center-periphery relations.

These problems remained to be unsolved after the death of Atatürk in 1938. Particularly the attitude of the post-Atatürk bureaucratic elite was not helpful. It is generally accepted that Kemalism was originally not an ideology in the real meaning of the word. It was rather an amalgam of ideological solutions, which had been devised by the modernizing elites in the face of urgent needs of the emerging republic. Accordingly, if it was an ideology, it was rather a “soft ideology”, a technique in the sense of an intellectual tool to find out the truth (Heper, 1985: 68, 71). In the words of Ergun Özbudun: “[Kemalism] aimed at putting Turkey on a level with ‘contemporary civilization’, making it modern, strong, fully independent nation-state. It did not dream about creating a new society or a new type of man, as did totalitarian ideologies.” (1981: 90). However, in practice, just as had happened in the times of Atatürk, post-Atatürk bureaucratic elites continued to interpret the Kemalist principles rigidly and even used authoritarian methods to realize them, which was the main source of the lingering resentment of the periphery.

To sum up, Kemalist reforms could not generate incentives to integration for the periphery. On the contrary, traditional elements in the peripheral value system, particularly ethnic and religious elements, continued to flow under the officially constructed secular-nationalist-republican sham. This, in turn, sowed the seeds of de-consolidating problems in

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14 As an immediate measure, the “Law for the Maintenance of Order” was adopted in 1925 and the “Courts of Independence”, which had been created originally by the “Law Against Treason of 29 April 1920”, were reactivated. The latter were mobile courts, manned by deputy-judges from the National Assembly and exercised extra-ordinary powers to prosecute the challengers of the regime (Aybars, 1988).
Turkish politics, namely Islamic fundamentalism and Kurdish nationalism\textsuperscript{15}. This being so, it is legitimate to ask, why these destabilizing factors were not given due attention or become the subject of long-term policies in the early years of the republic. There were mainly two reasons of this short-sightedness: First, the deterministic nature of the modernist strategies made the Kemalist elite to believe optimistically that the resistance to Kemalist reforms was a malaise of the traditional-primordial society. Hence, they envisioned that as the modernization project got progressed, such boisterous groups could be integrated into the regime. Second, there were clear differences between urban and rural environments in terms of the outcomes of modernization. The relative success of modernization efforts in the urban areas screened the magnitude of the underlying de-consolidating problems. (Barkey, 2000; 93-94) Such attitude at the elite level regenerated itself during the most of the republican period and hindered the discussion and development of proper strategies to solve de-consolidating problems.

The absence of political means, which would enable the periphery to participate in decision-making process, was another factor, spoiling center-periphery relations in the republican era. The Republican People’s Party (CHP), controlling the Assembly and the Government, was the single party at the time and it assumed the role of the “party of the center” from its inception. The periphery was silent, not because it consented the new regime, but it had no way express its grievances politically. Transition to multi-party politics, then, could solve the integration problem of the nascent republic. That is, creating a political society, which would locate as an osmotic layer between the state and the civil society, i.e. between the center and the periphery, may enhance polity’s integrity by providing legitimate channels for the elements of the periphery to express criticisms and develop alternatives. There had been two such attempts in the infancy of the republic, the Progressive Republican Party (Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası) in 1924 (Ahmad, 1991) and the Free Party (Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası) in 1930 (Weiker, 1991), yet these were not fully successful. More importantly, the driving force behind these attempts was not the periphery; the former was founded by a group of marginalized officers, seeking a platform to challenge the Kemalist cadres, whereas the latter, a manufacture of the Kemalist elites itself, was an example of “top-down”, not “bottom-up” democratization.

3.6. Transition to Democracy and the Military Intervention of 1960

With the opening the house of power to multi-party contestation in 1946, i.e. with the construction of a veritable political society in Turkey, the actors of the center-periphery universe were redefined. The nascent political society provided a new playground for central and peripheral actors. Accordingly, the center-periphery cleavage, which traditionally found its expression in the conflict between state and civil society, was transferred to the political society and it resurfaced between the representatives of the center and the representatives of the periphery, namely between the Democratic Party (DP) and the CHP.

The DP, was the clear victor of the first genuine multiparty elections in 1950. Having come to power, the DP cadres began to speak with the mouth of the periphery\textsuperscript{16}. More importantly, they introduced several measures to dilute the rigid Kemalist cultural

\textsuperscript{15} Certain authors put straightforwardly that these non-consolidating factors signify the “Crisis of Kemalism” (Yavuz, 2000b).

\textsuperscript{16} The frontmen of the Party, for example, frequently used religious symbols in their speeches and statements. However, this did not mean that the DP aspired to establish an Islamic regime or defended Islamic principles at the expense of Kemalism. By acting in that way, in fact, the Party leadership hoped to gain the electoral support of religious-conservative elements of the periphery, which constituted the majority of the population at the time. It should be noted that this was not unique to the DP. The Justice Party (AP) and the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), although they were not Islamist parties, followed the suit to expand their electoral base. Even the military rulers of the 1980 Coup did not hesitate to resort to religious symbols, which they hoped to provide a common framework for the national unity (Tank, 2005).
transformation program, particularly in religious matters. To mention a few examples; restoring the recital of the call to prayer, ezan, in Arabic, broadening the scope of the religious education, allowing to broadcast of Koran reading on state radio. Not only Islamist groups, but also Kurdish groups saw a relative ease in the semi-authoritarian single-party policies. During the electoral campaign, the Party leadership promised to reduce cultural restrictions in the East and it took its promise after the elections. Moreover, it gave the Kurdish elements an opportunity to enter into the political arena by putting the names of the members of the leading Kurdish families in its electoral lists, such as Melik Fırat, grandson of Sheikh Said (Bozarslan, 2002). As a consequence: “...during the multi-party era from 1950-1960, many Kurds and Islamists made their peace with the idea of modernizing state.” (Barkey, 2000: 95)

These and some other, promised or implemented, policies on the one hand, and certain majoritarian practices, on the other, brought the end of the DP’s rule. As had been expected, having secured the support of the dynamic segments of the society, a group of activists in the Armed Forces engineered a coup on 27 May 1960. The underlying motivation of the Coup was clearly explained in the first report of the Constitutional Commission, which was set up after intervention to provide its legal ground: “…[the] political power… fell into a position hostile to the State’s genuine and main institutions, and to Atatürk’s reforms, which are of extraordinary value and importance if Turkey is to occupy a worthy place among the nations of the world as a civilized State.” (quoted by Ahmad, 1977: 162-163; emphasis added)

3.7. The Period of 1961-1980

With the promulgation of the Constitution of 1961, the puzzle of center-periphery was reassembled. As for the political society, new political parties were formed, thanks to the liberal political environment, provided by the Constitution. The AP filled the vacuum left by the dissolution of the DP and became the new party of the periphery. Adding to the latter, other newly-founded political parties claimed to represent the different segments of the periphery. The CHP remained as the party of the center. Other elements of the center, namely the military and bureaucracy, in turn, entrenched their positions in this period.

The emergence of these new parties in the political scene resulted in further polarization of the periphery’s political layer on the basis of the ideological dispositions and attitudes of these newcomers. Accordingly, the political parties of the periphery divided as “near periphery” and “far periphery”. Those political parties of the near periphery did not completely reject Kemalist principles, although being critical of certain issues. Furthermore, they—in most cases just for tactical reasons—stood close enough to the center, which, in turn, could tolerate their existence. The AP before the 1980 military intervention provided an example of the political actors of the near periphery. The Party leadership did not take a stand against Kemalist project in general, but it criticized the technique used by the central elites to realize it. In other words, the AP was mainly against the top-down modernization, which resulted in severing all ties with the past. As for Kemalist principles, in certain cases, particularly with regard to secularism, the Party was more open and tolerant than the Kemalist elites. However, the AP generally came closer to the center as was seen in the strong nationalist language used by the Party leadership concerning the Kurdish issue (Demirel, 2004: 145-217). As for the relations between the AP and the center, the Party leadership managed to get along well with the bureaucratic elements of the center, particularly with the Military (Cizre, 2002). Those political parties of the “far periphery”, differed from their counterparts in the near periphery in respect of their strong reaction to (or even rejection of) founding principles of the Kemalist Republic on the one hand, and their open hostility towards the elements of the center. Islamist parties (such as National Order Party [MNP] and
the National Salvation Party [MSP]) as well as extreme right (MHP) and extreme left parties (the Turkish Workers’ Party [TIP]) were located in the far periphery.

It should be noted that a similar polarization was observed within the civil layer of the society in this period. Civil society had been traditionally weak in the Ottoman-Turkish society. This, however, began to change to a certain extent with the introduction of the 1961 Constitution. The new Constitution enabled and encouraged the emergence of a lively civil society. As civil society flourished, such peripheral civil actors as student associations, labor unions, and professional organizations, just as those in the political society, were divided along ideological lines. As their relative positions vis-à-vis the center got clear, their location in the center-periphery map became distinguishable. Moreover, those groups supporting Kemalist principles and reforms and those groups rejecting them took their place respectively in the further segmentation as near periphery and far periphery. In this period, even certain groups within the civil layer of the society went underground and resorted to armed struggle to subvert the established constitution (Bal and Laçiner: 2001).

As the above-developed analysis has already suggested, the central value system of the republic, i.e. Kemalism, lost its monopoly on the prevailing Turkish political discourse in the period of 1960-1980 with the emergence of peripheral voices in the political arena. This, however, did not mean that Kemalism lost its “hegemonic” character completely. What happened, in fact, was that it became part of routine political parlance, which was used by almost all political actors to accord legitimacy to their real ideologies, which could not sometimes be articulated openly. It was, then, a fact that political parties and civil society organizations always paid tribute to Kemalist principles and reforms. More correctly, they did (or could) not deny Kemalism, yet when they made reference to it, they selected and reinterpreted certain principles in accordance with their ideological needs. These developments, in turn, undermined its hegemony (Yeğen, 2001).

On the contrary to this selective and revisionist attitude of the periphery, the elites at the center, particularly the Military, always kept Kemalism in its ideological backdrop, as defined by founding fathers of the Republic. As a result, commitment to the principles of Kemalism and Kemalist reforms continued to serve as the basic test for the central elites to identify the enemies and supporters of the Republic. As had been in 1960 intervention, the political actors of the periphery failed again to pass this test in 1971. Top commanders at the time issued a memorandum. This was in fact a warning, targeting the politicians, to remind their responsibilities in the face of deteriorating political situation. The Armed Forces declared that unless necessary measures were taken, they were to take over the administration of the country in accordance with the powers vested in them by laws to protect and preserve the Republic. The declared motive of this intervention was the same; to maintain and guarantee Kemalist reforms and principles. Here is the relevant extract from the Memorandum: “The Parliament and the Government, through their sustained policies, views

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17 The position of the MHP should be analyzed carefully. Although the Party stood very close to the center and consider itself as “the party of the state”, the center, particularly the Military, did not share this view. On the contrary, it was much to the resentment and shock of the leaders and supporters of the Party that they were banned from politics and given prison sentence in the aftermath of 12 September 1980 military intervention (Çınar and Arıkan, 2002). This result mainly derived from the fact that the party-affiliated, extreme-nationalist youth organizations (known as “Ülkücüler”) used illegal means to fight with the “enemies of the state”.

18 Birol Akgün wrote for the two major political parties of the far periphery as follows: “From the outset, both parties met with harsh criticism from the Turkish establishment and were accused of being “fascist” (MHP) and “reactionary” (Islamist MSP). The ruling political class saw them as threats to their hegemony since they had not come from the established Kemalist elites who had been running the country since the early days. These parties have been seen as alternative power centers organized by rising new elites who do not share the Kemalist vision of the Republican elite. In response, both parties sought to prove that they are pro-system, loyal opposition parties, and that they support democracy and uphold the constitutional parliamentary government.” (2002: 20)

19 The Kemalist reforms and principles were guaranteed by the Constitution and the Penal Code. Accordingly, any act against these would constitute a crime according to basic legal norms, which were in effect at the time.
and actions, have driven our country into anarchy, fratricidal strife, and social and economic unrest. They have caused the public to lose all hope of rising to the level of contemporary civilization which was set for us by Atatürk as a goal, and have failed to realize the reforms stipulated by the Constitution. The future of the Turkish Republic is therefore seriously threatened.” (quoted by Ahmad, 1977: 288-289; emphasis added)

The 1973 elections were a turning point in the history of center-periphery relations. Of the three elements of the center, namely the Military, the bureaucracy, and the CHP, the latter two underwent a significant transformation. The CHP, after the declaration of its new ideological position as “left-of-center”, began to identify itself with the periphery and moved away from the center (Kalaycıoğlu, 1994), whereas the bureaucracy lost its power and integrity as a result of politicians’ tactical moves (Heper, 1985: 93). Consequently, the military was left alone at the center and began to feel itself as the sole guardian of the Republic (Heper and Güney, 2000: 637). One may safely argue that this solitary position of the Military made it over-sensitive and sometimes over-reactionary against the opposition to the Kemalist regime. If the Military had felt that Kemalist principles were safe and to be protected by political elites, it would not have been willing to interfere with the normal functioning of democracy several times. In the words of Lewis: “The only way to prevent the Turkish army from intervention is to govern the country efficiently and in accordance with the constitution and the letter of Kemalist reforms.” (Lewis, 1976: 15). The Army could not be prevented and the “Guardians of the Republic” walked again out of its barracks to save the Republic on 12 September 1980, third time in the republican history.

3.8. The Military Intervention of 1980 and Subsequent Developments

Again the aim of the military intervention was to guarantee the Kemalist principles and reforms. This time, however, the generals took all the actors of the periphery, near and far, responsible for the prolonged and worsening civil strife in the country and “cleaned” the political and civil layers of the society from the “hostile” elements. Accordingly, after the promulgation of the Constitution of 1982 and returning to multi-party politics in 1983, the bulk of the pre-1980 groups and organizations were absent in the political scene. Despite the efforts of the military rulers to promote the Nationalist Democracy Party (MDP) as the “party of the center”, the Motherland Party (ANAP) won the 1983 elections. As put by its leader Turgut Özal, the ANAP was an amalgam of several peripheral elements, the host of “four tendencies” (Kalaycıoğlu, 2002). Although the 1983 elections opened the channels of multi-party politics, normalization of politics in Turkey could only begin after the Referendum of 1987 on lifting the constitutional bans on the pre-1980 political leaders. Once the old political parties had reincarnated and their leader had reappeared in the political scene, the old center-periphery cleavage surfaced again. The ANAP and True Path Party (DYP) were the two claimants of the peripheral legacy of the DP-AP line. They were closer to the center than those political parties of the far periphery, such as the ultra-nationalist MHP and Islamist Welfare Party (RP). The center-left Democratic Left Party (DSP) was ostensibly the successor of the CHP, however its program was not very different from that of the parties of the periphery in many respects.

From the end of the 1980’s onwards, the specter of the twin-trouble of Turkish democracy raised again; Kurdish nationalism and political Islam. The latter found its expression within the far peripheral segments of both political society and civil society. As for

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20 Article 35 of the “Internal Services Act” has been shown as the legal ground of the guardian role of the military, which stipulates that: “The duty of the armed forces is to safeguard and defend Turkish territory and the Republic of Turkey as designated by the Constitution”. In the same vein, Article 85 of the “Internal Service Regulations” states that: “Turkish armed forces shall defend the country against internal as well as external threats, if necessary by force.”
the political society, first Islamist, then pro-Kurdish parties appeared on stage. Apparently, the RP and the Virtue Party (FP) were the representatives of the political Islam in Turkey and they were far from the center. Similarly, from the beginning of the 1990’s, pro-Kurdish parties, such as DEP, HEP, and DEHAP shared the location of the far periphery with the Islamist parties in terms of their unsympathetic attitude towards Kemalist principles and antagonistic position vis-à-vis the center. As for the civil society, gradual liberalization of the constitutional and legal system unleashed many peripheral elements, which had been emasculated by the military rulers of the 1980 intervention. Thanks to this relatively liberal atmosphere, peripheral groups managed to carve a niche for themselves in the rigid Kemalist structure. In many cases, these acted in concert with the political actors of the far periphery.

It is important to note that the actors of the far periphery in this period were not only those remaining within the constitutional and legal framework of the current regime. As far as political Islam was concerned, there were also such clandestine organizations as Hezbollah, which can effectively be considered the illegal elements of the far periphery. Just as political Islam, Kurdish nationalism had an illegal dimension. The terrorist organization PKK, led by Abdullah Öcalan, was responsible for the bloody guerrilla war fought in the southeast of Turkey between 1987 and 2002 (Mango, 2005).

3.9. The 28 February Process and the Emergence of the AKP

The parliamentary elections in December 1995 were another turning point in Turkish politics. The Islamist RP, led by Necmettin Erbakan, secured the support of %21 of the electorate. RP came in power in July 1996 as the coalition partner of the center-right DYP. The tension between center and periphery rose again after RP’s coming to power. At the meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) on 28 February 1997, top commanders issued an 18-point declaration, asking the RP-led Government to take measures to curb the growing Islamist activities (Cizre and Çınar, 2003). As can be expected, the Army Generals made again reference to Kemalist principles and reforms and to the Article 174 of the Constitution, guaranteeing the preservation of Reform Laws, adopted between 1924-1934.

This “soft” coup, targeting directly political Islam, resulted in the split of the “National Outlook Tradition” (Milli Görüş)21. Reformist faction separated itself from the conservative cadres and founded a new political party, AKP, on 14 August 2001. The AKP swept power with unprecedented majority and emerged as the clear victor from 3 November 2002 early parliamentary elections. The Party won 363 seats in Parliament by securing the support of 34.28 % of voters (Baç, 2004).

Within the context of this study, the AKP can be qualified as “the party of the near periphery”. Indeed, although the party cadres were rooted in the Islamic “National Outlook” tradition, from its inception, the Party leadership took the pain of proving that it was a moderate (conservative-democratic) party with center-right disposition. With certain exceptions, not only at the level of discourse, but at the policy level, the AKP has been careful to remain within the parameters of secular-democratic regime.

What is important for the current analysis is that, with AKP’s coming to power, “political reform” assumed a new, more correctly complimentary meaning. One of the pillars of the electoral campaign strategy of the Party was its promise for reform and this was linked to the EU membership process. Having entered the Parliament, the AKP took its promises and embarked upon a massive reforms campaign. Although the reform process in Turkey took momentum particularly after EU Copenhagen Summit of 1999, in which Turkey was granted candidate country status, the attempts of the predecessors of the AKP at transforming the

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21 Some authors argue that, the internal problems in the Milli Görüş movement were responsible for the division between the SP and the AKP. So, the February 28 process played only a catalyst role (Atacan, 2005).
authoritarian-statist political regime in Turkey proved always to be incomplete. Mainly because of the fact that none of these political parties had sufficient political resources to realize such a large-scale project. The AKP, from the very beginning, exploited the opportunity of being a majority party in Parliament and played the EU trump card competently to introduce a series of regulations in “taboo” areas.

3.10. From EU Reforms to Consolidating Reforms

Now, I think, I have provided sufficient background information to list the characteristics of recent political reforms, which may be called “EU reforms”, mainly carried out during the administration of the AKP Government. We may proceed from here to delimitate the nature of consolidating reforms: First, as we have seen above, while both Ottoman and Kemalist reforms were center-led reforms; the implementer of EU reforms was mainly a political party from the “near periphery”, i.e. the AKP. Second, political reforms in Ottoman-Turkish history were mainly state-centered reforms, aiming at strengthening the central authority, whereas EU reforms were more society-centered, focusing on expanding the scope of fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals. Third, while Ottoman-Turkish reforms were exclusionist in nature, the emerging consensus, though reluctant in some cases, between the major actors of the center and the periphery, proved the capacity of EU reforms to bring about convergence between these actors.

On the basis of these considerations, I argue that EU reforms are not sufficient for the consolidation of democracy in Turkey, however, they clearly set the direction of consolidating reforms; the latter should be “periphery-led”, “society-centered” and “inclusive” in nature. How can this be achieved will be the topic of the following sections. However, now it would be appropriate to conclude the current analysis by explaining the conditions of consolidating reforms listed as such:

(1) Consolidating reforms should again be designed and implemented by the near periphery. Since today the major conflict in Turkish politics between the center and the actors of the far periphery, particularly those nationalist Kurdish and fundamentalist Islamic elements, a near peripheral political party, an intermediate element, seems to be the most appropriate actor for the mission, which would create a bridge between the center and the far periphery. Today, the AKP still seems to have been the major actor located in the near periphery. Rainer Hermann, relying on a newly-articulated dichotomy by a well-known sociologist, Nilüfer Göle, argues that the AKP can be seen as a chance to make a historical compromise between ‘white’ Turks and ‘black’ Turks. He notes that historically the DP experience was another attempt, yet it failed (Hermann, 2003: 273).

(2) Consolidating reforms should aim at improving the quality of democracy in Turkey. According to Giovanni Sartori democracy: "...is only a shorthand—and a misleading one at that—for an entity composed of two distinct elements: freeing the people (liberalism) and empowering the people (democracy). One could equally say that liberal democracy consists of 1) "demo-protection," meaning the protection of a people from tyranny, and 2) "demo-power," meaning the implementation of popular rule." (Sartori, 1995: 102) As we have seen above both dimensions were problematic as far as the Kemalist project was concerned.

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22 Within this context, the 2001 constitutional amendments were undoubtedly significant steps towards liberalization of Turkish political system, yet this amendment package left several critical issues incomplete. See for these amendments and criticisms, (Gönenç, 2003).

23 It has been argued that there were basically two reasons why liberalism and democracy were left out of Kemalist scheme: First, liberal-democratic regimes fared badly in their birth place at the time. Due to the instability of these regimes in the 1930s, Kemalist elites saw nothing to emulate in them. Second, introducing these principles could bring about an “untimely” opposition, which could threaten the implementation of political reforms. Kemalist elites, apparently, could not afford such
The elites at the center faced with these flaws of the Kemalist project in two historical junctures; in the 1950’s, the emergence of the DP was a reaction to the absence of the “demo-power” element in the original Kemalist scheme. Transition to multi-party politics in 1946 and holding regular (free and fair) elections from the beginning of 1950 compensated this deficiency. Nevertheless, today Turkish democracy still suffers from the lack of representation channels for the excluded groups at the periphery. The “demo-protection” element, in turn, remained always weak in Turkey. Although we saw such a constitution as the Constitution of 1961, recognizing fundamental rights and freedoms as much broader as it could, the elites at the center did not hesitate to put aside “demo-protection”, when they thought that the Kemalist reforms and principles were in danger, as had been observed in military interventions of 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997. Forty years later, however, the center faced more seriously than ever with this shortcoming of the regime during the EU membership process. Although EU reforms strengthened demo-protection element, there are still things to be done. Accordingly, consolidating reforms can be seen as a complimentary project aiming at consummating the Atatürk’s modernization endeavor by strengthening both demo-power and demo-protection elements of democracy.

(3) Lastly, as Kramer puts it, today what Turkey needs is a “new sociopolitical synthesis” whose leitmotiv “…can no longer be exclusive secularism and nationalism; it has to be the inclusive conception of liberal democracy.” (2000: 90-91) As we have mentioned above, EU reforms were a significant step towards integrating those groups, excluded by the center during the republican era. However, they were not as much inclusive as making those excluded groups to feel themselves as an integral part of the current regime. Accordingly, consolidating reforms should be designed with this particular aim in mind.

4. Actors of Reform Process

The analysis in the previous sections provides the framework of the following sections: the would-be consolidating reform process will revolve around the actors, who were influential in previous reform movements in Turkey. First, Europe has always been in the reform game; in the Ottoman times, it was inspiration source for reforms; then it became the ultimate point to be reached by Kemalists; it appeared recently as the principal stimulator of reforms. It shall also be in the picture as far as the consolidating reforms are concerned. Second, the architect of Ottoman-Kemalist reforms was the center, however the initiative was passed to the periphery during EU reform process. As for consolidating reforms, the major political party from the near periphery, AKP, appears again to be the most suitable actor to lead the reform process. Third, the powerful actors of the center, of course, would not completely drop from the picture; they would continue to function as “veto players” in the upcoming consolidating reforms. Now we may look closer at these actors to better understand and explain the prospects for consolidating reforms.

4.1. The EU as the Reform Pusher

It is commonly accepted that the EU factor played the most crucial role in the reform process in Turkey. For example, Baç argues that: “…political reforms are a direct result of EU process. Without the latter, such a progress would have been impossible.” (Baç, 2005: 18) Indeed, there had been several attempts at political reform in Turkey in the past, but most of these were unsuccessful. The reform process gained momentum only after the declaration of Turkey as a candidate in 1999 Helsinki Summit by the EU. Under the EU conditionality, even

an early opening, given the strong impact of the old regime elements and traditional value system on the periphery (Kadioğlu, 1996: 188).
internally fragile DSP-MHP-ANAP Coalition Government took significant steps towards liberalization of the so-called 12 September regime (Başkan, 2005). The AKP leadership was even more skilful to utilize the support and pressure of the EU to break the resistance of domestic veto players to enact a series of “revolutionary” laws and regulations. As the EU has played the most important role in the reform process so far, now we may legitimately ask whether the EU conditionality will be sufficient to guarantee the adoption and implementation of consolidating reforms as well? One may not give an affirmative answer to this question after reading Nathalie Tocci’s analysis, summarized below.

According to Tocci, one of the best-known concepts of political science, the “costs of compliance” is the key to discuss the prospects for political reform in Turkey. If reformers perceive that introducing and implementing certain political reforms would be very costly for them, they (as well as their supporters) may lose their motivation. Here, the “value of the benefits” and “time inconsistency” also gain importance. That is, domestic political actors would not find that political reforms are worth to continue, unless they actually start to gain from the membership process. The uncertainty of the process and the remoteness of the membership would discourage decision-makers. To put Tocci’s analysis in a candid language; carrot-stick strategy worked relatively well so far, yet from now on to embark on more comprehensive reforms, political actors will most likely want to taste the carrot, maybe not to eat the whole. Apart from these, the following questions underline the inherent limitations of the EU conditionality: The EU declared that it would suspend negotiations and propose the conditions for eventual resumption, if Turkey reverses the reform process. However the link between monitoring process and negotiations has not been established clearly. Most of the political reforms, on the other hand, demanded by the EU, are not subtly formulated. In connection with these, monitoring capability of the EU seems questionable, given the insufficiency of precise information sources (Tocci, 2005: 75-79).

These and other considerations led several authors, including Tocci, to turn to internal political dynamics to explain the reform process (Kubicek, 2005). According to this line of argument, if Turkey really wants to be a liberal-democratic state, she may achieve this by her national resources. This is particularly true for consolidating reforms, which require a national consensus on several key issues. Putting emphasis on domestic politics, however, does not mean that the EU factor is insignificant. Undoubtedly, the EU, in spite of its all limitations, will be one of the main variables in the upcoming reform process. Of course, the EU process may come to a halt in the future because of other reasons than the debates on political reforms, such as the Cyprus issue, yet, by looking at the current picture, one may conclude that the EU will continue to play the role of the principal reform pusher. The conditions of the continuation of this position of the EU will be discussed below. Now, then, it is appropriate to analyze the prospects for consolidating reforms from the window of domestic political actors, as suggested by above mentioned authors.

4.2. Reformers: The AKP Government

Before proceeding to the business of the current section, I wish to put the main questions to be answered below: What was the meaning of EU reforms for the AKP Government from the point of domestic politics’ view? What were the main motivations for its leadership to embark upon such a difficult task? More importantly, will be these motivations enough to steam the AKP to carry out consolidating reforms? As these questions hint, I shall study the conditions

24 One of most important changes in the Turkish legal system was undoubtedly the abolition of the death penalty. For the legal framework and the application of the capital punishment in Turkey, see: (Gemalmaz, 2002)

25 This was a novel practice for the EU, which had not been envisaged for other harshly criticized candidates for their performance in terms of implementing the Copenhagen criteria, such as Slovakia and Romania (Kirişçi, 2004: 91).
of the continuation of political reforms and the prospects for consolidating reforms separately. To be able to do that, first I propose to explore the position of the AKP within the Turkish political system.

2002 early parliamentary elections saw the house cleaning in Turkish politics (Baç, 2004). The reactionary electorate voted out the incumbent coalition and gave no credit to the established political parties, whose performance was generally found to be unsatisfactory and sometimes corrupt, when they had been in office. Instead, the overwhelming majority of Turkish people preferred to see a newly-established political party, the AKP, in power. The AKP, in fact, was hardly a “new” party; its leading cadres had been familiar faces in Turkish politics for a long time and most of them were the members of those political parties following the Islamist “National Outlook” tradition. Accordingly, it is interesting to note that, although the past record of the AKP’s prominent figures, including its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was marked by intense Islamist discourse, the Party attracted a significant portion of non-Islamist voters, who had supported nationalist, center-right, even center-left parties in the past. Only the %25 of the AKP’s votes was coming from the traditional “MNP-MSP-RP-FP” base (Esmer, 2002).

There was, of course, no single explanation for the success of the AKP. A reasonable line of argument can be put as follows; the Party managed to convince the majority of the electorate that it was a genuine center-right party, maybe only more conservative than others. Indeed the AKP leadership constructed its whole electoral campaign strategy on this goal, to show people that they had been changed and they would operate as a “system party”, if come to power. The Party’s leaders were very careful in not “scratching” such sensitive issues as “headscarf” and “religious vocational schools”. When touching on such potentially-divisive issues, they deliberately chose a mild language and displayed a compromising attitude. One of the most important elements of this strategy was the pro-European discourse of the Party leadership (Doğan, 2005). The latter emphasized in every platform that it would do its best to carry Turkey to the EU. As a result, the AKP managed to garner the support of the large segments of the society. Accordingly, one may argue that the AKP’s pro-European stance rendered it as a credible alternative in the eyes of the moderate electorate and the latter, as it were, “trusted” its votes to the Party conditionally. Having come to power, pro-European policies proved to be a litmus test for verifying the newly-acquired center-right position of the AKP. The Party leadership was well aware of the fact that they would loose the support of moderate (left and right) electorate, i.e. the votes they had been “trusted”, unless they took concrete steps for the EU membership. In short, political reforms, which had been key to the “success” in the EU process, provided an opportunity for the AKP Government to show that how genuine the Party leadership was in its claim to be a center-right party.

As the analysis developed above suggests, obtaining a specific date for the beginning of accession negotiations with the EU had been vital not only for the fate of the future generations in Turkey, but also for the fate of the AKP itself. The AKP, bearing this in mind, put its whole effort to pass required legislation from the TGNA. The resulting corpus, very impressive on paper, was the main reference point of the EU, when deciding to open accession negotiations with Turkey on 3rd October, 2005. Now, it seems that the AKP got what it wanted from the perspective of domestic political calculations. So, is there a reason for the Party to continue political reforms in general, when looked from the window of internal politics? My answer is “yes”: On the one hand, the “success” in the EU process made the Party’s center-right position nearly uncontestable and the preservation of this position largely depends on the continuation of political reforms. On the other hand, this success accorded the AKP credibility, both at national and international levels, which can be and is converted by

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26 Here, needles to say, “success” practically means acquiring a date for the beginning of accession negotiations.
the Party leadership into extra political power, usable in other policy areas as well. Accordingly, at the point where we stand, it seems that the current political position of the AKP Government and its whole policy guidelines are mainly based on the EU factor. That practically means that, having engaged in the EU politics so deeply, it would hardly be possible for the Government to retreat.

To sum up, on the basis of the analysis so far, one may argue that the most rational choice for the AKP is to continue political reforms. This argument, however, can only explain the conditions of the continuation of political reforms in general, not the prospects for consolidating reforms. The following questions remain unanswered: Will the AKP embark upon such reforms as consolidating reforms, which could transform the current political regime in Turkey into a consolidated democracy? One may not easily answer this question. Such reforms can be very costly for any government. Thus AKP may prefer to continue to treat political reforms as “homework”. That is, the incumbent government may unskillfully formulate, harshly adopt and loosely apply vaguely defined reforms by the EU. This may save the day, however, as we have tried to explain above, Turkey needs more.

By reading the Party program and analyze the statements of its leadership, we may optimistically observe that the ultimate goal of the AKP is undoing the 12 September regime’s authoritarian-statist legacy. Most political actors in Turkey, including left and right wing intellectuals, also underline the suitability of the AKP for this “mission” (İnsel, 2003). Here, the past achievements, particularly in the field of human rights and state-society relations, can be seen satisfactory evidence for the commitment of the Party leadership to improve the quality of democracy in Turkey. However, the real problem for the AKP is not its leadership, but its radical base. The AKP’s rule could open a door to exit from the 12 September regime, hence to the consolidation of democracy, only under the condition that the Party leadership could harness certain (nationalist, Islamist, even authoritarian) groups within the Party, who would find certain consolidating reforms simply unacceptable. In short, under the assumption that the Leadership will be able to control certain radical groups, who would actively oppose upcoming reforms in certain areas, we may conclude that the AKP may play a key role in “normalizing democracy” in Turkey.

4.3. Veto Players: The Military, the Bureaucracy and the President

Even though we assume that the AKP is willing and able to improve the quality of Turkish democracy, we should be aware of the fact that the Party is only one of the actors in the reform game; the position and reaction of veto players are also crucial factors in the consolidating reform process.

As defined by Tsebelis, veto players are: “...collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change in the status quo.” (Tsebelis 1999: 591). Naturally, implicit in this definition, to speak of veto players, political actors should have de facto or de jure power (to veto) and they should have discretion in using the latter. Within the framework of this definition, one may identify several powerful veto players in Turkish politics. As an introductory observation we may put that the actors at the center, as defined above, are veto players in Turkey. Several actors in state machinery have assumed such a role in the course of time, depending on conditions, conjuncture and context.

When we turn to the 1982 Constitution of Turkey, we may discern three (constitutionally) powerful veto players, which practically make up an alliance in most cases; the Military, the Constitutional Court and the President. Accordingly, governmental policies, embodied as legislative pieces, should pass three consecutive hurdles. First veto point, the President, may send statutes back to the TGNA for reconsideration. This gives him a direct role in the legislative process. If a law is adopted as it is, the President has to sign and
promulgate it. However, even in this case, the President still has a tool to influence policy process; he or she may apply to the Constitutional Court for the review of the constitutionality of the law concerned. As it is apparent from the latter explanation that the Constitutional Court is the second veto point in Turkish politics. The Court may annul a law, if it finds that it is unconstitutional.27 These two veto points, although with varying characteristics, are also common in other political regimes, particularly in parliamentary systems. Turkish political system, however, differs from its counterparts mainly in respect of the characteristics and position of the third veto point, i.e. the Military. The Armed Forces had always been a power to be reckoned with in shaping policies almost in all major policy areas in Turkey. This was particularly true for those policies, which would affect or change directly or indirectly the Kemalist reforms and principles. In most cases the Military, not the elected political actors, said the last word. Even this powerful veto player did not hesitate to intervene in the normal functioning of democracy, when it perceived that the Kemalist principles and reforms were in danger. The position and the weight of the Military did not change within the framework of the 1982 Constitution. The Constitution, through the NSC, gave the military a supervisory role, not only in the field of national security, but also in the creation of almost all national policies. In connection with the latter, the autonomous position of the Armed Forces in the state structure was solidified by several constitutional provisions. However, what made the military as the most powerful veto player is not only its de jure powers, but also, and more so, its de facto powers. As was observed in the “soft coup” of 28 February 1997, the military never gave up its influential position in Turkish politics. Then, we may conclude that these three veto players—intentionally or unintentionally—act in most cases together and this sometimes provides an insurmountable barrier for incumbent government in implementing their policies.28 Accordingly, one should consider possible reactions of these veto players, when discussing prospects for consolidating reforms in Turkey.

The past experience in Turkey showed that the personal attributes and preferences of the President determine his or her position within the tripartite alliance mentioned above. That is to say, one may not put the presidency of Kenan Evren (Dodd, 1994) in the same basket with the presidency of Turgut Özal (Heper, 1994) in this respect. Similarly, the attitude of the current President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, differ significantly all from the latter. Without getting into details, it can be said that Sezer has been willing to assume the veto player role and he did this in many actual cases. Sezer, therefore, may not be very enthusiastic in certain areas, which would affect consolidation prospects.29 Here I should point out that Sezer term of

27 Related articles of the Constitution are: 89, 104, 148, 150.
28 The AKP bumped to this barrier several times in the past. The controversy over the Prayer Leader and Preacher Schools (İmam Hatip Okulları [İHO]) may provide an example. Before the March 2004 local elections, the AKP Government drafted a law, envisioning equal treatment to those graduated from the İHO and those graduated from other schools in terms of the impact of their educational score on their total score they would make in the University entrance exam. This practically meant to open doors of the University to those İHO graduates, who had been educated to function as prayer leader or preacher. The Military was quick to response. Top commanders harshly criticized the draft in open statements and articulated their concerns about the possibility of the religious extremists’ penetration into universities using this way, which would threaten the Secular Republic in the long run. Yet the Government passed the Law from the Parliament. This time, the President expressed his uneasiness and vetoed the Law. It is interesting to note the similarity between the grounds in his reasoning attached to the vetoed Law and the argument put forward by the generals. As tension was rising, the Government decided to shelve the draft (See for more information, Heper, 2005: 225-225). One may confidently predict that if the Law had been brought before the Constitutional Court, it would have been annulled on similar grounds. In the İHO case, undoubtedly, the worries of the actors at the center were not unfounded. However, as far as consolidating reforms are concerned, one cannot predict easily which of the alliance’s counter-arguments are to be justifiable as vital moves aiming to guarantee the survival of the Republic; and which are simply to be the embodiment of center’s traditional over-sensibilities.
29 The following discussion may illustrate the point: Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorism Act, criminalizing activities against the indivisibility of the state, was first amended by Law No. 4744 of 19 February 2002, entailing only the reduction of penalties in the Article. Then, the TGNA abrogated Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorism Act by Law No. 4903 on 19 June 2003. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer sent Law No. 4903 back to the TGNA for reconsideration on 30 June 2003. Sezer argued that the repealing of Article 8 would create a vacuum in the struggle against terrorism. According to Sezer, such a vacuum would not be filled with the existing Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code. Consequently, despite the President’s veto, Law No 4903,
presidency will expire in May 2007 and, if an early parliamentary election is not called, the AKP majority in the current Parliament will elect the new president. So, under the assumption that the AKP will continue to stay in power, one may conclude that at least the first veto point will be temporarily deleted from the Turkish political scene. However, this would be a hasty conclusion, for such a political move seems to create new problems, instead of solving the existing ones.

The position of the Constitutional Court is more ambiguous. The past record of the Court, in terms of would-be consolidating reforms, was not very encouraging. Interestingly enough, the jurisprudence of the Court on particular examples discussed above painted even a more pessimistic picture. That is, the Court is the architect of the “headscarf ban” in Turkey30; on the other hand, it found a model, similar to “Turkey deputy”, unconstitutional in 199531. So far, particularly during the recent reform campaign, one may observe a progressive attitude in the Court’s case law (Ergül and Clayton, 2005), however, there is no guarantee that the Court will not again assume its active veto player role when it comes down to possible consolidating reforms.

The Military, the most powerful veto point in Turkey, has had a good record so far during the EU process. Although top commanders frequently uttered their criticisms, even sometimes in a very harsh tone, generally they did not create an obstacle for political reforms. Even about those reforms aiming directly overhauling civil-military relations, the Military did not use its “ultimate veto power”. In short, in most cases, the Military was not silent, but it was not as much interventionist as it had been in the past. Thanks to this reasonable attitude of the top officers, most political reforms in taboo areas could be adopted without any major political hazard.

One may point out several reasons of the Military’s relatively balanced reaction: First of all, the Military has always had a Western vocation, harking even back to the 18th century reform movements. Accordingly, “Westernization”, understood as “Europeanization”, has been a part of their vocational history. More importantly, Kemalism, which has been guaranteed and maintained by the Military as the official ideology of the Turkish Republic, targets “the achievement of the contemporary civilization” as the ultimate goal. In connection with the latter, as an integral part of the Western Civilization, the Military has committed to liberal-democratic values. As had been proved after all military interventions, particularly top officers in the Armed Forces believed, at least in principle, that the last word should belong to the civilians. Last but not least, the officers have all been well aware of the fact that interventions inflicted negative effect on the internal structure of the Military. Accordingly, on all these accounts, they became more reluctant to interfere in politics (Heper, 2005).

True, the above-listed and some other reasons, which have not been mentioned here, may plausibly explain the mildness of the Military so far. However, none of these factors could guarantee that it will easily accept consolidating political reforms, even cooperate with politicians to implement them. The Military had declared in the past that it perceived Islamic fundamentalism and Kurdish nationalism as the most severe threats against the Republic. Accordingly, every measure to be taken to solve these issues will be carefully monitored by the Military Staff. And one may safely argue that if the Military sees any danger for the Kemalist regime, it would not hesitate to react strongly. Of course, the intensity of the Military’s reaction would vary. The author of the present article believes that its reaction would not reach to the level of direct or indirect military intervention, which was not uncommon in the history of the Republic. However, the Military factor ought not to be
underestimated when discussing probable consolidating reforms. Most likely, the officers will be in two minds. That is they will most likely put two things side by side: The ultimate goal of the Kemalist project, i.e. reaching the level of “Western Civilization” through “Europeanization”, which practically requires solving de-consolidating problems, and the traditional mission of the Military to maintain and guarantee the Kemalist principles (particularly secularism and nationalism) and reforms, whose rigid interpretation and application may create an obstacle to solving de-consolidating problems. One may predict that to prefer one to the other would be very difficult for top officers, but, as it has been seen in the past, they will most likely use their rational judgment case by case.

Here, the following argument may help the soldiers to justify their progressive moves: According to Atatürk himself: “The source of prosperity and superiority for the nation today, just as it was yesterday and will be tomorrow, is the reform of principles.” [italics are original] (Quoted by Karal, 1981: 23) As this quotation clearly indicates that Atatürk and his associates did not conceive reforms as a set of static/dogmatic principles. In other words, depending on the needs of the age, revolutionary reformism allowed the revision of other principles. By adding such adaptation mechanism, the founding elites aimed at guaranteeing the flexibility and thus the longevity of Kemalist reforms. Hence, one may argue that Kemalism bore the seeds of change in its harbor. To make the argument more solid; the principle of Reformism stipulates not only preserving the existing values and institutions of the Kemalist regime, but also a constant renewal in the latter to reach the ultimate goal; i.e. Western Civilization. Consequently, reinterpretating nationalism and secularism, or more correctly abandoning its rigid interpretation and application, would not be against Kemalism, on the contrary Kemalism itself opens these doors through Reformism.

5. Reform Strategies: Predictions and Admonitions

No doubt, designing and adopting political reforms, as comprehensive as such, must be a Herculean task for a government and requires a well-planned strategy. When we evaluate the accomplished political reforms from this perspective, unfortunately we may find neither meticulously constructed nor skilfully applied strategy. Rather, as I have mentioned above, the traces of the “homework” psychology has been detected on every piece of legislation adopted by the TGNA recently. Above all, the domestic decision-makers should abandon this outlook. Further political reforms should be seen as a tool to transform the current regime in Turkey into an “embedded democracy” (Merkel, 2004). Here, the main responsibility falls on the shoulder of the members of the Government as reformers. However, other political actors, including the EU, should act “responsibly” as well during the consolidation process. So, now a series of admonitions are in order to clarify the details of the reform strategy.

When we consider the relations between veto players, particularly the Military, and the AKP, we may still observe a “reluctant cooperation” between the two in the reforms process. Reluctant though, major actors in the center and the periphery were able to put their traditional animosity aside within the framework of the EU ideal. In most cases, as it had been observed in the reforms concerning civil-military relations, these actors rationally managed to harness their traditional sensibilities. Yet this is a fragile alliance. That is, it is still uncertain how long these actors will travel in the same car on the way to the EU.

The maintenance of this relatively peaceful reform environment depends largely on the AKP’s attitude. First of all, the Party’s leadership should not formulate consolidating reforms in a way to be unacceptable by the veto players. The reformers, in other words, should take into account the parameters of the current regime in devising consolidating reforms. Constant dialogue between these actors is the key to success. If veto players can express their concerns beforehand, i.e. during the process, this would reduce the risk of friction, which would arise
after the implementation of such reforms. Most worringly, in case of deadlock or the lack of cooperation, the Government may try to annihilate or emasculate veto players. This, needlessly to say, would bring more problems than it solves. The incumbents should avoid such a grave mistake. The veto players, in turn, should not spend their resources and energy to discover the “hidden agenda” behind the political reforms. They rather should be aware of the fact that without solving integration problems, Turkish democracy will always stay far away from consolidation.

The reformers in Turkey should also seek cooperation with and input from other political actors, particularly from other political parties. Those parties in and out of Parliament should involve in shaping consolidating reforms. Other political parties have already offered valuable insights to solve the consolidation issues; they may provide more alternatives, which would illuminate the way of the Government. Ultimately, obtaining the support of other political parties may solidify the ground of legitimacy for upcoming reforms.

When discussing strategy for consolidating reforms, civil society deserves particular attention. Generally, the weakness of civil society in Turkey has been underlined in the related literature. According to Sefa Şimşek, for example, ostensibly Turkish civil society is very lively and constantly growing, however, in reality, it is utterly ineffective. That is the elements of civil society cannot play as much crucial role as other political actors, particularly in terms of policy shaping or policy change (Şimşek, 2005: 49). One may logically infer from the latter argument that civil society in Turkey is too immature to react negatively or positively; so, consolidating reforms can be adopted and realized by the initiative of political elites, with no necessary involvement of the civil society. Such strategy, though it may make the Government’s task easier, would be inappropriate for such reforms as consolidating reforms, which require a broader-based consensus at the societal level. Accordingly, the Government should always keep its contact with civil society organizations alive. It should encourage these to provide input for the reform process and open channels to express their views freely. In other words, the Government should allow civil society to influence politics. The support or stimuli of civil society is as much important as the consent of other political actors for consolidating reforms.

The reformers, in turn, should act prudently and impartially. It is apparent that the majority of the ultra-conservative base of the AKP supported the EU process, not because they sincerely believed that the Turkish people will be better off in many ways within the EU, but they hoped that the EU conditionality might push the establishment to find a solution for human rights problems in Turkey, which was effectively reduced to religious rights and liberties in their mind (Tanıyıcı, 2003). As for these groups, it seems that the longer the solution for the problem procrastinated, the more they become vociferous. If the AKP only listens to these groups and brings only such issues as headscarf and religious vocational schools to the fore, this may cripple the whole consolidation project. Accordingly, by acting on narrowly-defined political interests, the AKP Government should not develop single-sided reform policies during the consolidation process. Put it in another way, the AKP should not see the consolidation problems only from the perspective of its Islamist base. As we have mentioned above, the consolidation agenda should be created by taking into account the twin-trouble of Turkish democracy, i.e. Islamic fundamentalism and Kurdish nationalism. One is not more important than the other. Consequently, the AKP should not use the EU/reform process to make certain regulations, which would satisfy only its radical base.

32 Recently, the judgment of the ECHR Grand Chamber in “Leyla Şahin v. Turkey” Case (10 November 2005) (Application no. 44774/98) must be very disappointing for these circles. The Court in this decision concluded that ban of wearing headscarves in universities does not violate freedom of religion and conscience. Discussing the legal aspects of this decision and its impact on Turkish constitutional system falls out of the scope of this article; it may be suffice to note here that the Court does not say that the headscarf should be banned. Accordingly, the door is still open to regulate the headscarf issue in the way we have tried to explain above.
Before passing, we would like to underline the importance of the techniques and tools of consolidating reform process. Consolidating reforms should be drafted very carefully with the participation of major political actors in Turkey. Drafts should be circulated widely and discussed satisfactorily in the public with the aim of obtaining a society-level consensus, as much broad and solid as possible. Parliamentary debates, in turn, should reflect the expectations and worries of the concerned groups.

As I have explained above, although it should not be forgotten that such reforms as consolidating reforms can mainly be achieved by the initiative and through the cooperation and interaction of domestic political actors, the EU may still play an important role in this process. Accordingly, certain strategic concerns should be discussed for the EU as well. First of all, the EU should not push for unacceptable solutions. It should properly understand the dynamics of Turkish political system and take into account the worries of the influential actors. Demanded reforms should be formulated clearly and in this endeavour the necessities of the consolidation should be given priority. More importantly, just as Turkey should abandon “homework” psychology, the EU should reconsider its “teacher” role. That is, so far the EU formulated political reforms, just as dictating a pupil his or her homework. This would apparently be a wrong strategy for consolidating reforms. As far as the latter concerned, the EU should offer acceptable alternative solutions, not just pointing out the problem, as it has done in the past. Undoubtedly, carefully gauged solutions may not be perceived as intervention in domestic politics and may provide input for consolidating reforms.

Apart from these, as it has been again partially explained above, just demanding, not giving would not provide sufficient incentive for consolidating reforms, whose adoption and implementation will be more difficult, when compared with the accomplished ones. Only if major political actors in Turkey and the population in general would see concretely that the partnership between the EU and Turkey is not one-sided, then they may continue political reforms to get the ultimate prize, i.e. the EU membership. What the EU could do is to show at least its goodwill for transferring benefits to Turkey in the future. According to Kubicek materialist incentives may convince the majority of the population that the political reforms are worth the cost (Kubicek, 2005: 373). Needless to say, there should be a lesson to be learned by the EU in Kubicek’s argument.

By way of conclusion, an admonition should be mentioned, which would be valid for all parties of the reform process: Consolidating reforms should be thought separately from conjunctural conditions. For example, the current mounting of the PKK terror or probable reactivation of radical-Islamist groups in the future should not provide a pretext for procrastinating or putting aside consolidating reforms. Even any “road accident” in the EU process should not hinder consolidating reforms. It should not be forgotten that the latter, in fact, provides the real solution for such destabilizing issues in the long run. To repeat the above-developed argument, these consolidating political institutions, may provide a filter to single out those groups, which would be integrated into the system, from those, categorically rejecting to be a part of it, and may enable the decision-makers to take necessary measures legitimately with the aim of keeping the latter under control.

6. Deliberative Constitution-Making

As the discussion in the previous section clearly suggests that consolidating reforms could only be adopted and implemented through a carefully-planned strategy. Within this context, I have tried to list above—of course not to claim to be exhaustive as such—certain considerations, which should be taken into account by the actors of the reform process. More specifically, as far as the EU reforms were concerned, the Government used a technique, which may be called “reform through piecemeal legislation”. The Government used this
technique basically at two levels: At the statute level, it carried out EU reforms mainly by enacting “patchwork laws”, which include amendments to several laws (e.g. harmonization laws); the reforms process exceptionally saw total revision to basic laws, as were in the case of Civil Code, Criminal Code. This technique was also utilized at the constitutional level, involving partial change in the current Constitution. I think the technique of “reform through piecemeal legislation” would not be suitable for consolidating reforms; what the latter calls for a thoroughly new constitution. Within this context, I propose to initiate of a “deliberative constitution-making” process.

In a deliberative constitution-making process, a constitution is drawn up by the representative of the people with the participation and contribution of all major political actors and adopted and supported by the latter through a broad-based consensus. A new constitution in general and deliberative constitution-making in particular have certain advantages over the technique mentioned above. First, consolidating reforms require more enduring institutional framework. Constitutionalization of consolidating solutions would guarantee, at least on paper, the survival of newly-created institutions long enough to produce their positive outcomes. Second, constitution-making carries a symbolic meaning. It may signify the beginning of a new era, in which the major political actors are committed to improve the quality of democracy in Turkey. Third, a deliberative constitution-making may provide a platform in which all significant problems of Turkish democracy could be discussed. Fourth, in connection with the latter, constitution-making in a deliberative manner may produce more legitimate solutions, which could be upheld by all major political actors than other reform techniques.

Making a totally new constitution has been on the political agenda in Turkey for a long time. However, this could not be achieved in the past for several reasons, which cannot be discussed here in detail. I think that consolidating reforms provide an opportunity to reopen this discussion.

7. Conclusion

In this article, I studied the need, the meaning and the conditions of consolidating reforms within the framework of Turkey’s EU membership process. Consolidating reforms should aim at taking decisive and courageous steps toward the appeasement of the protracted tension between the center and the periphery in Turkish society. To put it in the theoretical framework we have developed above, a chance for consolidation of Turkish democracy will arise, if the actors of the far periphery are drawn into the realm of the near periphery. The AKP, as an actor of the near periphery, seems suitable for this mission, provided that it will maintain its awareness of the “realities” of the political system in Turkey. The responsibility will also fall on the shoulders of the actors at the center in terms of harnessing their traditional sensibilities. The EU process provides an invaluable opportunity for the major actors in Turkish politics to work for consolidation of democracy. Accordingly, I wish to conclude that consolidating reforms will be gains on their own. Even though the EU membership process ends with failure, consolidating reforms will be added to the list of assets of Turkish democracy. If this chance is missed, Turkish democracy will remain simply unconsolidated in the unforeseeable future.

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33 See for “deliberative constitution-making”: (Fossum and Menéndez, 2005a; Fossum and Menéndez, 2005b; Closa, 2005).
34 See for debates: (Özbudun, 1997).
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