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Lebanese American University

*The Military in Turkish Politics:
1983-1997*

by

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1983-1997

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Abstract

The development of civilian-military relations in Turkey in the past thirty-five years has proven to be worth of attention and consideration. In fact, anyone who traces the role of the military in this country observes easily the influence that such an institution exerts over the country. In the past three and half decades, the country has witnessed four significant incidents of military intrusion into the political arena: two of these intrusions were accompanied with military takeover of the government (1960 and 1980), while the other two were accompanied with the stepping down of two other prime ministers (1971 and 1997) through an ultimatum and other tactics. Military interventions of this frequency render the examination of the political role of the military institution in Turkey an important and interesting case to the academic world and to the policy makers.

The main hypothesis of this thesis states that there has been lately a change in the civilian-military relations in Turkey between 1983 and 1997. To prove this hypothesis, the thesis concentrates on two case studies: Turgut Ozal (1983-1993) and Necmettin Erbakan (1996-1997). These two case studies are quite significant for examining civilian-military relations in the Turkish Republic, especially that the post-1950 period revealed Turkish military institution as an important, if not the most important, factor of their political, economic, and social development.

The thesis argues that starting from 1983, the country started witnessing a change in the military's strategy towards the civilian government. The 1983-1993 period witnessed military disengagement from Turkish politics accompanied with the subordination of the military and the supremacy of the civil power. The 1996-1997

period, however, witnessed military re-engagement in Turkish politics. Yet, unlike the pre-1983 period, this time the military had been more reluctant to take over power directly. Indeed, the 1997 event marked a new trend for military involvement in Turkish politics; the 1997 subtle form of intervention showed that the military have opted for “soft” indirect intervention through political, legislative and media channels in place of direct military takeover.

Introduction

The military have always enjoyed a privileged standing in the Turkish Republic. They have been the “guardian” of secular, reformist and democratic goals set by the “architect” of the Turkish Republic, Ataturk. Their main task has been the safeguard of the Turkish state from any external as well as internal threats.

With the transformation of the Turkish political system in 1950 from a single-party system to a multi-party system, three direct military interventions took place (1960-1, 1971-3, and 1980-3). Such interventions were justified on the grounds of protecting and preserving the principles of Ataturk, mainly secularism and nationalism. However, in each case, civilian rule was reintroduced after some interval during which certain problems were handled, new constitution embraced, and economic prosperity attained.¹

In addition to this, ever since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, only generals were allowed to become presidents of the Turkish republic (except for President Celal Bayar who had been deposed in 1960). Interestingly enough, it was only in the Third Turkish Republic, and more precisely in 1989, that a civilian president, Turgut Ozal, was elected (1989-1993). As expected, his election and policies seriously impacted the civilian-military relations. In brief, Ozal adopted various steps that were bound to defy the traditional role of the officer corps in Turkish politics.²

¹ M. Hakan Yavuz, “Turkey’s Fault Lines and the Crisis of Kemalism,” *Current History* 99, no. 633 (Jan. 2000): 33.

² William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London: Routledge, 1994), 288.

Another source of inconvenience to the military was the Refah Party's leader Necmettin Erbakan. Erbakan was elected as the head of government in 1996. He was the first Islamic leader to be chosen as a prime minister in Turkey (after Adnan Menderes in 1950).³ Like Ozal, Erbakan's policies outraged the military. However, unlike Ozal, Erbakan was banned from politics for five years and his party was prohibited.

This thesis focuses on the military involvement in Turkish politics. It examines the period ranging between early 1980s and mid-1990s. It concentrates on two case studies: Turgut Ozal (1983-1993) and Necmettin Erbakan (1996-1997). Hence, it examines the policies of both leaders and the reaction of the generals towards each. It also tries to find out why no "real" coup d'état took place in 1997 and how the military resorted to constitutional and legal mechanisms to topple Erbakan's government.

As such, the main questions that need to be addressed are the following: What were the policies of both Ozal and Erbakan, those that contradicted and trespassed the generals' beliefs and standards and those that matched and corresponded to them? And why has there not been any direct government overthrow whether during Ozal or Erbakan's term?

Concerning the structure of the thesis, it is divided into five chapters. The first chapter begins by presenting the different typologies of civilian-military relations and the different types of armies. The second chapter applies briefly the models discussed in the first chapter to the Turkish experience from independence (1923) till 1983. In

³ Rida Hilal, *Al'Sayif Wal'Hilal: Turkiya min Ataturk ila Arbakan* (Cairo: Dar el'Shourouq, 1999), 162.

other words, this chapter presents Ataturk's perception of the role that the military should adopt in politics. Afterwards, it reviews the three military coup d'états that took place in the country in an attempt to discover the types of military regimes that existed after each coup. The third chapter examines the 1983-1993 period that was characterized by military "disengagement" from Turkish politics. In this part, the thesis presents the different internal and external policies adopted by Ozal and opposed by the generals. Then, it tries to analyze the factors that prohibited the military from carrying out a coup or even imposing their own demands, thus bringing Turkey closer to the Liberal-democratic model of civilian-military relations. The fourth chapter scrutinizes the 1996-1997 period that was characterized by military re-engagement in politics. This chapter presents the factors that encouraged the military to intervene in Turkish politics and oppose Erbakan's regime. On the other hand, it shows the reasons that drove the military institution to act mainly as a "pressure group" without adopting any overt intervention. To do so, it, first, explores the reasons behind the victory of an Islamic party such as the Refah party in the general elections. Then, it presents Erbakan's internal and external policies and the different arguments with and against these policies. Afterwards, it stresses on the generals' reaction to these policies and the factors that prohibited a direct military coup from taking place. The final chapter focuses on the relation between Turkey and the EU. In this part, the thesis highlights the political factor that has always prevented Turkey from joining the EU. It also reveals why it is important for the Turkish Republic to join the Union.

Chapter 1

Civilian-Military Relations

In order to comprehend the role played by the military institution in Turkey, it is, first, important to examine briefly the different typologies of civilian-military relations.

Several analysts explored such relations and presented different theories. Even though the relation between the military and the civilian institutions became significant around two hundred years ago, theoretical examination of such relations did not take place before the Cold War.

One of the theorists who focused on civilian-military relations is Morris Janowitz. Janowitz asserts that there is no “uniform” pattern of civilian-military relations. In general, however, democratic countries witness civilian control over the military accompanied by restricted military intervention in their internal affairs except in matters related to foreign relations and defense strategies. In Communist states, on the other hand, the army is “neutralized” in the state’s domestic affairs and influences, at the same time, its external affairs.

I. Three Models of Civilian Control (Non-Praetorianism)

As a result, Janowitz considers the civilian-military relations in Western states, where there is a substantial civilian control over the military. He classifies civilian-military relations in such states into three models: aristocratic, democratic, and totalitarian

model.⁴ Eric Nordlinger, also, presents three models of civilian control. He labels them as traditional, liberal, penetration model.⁵

1. Traditional-Aristocratic Model

The first model of civilian control is the *Traditional-Aristocratic model*.

This model was originated by the European monarchies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It stipulates the absence of civilian-military differences, which, in return, prevents any sort of military intervention. With no differences present, it was much easier for the civilians to control simply because there was no justification for the armed forces' intervention. According to Nordlinger, the European aristocracy constituted both the civilian and military powers at the same time. In other words, the "same men wore both hat and helmet".⁶ The same men were both civilians and soldiers, and their concerns were the same. And even when the two became "distinctive", their beliefs and visions remained alike. This is true because both of them came from the same "aristocratic background". They, thus, embraced similar priorities. It was the absence of differences between the civilian and military personnel that led to civilian ascendancy.⁷

2. Liberal-Democratic Model

The second model of civilian control is the *Liberal-Democratic model*. This model is adopted mainly in Western Europe and North America. The civilians and the army are "highly differentiated". The army is subordinate to the civilians. Besides, it is highly

⁴ Moris Janowitz, *The Military Institution and Coercion in the Developing Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 78.

⁵ Eric Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1977), 11

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 12

“depoliticized” and “professionalized”.⁸ In fact, the professional soldier is forbidden from holding any social or political position.⁹ However, this model necessitates the civilians’ regard for the armed forces’ experience, “autonomy”, and political impartiality. Once the government restrains from both insulting the military institution and interfering in its affairs, then, the latter would have little incentive to intervene. Consequently, the military would be affected by this “civilian ethic” and, thus, ready to tolerate the supremacy of the civilian regime.¹⁰

3. Penetration-Totalitarian Model

The third model is the *Penetration-Totalitarian model*. It developed in USSR, Nazi Germany, and to a lesser extent, in fascist Italy. According to Janowitz, such a model necessitates “political control over the military by a centralized and authoritarian one-party political system”.¹¹ The civilians provide the military with various resources; the military support the civilians, in return. In this model, the civilians, or the ruling party, “penetrate” the military institution with their strategies and staffs in attempt to influence them and to affect their doctrine. Such a model results in “congruity” between the principles of the two, thus, abolishing any cause of trouble between them.¹²

It is here important to mention that all of the three models are subject to some limitations. The Traditional-Aristocratic model is very effective, but it cannot be applied in the present-day because of the intense differentiation between the military and the civilians. As for the Liberal-Democratic model, it needs time and favorable

⁸ Eric Nordlinger, op. cit., 12-13

⁹ Morris Janowitz, op. cit., 79.

¹⁰ Eric Nordlinger, op. cit., 12-13

¹¹ Morris Janowitz, op. cit., 80.

¹² Eric Nordlinger, op. cit., 15

conditions for it to be applied. Besides, any attempt by the civilians to intervene in the military's institution may lead to its abandonment. Finally, the Penetration-Totalitarian model can be implemented. However, its implementation always necessitates the presence of a weak army.¹³

Besides, all of the above models describe the civilian-military relations where the army is subordinate to the civilian authority and does not enjoy independent power. As a result, none of them can be applied to states that suffer from a "wider military involvement" and control level in its internal economic, social, and political affairs. This is why Nordlinger suggested *Praetorianism* or military intervention.¹⁴

II. Three Models of Praetorianism (Military Control)

Praetorianism takes place when the army threatens to carry out a coup in case certain requests were not met, when it carries out a coup, when the coup leads or prohibits the substitute of the government available by other civilians, and when the generals, themselves, "take control" of the government. In the latter case, the country witnesses a short-lived military government replacing the civilian regime.¹⁵

Amos Perlmutter, also, comments on the Praetorian model. He argues that such a model appears in countries that suffer from rural, "transitional" or "ideological" divisions. In such countries, the armed forces are by nature "interventionists" with the capability of causing real "constitutional" alterations. Such a model is characterized by a low level of professionalism, selective and "competitive" officer recruitment, and

¹³ Eric Nordlinger, op. cit., Ibid., 18-19

¹⁴ Ibid., 3

¹⁵ Ibid.

a weak civilian government with no public support. In such a case, the military would intervene for a short time, and then “divest” itself from the regime once the aims of the coup were accomplished. In other words, all praetorians hand over power to democratically elected personnel in close or distant time. Such a step usually takes place once the economy has flourished, the nation has revived, and open and formal elections have been adopted. Such a steps denotes that the praetorians do not oppose civilian rule. They intervene only when they believe that their country’s internal and external policies are threatened.¹⁶

Praetorian officers may be categorized as *praetorian moderators*, *praetorian guardians*, and *praetorian rulers*. These three types of officers are best examined by Eric Nordlinger and Christopher Clapham (see Table 1).¹⁷

Table 1: The Levels of Military Intervention

	Moderators	Guardians	Rulers
Extent of Power	Veto Power	Governmental Control	Regime dominance
Political and Economic Objectives	Sustain status quo	Sustain status quo and/or correct malpractices and deficiencies	Perform political change and at times socioeconomic alterations

i. Praetorian Moderator Model

Starting with the *praetorian moderators*, such armies veto the civilian governments’ decisions or conflicts, thus eliminating any need to replace that government. The civilian government would continue to rule but would be continuously scrutinized by

¹⁶ Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), 12-13.

¹⁷ Table 1 is available in Eric Nordlinger, op. cit., 22.

the military institution. Praetorian moderators are highly “politicized”¹⁸: they act as effective “pressure groups” that try to attain their goals through threatening to topple the civilian government. In some cases, they may adopt what Nordlinger calls a “displacement coup”: the civilian government is deposed and is substituted by another civilian government that is more flexible or pleasant to the armed forces. All in all, praetorian moderators can be described as “conservatives” who do not look forward to taking over power.¹⁸

ii. Praetorian Guardian Model

The other type of armies, the *praetorian guardians*, resorts to higher level of penetration and control. According to Clapham, the military consider it their obligation to “step in, to sort out the mess” created by the politicians. After a period of “corrective government” during which certain constitutional modifications have been adopted, the guardian military regime gives over power to democratically elected civilians.¹⁹ Nordlinger argues that such regimes take over power for a period of two to four years. They are all moderately conservative regimes: their main goal is to maintain the “basic status quo”. Moreover, they are ready to face all malpractice and deficiencies in attempt to sustain this status quo. Unlike the moderator (veto) regimes, the guardian regimes believe that they cannot attain significant changes unless they take over power. To them, there exist no option other than taking over power in case the country lacks an “elite group” capable of maintaining the economic and political condition. They may, also, intervene when they feel that the ambitions of the political elites are incompatible with those of the military institution.²⁰

¹⁸ Eric Nordlinger, op. cit., 22-23

¹⁹ Christopher Clapham and George Philip, *The Political Dilemmas of Military Regimes* (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books: 1985), 9

²⁰ Eric Nordlinger, op. cit., 24-5.

iii. Praetorian Rulers Model

The last type of armies is the *praetorian ruler*. Ruler-type officers enjoy even a higher level of political control than the first two. They are highly ambitious, often describing themselves as “radical modernizers” or “revolutionaries”. Unlike the praetorian guardians that aim to control the government, the praetorian rulers aim to “dominate” it through establishing “mobilization structures”. Such structures enable the military regime to manipulate the country’s economy, politics, and society. As such, they are authoritarian. Their goal is to alter the distribution of political power by subduing the present political institutions; reorganizing the economic and social system; controlling the media; and banning all political parties. Unlike guardian praetorians, ruler praetorians tend to govern indefinitely. This is why they make no promises to give back power to civilians.²¹

In conclusion, it is important to state that one should not view these models as a strict set of categories. Indeed, Nordlinger argues that these models represent a “simplified picture”. The army often enjoys substantial influence in states where civilians rule, and civilians sometimes exercise a “good measure” of influence where the army rules.²² Accordingly, to distinguish between civilian-military relations characterized by civilian control and those characterized by military control does not imply that one type is solely dominated by the army and the other exclusively by civilians.

The following chapter applies, briefly, these models of civilian-military relations to the Turkish experience from independence (1923) till 1983. In other words, it presents

²¹Eric Nordlinger, op. cit., 26-7.

²²Ibid., 28.

Ataturk's view of the role that the military should embrace in politics. Afterwards, it examines the three military coup d'états that took place in this country in attempt to discover the types of military regimes that existed after each coup.

Chapter 2

Civilian-Military Relations in Turkey (1923-1983)

This chapter examines the civilian-military relations in Turkey between 1923 and 1983. The aim of this study is to see which model of military regimes applies to Turkey during Ataturk's era and to each of the three past Turkish military coup d'états: 1960, 1971, 1980.

I. Ataturk and the Army in Turkey, 1923-1938

Ever since Turkey's independence in 1923, the army was able to play a powerful role especially through Ataturk's party, the Republican People's Party (RPP), the government and the National Assembly. Ataturk, the Turkish president with a military background, ensured the "quiescence" of the military until his death in 1938. He nominated former officers to significant administrative positions. He assured their representation in the Assembly. Around twenty percent of the deputies were military officers; around thirty percent of the high positions were controlled by military personnel. Many military personnel reached the cabinet and were able to stay there for a long period of time.²³

Ataturk's respect for the military and its role was expressed firmly through many of his popular announcements. For instance, in 1930, he openly stated,

"...The Turkish nation has...always looked to the military...as the leader of movements to achieve lofty national ideals...When speaking of the army, I am speaking of the intelligentsia of the Turkish nation who are the true owners of this country...The Turkish nation...considers its army the guardian of its ideals."²⁴

²³ James Brown, "The Military and Society: The Turkish Case," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no.3 (1989): 387.

²⁴ Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, "The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey," *Comparative Politics* 16, no. 1 (Oct. 1983): 20.

Indeed, the Turkish nation felt proud of the military. It viewed them as indispensable for the endurance of the regime: they suppressed the Kurdish rebellions in 1925 and 1930 and they functioned as the “mark of sovereignty” between the First and Second World Wars. In other words, the army was the supreme symbol of power and safety for the Turkish state.²⁵ The military, in return, viewed themselves as a significant constituent of the government’s structure, with their own distinct and exceptional high rank and values.²⁶

Ataturk, however, assured the army’s subordination to his ruling party, the Republican People’s Party. In fact, up until 1950, Turkey was a single-party state that received the support of the military. Military officers were indoctrinated with Ataturk’s ideology. Soldiers who abided by this ideology were rewarded, while those who violated it were penalized. With such characteristics, many political analysts considered the civilian-military relations in Turkey during Ataturk’s era as similar to the totalitarian-penetration model described above.

Other political analysts, however, such as William Hale, argued that Turkey did not witness most of the mechanisms of control that the totalitarian-penetration model usually witnesses. In fact, even though the country had security police, yet, it lacked paramilitary forces such as the KGB that would serve as a “counter-balance” to the regular army. Besides, Ataturk’s regime missed the “ideological rigidity” or the high extent of social penetration and command enjoyed by the totalitarian regimes.²⁷

²⁵ Morris Janowitz, *Military Conflict: Essays in the Institutional Analysis of War and Peace* (London: SAGE Publications, 1975), 165.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

²⁷ William Hale, *op. cit.*, 312.

Metin Heper, on the other hand, asserts that the civilian-military relations in Turkey in the 1923-1945 period were similar to the liberal-democratic model. The fact that the army was “differentiated from the civilian power but subordinated to it, professionalized and depoliticized”²⁸ drew the country closer to this model.

1. Ataturk’s Concept of Military Detachment from Politics

In principle, Ataturk called for the detachment of the military from politics or “depoliticization”. Even though he had a military background and even though he enjoyed the powers and privileges of a Supreme Commander, he always appeared in civilian outfit, except when joining military training. Such a custom was even adopted by his presidential successors.²⁹ As such, military personnel were prevented from holding civilian posts unless they relinquished office first.³⁰ The aim of such a detachment was not only to prohibit the army from interfering in politics but also to protect it from the “pulling and hauling of the political arena”. In fact, Ataturk insisted that the army enjoys freedom from partisan political intervention in its matters. It was this concept of the military’s autonomy from any political interference that made the military institution support Ataturk and back his reform program.³¹

To assure the military’s non-involvement, Article 23 was issued in 1924. The article stipulated that “no person may be a deputy and hold office under the Government at the same time”.³² There was also Article 148 of the Military Penal Code that considered any attempt to become a member of a political party, or to engage in

²⁸ Metin Heper, “The Military and Democracy in the Third Turkish Republic,” *Armed Forces & Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 22, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 619. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. http://web7.infotrac.london.gale.../purl=rcl_EIM_0_A18688909&dyn4!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

²⁹ William Hale, op. cit., 79.

³⁰ Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, “The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey,” *Comparative Politics* 16, no. 1 (Oct. 1983): 19

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² William Hale, op. cit., 72.

political meetings or to deliver political speeches, or to participate in the preparation or issuance of political statements as an "offence".³³

2. Ataturk's Vision of the Army as the Guardian of the Republic

At the same time, the army was responsible for "guarding and protecting the existing order" and reserving "Ataturk's torch alight".³⁴ Article 34 of the Army Internal Service Law, decreed in 1935 and repeated in the Turkish Armed Forces Internal Service Law in 1960, indicated that the function of the military is to safeguard and protect the Turkish state and the Turkish Republic, as stipulated in the constitution. With time, such a statement was understood as meaning that the military were "obliged" to intervene in politics in case the country's security was threatened. Astonishingly, even Ataturk, himself, encouraged the younger officers to view themselves as "vanguard of the revolution". In his speech in 1931 in Konya, Ataturk described the army as "...composed of its own heroic sons, as the permanent leader in the forefront of this march, as the permanent vanguard in campaigns to bring lofty national ideals to reality..."³⁵

Ataturk's vision of the army as a "vanguard" led to the conclusion that the "officers' political non-involvement" indeed denoted "personal detachment" from party politics rather than constraint from political intervention.³⁶ This "self-ascribed guardian role of the military" contributed to the adoption of the "interventionist and authoritarian tendencies" by the army.³⁷ On the other hand, it was Ataturk's persistence on

³³ William Hale, *op. cit.*, 72

³⁴ Mehmet Ali Birand, *Shirts of Steel: An Anatomy of the Turkish Armed Forces* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.), 58.

³⁵ William Hale, *op. cit.*, 80-1.

³⁶ Mehmet Ali Birand., *op. cit.*, 68.

³⁷ Ihsan D. Dagi, "Democratic Transition in Turkey, 1980-83: the Impact of European Diplomacy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1995): 124.

maintaining military detachment from party politics which made the army return to barracks after each intervention, call for new elections, and encourage the return of civilian rule.³⁸

In a nutshell, the Turkish officer reached the following conclusion:

“The Turkish Army must not become actively involved in politics but must guard and protect this Republic... and must intervene if these principles are endangered. Once developments have been settled, it must return to barracks”.³⁹

II. The Death of Ataturk and the Three Military Interventions

With the death of Ataturk, a significant internal change took place that affected the stance of the army. It was the separation between the military's leadership and the state's leadership. In fact, Ataturk was not only the president of the Turkish Republic, but also the Chief of Staff and a Marshal. In other words, the Turkish president was a soldier with the highest rank. As such, the state's leadership and the army's leadership were inseparable. However, with the death of Ataturk, and with the appointment of Ismet Inonu in his place, things started to change. Although Inonu was a General, he did not occupy the highest rank in the army. Marshal Cakmak was the one nominated as the Chief of Staff after Ataturk and not Inonu. This separation between the army's leadership and the state's leadership influenced seriously the role of the army till this day. The military institution became an independent entity supervising the legislative authority and intervening in case the latter proved to be unreliable or weak.⁴⁰

³⁸ Mehmet Ali Birand., op. cit., 68.

³⁹ Ibid., 95-96.

⁴⁰ Rida Hilal, op. cit., 93.

Nevertheless, the retirement of Marshal Cakmak in January 1944 affected the posture of the Turkish military negatively. Indeed, the Marshal's retirement facilitated the establishment of rigid civilian control over the army and the transformation towards a multiparty system instead of the mono-party system. Such a step could not have taken place under the conservative leader, Marshal Cakmak, who advocated Ataturk's concept of the army's autonomy from any political intervention.⁴¹

The military regarded this gradual relaxation of the one-party rule with ambivalent concern. Even though it was viewed by many as a significant step towards democracy, it was viewed by the military as a loss of their representation and top-level status. What deteriorated the situation even more was the termination of the "reign" of Ataturk's party, the RPP, through the victory of the Democratic Party (DP) led by Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes. Unlike Ataturk, these two politicians lacked any military background. As such, they proved to be incapable of dealing with the military institution. This development proved to have serious consequences for the future political direction of Turkey.

1. 1960 Military Intervention: The Military as Praetorian Guardians

With the victory of the DP in the 1950 elections, the military's position deteriorated. The Menderes government maltreated and disregarded the army: the latter's wages decreased seriously, and the military officers felt that they were losing their influence and social status.⁴² Besides, it tried to enhance liberalization models through resorting to the relaxation of laws that restricted the role of the Kurds and Islamists.

⁴¹ Rida Hilal, *op. cit.*, 94.

⁴² James Brown, "The Military and Society: The Turkish Case," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 1989): 388.

However, the trigger for the coup seems to have been the government's decision of using the army in an effort to regain control of the situation. It was when the Menderes government imposed Martial law that the army decided to "resolve the dilemma" by overthrowing the government. In order to legitimize their direct intervention, the military argued that it intervened only when it noticed that the government was no longer capable of adopting democratic procedures.⁴³

According to Metin Heper, the 1960 military regime may have wanted to create a government that would have appeared between Nordlinger's "guardian" and "ruler" types of military regimes. In fact, many members of the 1960 junta, known as the National Unity Committee, wanted to establish a ruler military regime. Yet, the leader of the coup, General Cemal Gursel, aimed after a limited guardian military regime. Finally, the younger officers were overruled by the moderate senior officers led by General Gursel, and a guardian military regime resulted.⁴⁴

The 1960 junta, and like all other guardian military regimes, declared, from the very beginning, its intention of giving over power to an elected civilian government after a short period of time and once some constitutional and legal modifications have been adopted. Indeed, this is what happened one year after the coup. In 1961, civilian rule was restored through a coalition including the former Justice Party (JP) led by Suleyman Demirel and the RPP led by Ismet Inonu.⁴⁵ Not only was civilian rule restored quickly, it was restored after some constitutional changes have been implemented. The junta drafted a new constitution with the aim of abolishing all the

⁴³ Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, "The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey," *Comparative Politics* 16, no.1 (Oct. 1983): 20-1

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ James Brown, "The Military and Society: The Turkish Case," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no.3 (July 1989): 389.

conditions that led to the "political crisis". Its main attempt was to prevent the emergence of an "authoritarian partisan regime" similar to Menderes' regime. As such, it tried to restrain the government's actions through establishing new institutions such as a constitutional court with the power to nullify the government's decisions. It also established the National Security Council (NSC) that included the minister of defense and senior military commanders.⁴⁶ The NSC appeared as an "institutionalized channel" through which the army would be able to reach the highest political authority.⁴⁷ Finally, the junta appointed the leader of the coup, General Gursel, as the president of the republic and Ismet Inonu as the prime minister.⁴⁸

With such steps, the army wanted to strengthen its posture before giving back the rule to a civilian government. Its aim was to appear as an "autonomous institution" and as the "guardian and of the new order". As such, the new Assembly set new legislation that legalized the increase in the soldiers' wages and subsidies. It supplied the pashas with luxury apartments in the most "exclusive" areas in the capital. It allowed resigned officers to hold positions in the upper levels of bureaucracy and sent retired generals outside the country as ambassadors or provided them with easy jobs on the boards of directors of some companies. In addition to this, the 1960 junta established the Army Mutual Assistance Association (known as the Turkish acronym OYAK) that allowed the army to interfere in business and industry. It established the "Army Bazaars" which permitted the ministry to purchase products at low prices, lower than those provided to the average citizen.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, "The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey," *Comparative Politics* 16, no. 1 (Oct. 1983): 22-23

⁴⁷ James Brown, "The Military and Society: The Turkish Case", *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 1989): 389.

⁴⁸ Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, "The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey," *Comparative Politics* 16, no. 1 (Oct. 1983): 22-23.

⁴⁹ Ahmad Feroz, op. cit., 130-1.

2. 1971 Military Intervention: The Military as Praetorian Moderators

Few years later, there was another military intervention. The 1971 intervention took place as a result of internal violence, “fragmentation” of political parties, and deterioration of the economy. The economy fell seriously and the efforts to redress this fall were undermined by chronic inflation. Violent leftist forces and trade unions opposed to the government’s economic program behind and led to the imposition of the martial law. The use of the military to support an unpopular government was opposed by the senior commanders. As a result, the army decided to interfere.

However, unlike in 1960, this time the army did not topple the government. It did not dissolve the parliament, suspend the constitution, nor even take over directly. The coup was a “coup by memorandum” signed by the chief of the general staff and the three force commanders.⁵⁰ Through this memorandum, the army insisted that an “above party” or a “technocratic” government be formed behind which it would be able to perform effective political influence.⁵¹ In other words, the 1971 military intervention can be considered as a “half coup” through which the army decided to rule from “behind the scenes” instead of ruling directly.⁵²

According to William Hale, some senior generals wanted to establish a guardian military regime, or maybe even a ruler regime. However, the air force commanders, General Batur, and the chief of the General Staff, General Tagmac, opposed such demands. At the beginning, they refused even to adopt any action against Demirel’s government. But, with time, they were forced to do so, especially with the rise of

⁵⁰ Ergun Ozbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 33.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 35.

chaos and violence. As such, they reached a "compromise formula" which was known as the "12 March memorandum".

The main reason why the military institution did not carry out a coup was that it was deterred by the problems that the Greek junta faced after its 1967 coup.⁵³ As a result, they adopted what Nordlinger called "displacement coup" whereby the Demirel civilian government was deposed and substituted by another civilian government that was more flexible and pleasant to the armed forces.⁵⁴ The military's main intention was to influence the events through pressure and compulsion.⁵⁵ With such a strategy, Nordlinger's moderator regime was applied. Like all other praetorian moderators, the Turkish military acted, simply, as effective "pressure groups" without taking over power.

The 1971 military intervention was also known as "coup by communique": the civilian government stayed officially in place, but its actions were supervised by the military institution.⁵⁶ The three cabinets, which existed between 1971 and 1973, were composed of civil servants and "backbenchers". They received, unofficially, the consent and support of the Supreme Military Council.⁵⁷

To be able to scrutinize and control the internal situation, martial law was imposed; newspapers were suppressed, and a huge number of extremists were arrested. Besides, the constitution was amended. The amendments touched nearly all the governmental

⁵³ Rida Hilal, *op. cit.*, 127.

⁵⁴ Eric Nordlinger, *op. cit.*, 22-23

⁵⁵ Rida Hilal, *op. cit.*, 127.

⁵⁶ William Hale, *op. cit.*, 314-5.

⁵⁷ James Brown, "The Military and Society: The Turkish Case," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 1989): 389.

institutions such as the unions, the Council of State, the Constitutional Court, the Assembly, and the Court of Appeal. They even touched the press, radio and television, and universities. The aim of such amendments was to restrict the freedom and rights ensured by the 1961 constitution.⁵⁸ Accordingly, the military's "indirect rule" stayed for thirty months, the period needed to attain these changes. Civilian rule was restored in October 1973.⁵⁹

3. 1980 Military Intervention: The Military as Praetorian Guardians

In 1980, another military intervention took place. The intervention was a reaction to an unsteady political situation that the elected government seemed unable to resolve. It was an attempt to defend a weakened state under attack by Leftists, Islamists and Kurds. In fact, the country was suffering from deteriorating internal conditions: economic collapse, internal violence, and serious threats to highly indicative symbols such as sectarianism. Yet, what forced the military to intervene directly was the government's imposition of the martial law as a means of controlling the situation and maintaining civil order.⁶⁰

Interestingly enough, many Turkish citizens supported this direction intervention. They viewed it as the "only alternative to anarchy". Unlike the previous interventions that aimed to attain "institutional reforms", this intervention was designed to adjust the directions set earlier. An executive body composed of five members and called National Security Council (NSC) was nominated. The Council ruled the country until the general elections of November 1983. It was headed by General Evren, the leader

⁵⁸ Feroz Ahmad, *op. cit.*, 152.

⁵⁹ James Brown, "The Military and Society: The Turkish Case," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 1989): 389.

⁶⁰ Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, "The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey," *Comparative Politics* 16, no. 1 (Oct. 1983): 22.

of the coup and the president of the republic until 1987. It appointed an overridingly civilian government and nominated Bulent Ulusu, a retired admiral, as the head of this government. The majority of the members of the government were bureaucrats, instructors and retired officers.⁶¹

According to Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, the 1980 regime was a guardian military regime. This is true because its main goals were to exclude "corrupt" politicians, revise the branches of the government, and regulate the distribution of power.⁶² To attain these goals, it suspended the constitution and all professional associations and confederations related to the labor union; it destroyed all symptoms of revolt originating from the left, such as revolutionaries, social democrats, and trade unionists; and it dissolved the legislative branch and shut down many political parties and arrested their leaders.

The junta also declared, immediately after it took over power, that civilian rule would be retained in a "reasonable period of time" and that it was "determined to remove all obstacles which had hindered the healthy working of the democratic order in a way that would preclude for ever the need for similar interventions in the future."⁶³ Such declarations confirm to Nordlinger's category of a guardian regime since they reveal the junta's intention of giving over power in a short period of time that is once the malpractice have been dealt with.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Turkey: Military Intervention and the Return to Civilian Rule* (1995). [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+tr0030\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+tr0030))

⁶² Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, "The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey," *Comparative Politics* 16, no. 1 (Oct. 1983): 28.

⁶³ Feroz Ahmad, *op. cit.*, 182-3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

The 1982 amended constitution increased the rights and privileges of the Turkish president. Among these rights was the right to dissolve the parliament and ask for new elections if the parliament was paralyzed and the right to appoint the members of the Constitutional Court and the members of other important judicial bodies. What encouraged the military to increase the powers of the president was the fact that the junta's leader, General Evren, was to be automatically appointed as the president of the Republic.

The constitution stipulated also the formation of a Presidential Council. The Council included five members from the junta and lasted for six years. In addition to this, it provided for an enlarged role of the army through the NSC. Article 118 of the constitution stated that the council was to be composed of the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Chief of the General Staff, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Interior, and Defense, and the Commanders of Land, Air, and Naval Forces and of the gendarmerie. The council of ministers was forced to consider seriously the decisions of the NSC in matters related to the existence, sovereignty, and independence of the country.⁶⁵

The guardian military regime stayed in power for three years. In September 1983, civilian rule was restored with the appointment of Turgut Ozal as a prime minister accompanied by a twenty-one member cabinet. In December 1983, the third emergence of an elected civilian cabinet in just over twenty-three years took place.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Daham Mahmoud Ali, "Turqiya ma ba'ed al-Outhmaniya," *Shu'un al-Awsat* (Sep. 2000): 19

⁶⁶ William Hale, *op. cit.*, 269.

It is here essential to state that the international environment played a significant role in handing over the rule to civilians in 1983. As a matter of fact, one of the most important restraints that influenced the 1980 junta's decision was the reaction of external states. The US emphasized on Turkey's strategic significance to NATO. The Carter administration declared that for it to maintain its assistance of Turkey, the junta had to give back power to the civilians. Yet, no open American "criticism" of the junta was witnessed. Indeed, it was the international organization in Western Europe that openly stated its dismay towards Turkey's internal affairs. The Turkish delegation was removed from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe directly after the coup. Besides, it was not allowed in except few months after the return of civilian rule. Moreover, the EC stopped an "aid package" to which it had consented for before.

Even though Evren refused to admit that this "pressure" affected the junta's policies, yet the government's concern and desire to join the Parliamentary Assembly and its continuous denials of human rights violations showed that the junta did care for the international environment. The junta did seek after preserving its "friendly relations" with the Western states. As such, it viewed the return of a democratically elected government as a means of maintaining good terms with the West.⁶⁷

What are the politically consistent hypotheses that result from this study? In reviewing the civilian-military relations in Turkey (up until 1983), it can be concluded that the Turkish army functioned as a praetorian army. The three military interventions presented a real proof of the army's assertive role in the political system.

⁶⁷ William Hale, *op. cit.*, 250-1

Like all praetorian armies, the Turkish army functioned separately from the civilian government. To attain its goals, it resorted to force or threatened to do so. It justified its direct or indirect resort to force in the name of guarding the country's "national security" and "national integrity". Besides, it resorted continuously to an official ideology, Ataturk's ideology, as a means to defend the rule of the state elite and state suppression. Concerning its political system, the Turkish army allowed a type of "pluralism" that permitted an opposition that does not defy the political system. If, however, the opposition opposed it, it lost all the chances to preserve its existence.⁶⁸

However, it should be stated that the Turkish military interfered in the political arena with reluctance. This is mainly the reason why the country has never witnessed the emergence of a ruler military regime. Indeed, throughout the three military interventions, the military acted either as a praetorian guardian (1960 and 1980) or as a praetorian moderator (1971), but never as a Praetorian ruler. In addition to this, it was the army's reluctance to rule indefinitely that made them give over power to a democratically elected civilian government once the desired modifications and changes have been attained. On the other hand, it was the army's willingness to reduce the needs to intervene directly or carry out a coup d'état that made it establish official and legal consultative machinery (such as the National Security Council) joining the civilian and the military institutions.

The following chapter considers the 1983-1993 period that was characterized by military "disengagement" from Turkish politics. It examines the different internal and external policies embraced by Turgut Ozal and rejected by the generals. Then, it tries to figure out what factors prevented the army from carrying out a coup or even

⁶⁸ Levent Basturk, "The Praetorian Turkish State and its Crisis of Hegemony," *MSANEWS* (1999) <http://msanews.mynet.net/Scholars/Basturk/praetorian.html>

compelling their own demands, thus bringing Turkey closer to the Liberal-Democratic model of civilian-military relations.

Chapter 3

The Military's Disengagement from Turkish Politics

(1983-1993)

The following chapter examines the smooth military disengagement that took place in Turkey in the post-1983 period. It shows how since the return of the civilian rule in 1983, the military institution started adopting a different stance towards the civilian government.

I. Military's Disengagement from Politics: Liberal-Democratic Model

According to Metin Heper, a Turkish analyst, the post-1983 era witnessed a movement towards Liberal-Democratic model, whereby the military started, especially in the 1990s, disengaging itself from the government.⁶⁹ William Hale asserts that,

“by the beginning of the 1990s, it was apparent that the armed forces chiefs were beginning to abandon their traditional position of semi-autonomy within the state structure, in which defense policy was regarded as their private preserve, outside the control of the elected politicians... The Turkish army's political role was now weaker than at any time since the 1950s.... There was a gradual shift towards a new balance, in which the generals would become the servants of an elected government, as in the Western democracies”.⁷⁰

1. Ozal's Defiant Policies towards the Military

i. Internal Policies

The appointment of Turgut Ozal as a Prime Minister in 1983 denoted the beginning of a decade characterized by a substantial reduction in the role of the military institution

⁶⁹ Metin Heper, “The Military and Democracy in the Third Turkish Republic,” *Armed Forces and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 22, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 614. *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web7.infotrac.london.gale.../url=rc1_EIM_0_A18688909&dyn4!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

⁷⁰ Ergun, Ozbudun, op. cit., 119.

followed by another decade of a significant civilian supremacy. As a start, Ozal tried to interfere in the country's public policies and to change many of the policies set by the military during the 1980-83 military rule period. For example, he allowed the citizens to determine, themselves and through a referendum, the fate of Provisional Article 4. This article prevented the heads of the pre-1980 parties from developing or maintaining any cooperation with any political party until 1992. He removed all conditions set for establishing new political parties. He eliminated all the conditions that limited the transition of the members of the parliament from one party to another. In addition to this, he legalized many activities that were prohibited after the 1980 coup such as "public meetings" and protests. Ozal, also, legalized the right to found associations and to present "collective petitions"; appointed civilian administrators in place of military "liaison" delegates in all ministries; decreased the maximum period of detention of suspects prior to arraignment from 90 to 15 days; and permitted nearly all trade unions to function. Furthermore, he tried to increase and diffuse the privileges of his government to the fields of internal security through establishing "regional governorships" and through providing the prime minister with uncommon powers with respect to the appointment and staff procedures of the National Intelligence Agency.⁷¹

Besides, Ozal interfered and started deciding on matters that had to do with the "military autonomy", thus, ignoring the latter's decisions and objections. In June 1987, for example, he appointed General Necip Torumtay as a Chief of General Staff even though the senior command, General Necdet Urug, suggested the nomination of

⁷¹ Gerassimos Karabelia, "The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in Post-War Turkey, 1980-85," *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (October 1999): 137

General Necdet Ozturun.⁷² To many, such an action represented an attempt to attain “civilian control over the defense establishment”. To the columnist, Ugur Mamcu, it represented a “Civilian coup”.⁷³ As a result, Ozal’s movement shocked the country especially that it was considered a “taboo” for the prime minister to behave in such a way towards the Chief of the General Staff. It was even claimed that this was the first time that military submission to civilians had been so strongly emphasized.

Few months later, Ozal felt confident enough to infer to communist leaders that his country had removed all constraints and that it was safe for them to visit it. By this, he was somehow eliminating, by himself and without consulting the military, Articles 141 and 142 of the penal code that prohibited communist politics. However, and as the leaders of the UCPT, Kutlu and Behice Boran’s successor Nihat Sargin reentered Turkey, they were instantly detained by the army. Such an incident was viewed by many as an indication of an intensifying discord between Ozal and the army.⁷⁴

Moreover, Ozal supported the Islamic movement within Turkey.⁷⁵ Islamic movements increased and became more alive in the 1980s with the help of Ozal. He supported Islamic schools known as *Imam-Hatip* (preacher) schools. Graduates from such schools were accepted, for the first time, in all universities except military academies.⁷⁶ He allowed the Ministry of Education to ban the teaching of Darwin theory in elementary and intermediate schools and permitted female students to wear

⁷² Gerassimos Karabelia, “The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in Post-War Turkey, 1980-85,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (October 1999): 137.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁷⁴ Erik Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1993), 300

⁷⁵ Ken Mackenzie, “Ozal and Turkey’s Generals.” *Middle East International*, no. 304 (11 July 1987): 13-14

⁷⁶ Morton Ambrowitz, “Dateline Ankara: Turkey after Ozal,” *Foreign Policy*, no.91 (Summer 1993): 176.

scarves. He issued a decree that permitted the construction of *Wakf* (endorsement) foundations⁷⁷ and adopted “liberal reforms” that stipulated the loosening Ataturk’s main principles, namely secularism. Such reforms paved the way for the rise of Islam as a significant feature of the Turkish identity.

Ozal’s party, the Motherland Party (MP), contributed also to the development of the Islamic movement. MP included important Muslim figures who were also members of the parliament. Besides, it encouraged the booming of Islamic organizations and charitable institutions and the appearance of two channels with Islamic trends that benefited from the “deregulation of broadcasting” adopted by Ozal.⁷⁸

Furthermore, Ozal advocated some essential rights to the Kurds. He insisted on the attainment of “modest” changes that would permit the Kurds to speak their own language. He urged the amendment of some articles in the constitution for the benefits of the Kurds such as giving them the right to publish and broadcast in Kurdish.⁷⁹

Indeed, he allowed the Southeastern Anatolia Project Television Network to broadcast a 60 or 90 minutes programs in Kurdish and permitted the suitable schools to teach in that language. With such steps, Ozal bravely invalidated Law 2932 which stipulated the prohibition of using the Kurdish language in 1983. When asked for the reasons for such a policy he replied: “What would happen if we do it? We should not be afraid of this at all”.⁸⁰ As such, Ozal backed the idea of “acknowledging” Kurdish identity. To the opposition, such movements indicated nothing but a serious breach in Ataturk’s

⁷⁷ Rida Hilal, op. cit., 154.

⁷⁸ Sami Zubaida, “Turkish Islam and National Identity,” *Middle East Report* 26, no. 199 (April-June 1996): 11.

⁷⁹ “Trying to Please,” *The Economist* 318, no. 7700 (March 30, 1991): 38.

⁸⁰ Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 62-63.

principles.⁸¹ Thus, it rejected such policies especially that Turkey has always renounced providing the Kurds with even cultural freedom. In short, Ozal was charged of “recklessness”.⁸²

ii. External Policies

a. Torumtay’s Incident

As Ozal became a president in 1989, his attempts to bypass the generals increased even more. In 1990, for instance, he responded to the Gulf War in a manner inconsistent with the military’s desire and beliefs. As a matter of fact, Turkey faced, at that time, a dilemma: It did not want to be involved in a war against Saddam Hussein; yet, it was forced to participate in the embargo against him. As such, Ozal permitted the US and other “coalition air forces” to utilize NATO air bases on Turkish territory to help establish the no-fly zones over North-South Iraq to hit Iraq. Such a movement, however, endangered Turkey and increased the probability of being dragged into a serious Middle Eastern war. Internally, it was rejected by the opposition political parties and by most of the Turkish citizens.

Ozal’s response to the Gulf War made many political analysts doubt the existence of “balance of power” between the regime and the officer corps. It even revealed the role of the generals as advisors and not as dictators of policy.⁸³ What was more shocking was the Chief of General Staff’s reaction to Ozal’s policies towards the Gulf. In fact, when General Necip Torumtay realized that it would be impossible to make Ozal

⁸¹ Noel Malcolm, “West from Turkey: the State of Ataturk’s Revolution Mattered Little to Europe-until Bosnia,” *National Review* 47, no. 11 (12 June 1995): 50, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web7.infotrac.gatech.edu/purl=rc1_EIM_0_A17015265&dyn=37!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

⁸² “Trying to Please,” *The Economist* 318, no. 7700 (March 30, 1991): 38

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 37-8

change his stance, he relinquished his position as a chief of general staff. When asked about the reasons for his resignation, Torumtay asserted that Ozal's reaction to the Gulf War was an "unconventional" one. He justified his resignation by arguing that the General Staff suggested a scheme to be adopted by the NSC and the executive branch, but this scheme was modified by President Ozal and the Foreign and Defense Ministers without Torumtay's acknowledgement.

However, it was argued that there were other factors behind Torumtay's resignation. Above all, Torumtay opposed the decision to permit the US Air Force to attack Iraq from Turkish territory without any shield for the country's other military basis. Second, he rejected the closure of the pipeline along the boundaries between Turkey and Iraq, especially that he was neither consulted nor informed of such a step in advance. Finally, he objected to Ozal's admission of the Iraqi Kurds into Turkey as refugees before the military leaders could resort to the procedures needed to prepare for their admission.⁸⁴

Up until Ozal's leadership, any conflict between the generals and the civilians was followed by a coup d'état. This time, the case was different: Disagreement between the two induced the resignation of the Chief of General Staff. What is more astonishing is that none of the other high-ranking leaders condemned the regime or even the civilian president.⁸⁵ In fact, the Torumtay incident demonstrated the subordination of the military to the civilian government, even in matters related to its own field; in other words, the military surrendered its "semi-autonomous positions".

⁸⁴ William Hale, *op. cit.*, 292.

⁸⁵ Ali Karaosmanoglu, "The Evolution of the National Security Culture and the Military in Turkey," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 211-212.

Ozal, however, viewed General Torumtay's response as a "normal incident" which may take place in any democratic state. To him, such an incident "is significant in that it showed the distance Turkey has traveled along this road since 1987."⁸⁶ General Torumtay's reply was even weirder. In response to the media's views, Torumtay asserted that

"There is no conflict between the military and civilian officials. The Turkish Armed Forces commanders know very well that the civilian authority has always the final word. The Army knows where it stands...of course, in meeting with civilian officials differences will arise. But this is only to be expected."⁸⁷

It is, however, essential to state that lack of coordination between Ozal and the military started even before that incident. It started in 1987 when the former was still a prime minister. It began when the Kurdish rebels slaughtered Turkish women and children at Pinarcik village next to the Syrian boundaries. Ozal responded to this tragedy by blaming General Ozturun, then the commander of ground forces, for carelessness and for his inability to prevent the slaughter from taking place. He used his legal authority and retired him few days later. Such an action was rejected by the military and viewed as an insult to them.⁸⁸

b. Ozal's Relation with Iran and Syria

Other external policies annoyed the military as well. Among these policies was Ozal's relation with Iran and Syria. The military regime viewed Iran with skepticism. It suspected the Iranian Islamists and their effect on Turkey. Iranian hostility towards Ataturk and his principles was apparent; it was the spark that caused the deterioration of the situation even more. An incident worth of mentioning is the Iranian Prime

⁸⁶ William Hale, op. cit., 293

⁸⁷ Ali Karaosmanoglu, "The Evolution of the National Security Culture and the Military in Turkey," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 211.

⁸⁸ Ken Mackenzie, "Ozal and Turkey's Generals." *Middle East International*, no. 304 (11 July 1987): 14.

Minister's visit to Turkey. In 1987, the Iranian Prime Minister, Hussein Moussavi, visited Turkey and denounced openly Ataturk's principles. He even rejected visiting Ataturk's tomb, even though such a step is viewed as a "must" for all visiting notables. As a response, the Chief of the General Staff, then General Oztorun, and his associates condemned Ozal for allowing the Iranian Prime Minister to visit the country.

The generals also opposed Ozal's relation with Syria. They believed that it was Syria that backed the Kurdish separatists. Yet, Ozal, again, ignored their fierce opposition and continued on with his relation with this country.⁸⁹

iii. Ozal's Style of Leadership

What eroded Ozal's reputation and position even more was his successful attempt to establish a "presidential style" that adapts to a "sultan" and to overcome the restrictions set by the constitution. Legally, a Turkish president has the right to act as a "national arbiter"; the right to dissolve the legislative branch; and the right to nominate ambassadors, high judges and university principals. Yet, Ozal seemed to be a "law unto himself". When setting many of his decisions, he ignored members of both the parliament and the cabinet. When asked about the reasons for adopting such a strategy, he replied: "I operate by changing peoples' minds... My style is to move very fast... You loose everything while everyone is debating what to do...."⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Mohammed Nouredine, "Shai'i'at al-Inqilab: Shabah al-Askar ma Zal Ka`Iman," *Shu'un Turkiya*, no. 2 (Oct. 1992), 23.

⁹⁰ David Lawday, "The Savvy Sultan of Ankara," *U.S. News & World Report* 111, no. 5 (July 29, 1991): 38, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web1.infotrac.london.galegroup.../purl=rc1_EIM_0_A10996811&dyn14!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

In addition to this, Ozal tried to manipulate, throughout his leadership, the government and his own party, the ruling party. To do so, he appointed people close to him for such posts. When he was elected as a president, he decided to appoint the head of the parliament, Yildirim Akbulut, as his successor as prime minister and head of the MP. Many argued that Ozal chose Akbulut, in particular, because he had a weak personality and could be easily manipulated. The press and the opposition parties even maintained that Ozal was ruling "behind the curtains" and that he was carrying out the functions and enjoying the privileges of a president, prime minister, and the leader of the ruling party simultaneously.⁹¹

Besides, Ozal was criticized for bringing members of his family to hold governmental and party posts. His brother, Yusuf, was the minister of state accountable for the economy. His other brother, Korkut, acted as a mediator with many Islamic countries. His cousin was the minister of agriculture. His elder son, Ahmet, was the chief of Staff and the one dealing with foreign businessmen. What was mostly astonishing was the influence which his wife, Semra, had on the regime's designations. In fact, Ozal's wife was very influential; she was appointed as the chairwoman of the crucial Greater Istanbul branch of MP in 1991 despite of the fierce opposition that such a move generated from the alliance and the members of Ozal's family.⁹²

All of these policies affected Ozal's reputation negatively. Ozal's indifference to the parliament and the cabinet and his desire to control the governmental positions made the opposition promise to topple him once it reached power. Ozal's luxurious lifestyle

⁹¹ Jalal Abdullah Mouawad, op. cit., 26.

⁹² "Blocking the Goal," *The Economist* 310, no.7594 (18 March 1989): 47

and his wife's eccentric and blunt modernism forced even the ordinary Turkish citizens to oppose him.⁹³

II. The General's Tolerance of Ozal's Policies and the Reasons behind their Patience

In a survey prepared by the *Hurriyet* Turkish newspaper in July 1992, it was discovered that 70.2 percent of the Turkish citizens believed that Ozal had trespassed his privileges, while only 26.1 percent believed that he had not, with 3.7 percent refusing to reply. When examined according to party alignments, the survey denoted that the majority of those whose reply was positive were supporters of Demirel's conservative Truth Path Party (TPP), Inonu's Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the Democratic Left Party, while the majority of those whose reply to this question was negative were the supporters of the Refah Party (an Islamic party) and the National Labor party (radical party). When asked whether Ozal should resign, 62.1 percent of the people replied "Yes", while only 31.1 percent replied "No", and 6.8 percent refrained from answering. Finally, when asked whether Ozal should be overthrown by the government, 59 percent replied "Yes", whereas 32.1 percent replied "No", and 8.9 percent did not reply.⁹⁴ Clearly, a high proportion of the Turkish citizens opposed Ozal's policies. Yet, the response of the military institution was astonishing. The Adjutant General and the Prime Minister openly stated that no coup will take place and that any coup will, ultimately, weaken the country.⁹⁵ Prime Minister Demirel firmly stated in 1991 that:

⁹³ Jim Bodgener, "Turkey's Fragile Democracy," *MEED Middle East Economic Digest* 35, no. 35 (Sep. 1991): 4. *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web1.infotrac.london.galegroup.../purlrc1_EIM_0_A11296924&dyn=12!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

⁹⁴ Mohammed Nouredine, "Si'raa Ozal/Yilmaz wa Mustaq'bal al'Ri'assa al-Tur'kiya," *Shu'un Turkiya*, no. 1 (Sept. 1992): 12-13.

⁹⁵ Mohammed Nouredine, "Shai'iat al-Inqilab: Shabah al-Askar ma Zal Ka'Iman," *Shu'un Turkiya*, no. 2 (Oct. 1992): 23-24.

“for the time being, neither the atmosphere of Turkey nor the atmosphere of the world is suitable for a coup d’état . Whatever trouble we are having today is the accumulation of our successive [military] interventions... People in the military know that the coups have harmed Turkey.... This time we will try democracy.”⁹⁶

i. Internal Reasons

The main question here is the following: Why did the military institution respond in this strange and unprecedented way? Why did not it carry out a coup d’état?

Ironically, the military started modifying many of its policies since 1980, even though such modifications collided with Ataturk’s principles. Above all, it changed its stance towards Islam starting from 1980. During the military rule, generals (especially General Evren) fostered, intentionally, Islamic preaching, in a manner not witnessed before in the country since the establishment of the Republic. As a result, the number of high religious schools increased from 249 to 341 between 1980 and 1983, and the number of enrolled students increased from 48,000 to 76,000. Graduates were allowed to enter all universities (except military academies). They were, also, allowed to work in different public posts in the government branches. This last point is very important especially that before 1980, graduates from Islamic schools were allowed to hold only religious posts.⁹⁷ Even the leader of the coup himself, General Evren, resorted publicly to *Ayyat* from the *Quran* on several occasions.

There were, however, reasons for the military’s adoption of such a “Turkish-Islamic synthesis”. This ideology was utilized as a tool to encounter the communist and the left-wing movements. It was, also, used as a means to reconstruct the official ideology

⁹⁶ William Hale, op. cit., 287

⁹⁷ Jalal Abdullah Mouawad, op. cit., 120.

of the state, so that the military would be able to control the society and to protect it. All in all, what is important is that the military did loosen its tight over Islam. By doing so, it was giving up intentionally its role as the “guardian” of secularism.⁹⁸

Moreover, the military institution relinquished other principles advocated by Ataturk such as “statism” and the “commitment to a fair and just society”. The generals accepted the structural adjustment programmes advocated by Ozal and the calls for the reduction of the state’s role as long as such steps contributed to the increase in the state’s wealth. With such steps, the military left the country’s economy in the hands of the civilian government, thus reducing the possibility of a conflict between the civilians and the officer corps. With such steps, Ozal was able to build and develop the country’s economical, political,⁹⁹ and even military capabilities. Indeed, he succeeded in increasing the country’s arms export up to \$400 million in 1985, thus making Turkey the world’s fourteenth largest armament manufacturer. He even succeeded in privatizing arms industries thus allowing private domestic and foreign companies to interfere in this profitable domain that was before manipulated by the military and state-owned firms. With this, Ozal proved to be a successful leader. He liberalized the Turkish economy and incorporated it into the world markets.¹⁰⁰

Internally, certain influential groups called for military disengagement. An important role was played by the intelligentsia. Whereas before the 1980 coup, the latter used to rely on the military’s support, in the post-junta period, they started opposing their intervention and asserting that it was an ineffective means which only hinders

⁹⁸ Omer Genckaya, et. al., *Aspects of Democracy in Turkey* (Jetro: Institute of Developing Economies, 1999), 62.

⁹⁹ Jalal Abdullah Mouawad, op. cit., 29-30

¹⁰⁰ Omer Karasapan, “Turkey’s Armaments Industries,” *Middle East Report* 17, no. 144 (Jan.-Feb. 1987): 27-8

democracy. The military's inability to protect and support these groups' demands encouraged the latter to oppose the former's involvement in the state's affairs.¹⁰¹

The Association of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen (TUSAID) also played an important role in reducing the military's role. With the end of the 1980s, some of the TUSAID members decided not to back the military any more. They discovered that it was not wise to support the military regimes because they have proven to be "unpredictable" in their policies and responses. They even decided that they should, themselves, interfere in politics and try to solve their own problems without resorting to the officer corps. Such a belief also contributed to the reduction in the military's role in the country.¹⁰²

ii. External Reasons

Other reasons that prevented the military from undergoing a coup were related to the "external environment". The US opposed any military attempt to topple Ozal's regime. It even supported the regime and assisted it. Indeed, good relation developed between Bush and Ozal and increased the general's belief of the inefficiency of any coup. Through around forty telephone conversations, both presidents were able to establish an "intimate" relation and even personal sympathy.¹⁰³ Besides, Ozal visited the US several times, and in one of his visits, Bush stated openly his respect for the Turkish leader and for his policies.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Ahmed Feroz, op. cit., 214

¹⁰² Ibid., 217.

¹⁰³ Sami Kohen, "Ozal Counting on Closer US Ties," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (April 1991). <http://www.washington-report.org/backissues/0491/9104014.htm>

¹⁰⁴ Amy Schwartz, "Atta Turk: Ozal Looks West," *The New Republic* 204, no. 15 (15 April 1991): 20. *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web7.infotrac.london.ga.../purl=rc1_EIM_0_A10602968&dyn=44!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

As a matter of fact, both the international and regional environments were unstable. America's main concern was Iraq. It wanted to deploy the NATO airbases on the Turkish territory to hit this country. The Turkish president, on the other hand, was willing to provide it with its needs and demands. As a result, a report was issued by the RAND Corporation and published by the Istanbul daily *Milliyet* (Nationality) in October 1992 in which it was stated that the US opposed a coup for any reason. It was this position that prevented the generals from carrying out a coup d'état.

Europe, also, opposed any government overthrow. Such an opposition was openly announced in October 1992 during a summit held by the Foreign Committee in the European Parliament in Brussels. During this meeting, the European states declared their opposition to any coup that might take place in Turkey and their desire to see democracy spread in the country. They, also, rejected the mechanism adopted by the Turkish army against the terrorists and viewed it as a hindrance to democracy.¹⁰⁵

iii. Ozal's Personality

In addition to all of these points, there was something about Ozal's personality and accomplishments that the military could not ignore. Indeed, Ozal was a successful leader. He was a "leader with a vision". He was very persuasive. He tried to adopt comprehensible and well-developed plans. He insisted that his party builds only weak connections with the localities because he preferred to influence the people "directly" through the media. To him, the best way to get the people's support was through appearing on television and presenting the economic plans and the remedies to the

¹⁰⁵ Mohammed Nouredine "Shai'i'at al-Inqilab: Shabah al-Askar ma Zal Ka`Iman," *Shu'un Turkiya*, no. 2 (Oct. 1992): 24.

economic problems in a simplistic manner.¹⁰⁶ He believed that one should resort to “economic rationality” and to the market signs in attempt to set efficient economic plans. He reduced the dominance of the regime over the public sector and protected capitalist activities.

Besides, Ozal was neither a fundamentalist nor a radical Islamist. He was distinguished in his personality. As a Turkish leader, he succeeded in mixing religious and secular visions in his personality, decisions and policies. It is true that he advocated the Naqshbandi before the 1980 coup and was influenced by the Islamic National Salvation party. It is also true that he practiced the spiritual virtues like praying and going to the pilgrimage. However, he was also a secular Western-oriented leader who defended secularism and Ataturk’s principles.¹⁰⁷ In fact, Ozal advocated a “moderate Islam”. He opposed not only radical Ataturkism but also the radical Islamic wave that emerged in Turkey in the 1980s, after the success of the Iranian Islamic revolution. In other words, Ozal called for a “moderate Islamic Turkish model” as a means of facing the revolutionary Islamic Iranian model. As Oktay Eksi, a commentator, once said: “With his brain he is in the West. With his heart he is in the Islamic world.”¹⁰⁸

However, and despite of Ozal’s successful defiant policies, it is wrong to conclude that during Ozal’s era, Turkey endorsed completely a Liberal-Democratic model similar to the one endorsed by Western democracies. As Hale once stated, in spite of the alterations which the country’s civilian-military relations witnessed, one should

¹⁰⁶Metin Heper and E. Keyman, “Double-Faced State: Political Patronage and the Consolidation of Democracy in Turkey,” in Sylvia Kedourie, *Turkey before and after Ataturk* (London: Portland, 1998), 67.

¹⁰⁷Jalal Abdullah Mouawad, op. cit., 30

¹⁰⁸Morton Ambrowitz, “Dateline Ankara: Turkey after Ozal,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 91 (Summer 1993): 164.

not conclude, "that, by 1992, the civil power had yet established the full degree of control over the military which is the norm of most democratic systems".¹⁰⁹

In fact, the emergence of Demirel-Inonu coalition government after the November 1991 elections led to the decline in the president's level of intervention in the government's affairs. Demirel and Ozal antagonized each other. As a result, the former emerged as an obstacle facing Ozal and his policies. Yet, the fear of any armed intervention in case the government collapsed compelled these two politicians to coexist. The hatred between the country's president and its prime minister made the risk of a coup d'état an imminent one.¹¹⁰

In conclusion, and upon examining Ozal's era, it can be easily noticed that he was a successful moderate civilian leader. He was the only Turkish president who dared to oppose the officer corps. Having emerged from the "womb" of the military institution, from the "womb" of the 1980 coup (as Nour el-Dine calls it)¹¹¹, and being a civilian leader advocating liberal policies, he had all the incentives to impose his desires and needs even those rejected by the army. As a result, he succeeded in reducing the role of the military institution to a remarkable and unprecedented extent.

Nevertheless, Ozal's sudden death in 1993 was followed by an increase in the political strength and influence of the military corps. As Suleiman Demirel replaced Ozal as the President of the Turkish Republic, and Tansu Ciller replaced Demirel as

¹⁰⁹ William Hale, op. cit., 294.

¹¹⁰ Gerassimos Karabelian, "The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in Post-War Turkey, 1980-1995," *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (Oct. 1999): 138.

¹¹¹ Mohammad Nour el-Dine, personal interview, taped, Beirut, Lebanon, 15 March 2001.

the first female Prime Minister of Turkey, rumors of a military intervention started spreading in Ankara. The development of "unfriendly" relations between the country's new president and its new prime minister plus Ciller's failure to deal with the economic problems forced the latter to rely on the army to keep herself in power. This, in return, permitted the military to exert more direct and indirect pressure and influence over the government. According to an English reporter, "traditionally, the armed forces have stepped in to clear such [economic] messes. But, few Turks believe a new coup is in the works. The armed forces do almost what they want."¹¹²

The following chapter examines the 1996-1997 period that was characterized by military re-engagement in politics. It reveals the factors that encouraged the army to intervene in Turkish politics and oppose Erbakan's government. On the other hand, it tries to show the reasons that drove the military institution to act mainly as a "pressure group" without adopting any overt intervention. To do so, it, first, presents the reasons behind the success of an Islamic leader such as Erbakan in the general elections. Then, it presents and analyzes the different internal and external policies which Erbakan adopted and which outraged the military. It also focuses on the generals' reaction to these policies and the factors that prohibited a coup from taking place.

¹¹² Gerassimos Karabelian, "The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in Post-War Turkey, 1980-1995," *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (Oct. 1999): 139.

Chapter 4

The Military's Engagement in Turkish Politics (1996-1997)

The following chapter focuses on the role the military played between 1996 and 1997. It shows how Turkey abandoned the track it followed between 1983 and 1993 and which made it very much similar to Western democracies. The 1996-1997 period presents the return of "military engagement" in politics with the victory of an Islamist party in the 1995 general elections.

I. The Rise of the Refah Party

The rise of the Refah Party (RP) is really quite a difficult issue to analyze. The Islamists' political strength has varied over time and they have often been shut down as a political force when it seemed they might gain some sort of power. In 1995, the Refah Party gained more votes than any other single party. At first, Tansu Ciller's True Path Party (TPP) and Mesut Yilmaz's Motherland Party (MP) set aside their rather bitter personal differences and formed an uneasy coalition along with the tacit support of Bulent Ecevit, the deputy Prime Minister, and the 75 seats controlled by his Democratic Left Party.¹¹³ However, such a step proved to be a failure. As the Ciller-Yilmaz coalition collapsed, Tansu Ciller secured a coalition with the RP itself in which the Islamists of the party toned down their antagonism towards the West and Ciller toned down her hostility towards the Islamists.¹¹⁴

As the RP's chance of winning the elections increased, popular reaction started

¹¹³ James Jackson, "Shotgun Marriage," *Time International* 147, no. 12 (March, 18 1996), 52

¹¹⁴ Rod Usher, "Secular State Suspended," *Time Magazine* 148, no. 5 (July 22, 1996), 53.

spreading. For the first time after the 1950's Menderes government, an Islamic party was about to take over power. The reaction to the victory of an Islamic party such as the RP differed. Moderate Islamists, such as Abdullah Gul, argued that since the West advocates democracy, then, it should not prevent the Islamists from ruling democratically. As for the non-Islamists, their reactions were divided. Some of them (around eighty percent of the population) were undisturbed by the RP's victory. They viewed it not as an "unchanging" and "irresistible force" but as a "political organism" which will adjust according to political "pressures". They assumed that the Islamist party would give up its disputed arguments and stick to a "social conservative" plan. The other twenty percent, which included educated middle-class citizens, opposed the party's victory. To them, the RP represented nothing but "fundamentalism". As a result, some of them expressed their desire to see the military interfere if the RP won the elections; others talked about the possibility of immigrating; and some others even talked about a high probability of carrying the gun and fighting.¹¹⁵

Erbakan responded to these complaints by insisting that his party was not opposed to a secularism relying on "state neutrality" in issues related to religion. After the December 1995 elections, he said: "If we succeed in forming a coalition government, our two main objectives will be to defend democracy and human rights."¹¹⁶

Few months later and in the local elections of 1996, the RP gained 33.5% of the votes and won 41 districts. Such a victory represented a break in Turkish history that was the outcome of a search for new relations between state and society.

¹¹⁵ Noel Malcom, "West From Turkey: The State of Ataturk's Revolution Mattered Little to Europe," *National Review*, 47, no. 11 (June 1995): 53, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web7.infotrac.london.ga.../purl=rcl_EIM_0_A17015265&dyn=37!ar_fmt?sw_aepla

¹¹⁶ Eric Rouleau, "Turkey: Beyond Ataturk," *Foreign Policy*, no. 103 (Summer 1996): 79.

II. The Reasons behind the Victory of the Refah Party

As a start, it is important to examine the reasons behind the victory of the Islamic party, the Refah Party. The first reason had to do with its organization. The RP superceded the other parties in the huge number of its members and in its detailed and effective party organization. It enjoyed a manageable and "well-organized grass-roots membership". Its activists were very "motivated", well-disciplined and firmly entrusted ones who viewed their jobs as ones selected by God. They operated at the "community level", whereby they went to all quarters, roads, and houses in the cities, collected individual data about the voters and their families, assessed them, and dealt with all the obstacles which they faced. In other words, the "party organization [was] on steam".¹¹⁷ The secular parties, on the other hand, lacked well-prepared and convincing policy programs. Some of them, like the Truth Path Party (TPP) and the Motherland Party (MP), were known for their corruption; others, such as the new Republican People's Party (RPP), were quarreling continuously. All of these points acted in favor of Erbakan.

Furthermore, the real strength of the RP was in its grass roots orientation. Contrary to what many think, the RP did not operate as a political party before 1995 but as a "social welfare agency" for the poor. It responded to the socio-economic needs of the urban poor, creating a system of social-welfare that helped urban immigrants from small or rural areas find jobs, food, apartments, medical care, and educational opportunities.¹¹⁸ Besides, it was not a military revolutionary movement, nor a monolithic grouping.¹¹⁹ On the contrary, it endorsed a more "secular platform" in an

¹¹⁷ Sencer Ayata, "Patronage, Party and State: The Politicization of Islam in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Journal* 50, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 52.

¹¹⁸ Metin Heper, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a Reconciliation," *Middle East Journal* 51, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 36.

¹¹⁹ Mouawad, op. cit., 162.

RP. The party also received the support of the Islamic economic enterprises. Such enterprises included corporations, chambers of commerce and industry, trade unions, women and youth groups, 50 publicists, 45 radio stations, 19 television channels, and many videos and cassette producers.¹²³ In addition to this, the party was backed by the “economically marginalized” sector of the Turkish society. Such a sector was composed of the lower middle class and the urban lower classes. They were excluded from the Western secularist nation. As such, they viewed the RP as the only party capable of supporting them.¹²⁴

The fourth reason had to do with Erbakan himself. In fact, the RP leader was very lenient and cooperative in his discussions and negotiations with the leaders of the other political parties. For instance, he restrained from putting pre-conditions for cooperating with the other parties in the formation of a new government. It was this leniency, accompanied by Ciller’s acceptance of a coalition with Erbakan, which also facilitated the rise of the Islamic party.

Unexpectedly, the Turkish military institution backed the RP-TPP coalition, or at least gave it the “green light” to appear. In fact, many political analysts argue that a “contract” was signed between the military and the RP-TPP coalition. In this contract, the military institution announced its acceptance of Erbakan’s coalition with Ciller under certain conditions: First, Erbakan’s acceptance of Ataturk’s principles (especially secularism) as the background for the cooperative work of the two parties; second, Erbakan’s abidance by and preservation of all universal and strategic treaties

¹²³ Metin Heper, “Islam and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a Reconciliation,” *Middle East Journal* 51, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 36-37.

¹²⁴ Jenny B. White, “Pragmatists or Ideologues? Turkey’s Welfare Party in Power,” *Current History* 96, no. 606 (Jan. 1997): 26.

attempt to widen popular support. It described itself as an "Islamic Democratic" party following the lines of the Western European Christian Democratic parties.¹²⁰

In a survey done in 1996, it was discovered that 41 percent of those who voted for the RP were secularists and that 71 percent declared their support of the army as the symbol of secularism. Indeed, the RP differed from other Islamic parties. It did not put the conditions of implementing the *Sharia* on the top of the list. On the contrary, it insisted on democracy and social equality. Besides, it was not the only Islamic party in the country. Thus, it did not present the rise of Islam nor the return of this religion as a symbol of change.¹²¹

The second reason behind the success of the RP was the failure of the rightist and leftist parties in forming a coalition which could replace the failing Yilmaz-Ciller coalition. In fact, after it became clear to Yilmaz that he could not cooperate with Ciller, he tried to negotiate with the leaders of the Left Democratic and Republican Peoples' parties in an attempt to form a coalition, but he needed the votes of around 30 members from Ciller's Party, the TPP. Ciller, also, tried to form a coalition that included parties from the central right and the central left in an attempt to prevent the RP from winning the elections, but she also failed.¹²²

The third reason was the increase in the popularity of the RP especially after the June 1996 municipal elections. Such popularity was enhanced by the media that started, for the first time, calling for the adoption of the "new-Islamic choice" advocated by the

¹²⁰ Metin Heper, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a Reconciliation," *Middle East Journal* 51, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 36-37.

¹²¹ Rida Hillal, op. cit., 162-3.

¹²² Ibid., 64.

signed by Turkey; third, Erbakan's commitment to refrain from adopting any act which might clash with the country's national interest (this last condition meant the military cooperation treaty signed between Turkey and Israel);¹²⁵ and fourth, Erbakan's consent to lead the cabinet for only two years. After these two years, Ciller would lead the government for another two years, with the last year's leadership left to be negotiated later. As such, the two leaders were ordered to rotate their positions annually. The aim of this transfer of power was to help the military check the consolidation of Islamism. Finally, the military insisted that all "sensitive" posts should be assigned to the Truth Path Party (TPP): Ministries of Defense, Interior, the Foreign Ministry and other agencies dealing with internal and external security were placed under the TPP's control. The RP was accountable only for Public Works, Labor, Energy, Agriculture, Environment, Culture, and Religious Affairs.¹²⁶

At any rate, it was impossible for the military to prevent the accession of the RP. This is true because, above all, all the governmental coalitions that appeared before the RP-TPP coalition stumbled. The RP-TPP coalition was the only choice available. Besides, the Turkish citizens were the ones who wanted the RP to govern. Indeed, the concentration of all political discussions on the need to keep out the RP and exclude it resulted in popular upset, even among those who opposed the party. As such, the RP's success was the "people's choice". Any military opposition to such a success would mean a neglect of "peoples' vote".

Moreover, the RP appeared in coalition with a secular party, the Truth Path Party.

¹²⁵ Jalal Abdullah Mouawad, op. cit., 66

¹²⁶ Ashraf Singer, "Al-Wizara al-I'tilafiya fi Turkiya bayna Ih'ti'mal al'Istimirar wal-In'hiyar," *al-Siyasa al-Duwaliya*, no. 128 (April 1997): 184.

This meant that the Islamist party's actions were to be monitored by its partner, thus reducing its ability to menace democracy, secularism, or even the army. Accordingly, any attempt to keep out the RP would be "illogical" and "immoral".

Finally, any military opposition to the success of the Islamist party would strengthen the Islamists. In fact, the RP stood as a strong opposition facing the government and its policies. With all the other parties weakening, it appeared as the only "untarnished, pure, and non-corrupt alternative" operating in the "name of God".¹²⁷

What contributed to the success of the RP was the army's continued desire to loosen its relation with the Islamists mainly for "Islamic appeal". The military carried on with the process of "Islamization" of the state that they have started in the early 1980s. Externally, they supported the Muslim Bosnians in the Balkans. They backed the pursuit of a conference in Ankara in October 1995 in an attempt to "coordinate" Islamic movements in the Central Asian republics, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and even Turkey. In this conference, Demirel himself stated that Islam is "one of the most important [bases] of our solidarity". Necmettin Cevheri, the foreign minister of the state, asserted that "for billions of Muslims, Turkey has become a beacon". Even Mesut Yilmaz, then the leader of the opposition Motherland Party, stated that "Islam remained the rising star of all times." Such statements revealed how far secularism had "drifted" mainly due to foreign policy targets and the desire of political parties to gain more votes.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Svante Cornell, "Turkey: Return to Stability," *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (Oct. 1999): 214

¹²⁸ Ashraf Singer, "Al-Wizara al-I'tilafiya fi Turkiya bayna Ih'ti'mal al'Istimrar wal-In'hiyar," *al-Siyasa al-Duwaliya* no. 128 (April 1997): 78.

The RP also received external support especially from Iran and Saudi Arabia. It was backed by these two countries as well as by the Islamic Brotherhood movement of Egypt, Jordan, and the Islamic movement of Pakistan, plus some Islamic groups in Afghanistan and Algeria.¹²⁹

III. Erbakan's Policies that Outraged the Military

1. Arguments Countering Erbakan's Policies

With such factors in mind, it is now important to examine Erbakan's policies. The main question that appears here is the following: Did Erbakan's policies really defy the army? While some analysts have related the military's hostile attitude towards the RP to Erbakan's challenging policies, others regarded the latter's policies as far away from being a threat either to the state or to the military.

According to Svante E. Cornell, the fears which many secularists experienced when the Islamists won the elections were not exaggerated. The RP did assist and back "Islamic revival" in the country. It tried to enhance the influence of Islam in the local government apparatus and in the society. Islamists were put in place of "secular functionaries". Ministries were designated to the RP in the coalition. Serious efforts were exerted by the Islamist party to nominate Islamic judges in place of the secular ones. Furthermore, there was a serious increase in the number of Islamist students at the social science departments of the universities and an increase in the number of Islamists willing to work in the public sector. There were, also, serious attempts to

¹²⁹ Tarek Dahrouj, "Turkiya: al-Intikhabat wa Ab`ad al-Azma al-Dakhiliya," *Si`yasa Dowaliya* no. 163 (Jan. 1996): 259.

introduce the *Sharia*, Islamic Law, even though such a step was prohibited by the Turkish constitution.¹³⁰

Jim Bodgener, a specialist in Turkish affairs, also doubted Erbakan's policies. According to Bodgener, Erbakan called for an "anti-Zionist Just Order" and announced openly "anti-Western rhetoric", even before the December elections. He asserted many times his desire to make his country abandon NATO and the EU. He talked about an "international Islamic club of nations" and an "Islamic trade bloc". He believed that Turkey could not develop its regional interests unless it developed bilateral relations with its "neighbors".¹³¹

To be able to attain such goals, Erbakan developed relations with Islamic countries in the first six months in office. He visited Islamic states (or states with a Muslim majority) such as Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Libya, and Nigeria. He forced Turkey to sign a treaty with Iran to purchase natural gas. He was even imputed for trying to make Turkey an "Iranian simulacrum".¹³² Indeed, Iran was the first country that Erbakan visited. The US opposed this visit because it had banned all transactions with this country. It viewed such transactions as a "drift away from the Western Orbit".¹³³

Erbakan also visited Libya. He ignored the objections of the chief advisor of foreign

¹³⁰ Svante Cornell, "Turkey: Return to Stability," *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (Oct. 1999): 215.

¹³¹ Jim Bodgener, "Turkey: Erbakan Expounds his Islamic Vision," *MEED Middle East Economic Digest* 40.36 (6 Sep. 1996): 30, *Expanded Academic ASAP*.

¹³² Jeremy Salt, "Turkey's Military Democracy," *Current Affairs* 98, no. 625 (Feb. 1998): 73.

¹³³ Jim Bodgener, "Erbakan Flies Pragmatist Colors," *MEED Middle East Economic Digest* 40.37 (13 Sept. 1993): 32, *Expanded Academic ASAP*.

policy, Abdullah Gul, who knew the visit would be misunderstood. Erbakan, however, insisted on going to that country. As expected, he returned "empty-handed" and embarrassed after Qadhafi openly blamed him for his inability to advocate Islam.¹³⁴

Moreover, the Islamist leader contacted Iraq. He sent two ministers to that country with the aim of assuring it that Turkey would carry on with the discussions on the re-opening of the Iraq-Turkey canal and would help remove the sanctions imposed on the country.¹³⁵

2. Arguments favoring Erbakan's Policies

Yet not all analysts viewed Erbakan's trips to Iran, as well as to Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia negatively. Some believed that such visits contributed to the "national interest" of the whole country. For instance, Erbakan's trip to Iran aimed at getting the country's support in opposing the PKK and developing a plan for a duct needed to transport natural gas from Iran to Turkey.

Many also asserted that Erbakan's deal with Iran did not challenge the US law that prohibits dealing with this country. In fact, the law opposed those who "invested" in Iran and not those who "traded" with it. In addition to this, Erbakan's right-wing secular partners did not repel this deal. Had such a deal really posed a threat to Turkey's secularists, they would have, undoubtedly, rejected it. Finally, Erbakan's

¹³⁴ Whit Mason, "The Future of Political Islam," *World Policy Journal* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 62, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web7.infotrac.london.gale.../purl=rcl_EIM_0_A64151725&dyn145!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

¹³⁵ Richard Myddelton, "Turkey Pushes East," *The Middle East* no. 260 (Oct. 1996): 8

visit to Iran was not clandestine. Erbakan informed the generals of his visit to this country. He even asked them to accompany him.¹³⁶

Furthermore, some argued that the army should have never feared Erbakan's early declarations of forming an "Islamic trade bloc". They believed that the "Islamic trade bloc" whom Erbakan once talked about during his campaign was not easy to accomplish due to the hatred and inconsistent goals that separated Turkey from its likely "trading partners". Turkey had an unstable relationship with Iraq and Syria because of their disputes over water and boundary matters. Turkey's relations with Egypt were declining after Erbakan's support of the Muslim brotherhood. The country's relation with Libya was not better than those with Iraq and Syria. Erbakan was repudiated for visiting Libya, especially after the Libyan leader's announcement of his desire to build a "Kurdish nation". This "political bombshell" contributed to serious demands from the Turkish parliament for Erbakan's resignation, yet he endured through a "no-confidence motion" by 19 votes.

Besides, it is important to point out that Erbakan's desires to develop economic ties with other countries was not restricted to Islamic states only. Erbakan wanted to sign a natural gas pipeline contract with Russia and an oil pipeline contract with Ukraine. In addition to this, his government developed relations with China, many Central Asian states, and Italy.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ "Turkey Tilts Eastward," *The Economist* 340, no. 7979 (17 Aug. 1996): 15.

¹³⁷ Jenny White, "Pragmatists or Ideologues? Turkey's Welfare Party in Power," *Current History* 96, no. 606 (Jan. 1997): 28.

Many even maintain that Erbakan never defied the army. Jenkiz Chander, a Turkish journalist and writer, believes that Erbakan was always willing to reach a compromise with the generals. Chander argues that the Refah's leader and his associates were traditional "etatist" technocrats. It is true that they were religious people, but they were also etatists. They believed strongly in the state and cherished their Turkish identity.

Furthermore, Chander asserts that the Refah Party's program never mentioned the *Sharia* as part of the country's constitution. It called for "republican principles" and for the "legal system". It advocated a market economy and supported the rise of "employers union" and many professional corporations that function as "front organizations" within the country.¹³⁸

J. A. Mango is another political analyst who viewed Erbakan's policies positively. In fact, according to Mango, many of Erbakan's policies were "reassuring". From the very beginning, he relinquished most of the "Islamic rhetoric" which he had adopted in opposition. He ignored his early threats of withdrawing from NATO and the EU. He succumbed to the military's desire to deal with Israel in defense training and acquisition. Mango even insisted that Erbakan did nothing but present "symbolic gestures": Construction of a mosque in Istanbul; acceptance of a break on Fridays for prayers; and the permission of Muslim praying in Hagia Sophia and the Byzantine mosques in Istanbul. With such steps, Erbakan was not challenging the secularists.

¹³⁸ Eric Rouleau, "Turkey: Beyond Ataturk," *Foreign Policy*, no.103 (Summer 1996): 77.

With such steps, he was revealing his desire to fulfill some of his earlier promises and not an "Islamic revolution".¹³⁹

Internally, he refrained from opposing the country's generals.¹⁴⁰ He consented to their desire to bow openly before Ataturk's tomb.¹⁴¹ With respect to his policies, he continuously referred to the military in every step he wanted to take, especially in foreign policy. He consulted with the NSC and accepted that the allied airplanes monitor the skies of northern Iraq from Turkish bases. He permitted the dismissal of thirteen military officers because they were charged for Islamic activity. He freed himself from various local RP administrators in five eastern districts because they adopted radical trends. He even consented to the army's desire to weaken the PKK and to "end" the Kurdish rebellion in eastern Turkey.¹⁴²

According to Mohammed Nour el-Dine, a specialist in Turkish affairs, it cannot be denied that the RP's basic guidelines were against any coalition with the West, Europe, and Israel. It is true that these guidelines stipulated the need to develop relations with the Islamic world. Yet, most of these guidelines remained "theoretical", mainly because implementing them required a "complete revolution" in the Turkish social, constitutional, and political system. As such, the RP's victory in June 1996 assured, on one hand, that these guidelines were nothing but a fallacy, an illusion. On the other hand, it revealed the pragmatic nature of Erbakan's personality that

¹³⁹ J. A. Mango, "Testing Time in Turkey," *Washington Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 6, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web6.infotrac.london.g.../purl=rc1_EIM_0_A19062752&dyn=57!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Eric Margolis, "Turkey's Generals Warm Up their Tanks," *The Wisdom Fund* (2 June 1997). <http://www.twf.org/News/Y1997/Generals.html>

¹⁴² Richard Myddelton, "Turkey Pushes East," *The Middle East* no. 260 (October 1996): 7

prevented him from disregarding the difficulties accompanying the implementation of these guidelines. Having recognized this, Nour el-Dine argues, Erbakan started changing his policies and attitudes towards the West. In October 1994, he visited Washington and assured the Americans of his party's desire to stick to democracy. In March 1995, he welcomed the American ambassador in Turkey. Add to this, the party's program stipulated that the government insisted on carrying on with the efforts of making Turkey join Europe.¹⁴³

IV. The Secularists' Vision of the Refah Party and its Supporters

If Erbakan had really changed his policies towards the army after his party's victory, then why did the latter continue on doubting the Islamic leader's policies? Why did it topple his government? According to Jenny White, an associate professor of anthropology, many secularists did not doubt the "head" of the RP, that is Erbakan, but the "body" of the party. They knew that the party's leadership was compliant and ready to negotiate. They feared, however, the "cadre" of Islamists and their supporters, be they the neofascists. In fact, the RP's followers embraced authoritarianism. They tried to spread Islamic values throughout the country. In the areas where the party won mayoralties in 1994, the Islamists tended to replace libraries and women's educational centers with *Koran* sessions. While in the areas where they had no control, such as in private institutes and associations, they resorted to "harassment" tactics. Veiled women were seen spending hours in the entrances and rooms of women's occupational training centers praying in a high voice in attempt to distract the participators and prevent them from completing their activities.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Mohammed Nour el-Dine, *Ku'ba'a wa'Amama: Mad'khal ila el'Hara'kat al'Islamiya fi Turkiya* (Lebanon: Dar el'Nahar lil'Nashir, 1997), 79.

¹⁴⁴ Jenny White, "Pragmatists or Ideologues? Turkey's Welfare Party in Power," *Current History* 96, no. 606 (Jan. 1997): 29.

Nevertheless, it was difficult for the secularists to detach the head of the party from its body. After all, Erbakan was the leader of the Islamists. Besides, he was the leader not only of the RP but also of other old Islamic parties such as the National Salvation Party. As such, it was difficult for the army to view Erbakan as an entity separate from the political parties that he himself established. It was difficult for the military to forget the Islamist leader's past defiant policies towards both the army and its foreign allies. This is why they continued on viewing Erbakan's policies with skepticism.¹⁴⁵

Moreover, the military's continuous reference to Ataturk prevented them from accepting the notion of having an Islamist party ruling. In fact, many argue that even if Erbakan had not defied the military, the latter would have still interfered. This is true mainly because the secularists stuck blindly to Ataturk's principles, especially those that advocated secularism. They endorsed the concept of Westernization which they have inherited from Ataturk and which they were reluctant to change. They perceived Islamist parties as a menace to Westernization and "secular democracy". They dealt with Islamists according to their "avowed" beliefs and not according to their actions and deeds. Indeed, supporters of Ataturk asserted that they were the only ones who cherished democracy. To them, the Islamists did not favor democracy; they abided by democratic standards only to persist. As a result, the secular elites viewed themselves as "democrats" when they shut down a party they disfavored, or when they carried out a coup.

In the same token, the secular elites viewed democracy as a system "devoid of conflict", a system lacking conflicting values. Thus, they believed that it was only in a

¹⁴⁵ Mohammed Nour el-Dine, *Ku'ba'a wa'Amama: Mad'khal ila el'Hara'kat al'Islamiya fi Turkiya* (Lebanon: Dar el'Nahar lil'Nashir, 1997), 83.

society where no one dared to defy the ruling class that secularists would attempt to expose their “democratic” values.¹⁴⁶

In reality, however, the defense of Ataturkism revealed that the secular elites have not advocated democracy. Ataturkism has always adhered to authoritarianism and, to the Turkish secularists, democracy evolved solely around their right to guard Ataturkism.¹⁴⁷ To these elites, the army was the only institution capable of such a mission; it was the “ultimate defense” against the intrusion of any threat, especially Islam, into the country.¹⁴⁸

V. 1997 Indirect Military Intervention: A “Soft” Coup

1. The Main Incidents that Triggered the Indirect Military Intervention

According to the military, the RP adopted many acts that showed that it was not “committed” to the maintenance of Turkish democracy as a secular state. Among these acts was Erbakan’s invitation to the *Iftar* meal (breaking of the fast) in Ramadan of religious men wearing religious costumes, a thing outlawed by the constitution. Erbakan considered his invitation to *Iftar* of “religious sect leaders” as a “sound and correct behavior”. The military, however, considered it as a defiant move through which Erbakan violated the country’s secularist system. They even referred to it as the direct pretext behind toppling Erbakan.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Whit Mason, “The Future of Political Islam in Turkey,” *World Policy Journal* (Summer 2000): 58, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web7.infotrac.gale.../purl=rc1_EIM_0_A64151725&dyn=14!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

¹⁴⁷ Ben Lombardi, “Turkey-Return of the Reluctant Generals,” *Political Science Quarterly* 112, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 209.

¹⁴⁸ Jenny White, “Pragmatists or Ideologues? Turkey’s Welfare Party in Power,” *Current History* 96, no. 606 (Jan. 1997): 30.

¹⁴⁹ Menderes Cinar, “Rebuilding the Center: Mission Impossible?” *PrivateView* (Autumn 1997). <http://www.tusiad.org.tr/yayin/private/autumn97/html/cinar.html>

However, the incident that can be considered as the beginning of the end of the RP took place in January 1997 when the Islamist Mayor of Sincan, a suburb of the capital Ankara, held a demonstration against Israel. In that demonstration, Muhammad Reza Beghari, the Iranian Ambassador, called for the adoption of the *Sharia* in Turkey. He also encouraged the Islamists to call themselves “fundamentalists”. A few days later, the military started spreading rumors of an imminent coup. Subsequently, the Mayor was jailed and the Iranian Ambassador was expelled. A unit of tanks and armored cars rolled through Sincan. This incident was the last straw in what the military saw as an alarming drift towards Islamic fundamentalism. Popular demonstrations took place from February till early March, which deteriorated the situation more and more. For one month, a huge number of Turkish citizens blew whistles and switched their house lights on and off daily and for one minute (at 9:00pm) in protest to the government’s policies.¹⁵⁰

2. The NSC Meeting and their Famous 18 Measures

With such events, the military institution launched what was characterized as a “soft” coup. It fired the first round of their “coup-in-progress” at the NSC meeting at the end of February 1997. The Council, a military-dominated agency, stayed for an “unprecedented” nine hours. Erbakan was present in the meeting. He was the only Islamist present, encountering five high officers and secular politicians from Ciller’s party, the Truth Path Party. The meeting resulted in a list of around eighteen points that emphasized on the need to attain certain changes in the government’s policies. The most important points were the following: Expanding public schooling from five

¹⁵⁰ John Doxey, “A ‘Soft Coup’ in Turkey,” *The New Leader*, 80.4 (March 1997): 12, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web7.infotrac.london.gale.../purl=rc1_EIM_0_A19350972&dyn=6!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

to eight years; prohibiting students from entering religious schools until they pass the eighth grade, when they would become more self-conscious; preventing Islamists from joining public services; restraining the religious sects and examining their sources; protecting the judiciary and maintaining its independence (this point appeared as a result of the systematic designation of Islamic judges); abiding by the principles set in the constitution; making political parties responsible for the decisions declared by their members;¹⁵¹ and banning headscarves in public institutions such as universities.¹⁵²

These were the most important conditions set for the government that had only two months to implement them. Even though Erbakan declared that all of the points were reached “unanimously”, later, it became clear that he rejected most of them. The main reason why he consented to them in the beginning was because he did not want to oppose an “unanimous” NSC. As such, Erbakan did not instantly declare that he would sign the “protocol”, although his signature was essential to make it legitimate.¹⁵³ A few days later, he even responded to the NSC recommendations in a defiant manner. He stated the following: “Governments are formed in Parliament not in the National Security Council; laws are made in Parliament”. He hoped to transfer the purview of the recommendation to the parliament, but the parliamentarians rejected to do so.¹⁵⁴

As such, and as it became evident that the RP did not want to abide by these

¹⁵¹ Svante Cornell, “Turkey: Return to Stability,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (Oct. 1999): 222

¹⁵² Metin Heper, “Islam, Nationalism, and the Military,” *Turkish Daily News Online* (Nov. 1999): 2-3. <http://www.turkishdailynews.com/1999osce/osce4.htm>

¹⁵³ Svante Cornell, “Turkey: Return to Stability,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (Oct. 1999): 222

¹⁵⁴ Marvine Howe, *Turkey Today: A Nation Divided over Islam's Revival* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), 139.

conditions, some generals started declaring their disturbance from the government's negligent approach. Accordingly, the military started using "strong language", sometimes threatening, as a proof that they "meant business". In March 1997, a high-ranking general declared, "If a car was parked next to a 'No Parking' sign, you either remove the sign or tow the car away."¹⁵⁵ To the military, the "No Parking" sign should stay in its place. One month later, the head of the Chief of General Staff Operations Department, General Cetin Dogan, said, "The Turkish Armed Forces is also responsible for taking measures concerning the internal threats to the secular-democratic state. This is not only our responsibility; it is everybody's responsibility. One difference is that we have weapons!"¹⁵⁶

3. The Military as a Pressure Group

Afterwards, the military started, in May 1997, to act as a "pressure group" through presenting a whole week of "briefings" and pamphlets to the public with one main goal: to persuade influential sectors of the civil society, that political Islam has reached a dangerous level and must be deterred. They also resorted to the media as a part of its "pressure group activity". In fact, in October 2000, a member of the parliament (a journalist at the same time), publicly presented a document set by the military institution in 1997, that is during Erbakan's leadership. This document included the names of the Television stations, newspapers, and journalists whose mission was to destroy Erbakan's reputation. The military institution did not deny this accusation. It only stated that the document was written, but never approved of completely. Later on, it was discovered that many of the points mentioned in the

¹⁵⁵ Metin Heper, "Islam, Nationalism, and the Military," *Turkish Daily News Online* (Nov. 1999).
<http://www.turkishdailynews.com/1999osce/osce4.htm>

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

document were implemented by some of the newspapers, television stations, and journalists who were on the list.¹⁵⁷

4. The Military and the Constitutional Court

The military resorted also to the Constitutional Court. In May 1997, the state's chief prosecutor, Vural Savas, charged Erbakan of violating Articles 68 of the constitution, which confirm the secularist stance of the Turkish state.¹⁵⁸ Article 68 of the Turkish Constitution stipulated that political parties cannot behave in a manner that endangers the Turkish Republic and its principles. He also resorted to Article 69 that stipulated that the Constitutional Court had the right to ban a political party accused of such acts.¹⁵⁹ Accordingly, Savas stood in front of the Constitutional Court, the country's highest court and a "stronghold" of Ataturk's attitude, and reminded it of some early phrases said by Erbakan to the effect that he was going to become a prime minister through "bloodless" or "bloodily" ways and that the RP represented the "army of Islam". Other charges directed against Erbakan included the *iftar* (breaking of the fast) meal where he invited religious men wearing religious costumes and allowed female public servants to put on their head scarves, things outlawed by the constitution. Furthermore, Savas accused two other RP deputies for trying to build a state relying on the *Sharia*. As a result of the army's pressure, Erbakan resigned on June 1997. With his resignation, President Demirel asked from Yilmaz (and not the leader of the largest party in the parliament, i.e. Erbakan) to form a new

¹⁵⁷ Mohammed Nour el-Dine, personal interview, taped, Beirut, Lebanon, 15 March 2001.

¹⁵⁸ Marvine Howe, op. cit., 142.

¹⁵⁹ Meltem Muftuler-Bac, "The Never-Ending Story: Turkey and the European Union," in Sylvia Kedourie, *Turkey before and after Ataturk: Internal and External Affairs* (London: Frank Cass), 250.

government.¹⁶⁰

In January 1998, the Constitutional Court declared the closure of the RP with nine votes against it. Erbakan and six other RP officials were excluded from politics for five years. The RP mayor of the central Anatolian town of Kayseri, was accused of isolating the secular provisions of the constitution; as a result, he was imprisoned.

In addition to this, the government prohibited the wearing of Islamic dress in government departments and schools. It questioned many teachers who were suspected of violating dress rules set by the ministry of education.

It prohibited university students from sitting for the final exams in Istanbul unless they followed the rules set by the government. Finally, it expelled Islamists from provincial personnel.

The reaction of the rest 147 of the RP parliamentary deputies, who were left independent, was challenging however. Indeed, all, except five, declared their intention of forming a new Islamist party, the Virtue Party (VP). With the exclusion of Erbakan from politics, it seemed that the military institution was actually doing the Islamists a "service"; it was facilitating the emergence of younger and more active Muslim politicians.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Jeremy Salt, "Turkey's Military Democracy," *Current History* 98, no. 625 (Feb. 1999): 76

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 77

IV. The Reaction to the Closure of the Refah Party

1. Internal Reaction

The reaction to the closure of the RP varied from one sector of the population to another. Many considered it as a "foolish" and an "unprecedented" act.¹⁶² They questioned the judicial decisions of the Constitutional Court and the Turkish judicial system. Others stressed on the concept of banning political parties. They wondered if banning a party as large and as important as the RP could ever be consistent with democracy. Nilfur Gole, an Istanbul sociologist, predicted that the expulsion of the Refah Party would lead to the "shrinking of democratic sphere" in the country. Gole believed that such an incident has shown that the secularists still seek the army's protection against any Islamic expansion. "What I find a pity is that in the name of secularism, we go back again to authoritarianism. This is a very vicious circle in Turkish politics which is very similar to the Muslim context which experienced modernity and secularism," said Gole.¹⁶³ Nazli Ilicak, a commentator with the Islamist Yeni Safak daily, commented by stating that "[military intervention] is a bad thing. Every time the army intervenes, parliament loses prestige. If the politicians were courageous, they would disregard it. But they are not."¹⁶⁴

Turkish Islamists viewed the closure of the RP as inconsistent with Turkey's democracy.¹⁶⁵ As for the secularists, only a few of them disfavored the army's intervention. Even though many opposed a military coup, most of them expected and

¹⁶² "Wrong Turn in Turkey," *The Economist* 346, no. 8052 (Jan. 1998): 18, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web6.infotrac.london.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/348/429/29836275w3/purl=rcl_EIM_0_A201797

¹⁶³ Jolyon Naegele, "Turkey: Military Upholds Secularist Tradition," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (4 Aug. 1998). <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1998/09/F.RU.980804131658.html>

¹⁶⁴ *Turkish Army Reassert Role as Guardians*. <http://www.hr-action.org/archive1/990318rtr1.html>

¹⁶⁵ Svante Cornell, "Turkey: Return to Stability," *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (Oct. 1999): 222

supported the military's intervention when they believed that their country's security was jeopardized.¹⁶⁶

The reaction of some secular parties such as the Motherland Party (MP) and the Democratic Left Party (DSP) differed from that of the army. Their vision of "reactionary Islam" was more lenient than that of the military. For instance, the Minister of Education (also a member of the MP), together with the DSP leader and Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, all stated that it was wrong to consider all symptoms of pioussness as a sign of reactionary Islam. However, they did not declare openly their opposition to the military's intervention.¹⁶⁷ It was Ciller's Truth Path Party that really stood by the side of Erbakan and supported him. Indeed, it was in Ciller's best interest to back Erbakan simply because he protected her from the judicial pursuit which she might have been subjected to, due to the past bribery and corruptive illegal deals which she adopted. Through forming a coalition with Erbakan, Ciller was protected from judicial pursuit.¹⁶⁸

2. External Reaction

Externally, Western diplomats responded negatively to the closure of the RP. Some argued that the army did not possess significant evidence that the Islamists were planning for an armed revolt. Others considered the moves against the Islamic business as an "outrageous interference in the private sector".¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ John Doxey, "A 'Soft Coup' in Turkey," *The New Leader*, 80.4 (March 1997): 13, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, Lebanese American University Library, Beirut, 3 Jan. 2001 http://web7.infotrac.london.gale.../purl=rc1_EIM_0_A19350972&dyn=6!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

¹⁶⁷ Metin Heper, "Islam, Nationalism, and the Military," *Turkish Daily News Online* (Nov. 1999). <http://www.turkishdailynews.com/1999osce/osce4.htm>

¹⁶⁸ Mohammed Nour el-Dine, personal interview, taped, Beirut, Lebanon, 15 March 2001.

¹⁶⁹ Marvine Howe, *op. cit.*, 142.

The US responded to the crisis in a serious manner. In mid-June, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told the press the following: "We have made very clear that it is essential that Turkey continues on a secular democratic way".¹⁷⁰ However, she added that the Clinton administration has emphasized that any alterations "have to be within a democratic context and with no extra constitutional approach".¹⁷¹

The American press was "blunter". The headline of an editorial in the *New York Times* was the following: "Military Meddles in Turkey". It described the military move as a "backdoor coup against parliamentary democracy". As for the *Los Angeles Times*, it quoted a White House official as stating, "first we don't like coups. And second, it is unlikely to undercut the appeal of Erbakan".¹⁷²

According to Inur Cevik, editor in chief of the *Turkish Daily News*, "the American message is loud and very clear. Whoever wants to stage a coup has to do it without the backing of the United States and the European states."¹⁷³

Yet, what annoyed the army the most (and encouraged the Islamists) was the visit of members of NATO officials to former Prime Minister Erbakan at the end of February after he had been restrained from politics and his party closed. Erbakan responded to such a visit by stating that this "thoroughly anti-democratic closure of the RP is not only Turkey's problem... it is the problem of all the World – it is the problem of

¹⁷⁰ Marvine Howe, op. cit., 143.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

NATO as well”.¹⁷⁴

As for the European Union, it disapproved of the role played by the NSC. It argued that in liberal democracies, the army should be supervised by the civilian authority. As a result, it openly asserted its rejection of this “omnipotent” military role in politics and mentioned it as a tangible proof that Turkey is inadequate to enter the EU.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, it stated that even though the decision to close the RP “is in accordance with the provisions of the Turkish Constitution, it is [still] concerned at the implications for democratic pluralism and freedom of expression and hopes that Turkey will make clear its continuing commitment to these fundamental democratic principles”.¹⁷⁶

iii. The Military’s Reaction

As for the military, they viewed their act as a “democratic” and constitutional one. To them, all what they did was “urge” the government to abide by the law. Besides, they asserted that they were never willing to resort to force even as a “last resort”. When asked about their reaction if the government did not abide by the eighteen measures, the commander in chief of the naval fleet replied vaguely, “The people would have taken to the streets in great numbers, and the government would have been forced to resign. Short of that, the people would have removed the government with some help

¹⁷⁴ Marvine Howe, op. cit.,180.

¹⁷⁵ Meltem Muftuler-Bac, “The Never-Ending Story: Turkey and the European Union,” in Sylvia Kedourie, *Turkey before and after Atatürk: Internal and External Affairs*: (London: Frank Cass), 248.

¹⁷⁶ Meltin Muftuler-Bac, “The Impact of the European Union on Turkish Politics,” *East European Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 167, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web2.infotrac.london.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/253/611/19364547w3?purl=rc1_EIM

from its military".¹⁷⁷

Indeed, the military tried to avoid a direct military takeover through resorting to the NSC. They viewed their reliance on the NSC as democratic because the Council was set by the Turkish constitution. They did not consider the NSC as an "extension" of the military into the civilian domain. They regarded it both as a "venue" through which important state personnel, accountable for the state, would consider the most serious issues, and as an "institution in the civilian sphere, autonomous from the military and certainly not representing the institutional interest of the military."¹⁷⁸

To legalize their actions even more, the military tried to act as a "pressure group". They presented a whole week of "briefings" for selected audience with one main goal: to persuade influential sectors of the civil society, that political Islam has reached a dangerous level and must be deterred.

Anyway, this "pressure group activity" proved to be successful. Through this activity, the army was able to increase the opposition towards both the government and the Islamist party.¹⁷⁹ Some members of the TPP, the "junior partner of the coalition", relinquished their positions. Important unions of employees and employers joined the opposition. Important confederations such as the Confederation of Turkish Labor Unions, the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TSIAD), the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB), the Turkish

¹⁷⁷ Metin Heper, "Islam, Nationalism, and the Military," *Turkish Daily News Online* (Nov. 1999).
<http://www.turkishdailynews.com/1999osce/osce4.htm>

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Confederation of Employers' Unions (TISK) and the Turkish Confederation of Tradesmen and Artisans (TESK) revolted against the government.¹⁸⁰

Among these confederations, the Association of Turkish Industrialists and Business (TUSIAD) strongly supported the military in their struggle against the RP. In fact, TUSIAD included influential industrialists and businessmen who carried out many illegal operations in collaboration with the ruling political class. Erbakan's party program, however, included many plans that were set to fight corruption and bribery. As a result, Erbakan's economic trend contradicted with the Turkish industrialists who benefited from illegal contracts carried out between them and the ruling political elites. As such, they were the most influential group behind the collapse of Erbakan's regime.

VIII. Factors Prohibiting a "Real" Coup D'état from Taking Place

As such, and as it is easily noticed, the military did not take over power directly. The main question here is why was not there a "real" coup similar to the past three coups? According to Marvine Howe, the army did not carry out a direct military coup mainly because the US and the EU had clarified that they would not overlook another military intervention in the name of democracy. They could no longer ignore the behavior adopted by Turkey during the Cold War. It is true that the NATO governments were unsatisfied with the idea of dealing with Erbakan, yet they were alert from the alternative.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Metin Heper, "Islam, Nationalism, and the Military," *Turkish Daily News Online* (Nov. 1999). <http://www.turkishdailynews.com/1999osce/osce4.htm>

¹⁸¹ Marvine Howe, op. cit., 135.

Mohammed Nour el-Dine presented other arguments. Above all, he seemed to agree with Howe's assumption that one of the main reasons that prevented the military from undergoing a real coup was Turkey's desire to join the European Union. In fact, Nour el-Dine argued that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, concepts of democracy, freedom and human rights started spreading. As such, a new international era appeared. With the appearance of this new era, Turkey started realizing how important it was to embrace such concepts. This is true because first, it knew that only through adopting such concepts could it become a member of the EU. Second, because it was aware that if it violated these concepts, it would be "hurting" the US, which was the main promoter of these "banners".¹⁸²

Another reason presented by Nour el-Dine was the role played by the National Security Council (NSC). Nour el-Dine believes that since the army was able to accomplish whatever it desired through the NSC, there was no need for it to undergo a direct coup d'état. It is essential here to state that according to Nour el-Dine, the famous measures of 28 February 1997 presented themselves as the "fourth coup" or, what he calls, "the fourth masked coup". Through these measures, the army achieved what it would have achieved had it undergone a coup d'état: the removal of the government and the formation of a new government and a new parliament two years later.¹⁸³

Finally, the army thought that if a coup took place, internal civil war might result. As a matter of fact, the military was afraid that their country might pass through the same civil war that Algeria had passed through. The military have taken over power three

¹⁸² Mohammed Nour el-Dine, personal interview, taped, Beirut, Lebanon, 15 March 2001.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

times since 1960, yet, they have defied the recent upsurge of Islamists without resorting to any direct military takeover.¹⁸⁴

In conclusion, many analysts describe the February 1997 act as another coup or at least the “first phase of a coup”, which was completed with the resignation of Erbakan around four months later. The military intervened in Turkey’s political process three times: 1960, 1971, and 1980. Every time they intervened, they defended their intervention by referring to the constitutional obligation to protect Ataturk’s secular republic. They also resorted to the pretext of increasing political violence and the need to reintroduce order.

In the same token, the events that followed the February 1997 meeting of the NSC showed the limits of the army’s patience for civilian leadership. Even though the army was reluctant to become involved in daily politics and was unwilling to intervene directly, its threshold for intervention was exceeded when two of its fundamental values – the indivisible integrity of the country and the secular character of the state – were threatened.

However, the 1996-1997 case is different from the prior ones. It is true that the Islamists did undertake some “rhetorical excesses”, yet their demonstrations were peaceful and even patriotic. In the same manner, the Turkish General Staffs did not resort to force. They achieved their goals without risking the widespread

¹⁸⁴ Jim Bodgener, “Soft Coup Imposes a New Agenda,” *MEED Middle East Economic Digest*, 41.31 (Aug. 1997): 8, *Expanded Academic ASAP*.

condemnation of a direct armed intervention. They only pursued their attack on the Islamists through recommendations, briefings, and warnings. The democratically elected Islamist prime minister had voluntarily relinquished power. From this it can be concluded that the 1997 event marked a new trend for military involvement in Turkish politics; the 1997 subtle form of intervention showed that the military have opted for “soft” indirect intervention through political, legislative and media channels in place of direct military takeover.

Marvine Howe described this process as a “sophisticated type of cold warfare”. It was different from the classic coup: no “bloody open-ended takeover”. At the moment the generals attained their goal that was the expulsion of the Islamist leader, the democratic process prevailed.¹⁸⁵

The following chapter focuses on Turkey’s relation with the European Union. It tries to study the essential points that have prevented Turkey from joining the union. It also concentrates on the benefits that will be attributed to the country once it joins the EU.

¹⁸⁵ Marvine Howe, *op. cit.*, 134.

Chapter 5

Turkey and the European Union

This chapter examines the relation between Turkey and the EU. It does not indulge into details of the country's past attempts to join the EU. Rather, it focuses on the factors (mainly political factors) which have prevented – and still do – the country from becoming a member of this union, and the importance of becoming one as soon as possible.

According to Samuel Huntington, it is very crucial that Turkey enters the European Union. Turkey's admission into the European Community would have "implications" for the stableness of democracy in the country. Because of its "peripheral" position, Muslim heritage, prior military interferences, and precarious human rights record, Turkish democracy needs the EC "anchor" desperately. Any failure to provide the anchor would jeopardize its democracy.¹⁸⁶

I. Political Demands for Turkey's Admission

The EU's accession criteria were set at the Copenhagen European Council in June 1993. These criteria were mainly "obligations" of membership, and they evolved around three dimensions: political, economic, and legislative. For Turkey, the political criteria were the most questionable ones. Concerning the economic and internal market criteria, the Customs Union, put into force in 1996, revealed the latter's

¹⁸⁶ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 283.

capability of fulfilling the economic conditions set by the EU.¹⁸⁷ The political criterion was the main problem. Turkish democracy was seen as being weak and too limited with the Turkish military enjoying a high privileged stance. In modern European democracies, militaries are inferior to the civilians and do not interfere in politics. In Turkey, the case is completely different: there have been four direct military interventions since 1960. Moreover, the military established institutions such as the NSC only to permit the officer corps to interfere directly in the state's affairs.¹⁸⁸

1. Redrafting the Turkish Constitution

As such, the Copenhagen European Council issued certain political demands and presented them in a report called the 1999 Report. The report stipulated different points. One of these points had to do with Turkey's constitution. To the EU, Turkey should redraft its constitution, so that it no longer legitimizes the military's assertive role through any move towards democracy. According to the Chief Justice of Turkey's highest court of appeal, Sami Selcuk, around 90 articles from the constitution should be removed if Turkey wants to implement EU's conditions. Selcuk even believes that Turkey should "rewrite it [constitution] from scratch".¹⁸⁹

In fact, the EU criticized Turkey's constitution, in particular, since it bluntly assures and emphasizes the army's "qualitative superiority". The Turkish constitution provides the chief of staff with more power than the defense minister and other members of the cabinet. The "head" of the military is accountable for the state's

¹⁸⁷ Bertil Duner, *Too Bumpy a Road? Turkey, The European Union, and Human Rights*, <http://www.ui.se/bumpy.pdf>

¹⁸⁸ Paul Kibucek, "Turkish-European Relations: At a New Crossroads?" *Middle East Policy*, no. 4 (June 1999): 163, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web6.infotrac.london.g.../purl=rc1_EIM_0_A55316203&dyn=18!ar_fmt?sw_aep=la

¹⁸⁹ Eric Rouleau, "Turkey's Dream of Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 2000), 105.

internal and external safety and for the intelligence agencies. He has the final say on matters related to the designation of ranking officials and promotions within the army; he also sets down defense policies. Moreover, the EU condemned the army's privileged stance with respect to the judicial domain whereby it has its own laws, regulations, courts and judges dealing with issues having to do with the armed corps.¹⁹⁰

In addition to this, the EU criticized the political power that the constitution renders to the "pashas" and that relies on strong economic and financial privileges. The chief of staff (not the prime minister, cabinet, or parliament) is the one who examines the production of weapons and who sets the annual military budget.¹⁹¹ Moreover, the military budget has to be consented by the parliament without any objection before submitting it to the chief of staff. There are also the "military-controlled industries" such as the OYAK, a huge corporation encompassing around 30 projects in various sectors such as car manufactories, tourism, insurance, banking and high technology. Another military-controlled industry is the TSKGV (Foundation for the Strengthening of the Turkish Armed Forces) that is concerned mainly with arms production. TSKGV includes around 30 companies. Around 80 percent of its profits are kept as reserve funds.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Eric Rouleau, "Turkey's Dream of Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 2000), 106-107.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 108

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 109-110.

2. Reforming or Abolishing the National Security Council

Another important point set by the Copenhagen European Council in its 1999 Report was the reduction in the army's influence in the political domain through "abolishing" or "reforming" the NSC and assuring the independence of the judiciary.

Even though the NSC, in theory, is a supervisory body whose recommendations are not legally binding, the EU emphasized that it has a "strong influence on government policy". The commission asserted that the existence of such a council revealed in itself that "the Turkish constitution allows the Army to play a civil role and to intervene in every area of political life... the [Turkish] army is not subject to civil control and sometimes even appears to act without the government's knowledge when it carries out certain large scale repressive military operations."¹⁹³

3. Reforming the State Security Courts

The 1999 Report criticized also the country's State Security Courts (SSC). SSCs were created by Article 143 of the 1982 constitution. They were concerned only with political crimes like separatism, terrorism, and all activities against the republic. Through these courts, the army stretched out its influence into the judicial system. The SSCs had three judges with one of them being a military judge.

In 1998, the European Court of Human Rights stated that since the SSCs included a military judge, then it contradicted the European Convention of Human Rights. As a

¹⁹³ Bertil Duner, *Too Bumpy a Road? Turkey, The European Union, and Human Rights*, <http://www.ui.se/bumpy.pdf>

result of the EU's reservations, a constitutional amendment was adopted which replaced the military judge (from the SSCs) with a civilian one in June 1999.¹⁹⁴

4. Abolishing the Laws that Restrict People's Freedom

Furthermore, the 1999 Report objected to a number of laws that restricted people's freedom of opinion. As a result, it presented a set of rights that included broadcasting and education rights for the Kurds, greater freedom of expression, and abolition of death penalty.

The generals, however, viewed these reforms as "outrageous demands". To them, these "democratic reforms" threaten their country. The commander-in-chief of the Military Academy, General Nahit Senoglu, stated that Turkey would not subordinate its national unity to its European targets (he was referring to the demands of the Kurdish minority). "If some international organizations and some European countries force us to choose, there is no doubt our choice will be for the indivisible unity of our homeland and people".¹⁹⁵

In fact, the Turkish army is unwilling to restrict its power. It is very much convinced that "separatism" and "Islamic fundamentalism" are dangerous, and "they don't trust politicians to act with the necessary determination to counter them".¹⁹⁶ Accordingly, the army rejects the idea of yielding cultural rights to the Kurds. Besides, it is mistrustful of concepts like freedom of thought and expression.

¹⁹⁴ Meltem Muftuler-Bac, "The Impact of the European Union on Turkish Politics," *East European Quarterly* (Summer 2000): 65, *Expanded Academic ASAP*, http://web2.infotrac.london.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/253/611/19364547w3/purl=rc1_EIM

¹⁹⁵ Nicole Pope, "Breaking the Mould," *Middle East International*, no. 635 (13 Oct. 2000): 18.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

II. Importance of Turkey's Admission to the European Union

To Turkey, EU membership is closely related to its "Western Vocation". Ankara has viewed full membership into the EU as a "symbol" of triumphant fulfillment of the Ataturk revolution.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, Turkey is threatened, nowadays, by an increasing isolation from Europe due to the European efforts to establish a "distinct" European security and defense identity. Turkey is not a member of the EU. Accordingly, it cannot share in the discussions on European defense and security policy. Moreover, Turkey is not part of the general trend towards "Europeanization" that has characterized the rest of the Southern Region. This draws it away from the other members and strengthens the country's feeling of "distinctiveness" and segregation from the wider trends influencing European safety.

This feeling of "marginalization" could increase in the future as the EU attempts to establish more powerful Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) with the EU from which Turkey is kept out. If Turkey is not permitted to become a member of the EU, Ankara would be kept out from the essential decisions that influence Europe's – and its own – safety. This might, in return, lead to Ankara's further alienation from Europe and to deeper discord between Europe and the US, which firmly backs Turkey's request for EU membership.¹⁹⁸

With this, a paradox results. On one hand, it is indispensable for Turkey to join the EU; on the other hand, for Turkey to join the EU, it should adopt many steps among which is the reduction in the role of the NSC and the endowment of fundamental rights to the separatists and Islamists. Yet, the military opposes both requests. They do

¹⁹⁷ Stephen Larrabee, *The Troubled Partnership: Turkey and Europe* (Washington: RAND, 1998), 5.

¹⁹⁸ Stephen Larrebee, *op. cit.*, 6.

not believe that civilian politicians are capable of handling internal problems. This makes them work seriously on sustaining and advancing their stance through institutions such as the NSC. In addition to this, the military institution fears political Islam and Kurdish separatists; this fear contributes to the military's reluctance to withdraw from politics. Consequently, it is one of the factors preventing Turkey from integrating into Europe. With this, it can be easily concluded that the army does back EU membership, yet it doubts the reforms recommended by the EU.

Conclusion

Throughout history, the Turkish praetorian armed forces have experienced a dominant role and a privileged stance in the country beyond defense. They have had the final word on matters related to security, domestic and external affairs. Moreover, they have considered themselves the “guardians” of the country’s territorial integrity, public order, and secularism.

As a result, they intervened three times since 1960, and they were always rapid in setting up a new constitution, new elections, and turning over power to elected civilians within a matter of two or three years. As objectionable as a coup may be, it is difficult to give many examples from the developing world of coup leaders actually taking action out of constitutional principles and then, in short period of time, giving power back to civilians.

Evidently, the military have conformed to their guardian role for almost half a century. With time, they have become more and more reluctant to take over power directly, but they are always willing to strike down any real or perceived danger to the state’s secularism and integrity. The Turkish military institution is still the country’s most respected, feared and uncompassionate institution. Nevertheless, the lapse of time and the changing face of the international community have caused serious changes in the military’s strategy: the military prefer to form coalitions and control political life without leaving their barracks.

This thesis concentrated on the military involvement in Turkish politics between early 1980s and the mid-1990s. It focused on two case studies: Turgut Ozal (1983-1993) and Necmettin Erbakan (1996-1997). It dealt with each case separately. It tried to concentrate on the civilian-military relations during the terms of each of the two leaders, and the reasons why the military refrained from undergoing direct military takeover against any of the two leaders.

The thesis examined first the 1983-1993 period. It proved that this period witnessed military disengagement from Turkish politics accompanied with the subordination of the military and the supremacy of the civilian power. Then, it examined the 1996-1997 period. It showed that the mid-1990 events, namely the removal of Necmettin Erbakan first from the premiership and then from the political scene for five years and the ban of his party, demonstrate the military's desire to maintain their superior and dominant role in Turkey's political life. However, the fact that the troops did not leave their barracks and tried to act solely as pressure groups confirm that the mid-1997 events marked a new trend for the military's involvement in politics: the 1997 subtle form of intervention show that the military have opted for "soft" indirect intervention through political, legislative and media channels in place of direct military takeover.

It is true that the Turkish military's unwillingness to directly destroy the constitutional system and their resort to indirect intervention instead of an outright assumption of power have benefits to a nation fighting to build a conceivable democracy. However, coup avoidance does not imply free civilian control. Till this day, the army has not accepted subordinate status. They have only abstained from taking over the political system. They have made their compliance dependent on

civilian performance: they scrutinize the elected leaders' ability to manage the country's economy, respond to social unrest, and conduct foreign policy.

Nowadays, there is a debate in Turkey. Some argue that democracy should be fully applied. They believe that no one should hinder the victory of even an Islamist party in democratically held elections since the victory of such a party is the people's choice. Others, however, argue that secularism should prevail over democracy and that democratic principles should be put aside in case they are in conflict with secular principles. With this, the following question arises: Which should prevail, democracy or secularism?

Upon examining the Turkish society, it is very clear that the country is witnessing a move towards a stronger civil society. As the country is becoming richer, pluralism is becoming stronger and the demands for change are becoming more intense. At the same time, the resources that enable groups and movements to challenge the army are increasing. A prove to this is the Fethullah Gulen movement. It is a moderate Islamist movement that depends on the contributions of its followers to build schools in Turkey and other countries and to operate large media enterprises. With time, and as these movements are gaining more support, it is becoming more difficult for the NSC to control them.¹⁹⁹ This also applies to the Kurdish case. The Kurds receive money and resources from their supporters and some internal communities. They have also established alliances with many international groups and organizations.

¹⁹⁹ For more information on the Fethullah Gulen movement, see Bulent Aras, "Fethullah Gulen and his Liberal 'Turkish Islam' Movement," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* (Dec. 2000). <http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/meria/journal/2000/issue4/jv4n4a4.html>

In addition to this, there is a growing internal pressure for a more open and liberal Turkey. Indeed, the military's vision of Islamists and Kurdish separatists as a serious threat is no longer experienced by the Turkish public. A recent poll revealed that only 3.5 percent of the population viewed fundamentalism as the country's "top problem".²⁰⁰ Furthermore, and in an "event unparalleled" in the country's history, President Sezer vetoed, in August 2000, the decree that would enable the state institution to depose civil servants accused of Islamist or separatist sympathies.²⁰¹ Such a decree, which could hurt tens of thousands of employees, was viewed as "unconstitutional" and "arbitrary" by all of Turkey's unions and professional associations and by many politicians, jurists, and columnists.²⁰² As a result of his stance, the president's popularity increased tremendously. In a survey, it was revealed that up to 73.7 percent of respondents stated that Sezer had "done the right thing" by adhering to his principles.²⁰³ This increase in the popularity of the president made the latter substitute the military as the state's most "trusted institution". It also revealed that the Turkish citizens believe that change is crucial for their country.²⁰⁴

Another point worth of mentioning is the country's desire to join the European Union. Although EU membership has not yet induced the Turkish army to renounce its grip on the Turkish state, the pressure to reform institutions, especially the role of the NSC, will increase with time. Such a pressure will be exerted mainly by the Turkish business organizations. The alliance between these organizations and the military will not prevent the former from exerting more pressure to reform the country's institutions, especially the 1982 constitution and the National Security Council.

²⁰⁰ Nicole Pope, "Paranoid Generals," *Middle East International*, no. 633 (15 Sep. 2000): 18.

²⁰¹ Nicole Pope, "Sezer Shows His Mettle," *Middle East International*, no. 632 (1 Sept. 2000): 17.

²⁰² Eric Rouleau, "Turkey's Dream of Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 2000): 101.

²⁰³ Nicole Pope, "Sezer Shows His Mettle," *Middle East International*, no. 632 (1 Sept. 2000): 18.

²⁰⁴ Nicole Pope, "Breaking the Mould," *Middle East International*, no. 635 (13 Oct. 2000): 18.

Finally, one should not ignore the fact that Turkey is a NATO member. This membership will make the country associate increasingly with the armed forces of other NATO countries. Such an association accompanied with its participation in NATO headquarters will make it more vulnerable to Western views, especially those related to the army's subordination to civilian authority.

All in all, the task of promoting liberal democracy necessitates the rethinking of the role and stance of the army across the entire spectrum of the society. Only when the military institution becomes more responsive and accountable to its citizens can Turkey adapt and follow the Western trend. Only when a democratic and legitimate civilian-military relationship is established can political decision-making, the power and status of political parties, the style of leadership, and the ways of exercising political power become more democratic.

Appendix

Political Parties

The following is a list of the political parties in existence as of mid-1992 having completed the required formalities related to their formation as provided for in the Political Parties Law:

Name of Party	Date of Formation	Name of Party's Leader
Motherland Party	1983	Mesut Yılmaz
True Path Party (Replaced the Justice Party which was founded in 1961 and banned on 1981)	1983	Tansu Çiller
Nationalist Action Party	1983	Devlet Bahçeli
Refah Party (closed on February 2, 1998)	1983	Necmettin Erbakan
Democratic Left Party	1985	Bülent Ecevit
Greens Party	1988	Bilge Contepe
Republican Dem. Youth Party	1988	Gökhan Evliyaoglu
Rebirth Party	1990	Sezai Karakoç
People's Labour Party	1990	Ahmet Türk
Socialist Unity Party	1991	Sadun Eren
Anatolia Party	1991	Zeki Çeliker
Worker's Party	1992	Doğu Perinçek
Republican People's Party (Dissolved in 1981 and reactivated in 1992)	1992	Deniz Baykal
Freedom and Democracy Party	1992	Mevlut Ilik
Socialist Turkey Party	1992	Ali Önder Öndes
Nation Party	1992	Aykut Edibali
Revival Party	1992	Hasan Celal Güzel
Democrat Party	1992	Necati Turgut
Socialist Revolution Party	1992	Cenan Biçakçı
Great Unity Party	1994	Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu
Liberal Democratic Party	1994	Besim Tibuk
Democratic Turkey Party	1996	Hüsamettin Cindoruk
Democratic and Peace Party	1996	Refik Karakoç
Freedom and Solidarity Party	1996	Ufuk Uraz
Virtue Party (Replaced the Refah Party)	1997	Ysmaıl Alptekin
Changing Turkey Party	1998	Gökhan Çapoglu

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