Chapter Twelve

Turkey

The Counterintuitive Transition of 1983

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On September 12, 1980, the Turkish Armed Forces overthrew their democratic government, claiming that anarchy, terror, separatism, and economic crises had crippled Turkish society. In a publicized speech, Chief of the General Staff Kenan Evren accused the political parties of inciting domestic terror between leftist and rights groups and not taking on the responsibility to prevent chaos. In the same speech, General Evren implied that the military would return to its barracks and lead a transition to democracy after the restoration of law and order and the preparation of a new constitution.1 The military kept its promise to a limited degree and stayed in power for only three years. In 1982 a new constitution was written, and in November 6, 1983, new elections were held.

The Transition to Democracy

The liberalization process, however, had serious shortcomings. Only three parties that were preapproved by the generals were allowed to run in the November elections. Additionally, most of the politicians before the 1980 coup and their parties were banned from politics. The military increased its political autonomy and received reserve and tutelary powers in the 1982 constitution. The constitution itself was highly criticized for its restriction of basic political, social, and minority rights.2

Despite these shortcomings, the November 1983 elections were the event that marked the transition to democracy in Turkey. This was because a center-right political party that was not favored by the military won 45 percent of the votes
and received the mandate to form the first civilian government after the 1980 intervention. The military hierarchy preferred former General Turgut Sunalp; yet it still relinquished its control in favor of Turgut Özal, the founder and leader of the victorious Motherland Party. Four years later, the Özal government lifted the ban on political parties. Subsequently, free and fair elections were held in November 1987, with the participation of political leaders and parties of the pre-1980 coup. Even though it was the 1987 elections that truly qualified Turkey as a minimal electoral democracy, formal military rule ended in 1983. The victory of a civilian in these elections also set the background for the lifting of political restrictions four years later. Therefore, Turgut Özal's electoral success in 1983 denotes a democratic breakthrough.

In this chapter, we argue that the Turkish military intervention of 1980 did not face significant opposition from international actors and there was no major international intervention for democracy in Turkey. Despite lack of sanctions and only a minimal degree of pressure on the Turkish military, international actors still played important but perhaps counterintuitive roles in the democratic transition. International actors (especially the United States) did not provide assistance to domestic opposition forces and continued to provide aid to the military. As a result, the relative balance of power among domestic groups was kept in favor of the military. The Turkish military was successful in restoring order and repressing opposition forces. This, in turn, gave the military generals confidence that they had achieved their initial goals when they first planned the intervention and therefore could lead a transition to democracy.

Second, economic accomplishments during military rule with considerable American, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistance contributed to the democratic transition. Relatively good economic performance increased the confidence of the generals and contributed to their decision to lead a transition to democracy. Additionally, implementation of a successful adjustment program in coordination with the World Bank and IMF increased the popularity of Turgut Özal, who served in the military government until 1982 as the minister responsible for the economy. This facilitated his triumph in the 1983 elections. Özal's contacts with Western political actors made it difficult for the generals to keep Özal out of the race and ignore the electoral results once the ballot was cast.

Finally, the Europeans pressured the military to keep its word and return the country to democracy. The military was pushed to declare a timetable for return to democracy approximately one year after the coup. These gestures that were taken to satisfy the international community increasingly bound the military rulers by their own words to eventually hold elections and consent to its results.
DOMESTIC FACTORS IN THE 1983 TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

The 1980 coup and the 1983 transition to democracy were not the first of their kind in Turkey. In fact, Turkey made its first transition to democracy in 1950, when the single-party rule of the Republican People's Party (RPP) came to an end with national elections. The RPP founded the Turkish Republic in 1923 and carried out several political, social, and economic reforms that molded a secular republic in a predominantly-Muslim country. The Kemalist ideology of the party envisioned a modern Turkish society that would be part of the politically and sociologically more advanced Western countries. Even though the military was not directly involved in government during this period, it took on the responsibility to support the policies and reforms of the RPP and serve as the guardian of the Kemalist, secular, nationalist, and pro-Western revolution. Indeed, the RPP included significant numbers of retired military officers, and the founder of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was a commander of the armed forces.

After the first transition to democracy, Turkey witnessed two military interventions in 1960 and 1971. Ironically, these interventions resulted in the perception that the Turkish Armed Forces were not greedy. The military did not hold on to power for long periods of time despite having had the opportunity to do so. It justified each of its interventions by its self-declared role as the guarantor of the Kemalist reforms, secularism, democracy, and Turkey's Western orientation. Even though both actions in the 1960s and the 1970s resulted in coups, most outside observers and significant segments of the Turkish public had come to believe that it was not in the Turkish Armed Forces traditional character to establish a long-term military dictatorship and that they were in fact the true guardians of the Kemalist republic.

Similar sentiments led to the public endorsement of the coup in 1980. The military enjoyed support from the majority of society because of the instability of the 1970s and the relative success of the military in power. The 1970s was identified with increasing terrorism and street violence. The ideological conflict between the Left and the Right in parliament and on the streets was combined with increasing religious fundamentalism throughout Turkey and Kurdish separatist movements in the eastern regions. Violence had reached such proportions that there were on average 20 deaths per day during the weeks that preceded the military intervention.

Another source of concern before the intervention was the economic crisis. The exhaustion of import substitution industrialization strategy coincided with the 1973 oil crisis, increases in prices, and a drop in the volume of imports. The result was widespread scarcity of basic commodities, accumulation of foreign debt,
and increasing inflation and unemployment. People from all walks of life were affected by the crisis. While strike activities and radicalism intensified among the lower income groups, the leading business enterprises and associations were also dissatisfied and blamed the politicians for giving in to radical groups and failing to readjust the economy. As a final attempt to save the economy, in January 1980, the last government formed by the Justice Party initiated a major economic program, which would start a new export-led growth period, in accordance with the suggestions of the IMF. Even though this program was welcomed by the business community, labor and some inefficient sectors resisted liberalization. Because of its unpopularity, the government failed to fully implement the program.

Thus, when the military took over on September 12, 1980, Turkey faced several challenges, the most important ones being terrorism, lack of personal safety, and economic crisis. In all of these issues, the military was relatively successful. Until the transition to democracy in 1983, the military repressed what it perceived as threatening groups and put an end to violence and terrorism. The generals perceived the mainstream political parties as one of the primary reasons for the instability of the 1970s. According to the military hierarchy, even though the terrorist organizations had relatively few supporters, they still had an important destabilizing effect because of the lenient attitudes of the center-left and center-right parties. Indeed, the coup was against mainstream politics as much as it was against radical groups. As a result, for the first time the military closed down all parties, including the founding party of the Republic, the RPP.

In the economic sphere, the military gave the responsibility of readjustment to Turgut Özal, who was a former employee of the World Bank, a well-known figure in business circles, and the chief architect of the economic program announced in January. This unpopular program could now be implemented under martial law, which restricted worker activities. As a result, in a short period of time, the economy picked up and grew on average close to 4 percent per annum (thanks mainly to the growth in industry). Exports boomed, Turkey's balance of payments was enhanced, tax revenue doubled, and inflation declined to around 30 percent.5

These political and economic policies of the coup were welcomed by some elite groups. Özal's economic solutions were perceived positively "by the private sector, in general, and big business, in particular," and became one of the reasons why the business community supported the 1980 intervention. Even though the activities of the politicians were severely restricted, most political leaders also chose not to actively oppose the military. The military's intervention was seen as a bitter pill that needed to be swallowed for stability.

The main domestic reasons in explaining the transition to democracy in Turkey are the relatively weak opposition the military faced during its rule and its success
in achieving its goals in accordance with the Kemalist ideology. The military was successful in restoring law and order by suppressing opposition groups and stabilizing the economy. The commanders of the armed forces became confident that democracy would not produce the same results as it did in the 1970s, since the former political forces, including mainstream ones, were now repressed. A return to democracy did not signal to the generals the continuation of major societal upheavals.

An additional factor that contributed to the decision of the incumbent officers to initiate the transition after a short term of rule was the belief that their power and influence would not be damaged. The military hierarchy was directly involved with the writing of the new constitution, which guaranteed increased autonomy and reserve and tutelary powers to the armed forces. The military high command also received personal immunity from prosecution in the 1982 constitution, and Chief of the Staff Kenan Evren assumed the presidency of the Republic for seven years, while the commanders of the armed forces became members of the Presidential Council until 1989.\(^8\)

In conclusion, the military rulers believed that their withdrawal would not threaten the military’s interests and their personal well-being and security. Moreover, because the repression of the old political forces was successfully achieved, there was belief that the reforms the armed forces instituted would not be upset and reversed.

**EXTERNAL ACTORS: REACTIONS TO MILITARY RULE AND PRESSURES FOR REDEMOCRATIZATION**

The most crucial foreign actors for Turkey at the beginning of the 1980s were the United States and several Western European countries, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), World Bank, the IMF, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Council of Europe (COE), and the European Community. Several human rights organizations, such as the Helsinki Human Rights Watch based in the United States and Amnesty International, also played vital roles in reporting issues of torture, cases against freedom of speech, and unjust imprisonment during military rule.\(^9\)

The Turkish military between 1980 and 1983 did not face any major external influences and pressures for democratic transition emanating from these groups. There were no overt, tangible, and coercive forms of international intervention in Turkey. Even the minimal amount of economic, political, and diplomatic sanctions that the Turkish military faced was not substantial and significant taken as a whole.
Turkey's alliance with the United States, which dates back to the end of the Second World War, continued during the military rule of 1980–83. Before the coup d'état American officials believed that the situation in Turkey was chaotic and potentially dangerous for US interests, especially if the leftist or Islamic terrorist organizations were to gain the upper hand. Reflecting this view, in its first official declaration about the military coup in Turkey, the Carter administration stressed that "for the last several years, Turkey has been beset by increasing politically motivated terrorism and severe economic difficulties." In the statement, the United States pledged to continue its assistance to Turkey and declared its hope that Turkey will have economic and political stability.

This initial "low-key" response to Turkey contrasted with the US reaction to other military interventions in the world at around the same time. In his daily report to President Jimmy Carter on September 12, Secretary of State Edmund Muskie commented that "the press will rightly note the clear difference in tone between this statement and those we have made about situations in Korea and Bolivia. . . . [T]here is no junta mentality in Turkey." Indeed, American newspapers did pick up on this difference and argued that "US officials seemed almost relieved that the interruption of democracy came not from such extremist forces as Turkey's communists or fundamentalist Moslems, but from the armed forces."

It was noted that the administration perceived the Turkish military as "moderate, pro-Western and committed to Turkey's role as NATO's strategically important southern anchor in the Mediterranean." In addition, there was strong belief in the administration that the military would return to its barracks after restoring order, as it did before.

The positive assessments of the State Department officials were shared by the US National Security Council. In a memorandum sent to National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Turkey specialist argued that proposals [are being made by] people with little judgment on Turkey . . . for gestures of disapproval for the military takeover. Most of this simply adds up to the petty sanctimoniousness which would needlessly irritate the military leadership in Turkey which has shown every sign of responsibility and good judgment and hardly needs nattering from us in schoolmarmish fashion. We should not boycott meetings or other scheduled international undertakings in which Turkey is playing a role nor should we encourage NATO allies to do this sort of thing. Other gestures that serve no concrete purpose should be avoided . . . The basic posture [that the US government] has taken
so far is exactly right. Let's not muddy our record by unnecessary self-righteousness! The Turkish generals are not Greek colonels or African master-sergeants. Let's make it clear to them that we understand that!15

Cordial exchanges took place between the military rulers, the US Embassy, high-ranking diplomats, and even President Jimmy Carter in the early days. In early October, President Carter sent a message to General Evin through the US ambassador in Ankara and appeared “understanding” of the military coup. Evin replied to this message and reminded Carter that “the Turkish Armed Forces have always been committed to democratic rule” and that they “are determined ... to remove all obstacles which have, in the past, hindered the healthy functioning of the democratic order.”16

Similar to the US administration, NATO officials took a controlled stance in their initial reaction to the Turkish coup. A NATO spokesman argued that the intervention was “strictly an internal matter,” but said a strong, stable and violence-free Turkey [was] vital to the Western alliance.” The official stated that NATO hoped Turkey would return to democracy, similar to the 1960 and 1971 military interventions.17 Despite NATO’s democratic credentials and the agitation of some European members about the legitimacy of Turkish military rule, there were no discussions of expelling Turkey from NATO or any substantial pressure for democratization as a result of the military takeover.

After the first warm response of the American government and NATO to the military coup, good relations between the allies continued. The Turkish-US Defense and Cooperation Agreement (DECA), which was renewed in March 1980 before the coup, was ratified after the military took over in Turkey.18 With the DECA, the United States pledged to provide general economic assistance and military aid to renovate Turkey’s armed forces. As promised, Turkey received substantial amounts of economic and military aid during the junta years. There was gradual increase in economic and military assistance during military rule when compared with the three years leading up to the coup (table 12.1). Between 1980 and 1983, Turkey received a total of $2.253 billion in economic and military assistance. This amount was the third largest American aid to a foreign country after Israel and Egypt.19

Turkey also received economic aid from the World Bank and IMF, which had already committed to Turkey’s economic readjustment before the military coup. International donors aided Turkey before 1980 by rescheduling its external debt. After the declaration of the January 1980 readjustment plan by the democratically elected Demirel government, the World Bank provided a $200 million structural adjustment loan. In June 1980, Turkey and the IMF signed a three-year standby agreement which provided approximately $1.6 billion worth of assistance.20
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Assistance</th>
<th>Economic Assistance</th>
<th>Non-Economic Assistance</th>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>125.0</td>
<td>115.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>176.6</td>
<td>175.4</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>203.0</td>
<td>180.3</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>238.0</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>260.0</td>
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<td>286.0</td>
<td>203.5</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>267.5</td>
<td>203.5</td>
<td>64.0</td>
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Source: US Agency for International Development (USAID) Overhead Loans and Grants, Obligations and Loan Authorizations (Greenbook)
Support continued after the military took over. Özlü's presence in the military's cabinet persuaded the IMF and World Bank that the Turkish Armed Forces were dedicated to the implementation of the liberalization program. The suppression of worker activities during the military regime was also a positive sign that the reform program could be carried out. In October 1980, the World Bank approved a supplement of $75 million to the first structural adjustment loan (SAL). In April 1981 the second SAL for $300 million was sanctioned. The third structural adjustment loan, worth $304.5 million, was also endorsed during the military regime. The World Bank also gave other types of assistance, such as "project loans, economic and sector work leading to policy recommendations, and technical assistance." The bank collaborated closely with the IMF, which in 1983 signed another one-year standby agreement with Turkey, supplying around $75 million. Both institutions guided and monitored the economic liberalization reforms and aided the military government in continuing to restructure the economy by providing monetary assistance.

American support to Turkey between 1980 and 1983 was not always in monetary terms. In their speeches and visits to Turkey, US officials also approved the actions of the military leaders. In December 1981, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger visited Turkey and met with Chief of the General Staff Kenan Evren. Two leaders agreed that a "high-level joint defense group" would be established to "enlarge and improve defense cooperation" between two nations. Perhaps more importantly than this agreement, Weinberger openly praised General Evren, stating, "We admire greatly the way in which order and law have been restored in Turkey under your very able direction." In May 1982, Secretary of State Alexander Haig made a similar visit to Turkey and met with high level officials. Haig brought with him a letter from President Ronald Reagan and congratulated the junta for restoring law and order. Haig also "encouraged the military leaders to move ahead with their timetable for a return to democracy." However, such calls for democratization by US officials did not go further than "encouragement" since, even behind closed doors in these meetings, Turkish military leaders were not pressured to make a transition.

Such political support from American officials was critical in balancing international opposition to the military. For instance, Secretary of State Alexander Haig angrily responded to a British reporter in Brussels, who asked if "the United States was using a 'double standard' in condemning martial law in Poland ... while increasing aid to Turkey." Haig argued that "the question itself 'reflects a double standard' by Europeans equating Poland and Turkey." The secretary of state reminded the reporter that Turkey was in chaos before the military intervention. In his visit to Ankara, Haig also discussed the attitudes of the Europeans with
General Evren, who extensively complained about Europe’s negativity toward Turkish domestic politics.  

When the issue of expelling Turkey from the Council of Europe came up, American officials were worried that Turkey would be isolated from Europe. On this issue, the Reagan administration “pressed the Europeans to relax their stand on Turkey and resume economic aid.” When in July 1982 several European countries applied to the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg against the Turkish junta, the United States officially defended Turkey once again. A State Department announcement said, “While there are human rights problems in Turkey, it would be shortsighted to forget that the current government has nearly eliminated the human rights violations due to terrorism that were rapidly eroding the viability of democracy in Turkey.”

The official policy of the US administration in dealing with the rift between Europe over Turkey’s military rule is reflected in Secretary of State Haig’s message to West German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher in December 5, 1981. Haig responded to a letter written by Genscher after the minister’s visit to Turkey and shortly before Haig’s own visit to Ankara as follows:

Geography, history, and shared values make Turkey a major partner for Europe and the United States. We fully support efforts to overcome the current estrangement between Turkey and certain sectors of Western Europe, in the interest of a stronger alliance, a stronger Europe, and a stronger Turkey.

The supreme goal which all friends of Turkey share is that the current regime return the country to stable democracy in a reasonable timeframe. General Evren and his colleagues are determined to achieve that goal. . . . The United States of America, the Federal Republic of Germany, and other allied and friendly states must assure that Turkey continues to receive sufficient support to achieve its objective. It is noteworthy in this regard that the former politicians whom you met agreed that the Evren regime must not be isolated. That is our view as well.

. . . Continued frank exchanges between friends offer the best means to achieve the results we all seek. Your visit to Ankara served that purpose, as will mine.

The US administration did not defend Turkey only against the Europeans but also against some American critics. On April 14, 1983, a congressional hearing on human rights in Turkey was held before the US Congress. Several human rights activists criticized the restrictive manner in which democracy was being reestablished and argued that torture was widespread in Turkey. Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams and former ambassador to Turkey James Spain were witnesses who defended the Turkish military government and American policy. In their testimony, these State Department officials argued that Islamist and left-
ist terrorist organizations in Turkey before the military intervention challenged strategic interest. They noted that generals would eventually return to full democracy because of their Western, Kemalist orientation and because they had never intended to stay in power for a long period of time. The results of the staff report written by the US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was also presented in the hearing. The report highlighted that non-Muslim minorities in Turkey felt more secure after the military intervention, implying that repression was not widespread as claimed by the other witnesses. In addition, electoral monitoring by the CSCE was pointed out to demonstrate that the 1982 constitutional referendum was “a fair one, fairly counted, and the results reflected the views of the people of Turkey.”

Even though in the hearing human rights activists pleaded for the aid to Turkey to be cut, Assistant Secretary of State Abrams and Ambassador Spain advocated a different strategy:

In the case of Turkey, circumstance and unwise policy among those outside... could put the essential allegiance to the West in doubt. Many decades ago, Turks chose the West, but they have sometimes felt the West rejected their very choice of the West.... If, in properly emphasizing human rights concerns, we isolated Turkey from the Western human rights tradition, the result would be tragedy.

Instead, the United States has sought to protect human rights in Turkey by frequent dialogue with the Government of Turkey, by seeking to protect Turkey's place as a valued Western ally and by keeping Turkey closer to the West rather than pushing it further away.

Thus, the US administration believed that support for Turkey should continue even if the transition to democracy was restrictive. It was argued that sensitivities on human rights should be raised gently only in private meetings. The overall US policy on Turkey during the military intervention suggests that these views of the State Department officials were implemented.

From the initial days of the military intervention in September 1980 to the November 1983 elections, the United States, NATO, and American-based financial institutions supported Turkey militarily, economically, and politically. Criticisms in the United States increased toward the end of the military junta. However, the Reagan administration did not oppose the manner of the transition. Turgut Özal's victory was welcomed by the Americans because of his previous commitment to liberal reforms and experience in the United States as a World Bank employee. However, even if the results were different, support for Turkey would have continued as long as (and to guarantee that) Turkey stayed committed to the Western alliance against the Soviets, was stable and without the risk of an Islamic or left-
ist takeover, and maintained a healthy liberal economy. In addition, the Turkish Armed Forces were popular and successful at home, and they had a reputation of returning to their barracks. From the perspective of American officials, there was no need to pressure Turkey to democratize. Such pressure might even push away a valuable ally. The counterruitive US policy was that supporting the Turkish generals and defending them against European and other critiques would hasten the return to a stable democracy.

Reactions of the European Community, the Council of Europe, and the West European Governments

Turkey became a founding member of the Council of Europe in 1949 and signed an Association Agreement with the European Economic Community in 1963. The Turkish military has traditionally viewed Europe as the ultimate destination for the country's Kemalist trajectory of modernization and accorded high primacy to Turkey's membership to these European organizations as an affirmation of the country's European credentials. In contrast to the United States, European governments and institutions were highly critical of the military coup and the policies of the military regime. The pressure for a rapid transition to democracy intensified in time with the exacerbation of human rights conditions in the country, although the extent of the vocal criticism and the ensuing policies aimed to promote transition to democracy in Turkey were not uniform among different Western European states and in the different configurations of the West European institutional settings.

The initial reactions from Europe to the military intervention can in general be regarded as cautious, yet critical. The foreign ministers of the European Community, Commission, and Parliament issued statements expressing concern over the developments in the country. The COE also responded to the military intervention with a recommendation that expressed that the Parliamentary Assembly was "gravely concerned at the military intervention in Turkey." What set the COE recommendation apart from its counterparts in the European Community was its explicit threat of political sanctions on Turkey. In the document, the Parliamentary Assembly recommended to the Committee of Ministers to "remind the Turkish government that the Committee of Ministers has to take action in conformity with Article 8 of the Statute of the Council of Europe if the Turkish government does not take prompt steps as mentioned in paragraph 10." This implied that Turkey could be expelled from the COE if it did not respect the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, release all elected politicians who had not gravely violated any law before the coup, and take rapid steps for transition to democracy.
Regarding economic aid, the European Commission officially adopted the position that contractual commitments to Turkey under the Association Agreement, namely the Third Financial Protocol ($400 million) and the Special Aid Package ($100 million), would be honored.41 The policy of continued economic aid to Turkey was, however, becoming more and more difficult to sustain, especially after the first year of military rule. The European Council and the European Commission were under constant attack from the European Parliament for not freezing EC aid to Turkey in the face of massive human rights violations and rising concerns over a speedy return to democracy in the country.42 In addition to Turkey's worsening human rights record, the accession of Greece in 1981 to the EC and the efforts of Greek members to freeze relations with Turkey were also influential in the rising criticisms by the Parliament.43 It was argued that the European Community had to freeze the Association Agreement with Turkey, just like it did with Greece in May 1967.44 Thus, throughout 1981, the European Parliament — particularly upon the initiatives of the socialist, communist, and liberal parliamentary groups — delivered tough warnings to the military regime through its resolutions. The most significant of those was the one delivered on April 10, 1981 where the European Parliament called on the Commission, Council, and the member states to suspend economic aid to Turkey.45

The Council of Ministers and the European Commission, however, paid little attention to Parliament's requests. In fact, in the four debates held at the European Parliament between January and August 1981, both the Council of Ministers and the European Commission preserved their mild attitude to the deeds of the military government and reiterated the importance of continuing cooperation with Turkey, with the hope of aiding the transition to democracy.46 In line with this, the Council of Ministers approved the terms of the European Commission negotiating mandate in May 1981 for the Fourth Financial Protocol of $625 million, and the Commission completed the formal negotiations with the Turkish representatives within the framework of the Association Committee in June 1981.47

This attitude of the Council of Ministers and the European Commission began to change in the second half of 1981, particularly as a reaction to the military government's November 1981 decision to abolish all political parties that existed before the coup and the imprisonment of former prime minister Ecevit for publicly criticizing the military regime.48 The Fourth Financial Protocol was scheduled to come into force on November 1, 1981. However, the European Commission refused to pass the file concerning the protocol to the Council for final conclusion, and the Council never formally insisted on receiving the file from the Commission, which in effect led to the freezing of EC economic aid to Turkey. The freezing of aid was reinforced further by an initiative of the Socialist members of the European
Parliament Budgets Committee, which ensured that the Council could no longer approve any expenditure under the heading of the Protocol without the consent of the Parliament, which shares budgetary authority.

Turkey's economic relations with individual West European countries were also hampered in 1981. Germany, as the second biggest supplier of military and economic assistance to Turkey after the United States, was the West European country with which Turkey had enjoyed closest economic links. In March 1981, German parliamentarians declared at a news conference that continued economic and military aid to Turkey "would speed up the period of a return to democracy." 20 Nevertheless, mainly owing to pressure from public opinion fueled by the worsening of human rights conditions, the ban on former political parties, and the persecution of the former Social Democratic leader in Turkey, Germany delayed bilateral aid to the country in both 1981 and 1982. 20 What is significant here is that, despite these setbacks, bilateral aid was eventually renewed in both years. In fact, Germany was even reported to undertake the residual financing of some selected national projects that were to be funded under the EC's Fourth Financial Protocol. 20 Germany also continued to be the primary foreign investor in Turkey with 25 companies, ranking above the United States, Switzerland, and France. 21

The Netherlands, Austria, Luxembourg, and the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) were more adamant in applying economic sanctions on Turkey. They all ended program and project aid under the OECD consortium for Special Assistance to Turkey in 1982. In 1980 and 1981, the total contribution of these countries to the consortium was $65.5 million and $56 million respectively. 22 Since these states were among the smallest contributors to the consortium, while the highest contributor was Germany (with a total of $620.55 million in both years), the economic sanctions imposed were not of high significance for the country. Germany's economic assistance to Turkey in 1982 ($79.63 million) exceeded the total aid dispersed by all seven European states in both 1980 and 1981. Given also the continued US economic assistance to Turkey, reaching high proportions as discussed earlier, it can be argued that the amount of economic sanctions applied by European governments and the European Commission was considered negligible by Turkish officials, who could rely on their main beneficiaries of economic aid, namely the United States and Germany. 22 This was expressed succinctly by a European Commission official when he highlighted that these economic sanctions were merely "pocket money" for the Turkish government. 25

More so than economic aid, political relations were being used to mount pressure on the military government to make the transition to democracy. In December 1980, European Commission president Thorn expressed his concerns over a rapid transition to democracy in Turkey in a meeting with Foreign Minister Turk-
men. Two years later, in January 1982, Foreign Minister Türkmen met Thorn to present the timetable for a transition to democracy and ask for the Fourth Financial Protocol to be resumed, where he was refused on grounds of human rights violations. Leo Tindemans, the president of the European Council, visited Turkey in April 1982. On this visit, General Evren presented Tindemans the timetable for transition to democracy, and Tindemans expressed the Council's concern for the human rights situation in the country. No EC member state suspended bilateral political relations with Turkey. In fact EC states, especially Germany, made use of its political links to promote democratic change in Turkey. As early as March 1981, German Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee visited Turkey to encourage the Turkish military to achieve a rapid transition to democracy. German foreign minister Genscher first visited Ankara in November 1981 to discuss the delay of German financial assistance to Turkey, where he was assured by General Evren of his intention to hold elections in a reasonable time. Genscher also met Evren in November 1982 to discuss the delay of economic aid and express his concerns at the slow steps toward transition.

As opposed to the Council, the European Commission, and the individual member states, the European Parliament froze political relations with Turkey. The European Parliament adopted a resolution on January 22, 1982, which formally suspended its participation in the Joint Parliamentary Committee and in effect froze political relations between the European Parliament and the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

The COE demonstrated even more opposition to the military regime than did particular European governments or the EC to the extent of considering severe political sanctions. At the May 1981 session of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, it was decided that the credentials of the Turkish delegates to the Assembly were not to be renewed for the 1981–82 session and that there could be no Turkish delegation in the Assembly until it was "elected and properly constituted." A joint subcommittee of the Political and Legal Committees was also established to monitor developments in Turkey and to deliver regular reports on the political situation in the country.

What was most notable, however, was the debate over the suspension of Turkey's membership to the COE, which had been on the agenda of the COE since the immediate aftermath of the intervention. The possibility of expulsion had been consistently brought up in almost every COE order, resolution, and recommendation on the situation in Turkey between 1980 and 1983. Thus delegations were sent to Turkey to undertake "fact finding missions" and then report their findings to the Assembly in relation to Turkey's membership. The delegations were also
forcing the military regime to explain and justify itself under mounting pressure. The best-known delegation visit, which was also widely covered by the international press, took place in January 1982, following rising criticisms in Europe over the imprisonment of Ecevit, the trial of former leftist trade union leaders, and restricted freedom of press. The delegation, which was first rejected by the Turkish authorities, was, upon pressure by West European States, later received at the highest level by General Evren and Foreign Minister Türkmek, who highlighted that “Turkey places importance on its relations with the Council of Europe and wants these relations to continue.” A member of the delegation—Ludwig Steiner, conservative member of Parliament from Austria—stated afterward that the delegation had left the talks with a “positive impression,” but this would not come to mean that the COE would vote in favor of sustaining Turkish membership.

Despite all the criticism, however, the COE did not vote for Turkey’s expulsion, neither after the January 1982 delegation visit nor on any other occasion. This did not come to mean that relations were improving. In fact, just the opposite was the case. In the course of 1982 and 1983, political groups from the left (socialists, communists) and the Greeks were pushing strongly for Turkey’s expulsion. On top of that, in the immediate aftermath of the January 1982 visit of the COE delegation, the COE adopted a resolution on Turkey calling member states to invoke Article 24 of the European Convention of Human Rights. The article permits any contracting state to report to the Commission of Human Rights any infringement of the provisions of the Convention. This resolution caused a major uproar in Turkey and even led to considerations among the generals to withdraw Turkey from the Council.

In line with this resolution, in July 1982 five Member States of the COE—namely, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France, and the Netherlands—filed a case against Turkey at the European Commission of Human Rights on grounds of continuing political repression, violation of human rights and trade union rights, and the torture of prisoners. Although a friendly settlement was eventually reached in December 1983 between these states and Turkey, the case contributed to increasing resentment of Europe by the Turkish authorities. The threat of expulsion from the COE reached its peak in January 1983, when the Parliamentary Assembly published a resolution “to give serious consideration to making a recommendation to the Committee of Ministers aiming at application of Article 8 of the Statute of the Council of Europe,” which regulates the expulsion of member states. The resolution was particularly critical of the undemocratic provisions of the recently adopted constitution in November 1982, continuing human rights abuses, restrictions on participation in political activity, and mass trial of union members. Nevertheless,
in the Assembly vote, the proposal to expel Turkey was turned down with 35 votes in favor and 75 votes against. However, in the same voting session, it was also decided that Turkey would lose its voting rights in the Committee of Ministers.\(^9\)

In order to understand why the COE did not expel Turkey from membership, despite all its criticisms and threats, the two main approaches in the Assembly need to be considered. One, taken up mostly by socialists, communists, and the Greeks, pressed for expulsion, often in reference to the suspension of Greek membership after the Colonels' coup in 1967.\(^9\) The second approach emphasized the need to keep Turkey in the COE in order to be able to exert leverage and thus aid the process of transition in the country.\(^\)\(^9\)

In the end, the second approach prevailed. Despite the accompanying threat of expulsion, the concern held by the second approach was also officially expressed in the January 1982 and January 1983 resolutions on Turkey. The January 1982 resolution declared that "Turkey's continued membership of the Council of Europe gives the latter the opportunity as well as the obligation to watch over the restoration of democratic institutions and the respect of human rights in that country."\(^22\) Similarly, the January 1983 resolution stated that the Assembly is "conscious that the Council of Europe's influence will be more effective so long as Turkey's links with the Council of Europe are maintained."\(^21\)

Another factor that contributed to the decision of not expelling Turkey from the COE was the role played by the opponents of the coup in Turkey. As expressed above, there was no strong and unified resistance to the military rule in Turkey. Nevertheless, individual democrats, most notably former social democrat delegates to the Parliamentary Assembly, kept in close contact with the COE and expressed the necessity of sustained membership for the transition to democracy in Turkey.\(^24\) The same arguments were also put forward by former political leaders like Demirel and Ecevit.\(^75\) Thus, in a similar logic with the European Community, "neither the total severing of relations, nor the unquestioning and uncritical continuance of relations as before" was perceived as a helpful option in guiding the COE's relations with Turkey.\(^76\)

**INTERACTIONS BETWEEN EXTERNAL ACTORS AND DOMESTIC CONTEXT IN EXPLAINING THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN 1983**

The Turkish military declared from the start and reiterated on various occasions that its main goal was to achieve transition to democracy in the shortest time possible. The Turkish military perceived itself as the guardian, not the ruler, of the Kemalist regime. At the time, both domestic and international actors believed that the Turkish military would return to its barracks. Indeed, the transition to democ-
racy in 1983 can partly be explained by the initial aims of the military intervention. The “costs of adapting” to democracy were low for the military, given that Turkey was democratic since 1950 and the military already had its own roadmap to transition, which also empowered the armed forces in the new democratic regime. Given the expectation that there would not be a return to chaos after the mainstream parties were closed down and radical groups were oppressed, the benefits of sustaining an authoritarian regime for a long period of time did not outweigh the costs of continued repression and European pressure.

The domestic reasons and the motivation of the military from the very beginning to lead a transition to democracy (albeit a restricted one) make it rather difficult to assess the true impact of external factors on democratic transition in the Turkish case. A closer look at events suggests that external actors mattered. However, in all likelihood the Turkish military would have returned to democracy as long as it achieved its initial goals of restoring order and establishing new rules for democracy.

In fact, this was the assessment of the external actors and especially the US administration at the time as well. Imposing sanctions against Turkey or empowering domestic actors against the Turkish Armed Forces seemed counterproductive. As a result, the United States and American-based financial institutions, such as the World Bank and IMF, continued to provide assistance and aid to the Turkish government and, hence, the military. Strengthening the military helped the generals attain internal security and relative economic stability, the two major ills of the precoup period in Turkey. Successful domestic governance, in turn, promoted public support for the military government, facilitating an easier transition. Hence, perceiving their goals as having mostly been achieved, the military proceeded with the transition.

If, instead, in the name of promoting democratic forces, the external actors had attempted to revitalize the previous ideological groupings on the left and/or the right, this would have most likely provided a strong justification for the military to remain in power in order to prevent further domestic chaos and bloodshed in the country. Withholding economic support at a time of massive economic instability would have produced similar results. Domestic resistance and upheaval with foreign support would have also made it difficult to reach an agreement on the new constitution, especially on articles that ensured military autonomy. Such failure of the military could have delayed transition for a few more years or more possibly, lead to its postponement for an indeterminate period. This could also go hand in hand with a potential reversal of Turkey’s Western orientations, as often hinted by the military leaders through more frequent visits to Eastern Europe or improved economic relations with Middle Eastern countries.79 Thus, American support af-
fected the military's success during the coup years and, thereby, facilitated the transition to democracy.

Another result of American support was Turgut Özal's rise to power as the civilian prime minister. Özal's victory in the November 1983 elections prevented the sustenance of military rule via blocking the election of the military's preferred candidate, Turgut Sunalp. This victory was partly a result of Özal's successful liberal economic policies—backed by the United States, World Bank, and IMF—which significantly increased his popularity among the electorate and especially among the business community. Only days before the elections, in a publicized speech, the leader of the junta, Kenan Evren, urged the Turkish electorate not to vote for Özal. Yet, despite this aversion, the military accepted his candidacy in the elections (while it put a ban on almost all of the former politicians) and agreed to transfer control over to him after the ballots were cast. Özal had strong ideological and political ties with the United States both because of his previous experience as a World Bank employee and because of his preference for liberal policies. Rejecting his victory could have seriously undermined American, World Bank, and IMF financial support to Turkey, which the country needed after the economic crises of the 1970s. Given that the military frequently announced in the international and domestic arena that it would eventually return to democracy, declaring the electoral results null and void would also bring about a significant loss of credibility and opposition at home and abroad, even in the United States. Losing US support at a time when relations with Europe were already strained could have left the country in total isolation. Thus, the military was bound by its own pledges and by Özal's close ties with the West to follow through the transfer of power from the armed forces to the civilians.

Whereas American military and financial support for the Turkish Armed Forces played important roles in democratic transition, the impact of the economic and political sanctions employed by Europe should be regarded with caution in the Turkish case. European economic sanctions were not substantial enough to exert serious pressure, thanks to sustained economic support by the two main creditors, namely the United States and Germany. Political sanctions on the part of the European Community were mostly limited to the European Parliament, which did not enjoy high decision-making power in the EC at the time. Besides, Turkish membership in the European Community was a too distant possibility to be utilized for democratic conditionality.

Under these conditions, there was little incentive for the military government to comply with pressure from the European Community or its individual member states. It still needed to be reminded, however, that the limited sanctions from the
EC and some of the member states were pushing the government to justify itself in the international arena. Foreign Minister İlter Türkmen's visit to Europe only three days after the referendum on the new constitution, to explain the new state of affairs in Turkey and to ask for the suspension of the Fourth Protocol provides a clear example in this respect.80

The situation with the Council of Europe was more different. The military's historic commitment to Westernization and to its ties with Europe as part and parcel of the Kemalist legacy that it upholds led it to bestow a highly symbolic importance on COE membership.81 Thus, the threat of expulsion could be expected to have an impact on the transition to democracy. The evidence available suggests that the willingness to end military rule existed earlier, but it was slightly accelerated as a result of COE pressure. In his memoirs, General Evren highlights that he envisaged a three- to four-year military rule before achieving transition.82 He also underlines the firm belief he held that COE would not expel Turkey but would instead use conditionality through membership to exert pressure.83 Thus, the dominant tendency in the COE was well understood by the military rulers.

However, the series of events in the country in 1981 changed the picture. In February 1981, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly convened to decide whether to impose any sanctions against Turkey or to expel it from the COE. On the eve of its assembly meeting, the government announced that an inquiry into four cases of alleged torture had led to the arrest of the members of the security forces found responsible.84 Similarly, pressure from the COE was found to be influential in the reduction of the detention period from 90 to 35 days.85 Although these can be considered as cosmetic gestures, they also demonstrate that the military rulers still cared about the country's European prospects and were willing to take some steps in that respect.

A more notable impact can be observed regarding the declaration of a timetable on transition to democracy. COE (along with the EC) had been demanding a timetable of transition from the early days of the military rule, with no concrete result.86 Dissolution of political parties and the imprisonment of Evren at the end of 1981 had led to severe responses from Europe. This was the period when the prospect of expulsion began to be discussed as a strong possibility. Just a week before the COE delegation responsible for drafting the report that would determine the state of Turkey's membership arrived in Turkey, Evren announced an approximate date for general elections. This announcement was made almost two years in advance of the scheduled general elections and a month after having dissolved all political parties.87 Regarding the postponement of the decision on the expulsion of Turkey from the Council of Europe, Evren wrote in his memoirs that "now we have gained three more months."88
CONCLUSION

Various external actors were at work in attempting to aid the transition process in Turkey. The way in which these actors interacted with domestic conditions and developments suggest that the case of Turkey introduces new dimensions to the debate on external influence on transition to democracy.

It demonstrates that external actors do not necessarily aid transition through the imposition of sanctions. It shows that economic and political support through constant, but cautious, expression of criticism and concern can also help a country to achieve a smooth transition to democracy. Military and economic support from the United States and financial organizations, coupled with a "wait and see" attitude in Europe, can be emulated in cases where the military (or authoritarian rulers) pledge to return to democracy relatively quickly and take concrete steps—like declaring a timetable and drafting a constitution—to make a transition. Although foreign support and relative economic and political success could lead to authoritarian stability and not to democratization, it is still possible for the rulers to initiate the transition voluntarily in cases like Turkey where they are powerful enough to mold a new political landscape, dictate the terms of the regime after the transition, guarantee their personal interest, and assure autonomy for their institutions. Surely the newly founded democratic regime would be restrictive under those circumstances; but if the domestic opposition to be fostered by the international actors is weak and not necessarily democratic, imposing sanctions on the authoritarian rulers, while empowering other domestic actors, might lead to ultimately worse and counterproductive results.

NOTES

We acknowledge the valuable inputs of Ali Çarkoğlu, Sabri Sayarı, Alain Servantie, İlter Turan, and all interviewees.


3. Foreign newspapers reported the public support for the military intervention. Because the Turkish newspapers could not have been entirely impartial during this period, these foreign reports provide the best neutral account of public opinion during this period. For examples of such articles, see Don A. Schanche, “Most Turks Believe Military Rulers Will Keep Pledge to Cede Power,” Los Angeles Times, May 13, 1982, E1; Eric Morgenthaler, “Conventional Coup: In Turkey, a Takeover by Military Is Almost Normal Part of Politics,” Wall Street Journal, September 15, 1980, 1; Edward Walsh, “Turkey Tests ‘Controlled Democracy,’” Washington Post, November 6, 1983, A17.


7. Major exceptions to this indifference were Bilent Ecevit and Sıleyman Demirel, the leaders of the major parties, the RPP and JP, respectively. For the appeals of the Turkish politicians to the Europeans and their belief that the military would make a transition to democracy, see Marvine Howe, "Turkey's Junta Lobbies to Stay in European 'Club,'" New York Times, March 9, 1981, A9.

8. For more on the reasons why the military disengaged voluntarily, see Yaprak Gürsoy, "Civilian Support and Military Unity in the Outcome of Turkish and Greek Military Interventions," Journal of Political and Military Sociology 37 (Summer 2009): 47–75.

9. Amnesty International contributed to the Political Affairs and Legal Affairs Committee in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Its reports were frequently referred to in the debates and reports of these European institutions. However, its criticisms (along with those of others such as Human Rights Watch) toward the military regime were found to have no significant direct repercussions in Turkey.

10. There is strong belief among some circles in Turkey that the United States was involved in the coup. A controversial interview conducted in 1997 by Paul Henze, a US National Security Council country specialist, have perpetuated the belief that the Americans in Ankara staged the coup. However, no concrete evidence has yet come to light that supports overt US involvement in the coup. In fact, even though an intervention was expected in the United States, it still came as a surprise. State Department reports and congressional hearings show that the probability of a military takeover was seen as low only a few months before September 1980. See Turkey, Greece, and NATO: The Strained Alliance; Staff Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1980), 30; United States-Turkey Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement, 1980: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1980), 27–28.


14. Goshko, "From the Allies: Patience."

21. Sina Pamukçu, former vice-secretary-general of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK), has even argued that the coup was supported by the IMF and the World Bank due to its potential to suppress worker movements. Sina Pamukçu, interview, Brussels, April 2008.
32. Downie, “Council of Europe Votes for Probe of Rights in Turkey.”
34. “Text of Secretary of State Alexander Haig, Jr.’s Message to West German Foreign


37. Ibid., 15.

38. Ibid., 6.


44. See in particular, the speeches delivered in the debate of the European Parliament on April 10, 1981.


49. Howe, "Turkey's Junta Lobby's to Stay in European 'Club.'"

50. See the "Statement Submitted by the European Parliament Socialist Group."


53. See "Chart on Organization on Economic Cooperation, and Development, and Special Aid to Turkey, 1979–82; Submitted by Hon. Ludwig Fellermaier (Socialist Member of the European Parliament)," in Human Rights in Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey, 80.

54. Türkmen interview.

56. Ibid.


58. Howe, “Turkey’s Junta Lobbies to Stay in European ‘Club’.”


62. Ibid.


69. Evren, Zorun Yillarin, 15.


71. Schumann interview.


75. Howe, “Turkey’s Junta Lobbies to Stay in European ‘Club’.”


78. Several American officials have agreed that Turgut Özal was well-known and highly respected in the United States. George Harris, former Director of Analysis for Near East and South Asia, US Department of State, anonymous National Security Council Official, and anonymous State Department Official, interviews, Washington, D.C., September 2007.

79. In our interview, Jayanta Roy (lead economist for Turkey in the World Bank between 1973 and 1986) stressed that the only implicit political conditionality for World Bank support to Turkey was to maintain Turgut Özal in charge of economic affairs. If Özal had been removed from power, the World Bank officials would have been at least concerned. Interview, Washington, D.C., September 2007.


81. Türkmen interview.

83. Ibid., 16.
86. See, for example, "Resolution on the Situation in Turkey," Council of Europe, no. 395 (1981), January 29, 1981.