Turkey-European Union Relations

Dilemmas, Opportunities, and Constraints

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Chapter 14

Civil-Military Relations as a Component of Democratic Consolidation in Turkey: A Comparison with Greece

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According to the 1993 Copenhagen criteria, in order to become a member of the European Union, candidate countries “must have achieved ‘stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.’” As for every candidate country, for Turkey as well having a stable and consolidated democracy is a necessary criterion for EU membership. Yet, Turkey still has major shortcomings on this issue. The 2005 EU Commission Progress Report for Turkey in its political criteria section concluded that “significant further efforts are required as regards fundamental freedoms and human rights.” Especially on civil-military relations, the report stipulated that “the armed forces still exert significant influence by issuing public statements on political developments and government policies.” Similar statements were included in the 2006 report of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs. Indeed, even though Turkey made a transition to democracy more than fifty years ago, it still has not consolidated its regime. Apart from problems in the executive and judicial systems of the country, the Turkish military continues to hold important political prerogatives, which prevents democracy from consolidating.
This chapter addresses the failure of democratic consolidation in Turkey and attempts to shed light on the country’s political regimes from the declaration of the republic in 1923 until today. Turkey’s neighboring EU member country Greece is used as a point of reference to explain the unconsolidated democracy in Turkey and the military’s involvement in politics since 1960. This comparison is particularly fruitful because until the mid-1970s the two Aegean countries shared similar problems regarding civil-military relations and democratic consolidation. Turkey from 1923 until 1983 experienced one authoritarian regime and three military coups. Since 1983 the Turkish armed forces have not staged an overt coup, however kept significant political prerogatives partly preventing Turkish democracy from fully consolidating. Similar to Turkey, from 1909 to 1974 Greece witnessed at least three successful military coup d’états and two authoritarian episodes. However, unlike Turkey, since the 1974 transition to democracy the Greek armed forces have withdrawn from politics partly facilitating democracy in Greece to consolidate. How can we account for the varying types of regimes in these countries? How did Greece consolidate its democracy and fulfill an important condition for EU membership while Turkey has not? Given that until the 1970s the two countries had similar regime problems, the Greek case can highlight some of the difficulties Turkey has been facing toward democratic consolidation and hence toward EU membership.

Similarities between the Greek and Turkish Regimes Until the 1970s

The analysis of the Greek and Turkish regimes and civil-military relations draws attention to two main similarities between the two cases. First, in both countries until the 1980s the military reacted to perceptions of threat and intervened in politics (either by short-lived coups or by establishing supporting authoritarian regimes) in response to internal dangers. In both countries, the factors that threatened the military were comparable. Elite conflict was responsible for short-lived military interventions in Greece until 1936 and similarly in Turkey in 1960 and in 1971. Threats from the lower classes or the majority of the electorate caused authoritarian regimes in Turkey until 1945 and in Greece in 1936 and in 1967. Ideologically, during the 1930s and especially after the civil war in Greece, leftist versus rightist conflicts became the most important issue. Similarly, during the 1970s in Turkey leftist versus rightist violence increased and caused the military to stage a coup in 1980. A second similarity between Greece and Turkey was the support the military received from civilian elites when they intervened in politics. In Greece, until the 1967 authoritarian regime, civilian elites (especially some of the politicians) cooperated with the military. Likewise in Turkey the military has garnered support from factions of the political and business elites.

Elite conflict was responsible for military interventions in Greece in 1909, 1922, and 1925. Soon after Greece got its independence, a clash between the monarchy and the independence war leaders developed, in which the latter resisted the centralizing tendencies of the former. The local landlords, military chieftains, Phanariots, and ship owner island notables were organized under the Russian, French, and British parties. As Nicos Mouzelis nicely summarizes, “King Otto’s efforts to establish an absolutist system of government were eventually thwarted by an oligarchy which found in the recently imported Western libertarian ideas of ‘freedom’ and democracy a convenient ideological vehicle for the maintenance and promotion of its interests.” In 1843, the King was forced to grant a constitution that defined the regime as a constitutional monarchy.

The first autonomous military intervention occurred in Greece in 1909 mainly as a result of a conflict between the armed forces and the oligarchic politicians. After the war with the Ottoman Empire in 1897, the military was ready to curtail the power of the political elites who did not properly equip the army to fight wars in order to realize the Great Idea of uniting all of the territories occupied by the Greek speaking people. The military, additionally, had grievances against the monarchy which created a clique of favorites through the supreme command of the crown prince and his brothers. During the 1909 coup, some of the political parties and the King collaborated with the Military League responsible for the intervention. However, the greatest boost of support came from Eleftherios Venizelos, a politician from Crete. After the 1909 coup, under the umbrella of Venizelos’s Liberal party, business elites found an environment more conducive for their interests. The power base and the land of the local elites diminished. The military, on the other hand, was strengthened vis-à-vis Greece’s neighbors which allowed the country to expand its territories during the Balkan Wars.

During First World War, two political camps emerged in Greece. The Venizelist bloc and the Liberal Party that represented it became a pro-republican coalition that garnered support from the majority of the commercial and industrial business elites. The Liberal Party received electoral votes from shopkeepers, small landowners of northern Greece, labor, and the refugees from Turkey arriving after the 1922 war. A weak but resistant coalition under the People’s Party emerging from the previous oligarchic democracy formed another parliamentary bloc. This anti-Venizelist coalition consisted of the privileged and happy partners of the previous regime: the monarchy and the politicians that dominated politics prior to the 1909 coup. The anti-Venizelist gathered votes from the small landowners of Peloponnesus and artisans. While the parliament, political and economic elites were divided along the lines of Venizelist and anti-Venizelist, the military was split into matching factions as well. Political parties and the blocs in the parliament “could not hold power without officers, while the latter could not preserve and promote their own interests unless they attached themselves to a party.” Similar to the 1909 coup, the threat was coming from another elite group. The electorate adhered to the mainstream po-
political coalitions and they were tied to their parliamentary representatives with hierarchical patron-client relations. Under these circumstances, elites preferred quick fixes and short interventions in democracy in order to oust from power the rival coalition. As a result, Greece witnessed two military interventions in 1922 and 1925 and two failed coup d'état attempts in 1933 and 1935. The unconsolidated democracy established in 1909 in Greece came to an end in 1936 when Metaxas established an authoritarian regime. In the 1920s and early 1930s Greece experienced industrial growth, especially in textiles and food processing. As a result of this economic development, the labor class grew, radicalized, and started to shift its political allegiance from the Venizelistos to the Communist Party. The bad harvest years of the late 1920s, the Great Depression, increase in the price of industrial goods, and heavy taxation caused the small landowners to become indebted and vulnerable to the market. As a consequence, like labor, northern peasants too started to oppose the Venizelist coalition, shifting their support to the Agrarian or Communist Parties. The economic crisis especially affected close to 1,500,000 refugees coming from Asia Minor in accordance with the Exchange of Populations Treaty. The refugees who were specialized in growing and producing tobacco in the north were affected by declines in international demand. Their isolation from the mainland Greeks and bad living conditions caused a significant portion to desert the Venizelistos. All of these factors combined to create increasing unrest and frequent demonstrations and riots against mainstream politics. When the Venizelist coalition came to a breaking point and lost the elections to its rivals in the 1930s, its political leaders attempted to ally with the Communist Party with the hope of holding the coalition together.

The military, which had been purged of the Venizelist elements after the 1933 failed coup, saw the Venizelist comeback with the communists as a threat. As a result, most of the officers supported Metaxas who established a dictatorship with the help of the King in 1936. Even though the political parties did not support the personal dictatorship of Metaxas, given the threat from below they did not have pro-democratic preferences either. Especially the support of the King for Metaxas was critical in diverting the opposition of the political elites. For the influential sections of the business community, a possible government with the communists proved to be more threatening than just the socioeconomic rise of the subordinate classes. Some of them also provided support to Metaxas by taking on administrative positions during his rule. In Greece, the second authoritarian episode reflected the military's perceptions of threat from the center-left. In Greece during the Second World War, the communist forces found the opportunity to escape from the dictate of the past authoritarian regime. Greece experienced a costly civil war from 1945 to 1949. Because it fought an almost nine year battle against the communists, the military—perhaps more than other elite groups—saw the subsequent years started to perceive the subordinate classes and the left as a threat. Also, this civil war allowed the military to gain back its autonomy from the political forces that it was attached to during the interwar years.

After the civil war, Greece returned to democracy with the 1950 elections. Even though until 1963 the right-wing National Radical Union under the leadership of Karamanlis controlled the government, politics during this period was polarized between the moderate left and right. In 1963, the victory of the Center Union and George Papandreou marked the victory of center for the first time in Greece. However, at the same time, the military's perception of threat increased. First, the years after the civil war saw considerable economic growth. In 1962, for the first time in Greek history, industry's contribution to GNP exceeded the contribution of agriculture. However, economic development occurred along with major inequalities, resulting in frequent demonstrations and strikes. These movements targeted especially the right-wing establishment which included the military. Second, subordinate class activation was not only in the streets. In the parliament too George Papandreou's son, Andreas, became vocal in support of the rising lower classes. In 1965, allegations that Andreas Papandreou was preparing a leftist coup in the military alarmed the latter. Third, starting from the 1960s, institutional power struggles between the monarch and the parliament reached to a level where it started to threaten the autonomy of the military. In 1965, George Papandreou and King Constantine II started to publicly argue who would control the military. The National Radical Union also seemed to ally with the Center Union on this issue and tried to curtail the prerogatives of the King and the military. This altered, as the rise of the center-left also did, the risk assessment of the armed forces. The military officers that staged or supported the 1967 intervention acted on their perception of threat aggravated by what they believed was a leftist lower class movement headed by the Center Union.

Similar to Greece, until the mid-1980s Turkey experienced military coup d'etats. These episodes were caused by analogous events: threats from the lower classes, the electorate, and due to elite conflict. In Turkey, the authoritarian regime of the 1920s and 1930s was created as a response to the preferences of the mostly rural population. The peasants that formed the majority of the electorate did not overwhelmingly support the secular elite that won the National Independence War. Unlike in Greece, at the beginning of the Turkish Republic, the political and military elites of the war were more unified. Even though conflicts between different elite factions occurred until 1930, they were subdued under the umbrella of the Republican People's Party afterwards. However, the elite conflicts of the initial years of the Turkish Republic played an important role: they proved that if democracy with free and fair elections were allowed, the electorate would not vote for the RPP and the dominant powerholders. Additionally, democracy was likely to bring about resistance and sporadic revolts—especially in eastern Turkey—against the reforms of the secular and nationalist RPP elites. These factors caused the dominant elites, with the support of the Turkish armed forces to establish a single-party authoritarian regime.

After the 1946 transition to democracy, elite conflict caused three military interventions in Turkey. The 1960 military intervention was caused by the grievances of the middle and lower ranking officers in the military, the Republican People's Party (RPP), and sections of the business community. The Democ-
ratic Party (DP) came to power after the authoritarian regime in 1950 with promises of democratic freedom and with assurances that the interests of the RPP members will not be attacked. However, as time went on, the party defied its pledges. The most pronounced disappointment with the DP was its repressive means to stop the advance of the parliamentary opposition. These measures of the DP threatened the well-being and security of the politicians (especially the RPP) and caused them to support the military intervention of 1960 in order to oust the Democrats from power.23

The initial economic policies of the DP were beneficial to the business community, which gained from the economic growth of the early 1950s. However, gradually, part of the business community started to turn its back to the DP because the economic boom that had kept the businessmen satisfied was largely superficial. Indeed, growth came to a halt only three years after the DP took over the government. In the industrial sector, expected investments from private and foreign enterprises failed to materialize. As a result, despite the aims of the DP to liberalize the economy, the government continued to provide almost half of the investment, which went to inefficient state-owned enterprises and infrastructure.24

The DP also disappointed military officers. There were serious imbalances within the military remaining from the RPP era, which the DP did not attempt to change. There were insufficient numbers of lower ranking officers, but the middle ranks and higher ranks were swollen. This challenged the promotion of the juniors. Throughout the DP rule, the military officers were also affected by decreases in their real incomes and their declining social prestige. A law in 1949 subordinated the chief of the general staff to the minister of defense. The behavior of the ministers and Prime Minister Menderes were at times dismissive of the officers, which was perceived as insulting.25

On 27 May 1960, a military clique led by junior officers took over the Turkish government and deposed the Democratic Party. Turkey returned to parliamentary democracy with the 1961 national elections. After a period of unstable coalition governments, the Justice Party (heir of the Democratic Party) came to power alone. However, the Justice Party’s success failed to bring regime stability. First, the government parties of the 1960s and 1970s were in almost constant conflict with the bureaucracy — especially with institutions such as the state planning organization, ministry of finance, and the constitutional court — which were given considerable autonomy and power by the 1961 constitution. Governments did not accept the challenge these non-elected institutions posed against their authority to determine and implement state policies. In the 1970s, a common practice to deal with the bureaucracy was to place political party sympathizers in bureaucratic positions. Even sensitive institutions, such as the police and education services, fell into partisan conflict.26

Second, in the 1960s, the implementation of import substitution industrialization strategy in Turkey caused the business community to split up over the allocation of rents. While commercial groups came into conflict with industrialists, regional quarrels and small versus big enterprise rivalry led to disputes within the Union of Turkish Chambers. Reflecting the conflict among the business community, the Justice Party as well started to break up into splinter groups.27 New rightist parties, such as the ultra-nationalist National Action Party, the Islamist National Salvation Party, and the Democratic Party, caused the JP to lose considerable power after 1973. As a result, the 1970s witnessed unstable coalition governments and a growing rivalry between the major leftist party of the decade (the Republican People’s Party) and the rightist parties. When combined with the conflict identified above (bureaucracy versus government), this led to the paralysis of the state and the government and unintentionally allowed extreme movements to grow in an uncontrolled manner.

In the late 1960s, an extreme movement that involved a group of lower ranking officers became a major concern. Influenced by leftist intellectuals, a military clique came into existence. The officers in the clique believed that the economic reforms of the constitution could not be carried out in a parliamentary system and that a coup was necessary in order to initiate the change toward socialism. The military commanders were aware of the activities of the clique and informed the Justice Party government of the coming threat. However, because of the types of elite conflict mentioned above, the government was too weak to avert a leftist insurgency either by force or by socioeconomic reforms. As a result, in 1971, the military commanders intervened in order to prevent the execution of the leftist conspiracy.28

After the 1971 memorandum, the two major parties of the time, the Justice Party and the Republican People’s Party, did not openly support the intervention. However, they collaborated with it by giving a vote of confidence to the caretaker government the military established, by providing ministers to it, and by helping to enact constitutional amendments (this was indeed very similar to the behavior of the Greek politicians during the 1909 coup). Influential businessmen, on the other hand, as Ayse Bugra argues, “wanted economic stability for their economic and social interests. Hence, they were very much against the JP government’s unplanned, pragmatic approach to economic policy, which aimed at the daily management of different popular demands and interests.”29 The economic aspects of the interim government, however, clearly benefited the big industrialists, causing a number of them to speak favorably for the reforms Prime Minister Nihat Erkin envisioned.

In Turkey, a situation resembling the last Greek military intervention’s ideological battles in 1967 occurred in the 1970s. In these years, leftist activities spread to the lower classes. However, at the same time, rightist movements came into existence fuelled by radical political parties. The leftist versus rightist clashes in the streets terrorized the population. During the weeks that preceded the military intervention, the death toll reached 20 people per day.30 The Turkish military intervened in politics with a coup d’etat in order to put end to increasing chaos and violence.31

After the 1980 coup, the leaders of the Justice Party and the Republican People’s Party opposed the intervention. However, there were members from both parties that collaborated with the military. In addition, when in 1983 the
military declared that national elections will be held, old political parties tried to run as candidates under new banners. Members of the RPP formed the Social Democratic People’s Party and the Justice Party reorganized under the Grand Turkey Party. Even though the military refused these parties because they were the continuation of the old ones, it allowed one new party headed by Turgut Ozal to run in the elections. Ozal was a bureaucrat who had close ties with the Justice Party. He had also served as the state minister responsible from the economy during the interim government. Thus, the military intervention of 1980 did not have any problems finding political elites to help govern the country and legitimize the political liberalization process afterwards.

Most of the big industrialists supported the military coup in 1980. The business elites welcomed the coup mainly because the street violence had threatened their lives and increasing numbers of strikes had adversely affected their businesses. In fact, the Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association (TÜSIAD) openly declared its gratefulness to the 1980 coup. In addition, the business community had been affected by the economic crises of the 1970s, which were caused by the exhaustion of the import substitution industrialization strategy in Turkey. Right after the military seized power, it implemented the export-led-growth program of the Justice Party, which envisioned the deregulation of prices, privatization, free and floating interest rates, market determination of labor wages, incentives to export, and open trade borders for imports. This pro-business strategy, which was impossible to implement before due to the activism of the workers, was put into effect when the military took charge.

This quick overview of the similarities between the two countries until the 1974 democratic transition in Greece shows that the causes of military interventions in both countries were alike. Perceptions of threat due to elite conflict or from the lower classes were partly responsible from the short-lived military interventions and authoritarian regimes. In addition, except for the 1967 Greek authoritarian regime, every relatively successful intervention was also supported by factions of the political and business elites. Altogether these two conditions contributed to the failure of democratic consolidation in Greece and Turkey for much of their histories.

### Differences between Greek and Turkish Civil-Military Relations after 1974

Despite similarities, Greek and Turkish cases started to diverge in the 1960s. The fundamental difference was the fact that all of the significant groups in Greece opposed the 1967 military intervention. Indeed, the last successful military intervention in Greece was the least supported. Quite differently, in Turkey the last military coup in September 1980 was supported by important sections of the public. Additionally, whereas the colonels’ regime in Greece did not command a unified military, the Turkish armed forces were unified in their support for the 1980 intervention.

The distinction between the two cases is important because it partially affected the way the military interventions made a transition to democracy with implications for its future consolidation. In Greece, the authoritarian regime of 1967 was seen by almost all of the influential political elites (including the King), the business community, and even sections of the military as undesirable. Therefore, elites refused to collaborate with the colonels, causing the regime to collapse without any military political prerogatives. The transition occurred with an external crisis “triggered” by the Cyprus events in July 1974. The possibility of war with Turkey increased the power of the opposition military officers and civilians vis-à-vis the colonels. Because of the way the military withdrew from politics, the armed forces could not hold political prerogatives and reserve and tutelary powers that would allow the armed forces to justify another overt or covert military intervention. After the 1974 transition, the military was rapped from even some of its previous powers such as full autonomy from elected officials. This relative decrease in the power of the military vis-à-vis the civilians and the loss of privileges in democracy were major factors that contributed to Greek consolidation of democracy.

Another reason why democracy consolidated in Greece was because internal dangers did not sufficiently rise to cause the military, political, and business elites to prefer a military intervention to democracy. The moderation of the previously threatening forces especially in the 1980s contributed to this favorable outcome. Some of the leftist parties abandoned their radical rhetoric and the Communist Party of Greece could not gain enough votes to influence politics in a threatening manner. The socialist PASOK, on the other hand, became a center-left mainstream party before it won the elections in 1981. When in power, PASOK proved itself as a party that would safeguard the interests of the military, right-wing politicians, and majority of the businessmen. The positive assessment of democracy among the mainstream elites was also a result of the experience of the last authoritarian regime. As explained above, the colonels’ regime was not supported. This unwanted experience caused elites to prefer democracy over authoritarianism even when PASOK’s rise to power initially caused alarm among some of the Greeks.

By contrast, in Turkey, the last military intervention could not have caused the majority of the elites to overwhelmingly prefer democracy to a future coup since the 1980 intervention was welcomed. In other words, the Turkish elites did not experience the undesirable outcomes of an unwanted authoritarian regime. Additionally, because of the support the intervention enjoyed, the military could guide the transition to democracy. When the military announced that there would be elections, all of the major political parties tried to participate allowing the military to choose among them which ones were secure. Through its own guidance, the military received important prerogatives during the 1983 transition.
In fact, in each of the military interventions in Turkey the military gained prerogatives during the transition back to democracy. In 1960, the civilian commission in charge of writing the new constitution introduced an institution called the National Security Council (NSC). The council, which included the chief of the general staff, the commanders in chief of the army, navy and airforce, the president of the republic and the prime minister, was empowered to inform its “requisite fundamental recommendations to the council of ministers with the purpose of assisting in the making of decisions related to national security and coordination.” During the 1983 transition, the powers of the NSC were increased. According to the new constitution “The National Security Council shall submit to the Council of Ministers its views on taking decisions... [and] the Council of Ministers shall give priority considerations to the National Security Council.” Apart from the constitution, the law regarding the NSC made sure that the military will have dominance within the institution. The secretary general of the NSC was an active duty military officer and the undersecretary consisted mostly of members of the armed forces. Additionally, the secretary general had the right to gather information from any civilian office and the power to supervise whether or not the council of ministers carried out the NSC decisions. Thus, a military general was given the power to interfere in civilian and elected offices in his capacity as the secretary general of the NSC.

In the post-1980 era, the military enjoyed autonomy from civilian offices. One of the main areas in which the military had autonomy was decisions regarding promotion and purges of armed forces personnel. In practice, almost all of the decisions of the High Military Council were implemented by civilian governments without criticism or discussion. Similar lack of deliberation was also practiced in the military’s budgetary decisions. The military also had seats in the state security courts (established after 1971). In the radio and television supreme council and the council of higher education, there were members from the NSC which gave voice to the military. After the 1961 intervention, another area which symbolically demonstrated the power and autonomy of the military was the state protocol list, which placed the chief of the general staff after the prime minister but before any other minister. Indeed, since 1961, the military is responsible to the prime minister rather than to the minister of defense.

The power of the military after the 1980 military coup is one of the main differences between Turkey and Greece. Whereas in Greece, by the 1980s, the Greek armed forces did not have any political prerogatives left, the Turkish military had even more when compared with the previous decades. The underlying cause for this divergence is the support the Turkish military had during the 1980 intervention. Especially the collaboration of the political elites allowed the military to guide the transition to democracy and arrange for itself increased powers. In Greece, however, the military regime could not find any supportive elites and faced a humiliating collapse, which caused the opposition political groups to abolish the prerogatives of the armed forces. By definition, in consolidated democracies the armed forces cannot hold reserve or tutelary powers (such as the ones exercised by the NSC). Thus, Turkish democracy did not consolidate after 1983 partly because of the prerogatives of the military.

Turkey in the Post-1980 Era: Continued Problems and Prospects for Democratic Consolidation

The prerogatives of the military are only part of the explanation why Turkey does not have a consolidated democracy. Continued perceptions of threat during the last two decades are also important factors in explaining why Turkish democracy failed to consolidate.

In the post-1980 era, the military refrained from using force in order to impose its decisions. However, especially through the National Security Council, the military wanted to have a say in security matters—both internal and external. In fact, this behavior of the military caused some scholars to believe that the military “can afford to forego most of its powers and prerogatives” and that the Turkish military has accepted civilian supremacy. However, the fact that the military does not use overt force does not necessarily mean that the armed forces do not continue to influence politics.

Starting from the mid-1990s onwards, the military used its power to shape Turkish politics especially on issues related to political Islam. In 1996, the secularist True Path Party (TPP, heir of the Justice Party) formed a coalition with the Islamist Welfare Party (WP) headed by Necmettin Erbakan. While in office, Prime Minister Erbakan took measures that intimidated the military and secular elites. For instance, the prime minister and the party in government gestured to the Islamist groups by official visits to Iran and Libya, by planning to end the ban on headscarves in public institutions and to build a mosque in Taksim square in Istanbul, by inviting leaders of the religious brotherhoods to dinner in the residence of the prime minister, and by allowing (or organizing) religious demonstrations, such as the one in Sincan in January and in Istanbul in May 1997.

The military perceived the rise of the Welfare Party and the growth of political Islam as a danger to the secularism principle of the republic. On 28 February 1997, during the National Security Council meeting, the commanders handed an eighteen point recommendation list to Prime Minister Erbakan and asked the government to put an end to Islamic activities and repress religious groups. The list of recommendations resembled an ultimatum since it implicitly threatened to use force unless the government refused to carry out the military's proposals. After a few days of opposition, Erbakan signed the recommendations; however, in the subsequent month did nothing to realize the requests.

The military, then, started its second attack on the Welfare Party and organized a series of briefings for selected members of the civil society. Members of the business community, judiciary, media, universities, and labor unions participated in the briefings and gave support to the military in its fight against politi-
cal Islam. Faced with growing military and civilian opposition, on 18 June 1997, Erbakan resigned from his post. Twelve days later, three opposition parties formed a coalition under the leadership of the center-right Motherland Party. A year later, the constitutional court closed down the Welfare Party and banned Erbakan from political activities.

Ten years later, similar events echoed the crisis of 1997. After the closure of the Welfare Party, Islamist politicians were divided into two political parties: the Felicity Party and the Justice and Development Party (JDP). In the November 2002 general elections the JDP won 34.3 per cent of the votes and became the majority party in the parliament with 363 deputies. After this victory, the JDP government faced frequent reactions from the military commanders, who publicly warned against political Islam. For example, in September 2006, the Chief of the Armed Forces Ilker Basbug declared that “the fundamentalist threat, even though some sectors do not accept it, is reaching troublesome levels.”

Despite these warnings, the military did not react to the JDP government until the issue of who will become the new president of the Turkish Republic surfaced. Since the president is selected by the parliament, the JDP could choose one of its representatives with its majority in the Turkish national assembly. At first, it was assumed that Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan would become the new president. Civilian elites started a fierce campaign against Erdogan’s candidacy (see below). The military took part on this issue when the Chief of the General Staff Yasar Buyukanit declared in a press conference that the “Turkish Armed Forces are closely interested in” the election of the president. Buyukanit also announced his belief that the selected president would be “genuinely, not supposedly, committed to the republic’s basic principles of secularism, democracy, social law, and the state’s unitary structure.” After considerable pressure, the JDP nominated another influential member of the party, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, for the presidency of the Turkish Republic. However, the fear that political Islamists would hold both the majority of the seats in the parliament and the presidency continued, causing the military to publish a memorandum. According to this declaration,

In the last few days, during the election of the presidency, the main problem has been focused on the dispute of secularism. This situation is observed with anxiety by the Turkish Armed Forces. It should not be forgotten that the Turkish Armed Forces are part of these disputes and are the certain defenders of secularism. Besides, the Turkish Armed Forces . . . when it is necessary will openly and clearly put forward their attitudes and behavior. No one should suspect this. . . . The Turkish Armed Forces conserve the unshakable determination to protect the . . . qualities of the republic, which were given [to them] as duties openly by law; and their devotion and confidence to this determination is certain.

The 1997 and 2007 interventions are important for several reasons. First, they show that, after the 1980 coup, the Turkish Armed Forces continued to intervene in politics. Even though there have not been any armed coup d’etats, the military uses its political prerogatives and tutelary powers to affect political processes. Second, these interventions mark a new perception of threat from the point of view of the military, namely political Islam.

Quite significantly, the 1997 and 2007 interventions also demonstrate the support some of the civilian elites provide to the military. In the 1990s, secular political parties collaborated with the military after Erbakan resigned from office. Even Tansu Ciller faced resignations from her own party members because she had formed a coalition with the Welfare Party. Indeed, “the military . . . worked behind the scenes, discreetly lobbying members of the TPP in an attempt to withdraw them from the coalition.” In this way, it became possible to isolate the WP and form a new government with three other parties. Two years after the TPP-WP coalition, in 1999, when a woman deputy from the Islamist Virtue Party (heir of the closed down WP) attempted to take her oath in the parliament with a headscarf, other deputies “engaged hoots of ‘Out! Out!’ and bang[ed] desks.” Bulent Eduvhit, the leader of the Democratic Left Party, declared that the parliament “is not a place to challenge the state. Turkey is a secular republic and religion should not be mixed with politics.” Later President Demirel publicly condemned the incident, calling the . . . deputy “an agent provocateur.” This event in the parliament was one of the reasons why the Virtue Party was closed down by the constitutional court in 2001. The fate of the TPP-WP coalition and the VP show the alliance of the military and secular elites against political Islam.

In the 1990s, similar to the political elites, a faction of the business community perceived Islam as a threat. The Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association (TUSIAD) voiced its opinions on democratization matters. For instance, a report published by the association in 1997 advocated the consolidation of democracy and even suggested the elimination of the National Security Council. However, after these recommendations, the president of TUSIAD Halis Comli, a representative of the younger faction in TUSIAD, resigned from the presidency of the association. Indeed, the report was criticized both within the association and by outside circles including the military. Especially because the older generation of TUSIAD members shares the military’s perception of Islamic threat, TUSIAD changed its stance. In the 1999 report, the association advocated that prayer and preacher schools as well as the Koran courses should be kept under control. The businessmen argued that secularism should be determinedly and principally protected. This change in hearts was also a response to the creation of a new rival association called the Independent Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association (MUSAID) which is known to be close to Islamist circles. Partly because of this pro-Islamist economic threat, TUSIAD (still the major association of big businessmen) began to emphasize civil and individual rights and the solution of the Kurdish issue; but underlined secularism and purposefully did not go into details on religious matters. In fact, it seems that the association used democratization as a means to an end, particularly towards European Union (EU) membership.
The April 2007 events again highlighted the alliance of secular political elites and the military with regards to the perception of threat from political Islam. The former president of the constitutional court and the last president Ahmet Necdet Sezer became the most vocal opposition to the JDP government during his term in office. During discussions on who would be the next president, Sezer gave a talk in the war academy and declared that "In Turkey, since the foundation of the republic, the political regime has never faced as much threat as it does now." He warned that there is no such thing as moderate Islam since when in power moderates would eventually become radicals in order to fulfill their ultimate ends, which as implied is the replacement of the secular republic with sharia (the rule of law based on the Koran). In the same speech Sezer also highlighted the importance of the office of presidency for the protection of secularism. He criticized attacks on the Turkish military and asserted that "the continued reservation of the modernity and power of our armed forces will be one of the most important guarantees of the future of our state and regime."

The main opposition party RPP and its leader Deniz Baykal shared the concerns of Sezer and the hierarchy of the military and insisted that Erdogan should not be nominated for the presidency. When Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul became the presidential candidate of the JDP, the deputies of the RPP and two smaller parties did not participate in the parliament session that would elect the president. Then, the RPP took the issue to the constitutional court arguing that not enough deputies were available in the session. Two weeks later the constitutional court decided that the first round of the presidential elections was null because the number of deputies in the assembly was less than the required number to elect the president. With this decision, the RPP and the higher judges effectively prevented any nominee of the JDP who is unacceptable to the secularist elite to become the new president. When, in response, the JDP attempted to change the constitution so that the president would be chosen by national elections, President Sezer vetoed the amendment.

There are several reasons why political Islam threatens the secular political and military elites. First, if the intention to change the Turkish political structure into an Islamic one is real, it is a considerable threat to the lifestyles of seculars. The fear is that women would be forced to cover their heads, secular education would be banned, polygamy would be legal, and repression would be exercised against people who do not practice Islam etc. For those elites that believe that the Islamists are using democracy only as a means to an end, this scenario implies considerable danger.

Second and more concretely, there is fear that the JDP has been placing its own sympathizers in bureaucratic positions. A former high bureaucrat himself, President Sezer (who had the power to veto top bureaucratic appointments) turned down most of the replacements. As a result, according to the RPP, more than 650 officers were placed in "acting capacity, a method intended to be used only on a short-term basis to ensure uninterrupted public service." This practice of shuffling bureaucratic positions has been common practice under previous governments as well. However, in the JDP's case the situation is worsened by the fact that the party "draws its ranking bureaucrats from a different pool of people." For example, the educational backgrounds of the JDP officers are from prayer and preacher schools. This creates threats to the current secular political elites since they would be gradually replaced by people from different upbringings and social classes.

Apart from this danger to their wellbeing, the lives of the secular bureaucrats are also occasionally threatened. For instance, in May 2006, a radical Islamist lawyer raided a session of a department of the council of state and murdered one judge and injured four. The lawyer later explained his action by an earlier decision of the council of state against wearing the Islamic veil in public schools. Combined with the fear that the Islamists have a secret agenda, changes in bureaucratic positions and shootings against top state officials cause anxiety that the bastions of secularism in the state are being lost.

The RPP capitalized on these fears and represents the secular bureaucrats and a faction of the Turkish population. Naturally, as the party of the authoritarian regime that undertook the secular reforms, an increase in the power of political Islam will mean that the prospects for another electoral victory for the party would be quite dim. In fact, in 1995, when political Islam under the Welfare Party made its first triumph, the RPP received only 10.7 percent of the votes, barely making it to the parliament which is closed to parties that win less than 10 percent of the national votes. In 1999, for the first time in its history, the RPP could not win any seats in the national assembly because its 8.7 percent of the national votes remained below the electoral threshold. In 2002, the RPP made a come back as the only parliamentary opposition against the JDP. The party now capitalizes on political Islam as a threat and opposes the policies of the JDP mostly based on this fear. In this way, the RPP tries to garner the support of the secular voters. Thus, the threat the RPP perceives from political Islam is based partly on its electoral calculations which pushes it to further intensify the conflict between the seculars and Islamists.

For the military, the JDP government coincided with relative decreases in their power and autonomy. Before the JDP came to power, in 2001, the constitution was amended so that the National Security Council would now only "advise" the council of ministers and the latter would only "evaluate" the decisions of the NSC. With this amendment, the powers of the NSC were retracted back to a similar version of the 1960 constitution. However, on paper and in practice the NSC still continued to play important roles. After the JDP came to power, it further decreased the powers of the military in the NSC by replacing the military officer with a civilian for the position of the secretary general of the NSC. Additionally, the powers of the secretary general of the NSC were diminished and the number of civilians working in the undersecretariat was increased. The regular meetings of the NSC were reduced from once a month to once every two months, making it less frequent for the hierarchy of the military to influence politics behind the scenes. Under considerable pressure from the EU for membership, in 2004, the state security courts were annulled and the NSC seat in the council of higher education was removed. In practice too the JDP government...
attempted to question the decisions of the High Military Council and disputed with the general staff on budgetary matters. In foreign policy matters as well, there has been tension between the military and the government on how to approach the Kurdish question especially in northern Iraq. Thus, the JDP has attempted to gradually curtail some of the political powers of the military.\textsuperscript{55}

During the 2007 crisis, the secular business community\textsuperscript{56} and especially the president of TUSIAD, Arzuhan Dogan-Yalcindag, had also been vocally involved with the political predicament. A close look at the declarations of the business community suggests three simultaneous tendencies. First, businessmen fiercely advocated moderation on both sides. Frequent calls for sound judgment, demands for early elections that would allow the electorate to decide on how to solve the impasse, and warnings against creating chaos that would adversely affect the economy draw attention to the businessmen’s concerns for increasing polarization.\textsuperscript{59} Second, unlike previous crises, an influential section of the business community spoke against another military coup. The business community did not openly criticize the military memorandum in April except for the lukewarm declaration of Dogan-Yalcindag that “the de facto situation created by the declaration of the General Staff is not appropriate for democratic conduct.”\textsuperscript{60}

Other influential business people, such as Guler Sanci\textsuperscript{57} and the president of TOBB, Rifat Hisarciklioglu,\textsuperscript{58} voiced their opposition to a coup d’état. The third apparent tendency was the business community’s warnings against radical political Islam. Dogan-Yalcindag initially opposed Erdogan’s candidacy similar to other secular political elites,\textsuperscript{61} and later, announced that “TUSIAD shares the increasing anxiety in society for protecting the secularist regime.” She criticized the government party, JDP, for not paying enough attention to this danger. TUSIAD also disapproved of the JDP for attempting to change the constitution so that the president will be chosen via national elections.\textsuperscript{62} Dogan-Yalcindag’s words on this issue resembled those of the secular political elites, such as the RPP and President Sezer. Thus, implicitly she gave support to seculars against the JDP. Her words were reiterated by those members of the business community that spoke against sharia. Indeed, one of the rallying points for the business community became “we want neither a coup nor sharia.”\textsuperscript{63}

It should be noted that this is an important shift in the attitudes of the business elites since, even though they spoke against polarization and political Islam, they do not seem ready to support an overt military intervention. However, despite this change, there is no overwhelming reaction against the military’s memorandum. Thus, it seems that the current behavior of the military is acceptable to the leaders of the business community as long as it does not use overt force.\textsuperscript{64}

The reaction of the business community is partially explained by the good economic environment the last JDP government induced. Wishes voiced by the economic elites for a single-party government rather than a coalition after the July 2007 elections\textsuperscript{65} show that the stability and growth the JDP encouraged during its term in office was welcomed by businessmen. In coordination with the International Monetary Fund, the JDP government continued to privatize inefficient state economic enterprises and reduce and rationalize public spending. As a result of the stabilization program, inflation decreased, foreign direct investment tripled in just one year, and exports increased to 85.5 billion dollars. The JDP also continued to push for Turkey’s membership in the EU and, despite setbacks, accession talks began in December 2005.\textsuperscript{66} Given that Turkey has been ruled by inefficient governments for more than a decade, the economic and political stability of the JDP’s term in office was a breath of fresh air for the majority of the business community. In other words, the interests of the business community were not as much threatened by the JDP as the military and political elites.

Similar to the business community, for the majority of the electorate, an overt military intervention is undesirable. Even though significant numbers still fear political Islam, they also oppose a coup. Recent events were critical for demonstrating what the secular factions of the electorate prefer. From the beginning of April to the end of May 2007, there were several demonstrations and rallies against political Islam. In Ankara around 370,000 people marched to Ataturk’s mausoleum. The numbers in Istanbul were more than 1,000,000, in Manisa more than 100,000, in Canakkale around 15,000, in Marmaris about 8,000, and in Samsun 80,000. These rallies vividly demonstrated the disdain of the secular factions against the JDP. However, at the same time, reactions against a possible military coup were also visible. The slogan “we want neither a coup nor sharia” which the business community later endorsed was first voiced in these rallies. These demonstrations and reactions of the economic elites show that if the military forcefully intervenes, it will not be supported even among the secular factions. Thus, the military would face a similar situation that the Greek armed forces confronted in 1967 and would encounter the resistance of Islamist lower classes, the JDP, and sections of the secular electorate and elites. This factor causes the armed forces to refrain from overreacting against political Islam by staging an overt coup.

Is it possible for the military to give up intervening in democracy completely? The Greek experience shows that democracy can be consolidated in states with a long tradition of military interventions, such as Turkey. However, it also points out that the military will not give up its political prerogatives unless perceptions of threat are minimized and civilian elites cease to support military interventions. From this perspective, prospects for democratic consolidation in Turkey do not look impossible. However, for military disengagement from politics (an important requirement of democratic consolidation) to occur, it is necessary for the perception of Islamic threat to diminish (and no new ones to rise) and civilian elites to refuse to support the military. Recent developments demonstrated that tolerating democracy with political Islamists is still too costly in Turkish politics. Increasing assurances from the JDP that the ultimate end of the party is not sharia and further moderation on its part would go a long way in decreasing the perception of threat. It is critical for the JDP to demonstrate that it will not threaten the wellbeing of the high bureaucrats by replacing them with its own sympathizers and challenge the lifestyles of the secular Turkish citizens.
Forceful retaliation against radical Islamists would also dissociate the JDP from more threatening fundamentalists. For their part, secular politicians should refrain from providing support to military interferences. As long as secularist politicians, high bureaucrats, and businessmen view the military as the guardian of secularism in Turkey, the armed forces will not give up their tutelary powers and political prerogatives. The events of April 2007 show that there is progress among the business community in this respect. However, stronger reactions against military involvement in politics from all quarters of society are necessary. The Greek experience after the 1967 regime suggests that democracy in Turkey will consolidate only with increased moderation of the JDP and political Islam and with increased opposition among the secular elites and lower classes against even the use of subtle military power.

Notes

11. For more information on this period's coup d'etats, see Thanos Veremis, The Military in Greek Politics: From Independence to Democracy (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 50-133.
22. For the transition to democracy in 1946, see Kemal Karpat, Türkiye’de CHP’li Partili Hayata Gecis (Ankara: İmge Kitapervi, 2003).


31. For more information on the military intervention, see William Hare, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).


44. “Cemaatler Devrimine Karşı: Irtica Uyarısı,” *Hurriyet*, September 26, 2006, 24(N). For an excellent overview of the confrontation between the military and the JDP government until the presidential crisis, see Jenkins, “Continuity and Change,” 347-353. Jenkins argues that there has been an important difference between the reactions of the former Chief of the General Staff Hilmi Ozkok, who was more moderate, and the current Chief of the General Staff Yasar Buyukanit.


58. As it could be expected, the reactions of MUSIAD were supportive of the JDP. See “MUSIAD: Kaos Istemeyiz, Secimini Adresi Meclis,” *Hurriyet*, April 29, 2007, 9(N).

59. For the declarations of the president of the Union of Turkish Chambers and Stock Exchanges (TOBB) see “Guven ve Istikrar Ufku Kararmasin,” *Hurriyet*, May 28, 2007, 9(N); “Son 15 Gunde 12 Eylul Oncesi Gelenler Donmekten Korktu,” Sabah.
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May 27, 2007, 9(N). For the declarations of the presidents of the Young Businessmen Association of Turkey (TÜSİAD), Ankara Chamber of Industry (ASO), and Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ISO), respectively, see "Demokrasi Sınavı Veriyorum, İstikrar Sureci Korunmalı," Hürriyet, April 29, 2007, 9(N); "Herkes Cozum Uretsin ve Özveride Bulunsun," Hürriyet, May 1, 2007, 8(N); "Belirizliğine Devam Etmesi Riski Artırır," Hürriyet, May 1, 2007, 8(N).

60. "TÜSİAD'dan Hem Hukumete Hem Genelkurmay'a," Hürriyet, April 30, 2007, 8(N).


63. "Erdoğan Bence Aday Olmayacak," Hürriyet, April 18, 2007, 8(N).


66. It should be noted that the current president of TÜSİAD represents the younger generation among the business community. The older generation still perceives more threats from political Islam and is more supportive of military interventions. For the acknowledgment of differences between the two generations see the declarations of a younger business woman and an older businessman, respectively, "Memleket Meselesinde Kurucu Kusaklar Hep Daha Duyarlı, Biz MBA Kusagiyiz," Sabah, May 26, 2007, 8(N); "Eger AKP'nin Destegi Yuzde 50'yi Bulduysa Memleket Kayboldu Demek," Hürriyet, May 7, 2007, 9(N).


Conclusion

Turkey-European Union Relations: Concluding Remarks

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In this book, we have addressed the key issues that stand in the Turkish accession talks with the EU. There were two main components of our analysis. One component was focused on understanding and uncovering the internal developments in Turkey with an eye towards analyzing the key challenges and obstacles to the process. Secondly, there was a focus on understanding, to a certain extent, the European perspectives or more specifically the Greek perspectives and the European Parliament’s position. Our motivation was that if we could understand the Turkish accession process in a coherent fashion, then this would allow us to better understand the EU’s conditionality for candidate countries. In this manner, we would be able to contribute to the larger literature on European integration by assessing the extent to which the EU induces change in aspirant countries in their political, economic and social subsystems. The analysis also enhances our understanding of the conditions under which the EU’s capacity could be compromised. For example, what would happen to the EU’s credibility when it sends mixed signals to a candidate country such as Turkey?

When the European Union opened accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005, this constituted a major turning point for Turkey’s future as well as for the European Union’s path of political integration. The EU is currently at a major crossroads in terms of the direction that European integration