

Article

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“Corrective Intervention” versus “Unfinished Revolution”: Transitions by *Reforma* and the Military in Turkey and Greece

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Abstract: The article compares the failed self-transformation attempt in 1973 in Greece and the actual transition that occurred in 1983 in Turkey. These two cases of regime-initiated transitions to democracy with differing outcomes beg the question: If the 1973 transition in Greece led to a crippled democracy controlled by the military (as in Turkey 10 years later), why was it brought to an abrupt end by the very group that it was supposed to benefit—i.e. the military themselves? The author seeks to answer this question by comparing the position of the Turkish and Greek military in their respective power structures, which produced different regimes (hierarchical in Turkey vs. non-hierarchical in Greece). Moreover, in both cases, the transitions were not perceived as equally benefitting the military—hence the different outcomes, i.e. the failure of the Greek transition and the problematic democracy in Turkey.

Keywords: Turkey, Greece, transformation, 1970s, 1980s

A forgotten incident in the Greek dictatorial regime—its failed liberalisation attempt of 1973 (the so-called “Markezinis experiment”)—shows a major similarity to the Turkish transition of 1983: in both cases, the regimes attempted to transform themselves into some form of democracy—with different results.¹ The success of

¹ As the former Greek prime minister Konstantinos Mitsotakis said: “Papadopoulos had planned to establish in the country a kind of governance based on the Turkish pattern: a façade of parliamentary life, with the very powerful position of the regime moderator, the President of the ‘Republic’ and the armed forces behind him, ready to intervene when necessary” (Diamantopoulos 1990, 355).

Author’s note: I dedicate this article to the loving memory of my beloved father, Athanasios Tzortzis, who passed away during its completion.

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the Turkish self-transformation came as no surprise since the military controlled the whole process and, with the 1982 constitution, guaranteed privileges for the army in the new democracy's institutional structure. In Greece, on the other hand, the similar attempt by the dictator Georgios Papadopoulos to institutionalise the military's privileged presence post-dictatorship failed and was subverted and reversed by the same military whose interests would have been served if the self-transformation had succeeded. What accounts for this seemingly inexplicable reaction of the Greek officers to a process that would perpetuate the army's control over civilian rule? And can this be compared with the Turkish military's efforts in the 1983 transition?

In this article, I will answer those questions by comparing the Greek and Turkish military regime-initiated democratic transitions.² The article will present the two armies' positions in their respective power structures, and examine the respective natures of the two dictatorial regimes in a way that will reveal their differences (a homogenous hierarchical one in Turkey and a fragmented non-hierarchical one in Greece). The account of the way in which both transitions were planned will indicate how the Turkish transition was perceived as serving the military's interests while the Greek one was not. Regarding the article's structure, therefore, the first part of the study will offer an account of the literature on the issue in question, followed by the section on the Turkish transition of 1983, after which the Greek case of 1973 will be examined. The final part will compare the conclusions of the two cases, accounting for their different outcomes.

Democratisation by Regime Transformation and the Military

Turkey and Greece experienced “transition[s] by *reforma*” in 1983 and 1973 respectively. In a *reforma*, dictatorial elites conclude that “that system which they have led and presumably benefited from no longer meets their needs [...]. They hence take the lead in modifying the existing political system and transforming it into a democratic one” (Huntington 1984, 213) after institutionally securing guarantees of their corporate interests in the future democracies. Thus, democracy is not necessarily brought about by democrats; rather, “circumstances may force, trick, lure or cajole non-democrats into democratic behavior” (Rustow 1970, 344–5).

² While the focus of this article is on inter-elite interaction and domestic politics, the importance of the international influences cannot be underestimated. Nevertheless, an account of those influences exceeds the limits of the article. A special paper on this issue is under preparation with the provisional title “The Impact of the International Factor on the Greek and Turkish Dictatorships' Self-Transformations.”

The role of the military in this process depends on the control they exert over the regime: democratisation by *reforma* is conditional and contingent upon factors such as the officer corps' organisational unity and cohesion, the nature of the dictatorial regime and the army's position in the regime's structure, and the military's perceptions of their corporate interests. Moreover, the military's principles of "duty, honour and country" (Moskos and Wood 1988, 7) need to be taken into account since they think of themselves as faithful safeguards of the *patria* which they are likely to identify with the regime and their own corporate interests with those of their country. The degree of cohesion and unity in the officer corps can also influence the military's capacity to intervene in politics, and the higher this cohesion is, the more likely it is that a possible intervention will produce a stable regime, while a low unity produces further interventional tendencies (Thompson 1976). Furthermore, the idea of what constitutes the national interest is not necessarily identical among all army officers. Some may conclude that it is in their (and the country's) interests not to concede power to the politicians. In turn, the diversity among the military that this may produce reflects on how the officers perceive the self-transformation of the regime that a transition entails. As long as they hold those "interventionist and messianic views" (Karakatsanis 2001, 162), they pose a substantial threat to the transition attempt.

Along with these factors, the position of the military in politics prior to a dictatorship may affect the military's motives for taking over and surrendering power. A dictatorship imposed as a reaction to a challenging political conjuncture will not produce the same type of regime (and consequently will not have the same potential for democratic self-transformation) as one established to maintain a lasting military control in politics. Furthermore, a regime imposed by a hierarchically controlled military may not have the same objectives as one that emerged from the action of various factions escaping hierarchical control. Therefore, the hierarchical or non-hierarchical nature of the regime, its degree of internal unity, and developments in its ranks are essential for the study of the transition.³ The Turkish hierarchy-led military intervention, which maintained internal unity in the officer corps as well as tight control over society, very likely set the institutional framework for its comfortable departure and retrospectively offered itself the legitimacy needed to accommodate the military's interests as an institution in the future democracy. The Greek regime, on the other hand, was internally divided into clashing factions that catered only to their short-term interests and was far less likely to achieve minimum consensus on the issue of a planned transition.

³ For a discussion on the hierarchical and non-hierarchical nature of military regimes, see Clapham and Philip (1985).

“Voluntary withdrawal results when the officer corps concludes that the army has accomplished its goals [and] realizes that the political arena is more complex than previously thought” (Danopoulos 1984, 233). For a successful transition, the outgoing military elites have to safeguard their own interests before accepting the “institutionalization of uncertainty” that it entails and proceeding to the transition. As Nordlinger (1977) pointed out, divisions among the military do not necessarily lead to democratisation since they can generate counter-coups led by pro-authoritarian factions within the regime, which may produce a dictatorial continuation rather than a liberalisation. This is because, for the military (the *par excellence* prodictatorial regime group), the transition to democracy means a loss of power and privileges, and the support (or at least neutrality) of the officer corps, a *sine qua non* for a *reforma*, is problematic “when the incumbents cannot count on the loyalty of the armed forces” (Shain and Linz 1995, 57). On the other hand, a unified military elite that leads the transition is better able to carry out the democratisation process. Moreover, the military’s assurance that their influence in the future democracy will continue will make them less reluctant to hand power over to politicians. As Nordlinger concluded, the armed forces’ guarantee that they can continue to act as “moderators” and that the institutional reforms that they introduced will be respected facilitates their extrication from power. To the extent that the regime is hierarchically controlled and enjoys a high degree of cohesion, the task of self-transformation will be considerably easier than in a factionalised and non-hierarchical regime. In that case, the transition attempt may result in divisions within the regime ranks, hardliners versus softliners, which may prove fatal not only to the transition but also to the stability of the regime itself. Stepan concludes that, when there is hardliner opposition in the army, “the redemocratization effort [by the government] may falter because of military institutional resistance, and no actual transfer of power may occur” (Stepan 1986, 75).

It is because of those factors that the comparison between the successful Turkish *reforma* and the failed Greek one will shape the article’s narrative and conclusions. The examination of the army’s position in the power structure of both countries will be followed by an analysis of the different natures of the dictatorships. The account of the development of the transitions will help to explain, in light of the aforementioned factors, the difference in the transformation outcomes in the two countries.

Turkey: From the Principle of an “Apolitical Army” to Hierarchical Interventions

For the Turkish military, the republic was characterised by the principle of an apolitical army. Kemal Atatürk, the first president (from 1923 to 1938) of the modern

Turkish republic founded on the rubble of the Ottoman Empire, introduced a formal separation between the army and civilian government, which had the final authority over the country's politics. His successors maintained this separation for almost 30 years. The military were confined to their defence tasks, but, although Atatürk urged the army to stay out of politics, he also encouraged the officers to view themselves as the cornerstone and guardians of the principles of Kemalism—secularism, republicanism, national unity and independence, economic progress, political modernisation, and “Westernism”—(Heper and Güney 2000; Narlı 2000), both as an independent professional group and as protectors of the state. From the 1950s on, the military “progressively developed into a professional body, [which] contributed to their basic unwillingness to be continuously involved in the swirl of politics” (Heper and Güney 2000, 652).

This radically changed after the transition to competitive politics in 1950. The weakness of civil society and liberal democratic institutions, divisive party politics, and issues of the governability of a multicultural state, along with its sensitive geographical position, gradually brought the army to an unavoidable (for the military) series of interventions, which consolidated its hegemonic presence in Turkish politics. In all these interventions, the military believed that they were acting to save the country from political chaos or to defend secularism: “This ideological dimension to the military's perception of its role has meant that its definition of security extends beyond public order and Turkey's political or economic interests to include threats to the country's Kemalist legacy” (Jenkins 2001a, 7). This belief was shared by a considerable part of the people as “the military's involvement in politics had been acceptable for the majority of society when the civilians failed to bring order and stability and when as a result public confidence in the politicians faltered” (Gürsoy 2012, 742).

As the rule of the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*, DP) stalled and started degenerating into authoritarianism, the military experienced a decline in their social status and economic problems because of the DP's failure to cater to them. This, combined with the DP's decision to use the army against demonstrators in the spring of 1960, resulted in the first intervention in May of that year, which was organised mainly by radical junior officers who posed as guarantors of national unity and claimed to have prevented a national split. Although the army hierarchy appeared to be the mastermind of the coup, the lower ranks wanted to be the decision makers and “initially it seemed as though field grade officers who wished to remain in power indefinitely might prevail” (Harris 2011, 204).

The military commanders imposed a “corrective intervention”, however, that pushed the army back into its barracks, handed power over to civilians. Having realised that “coups affected by junior officers are all too prone to generate further coups” (Dodd 1990, 143), the commanders formulated a new constitution

guaranteeing institutional prominence for the army in decision making.⁴ Furthermore, the involvement of lower-ranking officers in politics tended to become endemic, as two coup attempts by different factions proved. The dynamic reaction to these attempts by the top military restored discipline in the army.

After 1961, the military acquired a substantial degree of autonomy in its internal affairs; characteristically, the choice of the chief of staff was mainly made by the internal mechanisms of the armed forces and simply confirmed by the civilian authorities. As Narli writes, “the increased professionalism of the army is associated with greater military influence in the Turkish case rather than increased subordination of the military to the civil authority” (Narli 2000, 112). The army also determined, as is still the case, its own institutional development and the country’s defence and security policies. Moreover, with the introduction of the National Security Council (NSC) with the Constitution of 1961, the military were able to voice their opinion on all matters of “national security”, broadly defined. The army started showing the characteristics of a “praetorian” model of armed forces. In this model, an army “seeks to identify the military’s corporate aspirations with the national interest and becomes its own client” (Narli 2000, 112). The 1960 coup set the pattern for future military interventions: facing a set of major problems that civilian governments are unable to effectively deal with and withdrawing to their barracks shortly afterwards, thereby precluding prolonged interventions that might jeopardise the army’s internal unity. Nevertheless, the military “found it impossible to withdraw from the political stage, once they had leapt onto it” (Hale 1990, 149).

Post-1960 Turkish politics was characterised by “a ‘silent partnership’ in which the military enjoyed full autonomy from the government while keeping an eye over civilian political life” (Narli 2000, 113). In March 1971, they staged the so-called “coup by memorandum” (Davison 1998, 196),⁵ asking president Cevdet Sunay for a strong and effective government to deal with political violence and embark upon Kemalist-oriented reforms. The generals warned Sunay that, if their demands were not met, they would directly take control of the government. Prime minister Suleyman Demirel stepped down, and “an unstable balance of power between civilian politicians and the military” (Hale 1990, 195) ensued. The army minimised its interference by not forming its own cabinet, and the generals “were careful not to dictate to the civilian politicians exactly how to proceed” (Harris 1988, 189). Instead, they withdrew to the barracks. The rest of the decade

⁴ Hale (1990, 54) speaks of a “military-industrial establishment” in the country; he quotes a former member of the newly introduced, powerful National Security Council (NSC) in 1973 as saying that “in Turkey there is a military class, just as there is a workers’ and peasants’ class.”

⁵ Özbudun calls it “a half-coup” (2000, 35).

witnessed an uneasy coexistence in civil–military relations. The uselessness of this “half-coup” became a lesson for the military, but not for the politicians who, after the army retreated to their barracks, illusively thought they could win back the initiative in decision making. To quote Harris, “the military leaders seemed prepared to accept a considerable level of political and social disorder, but only if those in charge of the political process were serious about tackling the problems” (Harris 2011, 208).

The “Corrective Intervention” of September 1980 and the 1983 Transition

The next coup was the product of a major political deadlock of which there was no way out, given the Turkish political structure and agents. The incapability of the major parties to form stable coalition governments, the persisting incapacity of the parliament to elect a president, excessive clientelism and nepotism, low economic performance, the rising threat of Islamism, centrifugal tendencies in the periphery (mainly from the Kurdish movement), urban guerrilla terrorism, and unchecked violence from left- and rightwing extremism made an outright military takeover inevitable again.⁶ By 1980, it was agreed among most observers of Turkish affairs that, as a British diplomat put it, the decline in authority of the central power would lead to a collapse of the state, to which only the armed forces were able to respond “by putting into effect a coherent internal security policy. They are still loyal to their commanders [...] with both the left and the right setting up ‘no-go’ areas, the central power would be in greater trouble and the risk of clashes that would have more the character of civil war would be greater” (Lawrence to Bullard, 23 July 1980).

From the mid-1970s on, the generals agreed on a coup as a permanent answer to the political situation, and in the autumn of 1978 a “task force” was assigned to closely follow political developments in view of a coup. For the first time in history, there was preliminary support for a “corrective intervention” by the army among some political groups dissatisfied by the situation. They urged general Kenan Evren to order a coup, informing him of the politicians’ moves and consulting him on various political matters. This belief that certain politicians would support, or

⁶ In the words of a British diplomat, the coup was due to “the irritation of the High Command at the deadlock in parliament, unable either to elect a president or to pass the required legislation [...]; concern at the disrepute which this situation might bring upon the Turkish state; [and] frustration at the government’s failure to diminish political violence” (Lawrence to Bullard, 13 September 1980).

at least assume a neutral position towards, the planned intervention played a prominent role in the military's decision to intervene in 1980 (Gürsoy 2009).

The regime contained both veto and moderator types, although the latter was predominant (Karakartal 1985).⁷ The high ranks of the armed forces and general staff were involved, but there was disagreement on how far the intervention should go. This disagreement was not enough, though, to divide the military, who acted "more cohesively and hierarchically than previously" (Cizre 1997, 152). Also, in contrast to past takeovers, the mid- and lower-ranking officers did not object to or get involved in the formation of the government. As a British diplomat noted, "the armed forces at the senior level moved together, the coup was well coordinated and there is little risk of any breakdown in discipline [...]. Given the desperate state to which affairs have come in Turkey, a full military takeover may have been the only way out" (Gomersall to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), 12 September 1980).

Despite the fact that its head was ex-military, it was a civilian government apart from four military appointees. One more difference from previous interventions was that "the military executed the coup and implemented its program without having any partners among the intelligentsia, the civil bureaucracy, or the professional community" (Evin 1994, 39) except for the deputy prime minister, Turgut Özal, who was a technocrat. Undersecretary to Demirel's government, Özal had a major role in planning liberal economic reforms which could not be fully applied because of the political turmoil.

The military government set off to change the constitutional framework of the future democracy in order to tailor it to the needs—in the army's view—of the Turkish state and the interests of the military as an institution. It also embarked upon restructuring the bureaucracy and radically altering the country's legal framework, passing more than 600 laws and decrees that dealt with almost all aspects of political, social, cultural, economic, and judicial life. The 1982 constitution was the guarantee of the military's permanent influence in political decision-making. For example, according to Article 118, Turkey's Council of Ministers has to concede priority to the decisions of the NSC "concerning necessary measures for the protection and independence of the state, the unity and indivisibility of the country, and the peace and security of society" (Narli 2000, 114). Furthermore, in 1983 the NSC secretary general was given authority "to monitor the implementation of recommendations forwarded by the NSC to the Council of Ministers" (Jenkins 2001b, 344). The secretary general acquired the power to follow

7 In the "moderator" type, the army "feels itself obliged to 'step in, to sort out the mess' created by factious politicians, and after a period of 'corrective government' to hand over to a cleaned up civilian political system" (Clapham and Philip 1985, 9).

up on the implementation of the government's NSC decisions. Defence policies, the purchase and the manufacture of arms also fell under the purview of the chief of staff. The minister of defence had virtually no power in military appointments. Instead, responsibility for officers' promotions and discharges was bestowed on the supreme military council, which was exempted by law from judicial review. Moreover, the officers were not accountable to the minister of defence but to the prime minister.

The 1982 constitution reflected the military's distrust of political parties, interest groups, labour unions, and anything that might be part of a pluralist democracy, as well as their desire to expand their tight grip in the country so as to avoid the disorder of the 1970s. It allowed all the liberties and rights of a democracy, although it provided for their suspension or limitation in the event of internal or external threats, stipulating that parties willing to run in the elections had to acquire the NSC's permission. Even voluntary associations or trade unions were not allowed to have political goals or links or to give or receive financial aid from political parties. It thus "restructured the Turkish polity by narrowing the basis of political participation and strengthening state institutions" (Cizre 1997, 162).

The law on political parties passed in the summer of 1983 prevented what it defined as the "excessive politicization of the citizens" (Dodd 1990, 88). This was also the goal of the electoral law (again chosen by the NSC), which favoured stable governments, allocating many seats to larger parties and imposing a 10% electoral threshold for representation in the National Assembly in order to prevent the formation of fragile coalition governments. The electorate thus had a limited choice at the polls, which in the end turned into a one-horse race—Turgut Ozal. The Turkish military knew they had sufficient institutional tools at their disposal to deal with any undesired developments in the future. As the British ambassador stressed in a report in early 1984, Evren's goal was a "Turkish style" democracy:

Critics have argued that the 'democracy' produced by the Evren process is a sham and that the military, acting behind the scenes, will continue to be the dominating influence. [...] [T]he army's right to intervene to preserve the integrity of the State is accepted by the Turks with little question. The elections of 1983 were not unfettered democracy [...] but] the electorate by their massive turn-out showed that the exercise was worthwhile. (Wilson to FCO, 2 February 1984)

Moreover, the regime needed some democratic credentials for Turkey's external relations, especially with Europe. Liberal groups and organisations in the latter had heavily criticised the generals from the beginning, which had implications for Turkey's economic relations and for the country's funding from the EEC (European

Economic Community).⁸ Ozal, for his part, “strongly opposed giving in to voices from all quarters of the political scene to grant amnesty to many thousands jailed for involvement in violence during the years of military rule. That stand helped to mollify those in the military who were suspicious that civilian politicians nourished revanchist attitudes” (Harris 2011, 212). The democracy that emerged from the 1983 transition was a system where “civilian authority is primary rather than supreme [...] if [the army] considers that the civilian government is failing to safeguard against, or is even actively nurturing, threats to either the country or the nature of the regime, then the military believes it has a legal and moral obligation to intervene” (Jenkins 2001a, 34–5).

Greece: Military Factionalism and the 1967 Dictatorship

Military interventions in Greek politics were frequent in the first part of the 20th century following the deep political divisions in Greece between monarchists and democrats before and during the interwar years and between pro- and anti-communists in the 1940s. The latter produced the bloody civil war of 1946–9. After that war, many officers challenged the principle of civil supremacy over the armed forces (Zaharopoulos 1972). Moreover, conspiracy and factionalism in the officer corps, as well as the decline of the monarchy and the political right, resulted in the military coup of April 1967 when the perceived threat to the position of the army in the power structure became imminent. This was fatal to the regime’s frail unity and its self-transformation attempt in 1973.

Having “saved the nation from the throes of communism”, the army “identified itself with the homeland, owing to its role in securing the national sovereignty and independence of the polity” (Tsarouhas 2005, 4). The Greek officers were thus convinced that they deserved a higher status in society, as along with professional and economic rewards. By the early 1960s, the old major faction of IDEA (*Ερπός Λόχος*, Sacred Union of Greek Officers) had “practically dissolved because its leaders were in high hierarchical positions and their corporate goals were achieved” (Hatzivasileiou 2009, 425). The junior (lower- and mid-ranking) officers who were hostile to their superiors that blocked their ascendance to higher and influential posts, however, saw factionalism as a vehicle for achieving their

⁸ The United States, on the other hand, was happy with the regime, which, in the words of a CIA report, “has in effect made Turkey a generally more accommodating NATO ally” (CIA to Chairman, 1 March 1981, cited in Robins 2003, 134). On the relations between Turkey and the EEC and European states cf. Karaosmanoglu (1991).

personal ambitions. Most factions were comprised of commanders of military units—in stark contrast to the hierarchical military now assigned to high staff level positions and cut off from the army (Karampelias 2001; Veremis 2000): “The existence within the military establishment of conspiratorial officer cliques—no matter what their motives—signified a general breakdown in civilian supervision and control” (Zaharopoulos 1972, 25). The fierce anticommunism of the Greek officers was paired with an anti-parliamentarism that identified all politicians (regardless of party affiliation) with corruption, stagnation, and inefficiency, which they considered to be inherent to democratic politics (Stavrou 1976).

Moreover, the ongoing modernisation of the army enhanced their belief that “they could do better in modernising Greece than divisive politics and parties [...] and gradually turned against the political establishment and the Palace” (Kazakos 2009, 161). The latter, for its part, mistakenly believed that it controlled the army because it enjoyed the loyalty of the senior commanders. As the king himself admitted half a century later, “we had the generals on our side but not the majors and the captains [...] whatever a general commands, the soldiers will do what their captains order [...] the generals did not care about lower-ranking officers” (Konstantínos II 2015, 48). The collapse of the post-civil war power structure through a series of political crises from 1963 to 1965 and the spectre of the victory of the challenging radicalised centre-left in the elections set for May 1967 induced the conspirators to intervene on 21 April.

The dictatorship was thus the product of a conjunctural collaboration between various factions of mid-ranking officers (from captains to colonels)⁹ who bypassed the military as an institution, acting in their corporate interests to avert their subjection to civilian control following the success of the centre-left in the pending elections. It was a non-hierarchical veto military regime,¹⁰ devoid of ties with civil society, political parties with substantial support, or any organised interest. It reflected the complete isolation of the regime, which “did not have military unity or political clientele at its disposal, *sine qua non* elements for its transformation to a clientelistic authoritarian regime” (Veremis 2000, 268–9). This “unstable alliance of diverse and ambitious rivals” (Woodhouse 1985, 32) ruled Greece for seven years.

From early on, differences between Georgios Papadopoulos and his collaborators on the one hand and the future hardliners on the other appeared concerning the issue of the duration of the dictatorship. Papadopoulos, “the only one who was

⁹ One journalist counted 14 different factions that carried out the coup (Kakaounakis 1976, 185–7).

¹⁰ “Veto regimes pit the military against strongly organized civilian political structures, support the existing social order and their aim is to defend it. Consequently, these regimes are highly repressive” (Clapham and Philip 1985, 8–9).

thinking politics among the conspirators” (Haralambis 1985, 176), had his own ideas on how long the dictatorship should last and what should succeed it, as he sought to transform it into a personal regime. For their part, the hardliners’ factions wanted to stay in power indefinitely in order to reap its fruits: higher salaries, prospects for fast promotions, and enhanced social prestige, as well as high posts in the state administration. According to one of them, “the causes of Papadopoulos’ downfall and the failure of the Revolution were created from the morning of the 22nd of April on [...] [T]he insurgents, instead of looking ahead, only had in mind how to subvert each other” (Kakaounakis 1976, 185).

The factionalism inherent in the regime also reflected a series of internal struggles concerning influential governmental posts and promotions. These struggles jeopardised the armed forces’ cohesion, alarming NATO officials about “Greece’s military capacity, impaired by continuous purges since 1967, designed to [...] create armed forces that owed everything to the regime and had a stake in its continuation” (Pedaliu 2011, 116). The important policy and decision making was almost exclusively done by Papadopoulos, whose longevity in office seemed to threaten the long-term corporatist interests of the officers who were not part of his inner circle. The strong but inconspicuous pockets of inner subversion and conspiracy abounded: for six years the regime underwent one crisis after another.¹¹ To check his challengers, Papadopoulos had to rely on the head of the Greek Military Police (*Ελληνική Στρατιωτική Αστυνομία*, ESA), brigadier Dimitrios Ioannidis: “As Papadopoulos was ascending the regime’s climax, he was becoming more and more dependent on Ioannidis, who guaranteed him the control of the army” (Veremis 2000, 267). Ioannidis was the only insurgent never to occupy a governmental post; his commitment to controlling the army allowed him the potential for conspiracy and information on developments in the officer corps.

Isolation and factionalism were therefore the key features of the Greek dictatorship. The former kept the regime from forming any alliances with other political forces as there was no political party, group, or influential personality willing to cooperate with the colonels.¹² Factionalism posed a perpetual threat to its precarious internal balance, as well as to a structured evolution towards some form of democracy. The roots of the 1973 coup have to be sought in the continuous lack of hierarchical military and government control over the conspiring factions and in brigadier Ioannidis. US observers were aware of his the extent of his power; for

¹¹ Kakaounakis (1976, 185–7) indicates one major inter-regime crisis per year between 1967 and 1972.

¹² It should be noted that the regime failed to find collaborators even among the conservative party, the National Radical Union (*Εθνική Ριζοσπαστική Ένωση*, ERE), whose leader Panayotis Kanellopoulos, who was deposed as prime minister in 1967 by the coup, went on denouncing the colonels until the end.

instance, a CIA memorandum of September 1972 read: “If he [Ioannidis] decided to go against the prime minister, the threat of a successful military coup would balloon rapidly” due to Papadopoulos’ failure “to maintain a close relationship with those officers who see themselves as guardians of the revolutionary virtue” (CIA Memorandum, 25 September 1972).

The “Revolution Unfinished”: Military Reaction and the Failure of the “Markezinis Experiment”

In May 1973, there was evidence of organised anti-regime feelings in the armed forces, as a failed naval officers’ coup (the only such incident in six years) showed. The plan was to send an ultimatum to the government to resign or the fleet would blockade Athens. It was easily frustrated before it could hatch though, and all officers involved were arrested, proving once again the regime’s tight control.¹³ After suppressing this plot, Papadopoulos embarked on what he had imagined was a “transition,” abolishing the monarchy and proclaiming the Republic (he was sworn in as “president” in August). He also amended a constitution stipulated in 1968 (which had remained on paper) and guaranteed for himself and the army extensive powers and close control of political life in the future democracy. According to the new constitution, all matters of defence, internal security, and public order were left to the president, allowing the government substantial powers only in foreign policy and the economy. This move was also calculated to meet the needs of Greece’s foreign relations, especially with the EEC, whose opposition to the regime had resulted in Greece’s withdrawal from the Council of Europe, the freezing of Greece’s integration process, and the loss of precious European loans (Verney and Tsakaloyannis 1986).

After protracted negotiations over the summer, Markezinis, the only politician who accepted the *reforma*,¹⁴ was given the mandate to form the first all-civilian government since April 1967. Thus, Papadopoulos created the institutional framework of a perpetual military tutelage over Greek politics under himself, or so he thought. The extent of the control that the constitution allowed him shone through in a British diplomatic report:

¹³ One destroyer fled to Italy, however; for the failed naval coup, see Papadimitriou (1985).

¹⁴ Although politically negligible, Spyros Markezinis was “a truly progressive bourgeois element” and an “impressively radical personality” in Greece (Meletopoulos 1996, 378). He had not collaborated with the regime and believed he could play a key role in the transition and aftermath.

The President can reintroduce Martial Law at any time [...]. With responsibility for internal security, foreign policy and defence reserved to the president; with a council of ministers who will presumably deal mainly with social and economic affairs and not be answerable to parliament; and with a parliament lacking any real power and created from carefully managed political parties, this will be a partial democracy at best. (Denson to FCO, 28 August 1973)

It would seem that, with such regulations, the interests of the military were safeguarded in a way that precluded any reaction from within the officers' corps. This proved otherwise, however: after six years in power, Papadopoulos and his group were perceived as acting in their own narrow factional and personal interests rather than for the army as a whole or for the military as institution. Most of the lower-ranking officers too were worried about corruption in the military occupying governmental posts, expressing concern about "the betrayal of the spirit of the 21st of April" for higher posts and material wealth. General Grigorios Bonanos, then commander of an army corps in Thessaloniki, had distinguished three major groups in the officer corps: first, those who supported the regime, the most powerful among whom were affiliated with brigadier Ioannidis; then the royalists opposing the regime after the king's deposition; and, finally, the "neutral" officers who were in the majority and would not object to any arrangement. The most dynamic young and mid-ranking officers were worried about the course of the "revolution": "They were claiming that the armed forces were getting corrupted by the exertion of power, that there were signs of corruption and sleaze." This led to the conclusion that "the course of the regime was not what it should be [... The regime] had substantially lost its orientation. And there was urgent need of a 'corrective interference' that could only come from within the army" (both quotes in Bonanos 1986, 103). Bonanos noted that most of the higher-ranking officers, as well as many junior ones, were openly expressing their faith and devotion to Ioannidis in contrast to Papadopoulos, "whose accumulation of so many offices and titles over time (president of the Republic, prime minister, minister of defence) was destroying the dignity of the regime" (Bonanos 1986, 112).

Furthermore, the transition Papadopoulos attempted was viewed with a jaundiced eye by the hardliners who had come to identify any move towards civilianisation as a treacherous act against the army and the country. Their reaction was openly voiced by Ioannis Ladas, minister of the interior until October 1973. While handing over his portfolio to the new minister, Markezinis, he asked rhetorically: "[W]hy and how is the revolution over? Who brought it to an end?" (quoted in Grigoriadis 1975, 31). Ioannidis was thus subverting Papadopoulos with the open or tacit support of both the hardliners and the military as an institution, who refused to accept any submission to civilian control, even within the tight and detailed framework of supervision over politics stipulated in the constitution,

thinking that only Papadopoulos would profit from the new arrangements. They were also frustrated because the “revolution” was surrendering to the same political class it had overthrown six years before. Papadopoulos’ position as “President of the Republic” meant little as it did not guarantee the loyalty of the aforementioned regime groups. So, Ioannidis rallied “the radical officers who felt threatened by the return to some sort of civilian government, as well as those officers who accepted handing over the office to politicians but felt that their collective interests would be jeopardised if the Papadopoulos regime continued on its isolated path” (Karampelias 2001, 377). The extent of the threat Ioannidis posed was also evident to the British ambassador:

In recent months the influence of Colonel Ioannides [sic], one of the most powerful members of the so-called ‘Revolutionary Council’ seems to have counted for more than that of the hard line members of the Council of Ministers [...]. Prudence would ensure that Papadopoulos has been careful to retain Ioannides’ loyalty both as the leader of a significant para-military force and as the person responsible for military security who has the task of keeping the lid on the more turbulent middle ranking ‘Qaddafiist’ officers. (Hooper to Cornish, 30 August 1973)¹⁵

While Markezinis did not neglect the importance of gaining the military’s acquiescence, institutionally he could not claim jurisdiction over the armed forces left to Papadopoulos. When he was given disturbing information about the predispositions of the military toward his government, he rushed to alert Papadopoulos who, in turn, hoped that Ioannidis would not topple him: Ioannidis pretended to help him gather information on the predisposition of the junior officers, based on his earnest communication with them. Nevertheless, Papadopoulos did attempt to remove Ioannidis from the army in the summer of 1973, luring him into the newly created office of “Military House of the President of the Republic”, a post with negligible influence over the army. Unfortunately for Papadopoulos, however, Ioannidis was already aware of the plan and promptly rejected that offer. Papadopoulos backed down but then tried to have him transferred to the command of a remote division in northwestern Greece, which would have left Ioannidis with little opportunity to engage in conspiracy. He vehemently opposed this plan too, making clear that he did not intend to leave his post as ESA leader (Bonanos 1986). Therefore, Papadopoulos was concerned about the hardliners’ reaction but uncertain when it might occur and what role Ioannidis might play in that. He was also unaware of the extent of the opposition to his *reforma*. He was an easy target for the well-prepared action by Ioannidis’ insurgents who carried out their coup on 25 November 1973, putting an end to the timid “Markezinis experiment”.

¹⁵ Miller (2009, 171) notes that US ambassador Tasca also “embraced Markezinis with the same fervor as he had earlier backed Papadopoulos” out of fear that, should the “experiment” fail, a “Greek Nasser” would carry out a coup.

As if the military opposition was not enough, Markezinis made the error of preparing for elections outspokenly; he misjudged because he was dealing with ruthless officers with long experience in conspiracy and subversion. Markezinis was too conspicuous in his presumed intention of holding elections in the spring of 1974, seeking public meetings with politicians—most notably Kanellopoulos, the head of the ERE—thus offering the hardliners valuable information about his plans (such as the date of announcing the timetable for elections, which they could read about in the press), and facilitating their plot. Markezinis' pledge to legalise the communist party did not help either. It is quite something that the hardliners took Markezinis more seriously than the politicians opposing the regime who accused him of not sincerely intending to make Greece a democracy.

This became evident during the Athens Polytechnic students' demonstrations in November 1973. These demonstrations, though not directly involved in the hardliners' plans (their coup had been timetabled before the incidents and the demonstrations did not affect that timetable), unintendedly helped their cause by discrediting the "experiment". The intensity of the demonstrations and some slogans propagated during those days convinced many officers that the old demons of political unrest and "communist subversion" were about to be unleashed. The memories of the civil war and the turmoil of the 1960s, which was anathema to the military that saw itself as protecting society from "anti-national insurgency," were more than enough for them to welcome the hardliners' coup. Moreover, the Markezinis government itself evoked memories of the pre-1967 turmoil, as well as drawing parallels with the civil war, which "left a dark legacy of particular cruelty and a considerable number of civilian victims on both sides [... The government] aimed at creating alarming associations with these memories" (Kornetis 2013, 272).

On the other hand, the violent and bloody suppression of the demonstrations and the persecutions that ensued confirmed their suspicions that the "experiment" was only a smokescreen for the continuation of Papadopoulos' one-man-rule in civilian guise. This is why, in the aftermath of the coup, the mood in Greece was quite good: many had totally misread the intentions of the insurgents and assumed that they would finally allow a proper transition. As the British ambassador noted, "reaction to the change of government in Greece had not been markedly hostile, mainly because the coup took place without bloodshed or widespread arrests" (Nafpliotis 2012, 202). Nevertheless, the Greeks soon moved from relief to concern, dismay, and fear: the former minister Averoff spoke of a "worse dictatorship" in a memorandum he sent to general Phaedon Ghizikis, the newly appointed "President of the Republic". He stated that in the first days after the coup "there was everywhere a sense of general relief and joy, of lively optimism for the future, a feeling of devotion toward the armed forces. These feelings however were short-lived. Hopes were disappointed" (quoted in Andrews 1980, 206). Also

US ambassador Henry J. Tasca described the morning after Ioannides' coup as "grim, dismal and depressing" (Embassy in Greece to the Department of State, 26 November 1973). The British embassy shared this pessimism in a note on the new Greek regime:

Behind a cabinet of mediocrities are the real masters of Greece—Ioannides and his associates. The political basis of their coup seems to be 'back in April 1967' [...]. [I]t seems probable that Ioannides will avoid taking any chances on the introduction of an (as he would see it) unruly and premature democracy [...]. [P]ublic opinion after its initial euphoria is now confused and pessimistic [...] controlling [the government] stands a somewhat nebulous group of officers [...] in which revolutionary purists contend for power with moderates who still envisage a deal with the old politicians. (Hooper to FCO, 6 December 1973)¹⁶

Indeed, the forces that carried out the November 1973 coup had no plans on how to deal with the situation of the country (which had started deteriorating economically and was facing a political deadlock) but only to prolong their own stay in power by suppressing all opposition. In the eight months of Ioannidis' rule, "no open action against the regime was recorded [...]. [It was] authoritarianism in its fullest form" (Kornetis 2013, 288). As Markezinis wrote in his memoirs, Ioannidis intended to send all opponents into exile on the islands and stay in power for 30 years (Markezinis 1979, 528). US ambassador Tasca commented in February 1974 that "the Greek Armed Forces have become a symbol of repression, tyranny, and disarray. Their association in their present state and posture with NATO and the U.S. remains ominous for our future security interests in Greece" (Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State, 8 February 1974). The coup in July 1974 against president Makarios in Cyprus, which triggered the Turkish invasion, was the final blow. Acting irresponsibly and with great short-sightedness, the hardliners simply proved their total lack of any sound political management of the country and confirmed Markezinis's forecast that, if he failed, power would "pass into the hands of a Greek Gaddafi" (Markezinis 1979, 245).

Summing up, the exclusively military non-hierarchical nature of the colonels' fragmented and factionalised regime produced a deadlock due to the divergent goals among the officers that imposed it: most of the hardliners' factions aimed to stay in power indefinitely, whereas Papadopoulos sought a controlled transition on his own terms. But the fact that his leadership was always challenged and the army had passed into the control of the hardliners made the "Markezinis experiment" hostage to Ioannidis' conspiracy. The fertile ground for the hardliners' coup

16 This had been also the prediction made by Hooper's predecessor back in 1969, when he wrote in a report that "the immediate successors of the Papadopoulos regime [...] would only remain in power for a very short period, as their superiors would not tolerate them. They could do a fair amount of damage while they were in power" (quoted in Nafpliotis 2012, 200).

was provided by many lower- and mid-ranking officers' perceptions of the transition as a "betrayal of the 21 April" as well as by the hierarchical military's reluctance to accept even limited civilian control. Moreover, Markezinis' and Papadopoulos' miscalculations regarding the dispositions of the army and the extent of the plot and the politicians' and societal opposition to the "experiment" facilitated the work of the plotters. The Greek officers' corps was far from accepting its permanent return to the barracks in the fall of 1973. It would take the events in Cyprus in 1974 and the rise of the "Turkish threat" for the Greek military, the perception of which "satisfied most of the army's interest-group demands and reconciled it to an apolitical role" (Duman and Tsarouhas 2006, 413) to accomplish this return.

Conclusion

The comparison of the Turkish and Greek self-transformation of their respective regimes reveals that, despite both being military-led dictatorships, the two were very different in aim and structure. The Greek regime, led by a non-hierarchical military, was fragmented and isolated, aimed to do no more than to serve the short-term interests of its instigators and had a leader continuously contested by rival factions because he pursued his own narrow interests, the Turkish one, however, led by the hierarchical military as an institution, fulfilled its aim of transforming the country in a way that would serve the military's corporate interests in a supervised, weak democracy. Turkey's transition thus recalls the Chilean and Brazilian transitions from authoritarianism to "difficult democracies", whereby the regime forces and institutions maintained a close supervision over politics for some time, producing "not a strong, vibrant democracy, but a perverted one, skewed toward the interpretation of elite interests whose procedures and politics are subject to military review" (Hagopian 1990, 164). On the other hand, Greece's failed *reforma* stands as a unique case of a failed attempt at self-transformation; the actual democratisation of the country one year later following the Cyprus fiasco is comparable to the demise of the Argentinean regime after the ill-fated Falklands War venture during the 1980s.

The monolithic non-hierarchical military character of the Greek regime accounts for the impossibility of its self-transformation: it lacked sociopolitical support from other interest groups, suffered deep (but not obvious at the time) divisions within its ranks and failed to institutionalise itself and/or provide a clear path to the future. This was largely due to the different goals the officers that imposed it had: most of the hardliners' factions frustrated any possible attempt at a *reforma*. Even the problematic "constitution" of 1973 failed to become accepted by

the military as a safeguard for their corporate interests and was perceived as a mere smokescreen for the continuation of Papadopoulos' personal power. Moreover, the junior Greek military identified their own interests with the perpetuation of the "Revolution", refusing submission to civilian control. Finally, Markezinis, appearing as Papadopoulos' puppet, failed to involve the politicians in his "experiment", alarmed the military, and offered the hardliners all the information they needed about his plans for the elections he intended to call. Thus, his *reforma* was left hostage to fortune—that is, to the real overlords of the army: Ioannidis and his hardliners, as well as the military hierarchy acting in its own interests as well. If Markezinis had succeeded, "democracy would not have been immediately restored, and the regime would have cleared a critical hurdle in its search for a broader base of support and would have gained a minimum degree of wider acceptance that was the sine qua non of its viability in a form other than sheer repression" (Diamantouros 1986, 148).

Even that problematic democracy, however, went too far for the Greek hardliners; the coup of 25 November reinstated the only acceptable form of rule: a new dictatorship that would stubbornly refuse to abdicate power until the Turkish intervention in Cyprus a year later, which induced the military as an institution to put an end to the regime. One unnoticed consequence of the failure of the "experiment" is the trauma of the 1974 events in Cyprus. These events eventually ended the military threat to democracy but signalled an uneasiness in Greek–Turkish relations that continues to the present day.

In Turkey, the high degree of unity, discipline and cohesion and the military hierarchy's control over the army made it the only institution in the country over time capable of maintaining inner stability (as intended by the Kemalists) and intervening when it considered the latter to be under threat. The 1980 dictatorship, following this tradition and led by the hierarchical military, provided the army with enough institutional tools for controlling the weak democracy-to-be from behind the scenes, and was "a textbook example of the degree to which a departing military regime can dictate the conditions of its departure" (Özbudun 2000, 117). The military as an institution succeeded in keeping the lower-ranking officers in line and did not allow for any reaction to their scheduled transition, notwithstanding their favourite Turgut Sunalp's defeat in the elections.

Eventually, however, the military did not change the political structure of the country as much as their ambitious plan forecast. The generals "underestimated the extent of politicization that Turkish society had reached after three decades of parliamentary democracy" (Kramer 2000, 24). Furthermore, they left room for Özal who, having distanced himself from the regime and from the political divisions of the past, took his chance and profited from the fact that the pre-1980 politicians were excluded from the elections and the regime favourite was not popular. This

allowed him to emerge victorious from the polls. Gradually, in the next decade, the old dynamics of party politics greatly overtook the system designed by the pashas. Nevertheless, the capacity of the Turkish military to protect their institutional prerogatives hindered Turkey's efforts towards democratic consolidation for a long time. It would take Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's electoral victory in 2002 for the army's role in politics to be decisively diminished (not without a considerable reaction, as the failed coup of 2016 proved). The question whether the same could have happened in Greece is mere historical speculation.

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