

Effects of Civilian Support and Military Unity on the Outcome of Coups: The  
Cases of Turkish and Greek Military Interventions

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## **Effects of Civilian Support and Military Unity on the Outcome of Coups: The Cases of Turkish and Greek Military Interventions**

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### Introduction

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1967, Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos made his first public statement after he took over the Greek government and “justified the Army’s intervention by the threat of anarchy.”<sup>1</sup> Thirty-seven years later, his colleague and one of the three leaders of the junta, Brigadier General Stylianos Pattakos, reiterated that the country suffered from political instability and communist threat prior to the intervention.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in Turkey, when the armed forces took over the government on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1980, they announced that the military took charge because the state did not function properly, the political parties did not take the necessary measures, and the country had been driven to chaos.<sup>3</sup> Even though the main reasons for these two interventions were diverse, in both instances, the army perceived the country to be under threat.

Despite this similarity, the nature and subsequent developments of the two episodes were strikingly different. One difference (among many) was the way the civilian elites responded to the interventions. In Greece, the junta was not supported by the elites. Theodore Couloumbis, a prominent Greek professor who had done more than 200 interviews with political leaders between 1971 and 1974, found out that even the extreme rightists did not support the authoritarian regime. He stressed during his testimony before the U.S. House of Representative’s Committee on Foreign Affairs that “the preponderance of the Greek

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<sup>1</sup> C.M. Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels* (London: Granada Publishing, 1985), 33.

<sup>2</sup> Personal Interview, 3 September 2004, Athens.

<sup>3</sup> Kenan Evren, *Kenan Evren’in Anıları*, Vol. 1 (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayinlari, 1990), 546.

politicians, whether of left, center, or conservative orientations, find... themselves in strong opposition to the military regime.”<sup>4</sup>

The situation in Turkey, however, was completely different. The military intervention obtained support from many quarters of the Turkish society. Suleyman Demirel, a prominent Turkish politician and also an opponent of the coup decided to participate in the 1983 military-led transition to democracy because, in his words, “who was going to be behind us if we had opposed the coup? ...In Turkey, the struggle for the democratic regime is still not a goal shared by all.”<sup>5</sup>

This paper analyzes the consequences of elite support for the last Greek and Turkish overt military interventions. In Greece and Turkey, the support the interventions garnered from the political elites and the rest of the military officers affected the relative success of these coups during the transition back to democracy. The Greek coup of 1967 faced resistance, and therefore, the military was forced to completely withdraw from politics during the transition period. The Turkish military intervention in 1980, on the other hand, was at least implicitly endorsed by influential groups. This allowed the military to be relatively more successful in achieving its aims during the transition period in 1983.

### Opposition to Military Rule in Greece

When the Greek colonels intervened in 1967, they claimed to represent the right-wing against the growing threat of communism and the Center Union, headed by Georgios and Andreas Papandreou. However, none of the rightist elites seemed to agree with their assessment. Significant numbers of their own colleagues, most of the politicians, and the bureaucrats opposed the rule of the colonels until its end in 1974.

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<sup>4</sup> Theodore A. Coulombis, *A Professor's Notes: The Greek Junta Phenomenon* (New York: Pella Publishing Company, Inc., 2004), 27, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Personal Interview, 22 September 2005, Ankara. Demirel's party was banned and it could not run in the 1983 transitional elections.

The military intervention in April 1967 was carried out by around 20 middle ranking officers<sup>6</sup> who belonged to a conspiracy group called the Sacred Union of Greek Officers (IDEA).<sup>7</sup> The insurgents bypassed their generals, who had planned their own military coup but were waiting for the results of the national elections scheduled for May 1967.<sup>8</sup> Thus, from the very beginning, there was military disunity between higher and lower ranking officers.

The coup was staged mostly by the colonels in the army. The navy and the air-force were not actively involved in the conspiracy. Indeed, the colonels were not widely supported in these two forces.<sup>9</sup> In December 1967, King Constantine organized an unsuccessful countercoup against the junta with the help of the air force and the navy. The King, at first, had appeared to be supportive of the colonels by sanctioning their government and appearing in a publicized photo shoot. However, the attempted coup against the junta demonstrated that the monarchy did not endorse the regime. The King's decision to oppose the junta caused the opposition to the colonels to grow within the armed forces.<sup>10</sup> A military officer explains the army's first reaction to the junta as follows:

All the officers who were not in the narrow nucleus were taken by surprise. A small minority of this majority was in some way supportive [of the intervention]. But the majority ... was very thoughtful of what was going to happen next. We did not accept the military to take over the government. We were trained to obey the civilians. A small minority participated in resistance against the dictatorship. The bigger number did not react because of the military's discipline, *the fact that the King was still in power and gave them legitimacy*, and because we did not know what was going on.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Collectively, they are often referred to as the colonels because the majority of the insurgents held this rank at the time of the intervention. However, there were exceptions, the most important one being Stylianos Pattakos, who at the time was a brigadier general. There were also three lieutenant generals among the core of nucleus of 20 putschists. See the list in Constantine P. Danopoulos, *Warriors and Politicians in Modern Greece* (Chapel Hill: Documentary Publications, 1984), 59.

<sup>7</sup> The insurgents, in fact, belonged to an organization called the National Union of Young Officers (EENA), which was an offshoot of IDEA. For more information on IDEA and its involvement in politics from the 1940s until 1967, see Nikolaos A. Stavrou, *Allied Politics and Military Interventions: The Political Role of the Greek Military* (Athens: Papazissis Publishers, 1976).

<sup>8</sup> Athenian, *Inside the Colonels' Greece*, translated by Richard Clogg (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972), 60, C. L. Sulzberger, "Greece under the Colonels," *Foreign Affairs*, 48, 2 (1970), 303-304.

<sup>9</sup> Thanos Veremis, *The Military in Greek Politics: From Independence to Democracy* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 161.

<sup>10</sup> P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, "Regime Change and the Prospects for Democracy in Greece: 1974-1983," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 147.

<sup>11</sup> Personal Interview with an Anonymous Retired Chief of the General Staff, 23 July 2004, Athens, emphasis added.

Similarly another officer argues that “everything got confused when the King appeared with [the colonels]. So everybody obeyed without reactions. However, feelings were different. The air force and the navy were against the colonels and with the King [in December 1967].”<sup>12</sup> The King’s resistance changed the circumstances, making in the eyes of some of the military officers the authoritarian regime illegitimate.<sup>13</sup>

In May 1973, the navy organized another countercoup in order to topple the colonels from power.<sup>14</sup> Even though the attempt again failed, it demonstrated the extent of the opposition in the navy. An officer who took part in this countercoup argues that most of the navy participated in it: “If they [the colonels] arrested everyone involved, the navy would have collapsed –except for 10 or 15 colonel supporters, we were neutrals or against [the dictatorship]”<sup>15</sup> One of the leaders of the 1967 regime, Stylianos Pattakos, agrees that there was military opposition during the interim government: “Probably there was reaction initially but it was not obvious. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1967, with the King’s movement, some of the reaction appeared –there was division. The government did not condemn them but some of these officers continued [to react] and so they were exiled.”<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the fact that the military was not unified under the rule of the colonels, the leaders of the authoritarian regime were also split between three different groups. The first group, represented by the junta’s leader Georgios Papadopoulos, and including Stylianos Pattakos and Nikolaos Makarezos, held power from April 1967 until November 1973. This group attempted to liberalize the regime towards the end of their rule. The second and

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<sup>12</sup> Personal Interview with an Anonymous Retired Air Force General, 21 June 2004, Athens.

<sup>13</sup> The same was also true for some right-wing politicians who assumed that the King and the armed forces supported the intervention. The countercoup in 1967 demonstrated that this assumption was false and so caused some conservative politicians to turn against the colonels. George Yannopoulos, “The Opposition Forces since the Military Coup,” in Richard Clogg and George Yannopoulos eds. *Greece under Military Rule* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), 171-172.

<sup>14</sup> For the details of the navy coup, see Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels*, 116-117.

<sup>15</sup> Personal Interview with Retired Vice-Admiral and Former Deputy Chief of the Joint Defense Staff Ioannes Paloumbes, 05 July 2004, Athens.

<sup>16</sup> Personal Interview, 03 September 2004, Athens.

minority group was led by Colonel Demetrios Stamatelopoulos, who believed that the military must have returned to barracks shortly after the intervention. When he realized that the intervention was an authoritarian regime, he resigned from his post in the revolutionary council. From 1968 onwards, he vocally criticized the colonels who remained in power by publishing commentaries in opposition newspapers. He especially disapproved the fact that Papadopoulos was increasing his powers at the expense of his co-conspirators.<sup>17</sup> The final group among the putschists was led by the chief of the military police, Lieutenant Colonel Demetres Ioannides. This group favored a traditional dictatorship that would show more determination in the fight against the leftists. The colonels of this group became more visible after the first group, under the leadership of Papadopoulos, started the liberalization process in 1973.<sup>18</sup> Since they favored the continuation of the authoritarian regime indefinitely, the hardliner group took forceful action against Papadopoulos and his colleagues.

The authoritarian regime of 1967 was not supported by any of the significant rightist political leaders. Despite the fact that King Constantine helped construct the first government of the colonels and sanctioned the authoritarian rulers by a decree, he had been unaware of the upcoming intervention and was taken by surprise on the day of the coup.<sup>19</sup> As explained above, later, he attempted a coup against the colonels.<sup>20</sup> After his failure, he left for Rome and directed criticisms against the colonels from exile. He declared that he would return to Greece only if political prisoners were released, martial law was abandoned, and a time for free elections was set. After Papadopoulos' abolition of the monarchy and declaration of a presidential parliamentary republic in 1973, King Constantine became increasingly vocal in

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<sup>17</sup> Theodore A. Coulombis, "The Greek Junta Phenomenon," *Polity*, 6, 3 (1974), 361-362, Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels*, 77, 79.

<sup>18</sup> This group had started to make plans against Papadopoulos at least two years earlier, but they did not take decisive action until 1973. For earlier disputes, see Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Colonels*, 98, 103-104.

<sup>19</sup> Sulzberger, "Greece under the Colonels," 306-307, Athenian, *Inside the Colonels' Greece*, 63-64.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed account of the coup, see Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels*, 43-48.

his opposition from overseas. While he demanded a democratic regime, he tried to prove his sincerity by accepting a referendum on the question of his return to Greece.<sup>21</sup>

Most of the members of the major political parties refused to collaborate with the colonels<sup>22</sup> and publicly showed their resentment against the regime. The former leader of the right-wing National Radical Union, Konstantinos Karamanles, was in self-imposed exile in Paris since 1963. Seven months after the military intervention was staged, he declared to the international press that the colonels' regime was caused by the decadence of democracy in Greece, which needed radical reforms, and argued that the political parties could have prevented the intervention. This, however, did not mean that Karamanles was supporting the military rulers. On the contrary, his answer to the question "How can Greece return to legality?" was

By the removal of the putschists from power... [T]hey must not enforce a constitution which will be basically undemocratic and which will permit them the supervision of the political life of the country even after the establishment of legality... By withdrawing from power and by rendering to the Palace its functions they would open the way to the restoration of Democracy.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the main leader of the political right opposed the colonels and demanded a return to democracy. Two years later, Karamanles reiterated his opposition and his preference of democracy to the world press. He warned the colonels that if they do not withdraw willingly, they might be overthrown violently and asked the armed forces to take action against the

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<sup>21</sup> Couloumbis, "The Greek Junta Phenomenon," 370-371, Sulzberger, "Greece under the Colonels," 308.

<sup>22</sup> Two exceptions were a member of the National Radical Union and a Center Union renegade who took on ministerial positions in the cabinet. Apart from them, there were no politicians in the cabinet of the colonels after the King's counter-coup until the 1973 liberalization process. For a list of civilian cabinet members, see Athenian, *Inside the Colonels' Greece*, 124-125.

<sup>23</sup> This interview was published in *Le Monde* and *The Times* on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1967. Foreign press reached the Greeks at home (especially BBC and Deutsche Welle broadcasting was the main mean of getting uncensored news in Greece), so they were able to follow Karamanles' reactions. For a copy of the interview, see Maurice Genevoix, *The Greece of Karamanlis*, translated by Dorothy Trollope (London: Doric Publications, 1973), 191-197, quote from 196.

authoritarian rulers. Karamanles described the democracy that he wished to be restored as a regime “which will combine freedom with order and progress with social justice...”<sup>24</sup>

While Karamanles resisted the rulers and their regime from Europe, the last leader of the National Radical Union and the prime minister, Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, opposed the colonels from within Greece.<sup>25</sup> His first pronouncement came in September 1967 when he challenged the main claim of the colonels that there was a communist threat before the intervention. Similar to the declaration of Karamanles two months later, Kanellopoulos argued that the continuation of the authoritarian regime might lead to a social revolution and suggested that he would be supportive of the King if he took over the government.<sup>26</sup> Similar declarations opposing the colonels were frequently issued by Kanellopoulos during the authoritarian regime. In 1969, Kanellopoulos started to assume the leadership of a group of 170 former parliamentary deputies organized against the colonels. Kanellopoulos shared the leadership of this group with Georgios Mavros and Ioannes Zigdes from the Center Union and the former president of the parliament Demetrios Papaspyrou from the Liberal Democratic Center. In March 1973, this political opposition started to publish a periodical in Athens and voiced its concerns and demands for democratization.<sup>27</sup>

The only influential politician that did not participate in this group of opposing leaders was Andreas Papandreou, who chose to oppose the regime in his own independent way. Papandreou was arrested and imprisoned immediately after the colonels’ intervention, but he was released after the King’s attempted coup and was allowed to escape overseas. From then

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 198-202, quote from 201. Karamanles also urged President Nixon in a personal letter to force the colonels to surrender their power. See Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels*, 74.

<sup>25</sup> Nancy Bermeo, “Classification and Consolidation: Some Lessons from the Greek Dictatorship,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 110, 3 (1995), 441.

<sup>26</sup> Andreas Papandreou, *Democracy and Gunpoint: The Greek Front* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), 247-248. Kanellopoulos was put under house arrest several times for his actions. Other right-wing politicians that were arrested include Evangelos Averof, Ioannes Zigdes, and Georgios Ralles.

<sup>27</sup> Couloumbis, “The Greek Junta Phenomenon,” 364-366, Yannopoulos, “The Opposition Forces since the Military Coup,” 168-169, Athenian, “Inside the Colonels’ Greece,” 10-11, Woodhouse, *the Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels*, 66.



on, Papandreou made numerous declarations and published several books,<sup>28</sup> criticizing the colonels and claiming that their regime is a pawn of the United States. In his rallies and speeches organized in Europe and the United States, Papandreou called for violent resistance to topple the colonels and demanded the establishment of a social democratic regime. He later established a resistance organization entitled the Panhellenic Liberation Movement (PAK) based in Stockholm. PAK's main purposes were to bring together "resistance efforts in Greece, to the end that the junta be overthrown and that a genuine democratic process – guaranteeing the full and unconditional sovereignty of the Greek people- be established in Greece on a solid and permanent basis."<sup>29</sup> PAK had only a few hundred members and was not strong enough to engage in any significant resistance movement against the colonels within Greece.<sup>30</sup> However, by initially bringing together old members of the Center Union and allowing them to voice their concerns in Europe, it made clear that this faction of the political elite opposed the authoritarian regime.

Interviews with high civil servants conducted by Constantine Danopoulos reveal that the majority of the interviewees did not support the regime either. Most of the respondents argued that the goals of the regime were unclear and its directives ambiguous and confusing. The bureaucrats withheld information from the rulers when they regarded it harmful to the nation or their position. The disdain of the majority of the bureaucrats stemmed from the rulers' attitudes towards the civil servants. The powerholders viewed this group of political elites as "an unbridled... organ that had all but ceased being the servant of the public." As a result, they refused to seek the advice of the bureaucrats in policy making, dismissed close to

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<sup>28</sup> See the following books written by Papandreou during the authoritarian regime, *Democracy at Gunpoint, Man's Freedom* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1970), *Paternalistic Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972) and his wife, Margaret Papandreou, *Nightmare in Athens* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1970). Among these books, *Democracy at Gunpoint* contains most of the information relating to Andreas Papandreou's interpretation of events that preceded the establishment of the authoritarian regime and developments until 1969.

<sup>29</sup> Papandreou, *Democracy at Gunpoint*, 353-354.

<sup>30</sup> Michalis Spourdalakis, *The Rise of the Greek Socialist Party* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 51-56.

1,000 officers and replaced them with their friends or relatives, frequently threatened to dismiss more, attempted to change the regular and accepted routines and patterns of bureaucratic work, and appointed military officers in each ministry to keep an eye on the moves of the civil servants. Fearful of losing their jobs, the bureaucrats abided by the rulers, but in reality did not support them wholeheartedly.<sup>31</sup>

Similar confrontation also occurred with the judiciary. The colonels purged 30 opposition judges from their posts in 1968. These judges took the issue to the Council of State, which decided to accept their plea. The decision irritated the colonels and as a result the president of the council was dismissed. In response, other members of the council quit their posts. The issue of the 30 initially fired judges was not resolved for two years since the Council of State and the Supreme Court opposed each other.<sup>32</sup> The judges were finally dismissed for good; however, the fight they put and the support they received from other high judges were proofs that in this area of civil service as well the colonels faced resistance to their decisions.

Opposition was also evident among some of the professors employed by the state in Greek universities. There were professors who vocally criticized the colonels in classes at the universities in Athens and Salonika.<sup>33</sup> Some professors participated in resistance organizations and provided support to the students revolting in November 1973.<sup>34</sup> Others opposed the regime by their publications, meetings with foreign officials, and Greek politicians.<sup>35</sup> Some of the opposing professors and public officers organized the Association for the Study of Greek Problems, headed by the former deputy director of the central bank and a professor, Ioannes

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<sup>31</sup> Danopoulos, *Warriors and Politicians in Modern Greece*, 67-68, 70, 73, quote from 79-80, Constantine Danopoulos, "The Military and Bureaucracy in Greece -1967-1974," *Public Administration and Development*, 8, 2 (1988), 225-230.

<sup>32</sup> Woodhouse, *The Rise and the Fall of the Colonels*, 56, 65. After the transition to democracy, one of members of the council of state became the acting president of the republic. Richard Clogg, *Parties and Elections in Greece: The Search for Legitimacy* (London: C. Hurst Company, 1987), 67.

<sup>33</sup> Athenian, *Inside the Colonels' Greece*, 134-135.

<sup>34</sup> Woodhouse, *The Rise and the Fall of the Colonels*, 126-141.

<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, the meetings of Prof. Theodore Couloumbis with influential Greeks in *A Professor's Notes*.

Pesmazoglou. Until its ban, the association tried to create the right circumstances for the rise of new political leaders apart from colonels and the old politicians.<sup>36</sup>

In June 1973, the junta leaders declared a presidential parliamentary republic. The colonels tried to liberalize the regime in order to increase support and legitimacy.<sup>37</sup> As Nikiforos Diamandouros argues

The absence of solid support among their natural constituency translated... into a crisis of legitimacy, and brought to the fore, much earlier than would have otherwise been the case, the need to consider liberalization of the regime as an alternative mechanism for ensuring the support of the strategic elements of the Greek Right, and thus of obtaining legitimacy.<sup>38</sup>

The colonels lifted the state of siege, freed political prisoners, gave civil liberties, and set a future date for elections. A referendum was held under martial law on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July which approved the liberalization plan. Papadopoulos was declared the president for the next eight years with immense executive and legislative powers that included prerogatives in national defense, public order, and foreign affairs policies. The cabinet and parliament were subordinated to the presidency.<sup>39</sup>

When the colonels announced that they would liberalize the regime in June 1973, all of the major politicians refused to collaborate with the military rulers. They asked the Greeks not to participate in the elections and not to trust the colonels' claims that they would establish a democratic regime.<sup>40</sup> Only a small right-wing party leader before 1967, Spyros Markezines, agreed to collaborate with the authoritarian rulers during the liberalization process. Markezines, much like the former minister of foreign affairs, Evangelos Averof from the National Radical Union, had seen his role as a bridge between the politicians and the colonels. He intended to secure a return to democracy, but believed that the only way to do it

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<sup>36</sup> Couloumbis, "The Greek Junta Phenomenon," 367-368.

<sup>37</sup> Constantine P. Danopoulos and Larry Gerston, "Democratic Currents in Authoritarian Seas: The Military in Greece and the Philippines," *Armed Forces and Society*, 16, 4 (1990), 529-545.

<sup>38</sup> Diamandouros, "Regime Change and the Prospects for Democracy in Greece," 148.

<sup>39</sup> Couloumbis, "The Greek Junta Phenomenon," 360.

<sup>40</sup> Danopoulos and Gerston, "Democratic Currents in Authoritarian Seas," 540.

is to collaborate with the colonels.<sup>41</sup> In 1973, his strategy seemed to be working since he had secured himself the position of prime minister. A civilian minister in Markezines' 1973 government reveals the reasons why Markezines and politicians from his party agreed to participate in the liberalization process:

Papadopoulos had the first meeting with Markezines in 1968, 6 months after the revolution, with the subject how to move to democracy... Papadopoulos met with other politicians as well... Every one of them put their own terms. Markezines asked for a new constitution, a referendum on the new constitution, and after that, executing the provisions. Averof asked other terms. Papadopoulos continued with these secret meetings until 1973, until the navy coup... This led the revolutionary committee [the leaders of the regime] to dethrone the King. The constitution was changed to presidential democracy... And a referendum was held on this issue... *After this* Markezines accepted –after the results of the referendum.... Markezines requested from Papadopoulos first, an amnesty for 1,500 people who were exiled; second, cancellation of any form of censorship; and third, cancellation of the constitutional court, which functioned as a safety valve for the military against the communists. Markezines wanted... the elections to be fair.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, it seems that Markezinis agreed to support the regime only after he thought that a transition to democracy was being made. He refused to collaborate earlier when there was no prospect for the regime to liberalize. In fact, after the Polytechnic rebellion in November 1973, Markezines conflicted with Papadopoulos, who wanted to delay the general elections, and threatened to resign from office.<sup>43</sup> This also indicates that he cooperated with the colonels not because he supported the authoritarian regime, but because he believed that there would be a genuine transition to democracy.

For the hardliners within the junta, the liberalization of the authoritarian regime was unacceptable. Papadopoulos was not only making decisions on his own, without consulting his colleagues, but also civilianizing the regime at the expense of the colonels. In addition, the hardliners did not believe that Greece was ready for the elections. Therefore, Ioannides and his colleagues decided to intervene approximately three months after the proclamation of the presidential parliamentary republic. Even though the decision to intervene was made before

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<sup>41</sup> Couloumbis, "The Greek Junta Phenomenon," 366-377, Sulzberger, "Greece under the Colonels," 310, Yannopoulos, "The Opposition Forces since the Military Coup," 170-171.

<sup>42</sup> Personal Interview with Spyros B. Zournatzes, 17 July 2004, Athens.

<sup>43</sup> Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels*, 140.

the Polytechnic revolt of November, there is no doubt that the hardliners were convinced even more by the rebellion that liberalization was too early. On the 25<sup>th</sup> November, they took over the government without any resistance.<sup>44</sup>

The attempt of the colonels to guide the transition to a more liberal regime failed because the military rulers were not unified. Additionally, the colonels did not have the backing of most of the political leaders who believed that the liberalization process was a pretense to hold on to power for a longer period. Indeed, from 1967 until 1974, the military coup in Greece faced resistance from the King, the navy and the air-force in the military, influential political leaders, and the majority of the public bureaucracy and the university professors.

#### Support for the Military Intervention in Turkey

According to the declaration of the Turkish military on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1980, the armed forces intervened in democracy in order to end increasing chaos and anarchy. During the last years of the 1970s, Turkey was ripped with left-right conflict in the streets which terrorized the population and claimed thousands of lives. The armed forces blamed the political parties (especially the center-left Republican People's Party and the center-right Justice Party) and their leaders for the increase in hostilities. Since Turkish democracy was seen incapable of dealing with the violence, the military forcefully intervened and closed down all of the political parties.

Several months before the actual coup, the commanders of the Turkish Armed Forces unanimously agreed that it was necessary to stage an armed intervention. The Turkish commanders decided that a memorandum (similar to the previous military intervention in Turkey in 1971) would not be able to provide the desired outcome and that an overt military

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<sup>44</sup> Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels*, 142-144.

intervention was required. The same verdict was shared by the army generals from the lieutenant general level up.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the 1967 intervention in Greece, officers at the top ranks of the military were the ones that decided to stage the coup rather than middle ranking officers. There was an agreement on both the necessity and the nature of the intervention among the hierarchy of the armed forces. This helped keep the Turkish military unified during and after the coup.

The unity of the military hierarchy is evident from the fact that, even though the intervention was postponed, there were no leaks. The commanders in the military decided to intervene on July 11 and sent orders to the command posts and the army corps throughout the country. The military planned to intervene at this particular time because the Republican People's Party (RPP) was preparing to bring down the Justice Party (JP) government. In this way, they calculated that their intervention would not be directed at a particular political party. However, when the JP government received a vote of confidence from the parliament, the military decided to postpone the intervention because they did not want to seem like they were supporting the RPP to bring down the JP government. Kenan Evren writes in his memoirs that he feared that this delay would lead to a disclosure of the plan especially because in August there would be new assignments and promotions of military personnel. Evren suspected that generals who were not promoted and therefore had to be retired could inform the politicians of the impending intervention. However, it was clear that the generals collectively believed that the coup was necessary since no one shared the information with civilian leaders.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, during and after the coup, no dissent in the military occurred.<sup>47</sup> Since the coup was not aimed at a particular clique within the military and there was common

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<sup>45</sup> Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları* Vol. 1, 434, 437.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 434, 437, 456-461, 505, 519, Kenan Evren, Personal Interview, Bodrum, 18 July 2005.

<sup>47</sup> Mehmet Ali Birand, Hikmet Bila, and Ridvan Akar, *12 Eylül: Türkiye'nin Miladi* (Istanbul: Dogan Kitapçılık, 1999), 185.

agreement among the officers, there were no purges from the military -either from the higher or lower ranks. The coup was staged by the commanders of the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC was an institution created after the 1960 intervention which brought together the representatives of the civilian government and military officers. Its purpose was to transmit the military's concerns and advice on security matters to the government. After the 1980 coup, the civilian members of the NSC were expelled and the council started to function as a legislative body. Even though an executive body headed by ex-admiral Bulend Ulusu and consisting of civilians was formed, it was clear that the NSC ruled the country. As William Hale argues, "The [interim] regime thus represented the collective will of the high command, rather than that of particular military groups..."<sup>48</sup> Additionally, the commanders of the NSC continued to agree on most of the crucial matters and, as Evren notes in his memoirs, there were no disputes between the commanders.<sup>49</sup>

After it came to power, the military arrested the leaders of the radical parties -such as the National Salvation Party and the National Action Party- and sentenced them on charges of murder, attempting to start a civil war, and trying to change the secular character of the state.<sup>50</sup> During the night of the coup, the leaders of the Justice Party and the Republican People's Party, Suleyman Demirel and Bulent Ecevit, respectively, were put under house arrest in Hamzakoy, Gallipoli. Both of these leaders refused to give support to the intervention and criticized it whenever they can.<sup>51</sup> For instance, after Ecevit was released from custody (on condition that he will avoid political activities), he started to publish a weekly

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<sup>48</sup> William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 248-249.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 249, Kenan Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anilari*, Vol. 3 (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayinlari, 1990), 248.

<sup>50</sup> Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military*, 252. Eventually, both party leaders were released.

<sup>51</sup> According to Demirel, the military told him and Ecevit that if they publicly declare that the intervention was necessary (i.e. support it), their custody would be shortened. Both of them rejected the offer. However, Demirel argues that even though non-cooperation was possible, active opposition was impossible because, first, they were on house arrest, and second, opposition would have led to a civil war in Turkey. Personal Interview, Ankara, 22 September 2005.

journal and began to give public declarations that criticized the interim government and its policies.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the fact that the leaders of the two major mainstream parties opposed the intervention, there was a group of political elites from the JP, RPP, and the mainstream minor parties that supported the military. The RPP leader, Ecevit, argues that, even though these supportive deputies were a minority, they still existed in his party.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, according to Chief of the General Staff Evren, “quite interestingly there were demands for a military intervention from the parliament, the government, and the opposition parties.”<sup>54</sup> Before the coup, Kenan Evren regularly met with the national defense minister of the last JP government and discussed matters not necessarily related to national defense (such as how much vote each party would get in the next elections or who should be the president).<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Evren mentions in his memoirs an anonymous deputy from the JP that reported the activities of his party. For instance, the deputy informed Evren in detail which bureaucratic positions were going to the sympathizers of the National Action Party and the National Salvation Party.<sup>56</sup> From the last RPP government, Deputy Prime Minister Orhan Eyupoglu and Minister of Justice Mehmet Can were in contact with the military. Turhan Feyzioglu from the Reliance Party and Faruk Sukan from the Democratic Party resigned from the RPP government after they consulted with the military.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Evren met with an ex-RPP deputy and a member of the Reliance Party in May 1980. The deputy told the Chief of the General Staff that if he were in his shoes, he would be thinking about an intervention. This support from a civilian member of the elite gave courage to Evren, who writes in his memoirs that “in this way, I

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<sup>52</sup> Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, “The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey,” *Comparative Politics*, 16,1 (1983), 30.

<sup>53</sup> Personal Interview, Ankara, 30 June 2005. During our interview, Demirel argued that there were no JP members that cooperated with the military. Personal Interview, Ankara, 22 September 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Personal Interview, Bodrum, 18 July 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anilari*, Vol. 1, 356, 411, 427.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>57</sup> Umit Cizre, *AP-Ordu Iliskileri: Bir Ikilemin Anatomisi* (Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari, 2002), 240-244. For references to Kenan Evren's meetings with these politicians, see Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anilari*, Vol. 1, 285, 342, 356-357, 446.



learned that a non-military person and a person that has served a long time in state administration thought like us. This... gave me strength.”<sup>58</sup>

The support the military needed after the coup was provided again by cooperative political elites. When the commanders were preparing to form the government, they first thought of giving Turhan Feyzioglu, an ex-RPP politician and the leader of the Reliance Party, the position of prime ministry. Feyzioglu agreed; however, later, the commanders reasoned that this would tarnish the impartiality of the coup, and therefore, decided to give the premiership to an ex-admiral.<sup>59</sup> However, the government was still almost entirely made up of civilian bureaucrats. The most important one of them was Turgut Ozal, an ex-bureaucrat and a close aid of the leader of the Justice Party Suleyman Demirel. Ozal became the deputy prime minister in charge of the economy.<sup>60</sup>

Similar to the government, the military had no difficulty in finding help while rewriting the constitution. The constitution for the new democratic regime the military decided establish was first drafted by a commission headed by a university professor. Then the National Security Council and a consultative assembly revised the constitution.<sup>61</sup> 120 members of the consultative assembly were selected by provisional governors, while the generals chose the remaining 40 members from 11,000 applicants. The final assembly had 31 jurists, 19 professors, and 16 civil servants.<sup>62</sup> Some politicians from the previous political parties also participated in the consultative assembly. Significantly, these politicians had resigned from their political parties before the coup.<sup>63</sup> They were critical of politics before the

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<sup>58</sup> Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anilari*, Vol. 1, 437-438. During our interview, Evren said that the politician was Emin Paksut.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 520, Birand, Bila, and Akar, *12 Eylul: Turkiye'nin Miladi*, 190-192.

<sup>60</sup> Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military*, 248. Ozal asked Demirel's permission to join the cabinet. Demirel encouraged him to take the offer because he wanted the intervention to end quickly. According to him, if the military stays in power for a long time and fails in its aims, then problems occur within the military itself. Personal Interview, Ankara, 22 September 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military*, 256.

<sup>62</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Crisis of Turkish Democracy*, Second Edition (Beverly: The Eothen Press, 1990), 52, 145 ff8.

<sup>63</sup> Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Beverly: The Eothen Press, 1985), 134.

military intervention, and therefore, collaborated with the generals during the transition process by helping to write the new constitution.

Other political leaders implicitly endorsed the democratization project of the military. When in 1983 the military declared that national elections will be held, old political parties tried to run as candidates under new banners. This gave legitimization to the transition since it seemed like the mainstream political parties supported the new constitution and the terms of the new democracy. Members of the RPP formed the Social Democratic People's Party, headed by the ex-RPP leader Ismet Inonu's son Erdal Inonu. The Justice Party reorganized first under the Grand Turkey Party, and when that party was closed down, under the True Path Party. Two deputies from the Democratic Party, Ferruh Bozbeyli and Aydin Yalcin, as well, were willing to form new parties. The military refused these parties because they were the continuation of the old ones. The armed forces supported a center-right party founded by a former general, Turgut Sunalp. The military also allowed two new parties established by civilians to run in the November 1983 elections. One was established by a former governor, Necdet Calp, while the other was founded by Turgut Ozal. Ozal's Motherland Party won around 45 percent of the votes in the elections and received the mandate to form the government.<sup>64</sup> The military generals relinquished their control in favor of Turgut Ozal's prime ministry. Chief of the General Staff Kenan Evren resigned from his military post in July 1983. However, he retained some powers since he served as the president for seven years after November 1982.

The 1983 transition process in Turkey resembled the Greek colonels' attempt to liberalize the regime in 1973. In the colonels' scheme, the leader of the junta, Papadopoulos, was the new president. Selected political parties were allowed to run in the elections. The government was envisioned to compose of mostly civilians, while the military held important

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 263-267, Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anilari*, Vol. 4 (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayinlari, 1990), 151, 193-194.

prerogatives. Similarly, in the Turkish transition, the Chief of the General Staff during the military intervention, Kenan Evren, became the new president and the prerogatives of the military increased relative to the civilian government.<sup>65</sup> The major difference between the two cases was that the colonels' plan failed when most of the influential politicians publicly opposed the liberalization process, students at the Polytechnic revolted against the regime, and the hardliners of the junta toppled Papadopoulos and his colleagues. In other words, there was no smooth liberalization of the regime in Greece because the colonels were not supported by the majority of the political elites and sections of the military. By contrast, the Turkish military's transition plan was implicitly approved by politicians who tried to run as candidates in the elections with new parties. There was no revolt against the rule of the military during this crucial phase. There was no strong opposition within the armed forces that demanded to stay in power for a longer period of time. As a result, the military guided the transition more successfully in Turkey.

#### Consequences of Elite Support for the Transition to Democracy

The Greek authoritarian regime continued until July 1974 and collapsed suddenly due to threat of war with Turkey. This sudden collapse and lack of support among the elites to the colonels' regime caused the military to lose its prerogatives during the transition. In Turkey, on the other hand, because the military generals guided the transition and their plan was supported by influential sections of the population, the military increased its political prerogatives.

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<sup>65</sup> It is important to mention that the colonels' scheme was more authoritarian than the Turkish generals' plan. In the Turkish case, the office of the prime minister had more powers than the presidency. As Diamandouros notes, in the Greek case "Papadopoulos... made a new bid for legitimacy, this time in the form of a *more authoritarian* constitution." (Diamandouros, "Regime Change and the Prospects for Democracy in Greece," 152, emphasis added.) In addition, Papadopoulos declared himself president without any fair elections, without the consent of part of his junta colleagues, and without consulting an elected parliament. For these reasons, Papadopoulos' plan looked more like the liberalization of the authoritarian regime rather than a clear break towards democracy. Nevertheless if the liberalization had been more successful, it could have in time given way to a democratic regime (albeit a limited one).

Threat of war with Turkey over Cyprus became the trigger<sup>66</sup> that caused the authoritarian regime to collapse in Greece. Cyprus had been an increasing problem for Greek foreign policy since the independence of the island from Britain in August 1960. The treaty of 1960 recognized two communities on the island, Greek and Turkish, and established a bicomunal government and state. Archbishop Makarios became the new president of Cyprus. Makarios favored the independence of the island and, as president, rejected the option of uniting with mainland Greece, a project that had many supporters among the Greeks both in Cyprus and Greece. The colonels also advocated union with Greece and opposed the leadership of Makarios, who was determined to act independent of the government of the mainland. The Greek government of Colonel Ionnides ordered a coup against Makarios in July 1974. Five days after the coup that overthrew the Cypriot government, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1974, Turkey started to invade the island using its right from the 1960 treaty as a guarantor of the independent Cypriot government. The Turkish attack was unforeseen by the Greek colonels, who now faced war with Turkey.<sup>67</sup>

The events of July 1974 then quickly caused the authoritarian regime in Greece to collapse by strengthening the power of the opposition vis-à-vis the military rulers. Especially the opposing faction within the military found itself in a more powerful position. The prospect of war required military mobilization, and thus, necessitated the support of the armed forces that approved the policies of the authoritarian regime. However, a significant portion of the armed forces did not support the colonels. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, the Third Army Corps located in Salonika gave an ultimatum to the colonels calling for the creation of a Council of National Salvation which would bring together politicians and military officers. The ultimatum demanded King Constantine to be present in the council and Karamanles to be the president.

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<sup>66</sup> Susannah Verney and Theodore Couloumbis, "State-International Systems Interaction and the Greek Transition to Democracy in the mid-1970s" in Geoffrey Pridham ed., *Encouraging Democracy: The International Context of Regime Transition in Southern Europe* (London: Leicester University Press, 1991), 111.

<sup>67</sup> There is a vast literature on Cyprus. For a relatively objective assessment of the Cyprus problem, see Clement H. Dodd, *The Cyprus Imbroglia* (Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire: Eothen Press, 1998).

According to the military opposition, Karamanles should also be the prime minister of a new government which would swiftly hold elections and start the transition process.<sup>68</sup>

The colonels accepted the demands of the Third Army Corps and agreed to the formation of the Council of National Salvation under the auspices of a former general and the current president, Faedon Gizikes. The colonels feared both a domestic revolt and a humiliating defeat against Turkey. First, confrontation with Turkey over the island of Cyprus required the war mostly to be fought by the navy and air force, rather than the army. However, the colonels' were highly disdained in both forces, which increased the possibility of military defeat and/or revolt. Second, the authoritarian leaders had to mobilize not only the regular military officers, but also the reserves. The drafting of the reserves were done in a highly anarchic manner, which revealed the weaknesses of the Greek military against the Turkish armed forces. In addition, recruiting young reserves and civilians back to the military increased their strength making it possible for them to turn against the colonels by a revolt.<sup>69</sup>

The sudden collapse of the military regime after a humiliating external crisis and the fact that the civilians did not support the colonels had an important consequence for the future of democracy: the military could not retain political prerogatives. The Council of National Salvation met on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July. The military commanders of the three forces and politicians from the former National Radical Union and Center Union participated in the meeting. After some discussion, it was decided that Karamanles should be called from Paris to head the provisional government. During the meeting, President Gizikes asked the military to hold the ministerial posts of defense, public order, and internal affairs. However, he faced the determined opposition of the politicians.<sup>70</sup> If the demand of Gizikes had been met, it would

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<sup>68</sup> Danopoulos, *Warriors and Politicians in Modern Greece*, 126.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 127, Veremis, *The Military in Greek Politics*, 170.

<sup>70</sup> Danopoulos, *Warriors and Politicians in Modern Greece*, 127, Diamandouros, "Regime Change and the Prospects for Democracy in Greece," 157-158, Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels*, 164-165.

have been an “exclusivist political system.”<sup>71</sup> By rejecting Gizikes’ suggestion, the politicians guaranteed that the provisional government will consist of civilians and the military will not be able to steer the transition.

When Karamanles arrived, his provisional government moved swiftly to remove all prerogatives the military still had. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, the government tried to move units from Attica (the region Athens belongs to) to the north, but faced resistance from the army generals. After Karamanles “threatened to gather a mass demonstration against the high command in the center of Athens,” the generals backed down.<sup>72</sup> Eight days later, most of the higher ranking officers were purged from the military. The 1968 constitution, which had allowed the colonels to rule Greece, was shelved and substituted by the 1952 constitution until the drafting of a new one. Then, the 1952 constitution was changed swiftly so that the civilian government would be able to assign generals of its own choosing to the vacated posts. Not surprisingly, the post of the chief of the general staff went to a known anti-junta general. Finally, other laws enacted by the colonels and the state of siege were reversed during the last two months of the provisional government.<sup>73</sup> In only a few months time, the civilian government virtually eradicated the institutional prerogatives of the military remaining from the pre-1967 democratic regime and the colonels’ rule. The 1975 constitution cautiously allowed military autonomy, but did not grant powers that would allow the military to pressure the democratically elected government.

In Turkey, because the military guided the transition to democracy and influential elites participated in the process, unlike Greece the armed forces received important political powers. The 1983 constitution increased the powers of the National Security Council (NSC), which was created after the 1960 coup. The council included the chief of the general staff, the

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<sup>71</sup> Nikiforos Diamandouros, “Transition to, and Consolidation of, Democratic Politics in Greece, 1974-1983: A Tentative Assessment,” *West European Politics*, 7 (1984), 54.

<sup>72</sup> Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels*, 168.

<sup>73</sup> Veremis, *The Military in Greek Politics*, 171-172.

commanders in chief of the army, navy and air-force, the president of the republic, the prime minister, and the relevant ministers of the cabinet. According to the 1961 constitution, the council had the right 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.”<sup>74</sup> According to the new 1982 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...”<sup>75</sup> With changes in the wording of the article on the NSC, the new constitution made sure that the preferences of the military would be carried out by the cabinet. The secretary general of the NSC was an active duty military officer and the undersecretary consisted mostly of members of the armed forces. 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 and had tutelary powers to safeguard the Turkish Republic and its main principles against vaguely defined external and internal threats. 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 had seats in the State Security Courts. 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. Another area that symbolically demonstrated the power and autonomy of the military was the state protocol list,

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<sup>74</sup> Sadik Balkan et al., “Constitution of the Turkish Republic: Translated for the Committee of National Unity,” *Middle East Journal* 16:2 (1962), 215-239.

<sup>75</sup> Ergun Ozbudun, “Democratization Reforms in Turkey, 1993-2004,” *Turkish Studies*, 8, 2 (2007), 193.

which placed the chief of the general staff after the prime minister but before any other minister. Indeed, after the 1983 transition, the military continued to be responsible to the prime minister rather than to the minister of defence –a privilege which was granted in 1961.<sup>76</sup>

The military was able to retain some powers through the former Chief of the General Staff Kenan Evren, who now acted as the new president. The president “had the right to appoint all members of the Constitutional Court and members of the other important judicial bodies.”<sup>77</sup> Additionally, the president appointed the prime minister, the Chief of the General Staff, and the members of the High Board of Supervision (which supervised public bodies and trade unions and associations). He could summon the Council of Ministers and the National Security Council. While the president was given the power to restrict other institutions’ appeals to legal authorities, he had the right request the Constitutional Court to look into parliamentary legislations, cabinet decrees, and internal regulations of the national assembly. He could refuse to sign parliamentary decisions, decide to hold national elections, and call on referenda for constitutional changes. Symbolically, the president was given the duty to protect the security, independence, and unity of the country and its main principles.<sup>78</sup> While Kenan Evren kept powers as the new president, other military generals responsible for the military coup in 1980 served as members of the Presidential Council for six years.<sup>79</sup> In this way, the hierarchy of the military did not completely relinquish its powers during the transition to democracy.

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<sup>76</sup> Ilter Turan, “Unstable Stability: Turkish Politics at the Crossroads?” *International Affairs*, 83, 2 (2007), 331-332, Gareth Jenkins, “Continuity and Change: Prospects for Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” *International Affairs*, 83, 2 (2007), 344.

<sup>77</sup> Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military*, 258.

<sup>78</sup> Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey*, 141.

<sup>79</sup> Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military*, 258.



## Conclusion

The last overt military interventions in Greece and Turkey differ from each other in the amount of support they gathered from civilian elites and the unity of the military. The Greek intervention in 1967 faced opposition from the majority of the influential politicians. It was disdained by some sections of the bureaucracy and the university professors. The military was not united during the coup and split into various factions ranging from pro-democratic to pro-authoritarian during its seven-year lifespan. In 1973, the colonels attempted to guide the transition to a more liberal regime. However, the majority of the politicians refused to collaborate and the hardliners in the military found the opportunity to shelve the scheme by a countercoup. As a result, there was no guided transition in Greece and the regime collapsed suddenly in 1974 due to an external threat. The crisis over Cyprus triggered elite opposition and military disunity to topple the colonels. Since the transition was carried out by civilians and backed by pro-democratic military officers, the armed forces could not retain any prerogatives during the transition.

In Turkey, on the other hand, the 1980 military coup was supported by some sections of the political elites. Even though the leaders of the two major parties opposed the intervention (similar to their Greek counterparts), there were still influential politicians which supported the coup and collaborated with the interim government. During the transition to democracy, the scheme of the military commanders was again supported. Influential university professors aided the military in writing the new constitution. Instead of refusing to take part in the process right from the start, former politicians implicitly recognized the transition by trying to be a part of it. The military, on the other hand, remained unified between 1980 and 1983 and no section of the armed forces opposed the transition to democracy. As a result of this elite support and military unity, the generals guided the liberalization process and secured important political prerogatives for the armed forces.

