1. Introduction:

Ever since our adoption of the multi-party democratic system, Turkey has been in a vicious circle which has resulted in a military administration every ten years. When the problem is examined, it will be seen that every ten years [the country] has entered a cul de sac in its foreign payments, an economic crisis has begun in the wake of this and that a military administration has followed the subsequent social and political unrest... [However] the developments which have occurred in the last four years, during the period of the Motherland Party administration, are full of signs indicating that this vicious circle has been broken.1

The Motherland Party's 1987 election manifesto may have been overconfident that, since 1983, Turkey had broken out of the cycle of military intervention, withdrawal, political and economic crisis, and renewed intervention which had been repeated three times since 1960. By the end of the 1980s, there could be no certainty that the cycle might not be eventually repeated. Nevertheless, it was hard to deny that, since 1983, there had been a notable and generally successful disengagement of the military from government.

In an attempt to explain this process, and to fill in some of the details, this paper is divided into five sections. The first of these gives a brief

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summary of the main political trends and events of 1983-90 which had an important bearing on the evolution of civil-military relations. The following three sections take up four crucial aspects of the story - that is, the separation of the military and civilian functions of government, the subordination of the military to the civil power, the role of the President between 1983 and 1989, and the evolution of military attitudes towards secularism and Islam which, it appears, was the most important point of ideological conflict between the military and the government during the 1980s. The final section tries to offer some assessment of the process of military disengagement from politics during these years, and some explanations of it.

2. Political Trends, 1983-1990:

Since this paper aims to concentrate on the role of the armed forces in politics since 1983, it is inappropriate to retell the whole of the story of Turkey's political evolution over these years. Nevertheless, certain points need to be highlighted. They can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, although Turgut Özal's Motherland Party was a somewhat eclectic formation, in which liberal, Islamic conservative and ultra nationalist factions were welded together in an uneasy alliance, it provided Turkey with an interval of stable civilian government which she had not known since Süleyman Demirel's first administration of 1965-69. Political violence was not extinguished, especially in the Kurdish inhabited provinces of south-eastern Anatolia, but the phase of rampant terrorism which had almost brought the country to its knees in 1980 seemed to be over. This was combined with a high level of economic growth, and a generally successful transition towards a more liberal and externally oriented economy. To put the case crudely, the civilian regime could be said to have done a reasonably good job, and the conditions of actual or alleged crisis which had led to the previous military interventions of 1960, 1971 and 1980 did not recur. Concurrence between the military and the Özal administration was enhanced by the fact that, since the fall of the first Nihat Erim government in December 1971, the military had progressively abandoned its former attachment to an etatist or interventionist economic policy. By 1980, it was accepted by both the military and the centre-right of Turkish politics that there was no practical alternative to the shift towards a liberal market economy, with a great degree of integration into international markets. Hence, economic policy ceased to be a potential source of conflict between the military and the government.

At the outset of Özal's premiership, a serious problem affected the political system as a whole, in that the exclusion of the Social Democracy Party (SDP) and the True Path Party (TPP) from the 1983 elections raised serious doubts about the democratic legitimacy of the parliament. It took four years to resolve this problem. Nevertheless, the task was achieved without
any of the violent shocks to the system which might have been expected. The Nationalist Democracy Party, the least well supported of the three parties in parliament, rapidly dissolved, and failed to survive to fight the 1987 general elections. The Populist Party, which was the second of the two parties set up with the encouragement of the military régime in 1983, merged with the SDP in 1985 as the Social Democrat Populist Party (SDPP) thus becoming the main and legitimate party of the centre left. Finally, in 1987, all the pre-1980 political leaders regained the political rights which had been denied them by the original text of the 1982 constitution. With the exceptions of communism and Kurdish nationalism, virtually all strands of opinion were now allowed to compete freely in the political market place. By the time of the 1987 elections, it seemed hard to sustain the charge, often made in 1983, that Turkey would henceforth be a 'guided democracy', restricted by rigid limitations laid down by the military.

The most serious test of the military withdrawal from Turkish politics occurred in November 1989, when Kenan Evren's term as President of the Republic expired. Since 1961, all Turkey's Presidents had been retired senior commanders. The Presidency, along with the National Security Council, was unofficially regarded as the military's foothold in the civilian political system. The succession of a civilian candidate could thus be seen as the breaking of a powerful tradition. In the event, Turgut Özal's election was not achieved without considerable controversy, mainly because it was clear that, as the founder and mainstay of the ruling party, it would be impossible for him to exercise his powers with the degree of neutrality which the constitution assumes. The shift towards a more active and executive Presidency was also felt to be contrary to the spirit of both the 1961 and 1982 constitutions. What was remarkable about Özal's election, however, was the fact that the succession of a civilian politician did not produce the crisis in civil-military relations which could have been expected. In February 1988, Kenan Evren had announced that he would not seek a second term (which would in any case have required a constitutional amendment). After this, the issue was effectively laid to rest: the idea that he could only be succeeded by a retired military commander was occasionally hinted at, but not seriously advanced.

In parallel with these changes, the years after 1983 also saw the gradual withdrawal of other political restrictions. In 1990, Turks were still being prosecuted for no more than expressing radical political views, and some controls on the press remained in place - particularly affecting reporting on the Kurdish problem. Nevertheless, there had been an important degree of relaxation in the application of legislation which was arguably quite contrary to internationally accepted principles of human rights (in particular, the notorious Articles 141, 142 and 163 of the Penal Code). Political trials, such as those of the Turkish Peace Association and of DISK, the radical left-wing labour confederation, dragged on for years after 1983, but the accused were all
eventually released, and it seemed unlikely that similar large scale witch-hunts would be repeated. DISK unlikely that similar large scale witch-hunts would be repeated. DISK remained banned as an organisation, but the middle of the road Türk-İş, Turkey's biggest trades union confederation, gradually began to exercise its industrial muscle by calling strikes in a number of industries. By 1990, it even appeared possible that the official ban on the formation of a communist party might be lifted, although the legal status of the 'United Communist Party of Turkey' - the first overground communist party since the 1920s - was still in doubt. Under the constitution, any sort of Kurdish separatist activity, and even the use of the Kurdish language, remained forbidden, but here too there were some signs of a relaxation of official attitudes. In July 1990 the SDPP issued a report on the 'Eastern and South Eastern Region', which drew attention to its economic neglect, and called for the lifting of the blanket ban on the use of Kurdish. The report was given a frosty reception by Özal but, granted the sensitivity of European opinion on this score, it did seem possible that some concessions might eventually be allowed.

3. Military and Civilian Powers:

Distinguishing between military and civilian régimes is not always as easy as it may seem at first glance, since there are many régime types which can be described as only partly civilianised. In the case of Greece, for instance, one can say with some degree of confidence that the régime between 1967 and 1974 was a straightforward military autocracy, and the régime since 1974 a civilian democracy. The same distinction might be made in the case of Argentina before and after 1983. There are many other intermediate cases, however, where military régimes can be described as having become semi-civilianised (such as Egypt since 1952) or where formally civilian ruling parties have in fact been taken over by the military (as in the case of the Ba'athist régimes in Syria since 1963). In other cases, such as those of Pakistan and (more doubtfully) Turkey, the periodic installation of elected civilian governments has still left the military in a powerful position behind the scenes. In these intermediate cases, one finds a more or less uneasy symbiosis of the military and the civil power.\(^2\)

\(^2\)This is not to suggest that all civilian régimes are necessarily definable as liberal-democratic. Cases in point are those of the Soviet state, or Iraq under Saddam Hussein, where a single party régime or personal civilian dictatorship converts the army into a subservient part of the state-party structure. Nordlinger refers to this type of civilian control as the 'penetration model': Eric Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments*, Englewood Ciffs, N.J., Prentice Hall, 1976, pp. 15-18.
This leaves one with the task of producing an acceptable definition of the civilian régime. To summarise a potentially long and complex argument, it can briefly be said that a plausible model of liberal civilian government assumes the existence of three main conditions. The first is that the military should not exercise the powers of government, either directly and formally (as had occurred in Turkey during 1960-61 and 1980-83) or indirectly (as in 1971-73). In short, there should be an elected and autonomous civilian government, with real powers. The second is that, within a civilian régime, the role of the military should be restricted to its professional functions - in other words that the armed forces should not be allowed to decide (as distinct from execute) policy on their own, although they may have a role in policy making, especially in the defence field. The third, and related condition, is that the armed forces should be fully subjected to the control of the civilian government, although the latter should give due regard to their professional interests and policy proposals.3

To return to the Turkish case, it can be argued that the first condition had largely been met in November-December 1983, when the military régime which had ruled Turkey since 12 September 1980 was formally dissolved, and power was handed over to an elected civilian government. The second and third conditions, however, have been far more difficult to achieve. It is argued, in fact, that even at times when Turkey has officially been ruled by an elected civilian government, the political system has never been fully civilianised. The reasons advanced are that the military has been responsible for large areas of decision-making which should properly be allotted to the civil power, and that the government has been left virtually powerless over, for instance, the allocation of the military budget or the determination of national defence policy.4

On the first score, it seems hard to deny that there was a steady withdrawal of the military from the work of government after 1983. However, this process was only a gradual one, since at the outset Özal's government inherited a situation in which, one year after the official return to a civilian régime, martial law was still in force in 47 of the country's 67 provinces. These included virtually all of the Kurdish-inhabited zone of south-eastern Anatolia, plus most of the industrialised regions of western and

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3This formulation is suggested by Nordlinger, Ibid., pp. 12-14 and Morris Janowitz, The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: an Essay in Comparative Analysis, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964, pp. 3-4. Janowitz describes this 'democratic model' as an objective rather than reality, and admits that only "elements" of it have been adopted in certain western industrialised countries.

southern Turkey. Within these provinces, martial law courts were still in operation, and the military authorities had the right (which they sometimes used) to ban strikes and control publications. At this stage, it was suggested that there was something of a division of labour at the top of Turkish government in which the military, through President Evren, was responsible for deciding policy in the fields of domestic and external security, with Özal and his cabinet controlling economic and social policy. However, over the following four years, the army's role was subjected to steady erosion, as martial law was steadily withdrawn. By November 1986 the number of provinces affected had been reduced to five—all of them in the south east—falling to four by July 1987.

At this point, the government decided to use the powers vested in it by a special State of Emergency Law to declare the four provinces remaining under martial law, together with four neighbouring provinces, a 'Regional State of Emergency Governorate', headed by a civilian 'Coordinator Governor' (known informally in the press as a 'super-Governor') Hayri Kozakçıoğlu. The 'State of Emergency' allowed the authorities to implement something of a half way house between full martial law and a normal civilian régime, in which the civilian authorities were given special powers to maintain order and control political activities. Under the 'super-Governor', the army and gendarmerie continued to carry out search and destroy operations against the PKK. To this extent, Turkey could still be said to fall short of the fully civilian model of democratic government.

On these grounds, the SDPP's 'eastern Report' urged that the special Governorate should be withdrawn, and the normal system of local administration applied instead. However, there were precedents for this type of situation in other democracies (for instance, in Northern Ireland) and it only affected a remote and thinly populated part of the country. By 1990, for the vast majority of Turks, the soldiers had long since disappeared from the streets, except when off duty, and direct rule by the military was a fading memory.

The initial application of martial law was not the only institutional element inherited by the civilian government which gave the military the opportunity for a decision-making role in the post-1983 régime. Of these, the most notable were the Presidential Council, the National Security Council, which was given enhanced powers under the 1982 constitution, and the

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6 The eight provinces affected were Bingöl, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt, Tunceli and Van.
extension of the authority of the President. So long as Kenan Evren, or some other retired general, occupied the presidency, then most Turks were likely to see this as an important part of the military voice in the political system.

In practice, the Presidential Council turned out to be easily the least effective of these institutions. Under Provisional Article 2 of the constitution, it was composed of the Chief of the General Staff and the four force commanders who had made up the National Security Council at the time of the transfer of power in November 1983. Its functions were to examine laws adopted by parliament concerning fundamental rights and freedoms, the principles of secularism and the reforms of Atatürk, national security, public order and other matters. On the request of the President, it was to consider and give an opinion "on matters relating to the holding of new general elections, the exercise of emergency powers and the measures to be taken during a state of emergency...and the conduct of religious affairs." The Presidential Council was to be wound up six years after the reconvening of parliament. As it was, its activities were very little reported: if it did play any important role in influencing decisions from behind the scenes, then this was very well hidden. When the Council was eventually dissolved in November 1989, its passing attracted virtually no public attention, and seems to have made no difference to the balance of power between the military and civilian politicians.

A second, and more important focus of concern was the political role of the National Security Council (NSC). This had originally been established under the 1961 constitution, and was composed of the President, the Prime Minister, Ministers of State and Deputy Prime Ministers of Defence, Interior, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Transport and Labour, and, on the armed services side, the Chief of the General Staff, and the Commanders of the Land Forces, Navy and Air Force. In this way, the civilian members of the Council were in a clear majority. The NSC's powers were increased by the 1982 constitution, which required the government "to give priority consideration" to the decisions of the NSC in matters which it "deems necessary for the preservation of the existence and independence of the state". This enhanced its former powers under the previous constitution, under which the NSC was to "recommend" to the government "the necessary basic views for decisions to be taken in connection with national security and coordination". At the same time, its membership was reduced to four cabinet members (the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs and the Interior) plus the four force commanders (that is, adding the Commander of Gendarmerie to the three previous members). Hence, the civilian members of the Council would only be in a majority if the President

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7 1982 Constitution, Provisional Article 2.
voted with them. As had been the case before 1980, the NSC was the most important regular and formal point of contact between the armed forces commanders, the President and the government. The degree to which it actually made policy, rather than merely advising the government on security and defence questions, and the extent to which it discussed and expressed views on questions not directly to these topics, were a crucial test of how far Turkey had advanced towards a fully civilian régime.

On occasions, the NSC expressed views on what could not strictly be considered military matters: for example in July 1986, it complained of the "undesirable beliefs" which were allegedly imparted by religious programmes on state radio and television, and in January 1987 it drew the government's attention towards the signs of a religious revival in Turkey. However, as time passed it appears to have retreated into a more strictly military and advisory role. It generally ceased to issue pronouncements on political matters which could not be claimed as having a direct reference to national defence and security (though the latter naturally included the sensitive question of the Kurds). Hence, by the end of the 1980s, the idea that the NSC constituted some sort of secret military government of Turkey seems to have been a serious exaggeration.

The incremental withdrawal of martial law, the demise of the Presidential Council, and the limitation of the role of the NSC to strictly military functions, all suggest that the independent decision-making power of the armed forces noticeably declined after 1983. These left open the question of the degree to which the elected government had started to invade the military's previous autonomy in running its own affairs. Here again, the evidence suggests that by the end of the 1980s the government had begun to advance towards the position of the western democracies in which the civil power fully controls the military, although the process was very far from complete.

Ibid., Article 118; 1961 Constitution, Article 111, as amended by Law No. 1488 of 20 September 1971: Law No. 129 of 11 December 1962. For further details and explanation, see Özdemir, Rejim ve Asker, pp. 113-115. Some confusion is created by the fact that the term 'National Security Council' is applied both to the mixed civilian-military bodies established under the 1961 and 1982 constitutions, and the purely military junta which ruled between 1980 and 1983. In Turkish, the former is officially referred to as the 'Milli Güvenlik Kurulu' and the latter as the 'Milli Güvenlik Konseyi'. Unfortunately, the difference of title does not come out in translation.

An important sign of the changing times occurred in June 1987 when General Necdet Uruğ, who had succeeded Nurettin Ersin as Chief of the General Staff in 1985, became due for retirement. His expected successor was General Necdet Öztorun, the Commander of Land Forces. Had it happened, the appointment of Öztorun would have corresponded to the normal rank hierarchy at the top of the armed forces, in which commanders usually moved one rung up the ladder following a retirement. His promotion was also said to be supported by the other top commanders. However, Öztorun was reported to have annoyed Özal by his allegedly faulty handling of the security problem in south-eastern Anatolia and, in particular, by his failure to inform the prime minister of a particularly vicious attack by the PKK on Pınarcık village, in Mardin province, on 21 June. It was also reported that there was tension between Özal and some of his generals, who complained that the Islamic fundamentalist faction was wielding too much influence in the Motherland Party.

Under the constitution, the Chief of the General Staff is appointed by the President on the proposal of the cabinet and is responsible to the premier in the exercise of his duties. On 29 June Özal caused something of a slock by announcing that General Necip Torumtay, the deputy Chief of the General Staff, would succeed Uruğ, forcing Öztorun to resign the following day. Torumtay took over temporarily as Commander of Land Forces on 1 July, before duly succeeding as Chief of the General Staff in August.¹⁰

In most countries, the fact that the prime minister had exercised his constitutional right to nominate the top commander of the armed forces, even if against the wishes of senior generals, would hardly have caused anything of a stir. In Turkey, however, it severely challenged the tradition of military autonomy, exemplified by the idea that the internal organisation of the armed forces was a matter only for the generals, over which civilian politicians should not have effective control. In this case, the contest was complicated by rumours that President Evren, who was responsible for appointing the cabinet's nominee and was treated by most people as the armed forces, main representative in the political structure, was not a wholehearted supporter of Öztorun. Certainly, he does not seem to have made any objection to Torumtay's appointment. Be that as it may, the outcome was seen at the time as an important victory by the government over the corporate interests of the military.

Further signs of this trend were apparent during the Gulf crisis of 1990. For the first time since the late 1940s, there was a distinct risk (even if a fairly remote one) that Turkey's national security might be in jeopardy, or that Turkey might become involved in major military operations. As in the

Cyprus crisis of 1974, the army's professional function, as the armed instrument of the state, assumed primacy over the political role which it had frequently assumed. What was striking, however, was that even in a crisis with an important external security dimension, it was the civilian President Özal who was clearly in command. The National Security Council naturally met to discuss policy, but it was Özal who was presented as the man at the helm. Necip Torunyay and his fellow commanders were evidently content to let themselves be seen in a secondary role. Commenting on this situation in his column in Milliyet newspaper, the widely respected journalist Mehmet Ali Birand recalled that in previous crises, even though decisions had actually been taken jointly between the generals and the government, it was the soldiers who were presented to the public as the main decision-makers. As an example, when a long running dispute with Greece over off shore oil rights in the Aegean had erupted into crisis in March 1987, it was a military spokesman who had appeared on television to announce what Turkey's policy would be. On this occasion, however,

"Everything was in the hands of the civil authority. Leaving aside the question as to whether this was legal, the decisions were taken by the President. In fact, he was in prolonged consultation with the General Staff. Again, the options were considered together with the soldiers, but the external appearance came over to the public in a completely different way."11

Later, he wrote:

"The political wing of the state (especially the President) has taken over the direction of the crisis in a complete sense. [The President] gets information, makes contacts abroad, makes evaluations with what he has accumulated from these, and finally makes the decisions personally. External appearances suggest that the Turkish armed forces have not gone beyond the functions of participating in the evaluations and carrying out the orders which are to be issued.12

Birand described this as an "extremely healthy situation from the viewpoint of the management of the country"13 since it kept the army out of political polemics and argument. It also signalled Turkey's transition towards the liberal democratic model of military-civilian relations, in which the civilian political leadership is ready to pay due regard to the opinions of the commanders on strictly military questions, but where the military is

12 Ibid., 1 September 1990.
13 Ibid., 14 August 1990.
effectively depoliticised, and ultimate authority rests firmly with the civilians.

This is not to suggest that the process has reached the stage of full civilian control over the military. Under the Constitution, the Chief of the General Staff remains answerable to the President, not the Minister of Defence. As Mhemet Ali Birand remarks in another context, "fears that the army might become an instrument of politics have, in the words of a former Minister, reduced the Ministry of Defence to the status of an 'equipment office'". A further sign of the continuing tendency to regard the military as an independent world apart is the fact that, although Turkey's external security environment has been transformed over the past year by the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, there has been very little public debate as to how her defence posture should be altered in response. As in the military, in which the elected government does not have the right to determine long run policy. On the other hand, the conduct of policy in the Gulf crisis appears to indicate that a gradual transition towards the model of civilian control may be emerging.

4. The Role of the President, 1983-1989:

A crucial part of the process of military disengagement from politics during the 1980s was the political role of President Evren. Although the President had officially resigned from the army on taking office in November 1982, he almost certainly maintained close links with the serving commanders thereafter: (in fact, the formal position of the President as Commander-in-Chief meant that he was constitutionally entitled to do this). Above all, President Evren was popularly, and probably correctly, regarded as the chief representative of the military in the civilian political structure. In the process of military disengagement from politics, Evren's retirement from the Presidency in November 1989 ended this aspect of the army's political

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14 Birand, Emret Komutanım!, p. 415. See also Özdemir, Rejim ve Asker, pp. 252-54, 256-63.
15 Two exceptions to this may be noted. In 1987 a pioneering study in Turkish of national defence strategy was published by the Foreign Policy Institute in Ankara, which recognised the need for wider discussion of defence questions, and set out to meet it: Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu et. al., Türkiye'nin Savunması, Ankara, Dış Politika Enstitüsü, 1987. Unfortunately, a good deal of the material contained in this study has now been rendered rather obsolete by the dramatic changes in eastern Europe, and the new framework of East-West relations. The other is the fact that a public debate has fitfully started about the desirability of continuing universal military service: (see, e.g., Milliyet, 16 June 1990). However, this debate would probably have arisen anyway, without the recent changes in the international environment, since it arises partly from demographic factors, and not just questions of defence strategy.
role, and appeared to close a chapter in civil-military relations which had begun in 1961. What is important, however, is that Evren’s exercise of his presidential powers appears to have altered substantially during his term as President, and that his succession by Özal seems to have marked a far less abrupt turning point than might at first appear.

At the outset, President Evren seems to have adopted a distinctly cautious attitude towards the process of democratisation: (this caution, it can be argued, was more than justified by Turkey’s political experiences during the late 1970s). However, as time went on, and political stability appeared to be relatively well assured, he seems to have accepted that the civilian political leaders would assume fuller authority, and that his own role as President would decline correspondingly. An early and important example of this occurred in January 1984 when parliament passed the bill providing for local elections on 25 March, and allowing the participation of those parties who had been excluded from the 1983 general elections. On 12 January, the President vetoed the bill, returning it to the Assembly according to the constitutional procedure. The original bill was technically at fault, in that it arbitrarily called for the reduction in the size of some local councils which had been established by another law. However, it is likely that Evren’s real objection to the bill was that it allowed the Social Democrats and Demirel’s True Path Party back onto the electoral stage only a few months after they had specifically been excluded by the military. On 15 January the Assembly reconsidered the bill, and repassed it with only minor amendments, leaving Evren with no alternative but to approve it on the following day, whatever his private reservations. In this early test, as on subsequent occasions, the constitutional machinery was adhered to with impressive smoothness.

In general, President Evren came across to the Turkish public as a fatherly figure who could occasionally issue bluff warnings, but usually pulled in his horns rather than create a political crisis. A crucial case was his attitude towards the return of political rights to the pre-1980 party leaders. Until 1986 he stuck strictly to the view that Provisional Article 4 of the constitution, which forbade the former party leaders to engage in any kind of political activity until 1992 should be kept in place: at the opening of parliament in September 1985 he stressed that the bans forbade them to make any kind of political statements, provoking protests from Demirel. By the following year, however, it was becoming increasingly clear that upholding the bans was becoming less and less practicable. Accordingly, on 5

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16 This suggestion is made by Dodd, Turkish Democracy, 1990 edn, p. 106.
November 1986, he held a meeting with opposition leaders, after which he announced that he was in favour of lifting the bans, although he admitted that this would be a matter for parliament to decide. This cleared the way for the process of withdrawing Provisional Article 4 during 1987.

Another less critical but nonetheless illustrative incident occurred at the end of April 1988. On 28-29 April serious disturbances broke out in Istanbul and other universities, as students protested against the tight government controls over higher education. These were accompanied by a renewed upsurge of violence by the PKK in the south-eastern provinces, provoking fears that Turkey might be reverting to the anarchy of the 1970s. Evren gave voice to these concerns on 30 April when he told an audience in Trabzon that "there are people who want to push our country into anarchy...Turkey will not see such days again. If Turkey is in a similar situation, the force to resist this is the armed forces". The implied threat that the army might launch another coup triggered off predictable criticism from the politicians, especially Demirel. Evren then appeared anxious to correct his mistake: on 2 May he assured the public that "the period of fights and disputes is over. As long as unity exists, democracy will progress step by step". Özlü backed the President up by stating that he "seriously and sincerely supports democracy".18 As on previous occasions, Evren had shown a worrying tendency to make unguarded comments in public but was flexible enough to defuse the situation before any serious damage had been done.

In exercising authority over government appointments, it is suggested that President Evren was opposed to the appointment of sympathisers of the former National Salvation and Nationalist Action Parties to top civil service posts. On the other hand, he does not seem to have prevented Özlü from bringing in his own team to key posts in the bureaucracy. In his pronouncements on general political questions, he stressed the value of hard work and responsible behaviour, but steered clear of delivering any hard work and responsible behaviour, but steered clear of delivering any verdicts on economic policy, on the grounds that this was outside his area of responsibility. On other issues, his most striking change of heart concerned the continuation of capital punishment and the ban on a communist party, both of which he originally supported. In the course of a visit to West Germany in October 1988, he unexpectedly told journalists that he accepted that eventually the Communist Party would have to be legalised in Turkey, and the death sentence abolished. His conversion appears to have been part of a gradual shift towards greater liberalism, as the legacy of the military régime progressively weakened.19

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18 Quotations as reported by Reuter, 30 April, 2 May, 3 May 1988.
19 Heper, Politics of Transition, pp. 7-8; Dodd, Turkish Democracy, 1990 edn., pp. 106-107.
5. Politics and Islam, the Main Point of Conflict:

The only really serious point of conflict between the government and President Evren appeared to be the Motherland Party's cultivation of elements of fundamentalist Muslim support - an issue on which Evren evidently had the support of the military members of the National Security Council. In his public speeches, the President attacked Islamic fundamentalism, along with communism and fascism, as one of the main threats to the state and to Atatürk's legacy. In the long running battle over the wearing of 'Muslim' headscarves by women students, he vetoed a bill passed by parliament in November 1988 which allowed freedom of dress for all students and faculty members. It was also said, though unproven, that objections by the President had been the main reason for the exclusion from the cabinet of Mehmet Keçeciler and Vehbi Dinçerler, two prominent members of the Motherland Party who were usually associated with the party's Muslim fundamentalist faction. This supposition was strengthened by the fact that both Keçeciler and Dinçerler were given posts in the cabinet formed by Yıldırım Akbulut in November 1989, after Evren's retirement from the Presidency.

It is difficult to be categorical about the position of President Evren on the vexed question of religion and politics, however, since it contained elements of ambiguity, which reflected important changes in the nature of the debate in Turkey. Certainly, the contest was not now a straightforward clash between strict secularism (represented by the army) on the one hand and radical Islamic fundamentalism (represented by civilian political groups) on the other, since the lines of distinction were frequently blurred, and there were many intermediate positions. One cause of the change lay in the field of foreign policy, in which Turkey was now developing close relations with conservative Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. This encouraged some redefinition of the official position. In 1982, for instance, Evren told a meeting in Istanbul of the Governors of the Islamic Development Bank that "Turkey is an inextricable part of the Islamic Community". It is hard to imagine that any President of Turkey could have made such a pronouncement in earlier decades, without provoking a storm of protest.

Within the domestic political context, also, the military régime of 1980-83 had modified the army's previously strict stand on secularism, and this change carried over into the post-1983 period. The perception was that if the state effectively told its citizens that religion played no part in official

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ideology, and neglected religious education, this left a moral void in the upbringing of the young which had previously been filled by Marxism, fascism and other anti-systemic doctrines. During the late 1970s, an intellectual group had arisen which had tried to overcome the apparent dichotomy between the official commitment to secular nationalism and oppositional proponents of an Islamic identity, by projecting the idea of a 'Turkish Islamic Synthesis'. This proposed, in effect, that Islam was a part of Turkish national culture, rather than in conflict with it, and should be promoted as such. Without abandoning the official commitment to secularism (for instance, Turkey was still referred to as a 'secular' state in Article 2 of the 1982 constitution) the military régime had adopted some of the elements of the 'synthesis' - in particular, by including in the constitution the provision that "education and instruction in religion and ethics" should be made a compulsory part of the curricula of all primary and secondary schools. During the 1980s, there was also a massive expansion in the provision of special high schools for Muslim imams and preachers so that, by the middle of the decade, around 30 per cent of all high school students were attending these institutions.

There is some debate as to whether these changes had amounted to an attempted depoliticisation of Islam, or whether the military régime and its successor had exploited a mild form of Islamic doctrines which, as Paul J. Magnarella concludes, was "designed to reinforce rather than contradict state authority". Politically, also, this evolution had be judged against a background in which the army was generally withdrawing itself from involvement in tricky ideological arguments. It seemed probable that the debate about the political role of religion would continue in Turkey, as in other Muslim countries, but at least there was hope that it would be less likely to contribute towards confrontation between the military and civilian political leaders than it had in the past.

6. Assessment and Explanations:

Although Turkey suffered from a number of serious political problems after 1983 it appears that, for the first time for many years, these did not include any serious or overt clashes between the civilian political establishment and the military. In fact, the army's withdrawal from the political scene turned out to be far more smooth than most observers had
probably expected. By the end of the decade, nearly all the mechanisms by which the military régime of 1980-83 had planned to impose its own pattern on subsequent civilian politics (such as the restrictions on the party structure, and the attempted exclusion of the pre-1980 party leaders) had faded away. The process took a further step forward with Turgut Özal's election to the Presidency in 1989. Admittedly, the armed forces still appeared to retain a degree of autonomy from the civil power which would probably have been rejected in the western democracies. Nevertheless, an important degree of military disengagement from politics had been achieved, and with remarkably little overt objection from the military commanders.

This tentative conclusion prompts the question as to why and how this disengagement was possible. In general, the literature on the problems faced by the military and civilian political leadership in effecting this kind of transition, and the conditions in which it may occur, is far less extensive than that seeking to explain the political activism of the military or the process of military takeover. The Turkish case must clearly be differentiated from those of, say, Greece in 1974 or Argentina in 1983 where the military withdrawal occurred involuntarily, as the result of a disastrous foreign adventure by a military régime. Some suggestions may be made, however, as to how a voluntary disengagement of the Turkish type may be effected.

S. E. Finer, for instance, posits three conditions for such a process. Firstly, the military leadership must positively want to disengage; secondly, it must be able to establish a successor régime which is viable without military support and, thirdly, the lower or middle ranking officers must have sufficient confidence in their commanders to withdraw to their barracks. Analysing the Turkish experience of 1961, C.H. Dodd adds the conditions that the military leadership must eliminate the 'anti-democratic element' (if any) within the previously ruling junta, must maintain unity between the junta and the military command, that the military must not be divided on partisan lines, and that a party or combination of parties must be available to take over whom the military can trust. Finally, Christopher Clapham and George Philip suggest that armies having a high degree of unity of command structure and of differentiation of the military from civil society will tend to assume a 'moderator' role in politics, stepping in occasionally when the civilian political system breaks down, but withdrawing once the conditions for the re-establishment of reasonably stable and acceptable civilian government seem sufficiently assured.²⁴

²⁴S. E. Finer, "Military Disengagement from Politics", in Collected Seminar Papers on the Politics of Demilitarisation, University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, April-May 1966, p. 6; C.H. Dodd, "The Turkish Experience", in ibid., p. 29; Christopher Clapham and George Philip, eds., The Political Dilemmas of Military Regimes.
The events of 1983-90 in Turkey suggest that these conditions were well met. Unlike its predecessor of 1960-61, the military régime of 1980-83 was not divided by inter-rank or corresponding ideological divergences. General Evren and his four force commanders had maintained control over their subordinates throughout, and there seems to have been no serious danger of a counter-coup, either during or after the period of military government.25 With the inauguration of the Constituent Assembly in October 1981, the junta committed itself to a return to elected civilian government, and never seems to have seriously wavered from that commitment. Nor were there any clashes between the junta and the serving military commanders (as there had been in 1961) since General Evren and his close colleagues were careful to keep both military and political command in their own hands.26 Above all, a notable feature of the Turkish army's corporate culture is its extreme emphasis on maintaining the hierarchical chain of command (a necessity frequently referred to by General Evren at the time) and its high degree of differentiation from civil society. The point has frequently made that Turkish army officers regard themselves as a world apart, and are encouraged to do so by their internal educational system.27 They thus tend to act as a bloc, and to avoid 'contamination' from divisive civilian political movements. This cohesiveness had not been achieved easily or automatically, since fundamental divisions, both within the ruling junta and between the junta and the serving commanders had emerged during the earlier military régime of 1960-61. However, the rapid collapse of the two attempted counter-coups led by Colonel Talât Aydemir in February 1962 and May 1963, and the failure of attempts by some officers to project the army into a more activist and radical role in 1971, had restored the command hierarchy to an impressive degree.


25 As this paper was being written, the memoirs of ex-President Evren were starting to appear in serialised form in Milliyet newspaper: it is thus possible that further information on this point may be available.


27 See, especially, Birand, Emret Komutanım!, Section 1, passim. The same point is made by James Brown, "The Military and Society: the Turkish Case", Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 29 (1989), p. 400 and Bener Karakartal, "The Army as the Guardian of Political Order", in Clapham and Philip, eds., Political Dilemmas, p. 60. For an interesting statement of the army's isolation from civil society by a former member of the National Unity Committee of 1960-61, see Orhan Erkanlı, Anlar... Sorumlular, Istanbul, Baha Matbaası, 1973, pp. 375-76.
Besides factors related to the internal structure of the military in Turkey, the external environment also has to be born in mind. In spite of the ups and downs of Turkey's relationship with her NATO allies since the 1950s, the commanders have always been well aware that Turkey's defence ultimately depends on close collaboration with the alliance. The commitment to achieving Atatürk's ambition of making Turkey a respected member of the western comity of nations has also meant that they have supported the drive to attain full membership of the European Community, even if this means a degree and speed of political liberalisation which they might otherwise have been reluctant to accept.

In April 1987 Turkey officially applied to the European Community for admission as a full member. Eventually, in December 1989, the EC Commission issued an official Opinion, in which it turned down the idea of any negotiations leading to accession before 1993 at the earliest. The Opinion was later adopted by the EC Council of Ministers. Besides the predictable economic problems, the fact that "the human rights situation and respect for the identity of minorities have not yet reached the level required in a democracy" was cited as a reason for this decision. Although the 1980-83 régime had never been willing to admit that the return to civilian government had not even partly been motivated by foreign policy considerations, it seems to have been accepted by both the military and the civilian governments that further political liberalisation would be a necessary condition for Turkey's eventual accession to the Community. This consideration was reinforced by the dramatic political transformations in eastern Europe of 1989-90: as a member of the NATO, Turkey could not allow herself to be credibly presented as being less democratic than the members of the now defunct Warsaw Pact.

The need for a stable successor régime acceptable to the military has also been mentioned as an important condition for successful disengagement. Here, again, conditions in Turkey in the 1980s were favourable. Although President Evren had delivered a much criticised TV address on the eve of the 1983 elections, in which he implicitly urged the electorate to vote for Turgut

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28 As an illustration of this, the military régime of 1980-83 announced several times that, once democratic government had been restored, Turkey would submit an application for full membership of the EC. Setting aside the question as to whether the ruling generals were entitled to commit a subsequent civilian régime to taking this step, there can be little doubt that they supported the principle of accession as a logical outcome of the Atatürkist programme of secularism and modernism.

Sunalp's Nationalist Democracy Party and attacked Turgut Özal, he rapidly accepted Özal's election victory with good grace, and seems to have enjoyed a cooperative relationship with him afterwards. Özal, for his part, seems to have been concerned to give the former military régime a soft landing. He never openly attacked the actions of the generals between 1980 and 1983, and there was never any question of the civilian régime seeking revenge on the former military rulers. The incident of Evren's pre-election broadcast was quickly brushed aside: as Özal claimed in 1985 "the President is my best friend. Our relations are extremely good. Now that a few misunderstandings have been cleared up, everything is on course".30

This favourable attitude was not shared right across the political spectrum: for instance, Süleyman Demirel attacked Özal as the alleged instrument of the military, and thus implicitly attacked the military itself.31 He continued to maintain that his own government was well on the way to solving Turkey's problems before 12 September 1980, and that the coup was therefore unjustified.32 Nevertheless, the junta was able to hand over power in 1983 without the fear that the civilian régime would later try to upset all that it had achieved over the previous three years, or try to bring its members to book for alleged misdeeds while they had been in power.33 When basic revisions of the post-1983 political order took place (such as the return of political rights to the pre-1980 party leaders in 1987) it was in conditions that the military were prepared to accept.

To conclude, it has to be admitted that the process of disengagement has not meant that, by the beginning of the 1990s, the cycle of military intervention, withdrawal, crisis and re-intervention has definitely ended by the beginning of the 1990s. Should Turkey relapse again into the anarchic conditions of the late 1970s, then it is likely that the armed forces would intervene again, and just possible that they might decide to stay in power for a longer period, rather than re-start the cycle. In spite of the modification of the military's position of Islam and secularism, moves by the Motherland Party or any other administration which appeared to undermine the secularist principle to an unacceptable degree would probably lead to a sharp reaction from the armed forces (probably taking the form of a pointed public warning

30 In an interview with a Greek journalist: quoted, Hulusi Turgut, 12 Eylül Partileri, İstanbul, ABC Ajansı Yayınları, p. 477.
32 In an interview with the writer.
33 Provisional Article 15 of the 1982 constitution gave the former members of the junta legal immunity for all their actions between 12 September 1980 and the ending of the military régime. This provision could have been withdrawn by means of a constitutional amendment, but no attempt has been made to do so.
by the military members of the National Security Council, as a first step). On the other hand, Turkey's experiences of 1983 to 1990 do seem to offer something of a textbook case of a successful process of military disengagement from politics, which may have important implications for our understanding of this process in other contexts.