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**12 SEPTEMBER JUNTA REGIME IN TURKEY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
BRITISH DIPLOMATS, 1980-1983**

Abstract

1980 witnessed the second military takeover in the history of modern Turkey. The Army took over on 12 September to end the violence. The effect was instantaneous: Operations against the extremists were prosecuted vigorously, and the Junta won its first victory. Political activity had been banned and the security forces had to be rough. But the press was not censored, and action had been taken against some members of the security forces accused of ill-treating suspects. The Generals were faced with the more challenging task of the return to normalcy, to which they had committed themselves. A Civilian Government was appointed on 21 September. Work had begun on to revise the constitution.

On the whole, 1981 saw positive outcomes. Law and order were further consolidated, and the economy made considerable progress. On the other hand, 1982 was a difficult year. Domestically, popular support for the Generals was dependent on substantial progress being made in restoring a parliamentary system. Nevertheless, there still were grounds for optimism that Turkey would continue its political and economic progress in 1982. As it turned out, Turkey emerged from 1982 satisfactorily.

Turkey entered 1983 more self-confidently regarding internal affairs. The process, instituted by Turkey's military leaders, to return the country to multi-party civilian government, culminated in a general election held on 6 November. Özal's Motherland Party swept to power with a clear majority. Now, it was Özal's government, not the military, who were now in charge.

Özal had the chance to govern for the next five years and to make his party a permanent force in Turkish politics. However, should he make any mistakes, particularly in his management of the economy, the opposition - both inside and outside the Assembly - were ready to take advantage. The military had taken a backseat, but President Evren retained an important





supervisory role. However, Özal was playing for high stakes, and the consequences of internal failure could be damaging for wider Western interests.

Key words: 12 September, Coup, 12 September Coup, Junta, Turgut Özal, Kenan Evren

İNGİLİZ DİPLOMATLARIN GÖZÜNDEN TÜRKİYE'DE 12 EYLÜL CUNTA REJİMİ, 1980-1983

Özet

1980, modern Türkiye tarihinde ikinci askeri darbeye tanık oldu. Ordu, şiddeti sona erdirmek için 12 Eylül'de görevi devraldı. Etki anlığı: Aşırılık yanlılarına yönelik operasyonlar şiddetle kovuşturuldu ve Cunta ilk zaferini kazandı. Siyasi faaliyetler yasaklandı ve güvenlik güçleri sert davrandı. Ancak basın sansürlenmedi. Generaller, kendilerini adadıkları demokrasiye dönüşün zorlu göreviyle karşı karşıya kaldılar. 21 Eylül'de Sivil bir Hükümet atandı. Anayasanın revize edilmesi için çalışmalar başladı.

Genel olarak, 1981 olumlu sonuçlar gördü. Kanun ve düzen daha da sağlamlaştırıldı ve ekonomi önemli ilerleme kaydetti. Öte yandan, 1982 zor bir yıldır. Yurtiçinde Generallere verilen halk desteği, parlamenter sistemin yeniden kurulmasında kaydedilen önemli ilerlemelere bağlıdır. Bununla birlikte, Türkiye'nin 1982'de siyasi ve ekonomik ilerlemesini sürdüreceğine dair iyimserlik gerekçeleri hala vardı. Türkiye 1982'den tatmin edici bir şekilde çıktı.

Türkiye 1983'e işlerine daha özgüvenli girdi. Türkiye'nin askeri liderlerinin ülkeyi çok partili sivil yönetime döndürmek için başlattığı süreç, 6 Kasım'da yapılan genel seçimlerle sonuçlandı. Özal'ın Anavatan Partisi net bir çoğunluk ile iktidara geldi. Şimdi sorumlu olan Özal'ın hükümetiydi, ordu değil.

Özal, beş yıl boyunca iktidar olma ve partisini Türk siyasetinde kalıcı bir güç haline getirme şansına sahipti. Ancak, özellikle ekonomi yönetiminde herhangi bir hata yapması durumunda, muhalefet - Meclis içinde ve dışında - bu avantajdan yararlanmaya hazırды. Ordu arka koltukta bekliyordu. Ve Cumhurbaşkanı Evren önemli bir denetim rolünü sürdürdü. Ancak Özal yüksek oynuyordu ve iç başarısızlığın sonuçları daha geniş Batı çıkarlarına zarar verebilirdi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 12 Eylül, Darbe, 12 Eylül Darbesi, Cunta, Turgut Özal, Kenan Evren

Introduction

1980 witnessed the second military takeover in the history of modern Turkey. Had the takeover not happened, the year might have been remembered as that of the new policy for economic recovery, introduced by the minority Demirel Government in January 1980. However, that was all Demirel had achieved. Parliament reached stalemate, failing even to elect a new President. Governmental control steadily weakened, and political violence increased. The Generals took over on 12 September to end the violence, amidst general relief. The effect was instantaneous: Operations against the extremists were prosecuted vigorously, and the Junta won its first victory.(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).





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But having constituted themselves the sole legislative authority the Generals had undertaken a heavy responsibility. They cleared the more important bills stuck in Parliament, and continued the previous Government's economic policy somewhat effectively, in particular encouraging the IMF and OECD countries to proffer further aid. Nevertheless, exports were slow to respond, and the balance of payments, deficit and foreign debts did not decrease. Recovery in even 4-5 years' time looked optimistic.(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

Political activity had been banned and the security forces could be rough. But the press was not censored, and action had been taken against some members of the security forces accused of ill- treating suspects. The Generals were faced with the more challenging task of the return to normalcy, to which they had committed themselves. A Civilian Government was appointed on 21 September. Work had begun on a revised constitution. On 15 January 1981, General Evren announced the intention to convene a Constituent Assembly between 30 August and 29 October of that year. (TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

In Foreign Affairs, the Association Agreement with the EC was reactivated. The Turks facilitated the resumption of civil aviation in the Aegean; the return of Greece, with whom relations improved, to the NATO military structure; and the reopening of the Cyprus intercommunal talks. They adopted a determined stance on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In the war between Iraq and Iran, their two main oil suppliers, they maintained in public a neutral position. Their relations with the West were overshadowed by the imposition of visas by the West Germans and some others, and by what Turks regarded as undue concern in the Council of Europe and elsewhere with their management of their own affairs. Nevertheless, what assets Britain had with Turkey were effectively used. 1981 was being celebrated as Atatürk year. It would show whether his principles combined with military authority and Turkish common sense would be a sufficient preparation for the next step in the Turkish experiment in democracy. (TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

The Atatürk year celebrations were used to stimulate patriotic feelings and popular support for the Generals. On the whole, the year saw positive outcomes. Law and order were further consolidated, and the economy made considerable progress, with the upward trend in exports continuing strongly. Turkey remained heavily in debt, but due to rescheduling, it started the New Year with an improved credit rating. The Generals' promised Constituent Assembly, which had been selected not elected, convened in October. They also announced a long considered new Universities Law which gave the Government greater administrative control. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

On the other hand were the continued restriction of political and trade union rights and press freedom, and the dissolution of existing political parties, the last of which aroused little reaction internally. However, it was these negative factors that attracted most attention abroad, especially in the Council of Europe. Moves to expel Turkey were checked after General





Evren announced the timetable for the return to democracy on 30 December and a parliamentary delegation visited Turkey in the New Year, but Turkish pride was wounded by restrictions over human rights. Relations became more difficult with the Federal Republic of Germany, and deteriorated with France. In contrast, relations with the US and UK strengthened, with British exports up about 40 per cent. Turkey continued to develop relations with its eastern, southern and Balkan neighbours, with some economic advantage. Relations with Greece were affected for the worse by Papandreou's advent to power. Nevertheless, Turkey maintained its steady support for the intercommunal talks in Cyprus. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

1982 was a difficult year. Domestically, popular support for the Generals was dependent on substantial progress being made in restoring a parliamentary system. Externally, the financial aid that was necessary for Turkey's economic recovery was in danger should the Council of Europe decide to withdraw it over human rights issues. This would turn Turkey away from its European allies. Meanwhile, a potential offensive by Greece in the Aegean would provoke a serious Turkish reaction. Nevertheless, there still were grounds for optimism that Turkey would continue its political and economic progress in 1982. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

As it turned out, Turkey emerged from 1982 satisfactorily. Much of the year was taken up with the preparation of the new constitution, which, after a slow start, was finally approved by an overwhelming majority in a popular referendum in November. The vote also confirmed General Evren as President for seven years and was essentially a vote of confidence in him. The outside world, however, criticised the constitution as being too restrictive, and this troubled the Turkish government. Strains between Turkey and Western Europe increased, in both the political and economic spheres. The Turks still maintained their Western commitment, but a feeling of frustration caused them to increase their efforts to develop their other relationships, if only to convince themselves that they had more than one option. Greece's behaviour did not alleviate matters, but the Turks did not overreact to Papandreou's stop-go tactics. The sudden departure of the economic overlord, Özal, in July, over the money-broker incident, diminished the drive behind the execution of the recovery programme, but the government held to it and the latest IMF and OECD assessments were favourable. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

The Turks entered 1983 more self-confidently regarding internal affairs. New party and electoral laws were to be completed in a matter of months and general elections were scheduled for October. However, the heavy-handed nature of some trivial regulations had caused some resentment. These and the likely restrictions on party political activities were likely to be seized on by Western critics. The strains in Turkey's relations with the Council of Europe and the European Community would continue at least until elections had been held.





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The UK, however, had maintained its credibility as an ally, which was underlined by the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the appointment of the first English Ambassador in January 1983. British influence contributed to the common goals of the Alliance.(TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The process, instituted by Turkey's military leaders, to return the country to multi-party civilian government, culminated in a general election held on 6 November. Özal's Motherland Party swept to power with a clear majority. Restrictions in the Political process meant that this was not yet a full democracy yet. However, it was Özal's government, not the military, who were now in charge. The promising economic trends of the previous two years failed to continue, and a sense of drift prevailed. Exports grew by little, and inflation was up. Özal has moved quickly to grip the situation with a series of radical measures. Turkey's commitment to NATO and Europe remained firm, but an uneasy relationship with the Council of Europe and relations with Greece, exacerbated by "independence" in Cyprus, were negative factors. Development of ties with the Islamic world was an increasingly important theme in foreign policy, but one that was complementary to Turkey's basic Western alignment. Cyprus was the one sour note in an otherwise particularly good year for Anglo-Turkish relations, marked by an increase in Britain's exports, two large defence contracts and high-level visits in both directions.(TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

Özal had the chance to govern for the next five years and to make his party a permanent force in Turkish politics. However, should he make any mistakes, particularly in his management of the economy, the opposition - both inside and outside the Assembly - were ready to take advantage. The military had taken a backseat, but President Evren retained an important supervisory role. It seemed reasonable that Turkey would come emerge from the next five years in reasonable shape. However, Özal was playing for high stakes, and the consequences of internal failure could be damaging for wider Western interests.(TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

1980

1980 went down in Turkish history as the year of the third military takeover.(Demir, 2020: 258-285). It might otherwise have been remembered as that of the new economic policy, introduced by Demirel on 24 January with the aim of restoring Turkey's fragile finances and enabling it to pay its way through planned devaluation, the stimulation of private enterprise and exports, and the eventual elimination of the deficit of the State sector. Demirel stuck by his policy staunchly.(Zürcher, 1993: 292-322). However, was his only positive achievement? Politically he found himself hesitant in the face of the unpredictable Erbakan of the revivalist Salvation Party and Türkeş of the Nationalist Action Party. His relations with the Opposition leader, Ecevit, were increasingly antipathic. His government's control of events, especially of internal security, grew less each month. His cynical sacrifice to the Opposition of his respected





Foreign Minister, Hayrettin Erkmen, in September did nothing to enhance his reputation. His aim appeared to be to remain firm in the hope that the next election would return him to power with a working majority. However, Parliament failed either to elect a successor to President Korutürk, whose term expired on 6 April, or to pass any substantial legislation, or even to dissolve itself. In face of increasing political violence, it could pass only some of the measures demanded by the National Security Council.(Ahmad, 1993: 181-213). It was the violence and the faltering authority of the Central Government that triggered the Generals' intervention on 12 September. At that point, to suggest that Turkey was on the brink of civil war would have been an exaggeration. The violence was localised, and the majority of the population not directly affected. However, the aim of those behind the violence was undoubtedly to bring about a disintegration of the existing order, out of which either a Right- or Left-wing dictatorship could emerge. The longer the violence continued, the greater the risk. The Generals said that they had intervened not to suppress democracy but to remove the hindrances to its functioning. The country as a whole believed them and welcomed their action with relief.(Akn, 2010: 411-422).

The restoration of law and order was almost miraculous. The rate of killings dropped from over ten a day to one or two. Calm returned to the shanty towns and the universities alike, and fear was expelled. Operations against the gangs of both Left and Right were prosecuted vigorously. Several thousand suspects were arrested, trials had begun, and four convicted terrorists hanged. Vast quantities of weapons were surrendered or seized. The initiative remained firmly in the hands of the authorities. They had won the first round, but had not achieved a knockout. The Right-wing had retired hurt, but a Left-wing hard core still remained at large. Moreover, the slow process of ensuring that the police and administration were depolarised had only just begun.(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

General Evren and four Force Commanders, constituted as a new National Security Council, had taken on a heavy responsibility. Having abolished Parliament and suspended certain articles of the Constitution, they had appointed General Evren as Head of State and themselves as the sole legislative body. They had been dealing conscientiously with most backlogs of bills that the deadlocked Parliament had been unable to pass. The most important Acts promulgated so far had been those establishing emergency procedures for dealing with security, and a whole series on tax reform. The tax system, unreformed for 10 years, had become grossly out of date and unfair. The new Acts would relieve the lower paid and salaried employees from a disproportionate share of the burden and spread the load more widely.(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

Realising their own limitations, the Generals continued the economic policy introduced by Demirel, and employed its architect, Turgut Özal, to run it.(Pamuk, 2018: 263-273). It was still early days to say that the economy had started to mend. Certain positive things had been





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achieved: inflation (still over 80 per cent) and the money supply had been brought under partial control; consumption had been sharply reduced; a start had been made towards reforming the state sector of the economy. The procedures for both exporters and foreign investors had been simplified, though obstacles still remained. A three-year stand-by agreement had been negotiated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and further balance of payments support obtained through the OECD, in which the US and the FRG had the largest share. On the other hand, industrial production had been hardly, if at all, better than in 1979, through a combination of reduced internal demand, tight money, strikes, and shortages of energy and raw materials. Exports had not markedly increased in volume compared with 1979, although there were some more promising signs late in the year. The oil bill (over \$3 b.) representing at least 45 per cent of total imports, exceeded the total of visible export earnings. The trade imbalance (\$3-5 b. this year) must be financed by invisible earnings, mainly workers' remittances (c. \$2 b.), and by loans. The latter increase the burden of debt (estimated at \$15 b. not including interest payments), and although the immediate strain had been relieved by the rescheduling of debts falling due in 1980-83, the future was being progressively mortgaged. Foreign investors and commercial banks had been wary of putting more money into Turkey; indeed, during the year the latter took net transfers out. Unemployment continued around the 20 per cent mark and was rising. Özal estimated that it would take Turkey 4-5 years to put its economy back into order, and this on the assumption that foreign help continued to be provided generously. On the basis of performance in 1980, this estimate looked optimistic.(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

Politically, there were downsides too. Following 12 September, political parties were banned; the activities of the extremist trades unions, but not those forming the Centrist federation Türk-İş, were suspended, as were all associations with any degree of political tendency. The Turco-British Association newspapers remained free but were expected to exercise self-censorship. The methods of the Security Forces were far from gentle, with allegations of torture and reports of deaths in custody. To be fair to the regime, such reports had been published, investigations begun, and the members of the Security Forces involved suspended or arrested.(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

The Generals were faced with the problem of how to return to normalcy once law and order had been sufficiently restored. No one supposed that the Generals wanted to remain indefinitely. They had kept their word in both 1960 and 1971. However, they had committed themselves not only to restoring law and order, but also to revising the constitution and the laws on elections and political parties, and to do these things in such a way that party politicians in future cannot change the rules. Meanwhile, on 21 September, the daily administration of the country was placed in the hands of a Civilian Government. Many of its members were former Admirals and Generals, but Özal was included as a Deputy Prime Minister, there was a diplomat as Foreign Minister, a respected businessman as Minister of





Industry and Technology, and the Secretary-General of Türk-İş as Minister of Social Affairs. Work had started on a revised constitution. No timetable had yet been announced for the publication of a draft or for the summoning of the promised Constituent Assembly, but General Evren announced in a speech in Konya on 15 January 1981 that unless some serious hindrance appeared, the latter would be convened between 30 August and 29 October 1981.(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

In foreign policy the emphasis under both Demirel and the Generals was more on links with the West than with either Eastern Europe or the developing world, loyalty to both the NATO and the Council of Europe being specifically reaffirmed after 12 September. Earlier, relations with the European Community had been reactivated. The Association Agreement was revised and improved, and there was talk, particularly by the former Foreign Minister, of lodging a formal application for membership of the Community before the end of the year. This was largely inspired by a desire to get the application on record before Greece joined the Community as a full member on 1 January 1981. The military takeover shelved this. At the same time, relations with Greece improved during the year, the first step having been taken by the Turks in unilaterally lifting NOTAM 714 in February, thus opening the way to the resumption of civil aviation over the Aegean. Moreover, Turkey's assent in October to a compromise procedure negotiated by the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe enabled Greece to re-join the military structure of NATO. On Cyprus, pressure from Ankara on Denktash helped the reopening of intercommunal talks under UN auspices, with at least some hope of progress.(Oran, 2003: 10-200).

Turkey was not affected internally by the revolution in Iran, but was much concerned not only by developments in that country, but by the threat posed to area stability by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Iran/Iraq war put Turkey in a further dilemma, since it desired good relations with both countries, who between them supplied the largest part of its oil requirements and were valuable markets for its exports. Turkey took a leading part in formulating the opposition of the Islamic countries to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, without going as far as to provoke a Soviet reaction against itself. In the Iran/Iraq conflict it had stayed connected with both sides, while being careful to maintain a neutral stance in public.(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

In relations with the West, which otherwise prospered, two negative factors appeared which, though small, could assume more serious proportions. One was the reintroduction of visas for Turks by the Federal Republic of Germany, followed by France and the Benelux countries. The reason was the need to control the flow of migrant workers taking advantage of liberal German laws on political asylum, which the Turks understood. Nevertheless, what appeared to them to be discrimination against them hurt their pride and brought out their latent xenophobia. The second factor was what the Turks regarded as an exaggerated external





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interest in the speed of their return to democracy, expressed particularly by the Scandinavian countries. In the Council of Europe, they had argued their case with some vigour, but were resentful of suggestions on how to run their own affairs.(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

Britain's opinion remained that Turkey should be valid member of NATO, should play as constructive a role in the Eastern Mediterranean region as circumstances and its resources permitted, and should become economically viable. The Turks recognised the limitations on Britain's power to help them materially. Indeed, certain similarities with their own position created a bond between Turkey and Britain. The Turks had appreciated Britain's financial aid, modest though it had been and the, more significant, rescheduling of their debts to Britain. However, Britain's assets vis a vis the Turks were rather Britain's greater experience of international affairs, the influence Britain still exercised and its readiness to consult seriously with them. These assets had been effectively used in 1980 towards achieving Britain's objectives.(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

1981 was the year of Atatürk. The centenary of his birth in Salonika would have been celebrated anyway. The military takeover had given it added significance. Peter Laurence, British Ambassador to Ankara, commented that:

"Like its predecessors, the 1980 coup was a reaction against deficiencies and abuses. It was not attempted to impose a New Order or a new" -ism". The Generals looked back to Atatürk as their guide. Fortunately, Ataturk's philosophy was essentially pragmatic, not dogmatic. Its keynote was independence, self-reliance and Peaceful co-operation with all countries. Ataturk also insisted that the Armed Forces should stay out of politics, as General Evren himself had specifically repeated. While celebrating the founder of modern Turkey with a good deal of pomp and circumstance, 1981 would show whether a combination of Ataturk's principles, the authority of the Turkish Armed Forces, and the common sense of the Turkish people was a sufficient preparation for the next stage of the Turkish experiment in democracy."(TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

T. L. A. Daunt, Southern European Department of the Foreign Office, commented that the review was a useful one of the conventional type. The department endorsed the main conclusions, which were notably cautious. The large majority of Turks regarded the Generals' takeover as fully justified; the Generals had so far done considerably well, but challenges lay ahead politically, economically, and over terrorism in particular. (TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

As Laurence had said, economic recovery in even four to five years looked optimistic, as did the winning of the battle against terrorism, where the Generals had made a good start. Second, the cohesion of the junta was questionable, given that the time was approaching to return to democratic forms and leaving the main power to the politicians who had always misused it. Regarding this issue, a crisis was expected in 1981. Third, foreign interest in the





speed of Turkey's return to democracy could, as Laurence suggested, produce a xenophobic reaction. If mishandled, this could even have implications for Turkey's commitment to NATO. The Council of Europe could seriously alienate the Generals and a large majority of Turks. In contrast, the British Government's attitude was one of relative sympathy, which could give Britain a helpful role to play in that context. However, Daunt warned the British Government to avoid acting as blatant apologist for the Generals. (TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

Laurence had commented that, had the military takeover not occurred, 1980 might have been remembered as the year of the New Economic Policy. Indeed, Daunt remarked that "I rather wonder whether, if Demirel had stayed in power, he would have held to the Özal line with the same sort of tenacity as the present Government. Even the present government has never been as resolute in dealing with the SEEs as Özal's public pronouncements have led the hard men of the IMF to hope. And we do, of course agree that it is too early to say that the economy is on the mend. Likewise, we agree that Özal's estimate of four to five years for economic recovery is optimistic." (TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

On terrorism, the outlook was evidently brighter. Nevertheless, any attempt to understand, let alone eradicate, the causes would remain exceedingly difficult. Despite the popular opinion among the Turks, the Generals were going to be faced with stronger pressure from the West for a quicker return to democracy, as the country moved slowly toward the first hurdle of the Constituent Assembly in autumn 1980. As the Secretary of State had suggested to the Turkish Ambassador, the Turks really needed to do more about public relations. The assembly debate in the Council of Europe at the end of January clearly illustrated the strength of opposition amongst Western parliamentarians to the Turkish regime and a general ignorance of the views of those Turks they professed to wish to help. Daunt concluded that "in the department, we remain distinctly nervous to how events will develop, given the generals' evidently tolerance of foreign criticism." (TNA/FCO9/3317/WST014/2).

1981

1981 was Atatürk Year, the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the national hero. It was also the first full year of the Generals' rule since their takeover on 12 September 1980. The coincidence was unplanned, but the Generals used the year-long celebration to stimulate the qualities of patriotism, perseverance and self-sacrifice that had previously helped the Turks through their difficulties and to maintain their rapport with the general population. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

The balance sheet for Turkey for the past 12 months was on the whole positive. The Generals had made significant achievements in security and economy. The transformation in law and order, which had been effective in the first few weeks after the takeover, was maintained and consolidated. Thousands of suspects, hundreds of thousands of weapons, and millions of rounds of ammunition were gathered. The lengthy process of interrogation,





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accusation, trial and sentence had been slowly proceeding. Daunt commented that political terrorism was unlikely ever to be wholly eradicated in this country, but that it had been neutralised as a threat to the fabric of state and society and he expected that it would be containable. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

Progress in the economy had been equally marked. The year was the second of the economic recovery programme, and the results were encouraging. Inflation was halved to an annual rate of about 35 per cent. Production slowly increased. Both these trends were helped by the suspension of collective bargaining and the ban on strikes and lockouts. The money supply had been kept under strict control. Although this, combined with high interest rates, dented investment and placed some firms in difficulty, the upward trend in exports noted in the last quarter of 1980 continued strongly throughout the year. At some \$4-5 billion, visible exports paid for more than 50 per cent of total imports. Workers' remittances reached some \$2.5 billion, and receipts from Turkish contractors working abroad began to roll in. There was still a sizeable deficit on current account of over \$2 billion. However, this was largely closed by the positive balance on capital account resulting from foreign aid receipts, principally from the OECD, IMF and the World Bank. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

Turkey's total debt burden stood at over \$20 billion and presented a heavy call on its future resources. Even in 1981, and with the benefit of the various rescheduling agreements signed in 1980 and 1981, the payment of interest and some capital cost Turkey about \$2 billion. The Turks managed this, although with some payment delays and under some pressure from their creditors. They were also able to reach an accommodation with the majority of foreign banks concerned revising the 1979 rescheduling agreement covering commercial debt. They were, therefore, able to start the New Year (1982) with a relatively clean sheet and a somewhat improved credit rating. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

The Generals kept their word on initiating the return to parliamentary democracy. The promised Constituent Assembly was duly set up on 23 October 1981. It was not everyone's idea of a democratic body, consisting of a Consultative Assembly of 160 persons selected from a rather limited field of volunteers by the authorities, and of the National Security Council itself. The latter retained the final say. The Consultative Assembly took some weeks to sort itself out, but by December had got down to serious business, the most important being the drafting of a new constitution. Its members furthermore were showing considerable freedom of view and expression. (Çavdar, 2008: 263-326).

The Generals could also be given credit for taking on several thorny issues that previous governments had shied away from. At the end of 1980 they reformed the tax system. In November 1981 they promulgated a new Universities Law. They were dealing with land, trades union and civil service reform. The effect of the Universities Law was to give the Government a large measure administrative control of the universities through a new Higher





Education Council, while leaving academic autonomy untouched. Not surprisingly the law drew criticism from many academics, particularly in the elite universities. It was, however, a necessary measure. The need for some sort of reform in the universities, which had been centres of anarchy in previous years, was widely accepted and discussion had been going on for months, inconclusively. The Government's solution had the backing of the Presidency of the Inter-university Board, and General Evren indicated that the new law could be modified in the light of experience. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

On the debit side was the continued restriction of political activity, the suspension of some trade union rights, and the harassing of the press. The latter was still expected to exercise self-censorship, though it was becoming increasingly outspoken in the last quarter of the year. The extremist unions remained banned and the trial of the leadership of the Left-wing federation DISK, on political charges, opened on 24 December. It was the most recent of a series of mass trials, a form that itself invited criticism. The restrictions on political activity were tightened up in June. Amongst other things, these caused Ecevit first to resign his journalistic post, and then, in October, to challenge the regime more openly. The result was his prosecution and a three-month jail sentence. This excited little attention internally, but inevitably created a bad impression in Western Europe. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

An equally bad impression was created by the dissolution of existing political parties the day after the names of the members of the new Consultative Assembly were announced. This seemed to show the Generals were moving away from democracy rather than towards its restitution. To the Generals, however, and to the majority of Turks, the action appeared in a different light, as an essential part of the process of clearing the ground for a fresh start, and as justified by the persistent non-co-operation, if not obstruction, on the part of the old politicians, including both Demirel and Ecevit. There was no great reaction in the country. The manner and timing of the action, however, were a further indication of how inward-looking General Evren and his colleagues were, and how comparatively insensitive to the desirability of presenting themselves in a more convincing light to the outside world. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

Inevitably the negative side of the balance sheet was the one most remarked abroad, especially in the Council of Europe, which expressed particular concern over human rights and freedoms. The Turkish delegates to the Assembly were withdrawn in the spring. Opinion in the Assembly steadily hardened during the year and a move began to have Turkey expelled or suspended. The announcement by General Evren on 30 December of an indicative timetable for the introduction of a new constitution this year and elections a year later, followed in early January 1982 by a week-long visit by a large delegation from the Political Affairs and Legal Committees helped to improve the climate. The move to expel Turkey from the Council was





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checked, but the moralising tone of the strictures on human rights in the resolution adopted by the Assembly hurt Turkish pride. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

Opinion in the Council of Europe affected that in the European Parliament and in national Parliaments also. The European Commission, fearing a negative reaction from the Parliament suspended action in November on the Fourth Financial Protocol, to Turkey's chagrin. Moreover, the Bundestag was sufficiently concerned to cause a delay over Federal German aid in the summer. This imposed some strain on Turkish-German relations, in addition to the continuing restrictions on Turkish workers in Germany. Herr Genscher's visit to Ankara in November relieved this some extent, and the announcement of the programme for the return to Parliamentary Government should help with the Bundestag. But it was by no means certain that this would be sufficient to persuade it to approve aid again that year. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

With France, too, relations worsened, not so much over visas as over the murder of three more Turkish diplomats in France by Armenian terrorists, and the apparent inability, or unwillingness, of the French Government to take effective action against them. With the US and the UK on the other hand, relations strengthened. The advent of the Reagan Administration and increased US economic and military carried US/Turkish relations a considerable step forward. With the UK there was nothing so spectacular. But the rapid conclusion of Britain's 1981 aid agreement doubled its effect. UK exports were reportedly up by about 40 per cent in value to over £200 million. Political consultation deepened, boosted by the visit of the Lord Privy Seal in April. And the UK Presidency of the Community gave more substance to the political co-operation arrangements with Turkey. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

In other regions, Turkey continued its efforts to improve its relations with its neighbours on the south and the east and in the Balkans. Numerous visits to and from Middle Eastern countries began to pay off in terms of increased exports, work for Turkish contractors, and even some modest loans. Turkey's cultivation of its Balkan neighbours did not, however, prevent it from co-operating fully in NATO action regarding Poland, and the State Visits that General Evren was due to make to Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia were called off at the last moment, officially because of the deterioration in Mrs. Evren's health. There was, however, disappointment in Turkey's relations with Greece. The dialogue that had been slowly developing over the previous 18 months was abruptly halted by the advent to power of Papandreou, who opened a propaganda campaign against Turkey as Greece's real enemy. The Turks so far had taken this reasonably calmly, and had maintained their steady support for the intercommunal talks in Cyprus despite manoeuvring by President Kyprianou and complaints from Athens. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).





On both the domestic and foreign fronts 1982 turned out to be a testing year. The vast majority of the population were prepared to give the Generals time to complete their programme. But their support, already eroded among the politicians and the academics, and to some extent the civil servants and trades unions, was likely to diminish further if substantial progress was not seen to be made within the next 12 months. The establishment of the Consultative Assembly was only a first step. A considerable effort would be needed to achieve a new constitution and referendum by the end of 1982 as forecast by General Evren. Given the undoubtable determination and sincerity of the Generals, Daunt saw these to be achievable, as long as no unexpected external event arose. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

Externally the prospects were less certain. It was touch and go whether wounded pride would move the Generals to withdraw Turkey from the Council of Europe rather than risk the appearance of moving towards democracy under pressure from whom they considered pious Northern European moralists. Withdrawal would not improve the ability of their friends in Western Europe to help them, and would encourage them to look more exclusively to the US for aid and relief. This in turn would tend to increase the already present strains between US and Europe and within NATO. It would also diminish the prospect of OECD, and Community Aid for Turkey that year. This would be damaging both politically and practically. Turkey would still need foreign aid for the next couple of years if the economic recovery programme were not to be thwarted. If it were, economic regression would also be a serious obstacle to social and political progress, and the risk of a return to the disorder of earlier years increased. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

Then there was the maverick factor in the form of Papandreou. The collapse of the Cyprus talks did not turn out to be disastrous for the Turkish Government, although they genuinely want them to succeed. However, a forward Greek policy in the Aegean intended openly or covertly to turn the whole area into a Greek inland sea in and over which other states would have 'second-class rights', was likely to provoke a very serious Turkish reaction. Despite these unthinkable possibilities, there were still grounds for optimism. The Generals had maintained their authority and their objectives. The Turkish people had shown their common sense and cohesion. By the end of the year the return to a Parliamentary system should be well under way, and, with some further aid from abroad, the third year of the economic recovery programme should prove no less successful than the second. This was a good deal more than might have been expected two years previously. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

D. C. Wilson, Southern European Department of the Foreign Office, remarked that the Ambassador, Peter Laurence, judged that the balance sheet for 1981, the first full year of the Generals' rule and the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Atatürk, was positive. The main achievements were further improvements in law and order, and in the economy. On the





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political side the Generals kept their word on initiating the return to democracy by setting up the promised Constituent Assembly and, at the very end of the year, announcing a timetable for elections by late 1983 or early 1984. They have also been conducting a number of important overdue reforms, e.g., tax, land, universities, trades unions and civil service. But on the debit side political activity, trades union rights and press freedom continued to be restricted. The dissolution of political parties, the imprisonment of Ecevit and the current trial of the DISK leadership, imprisoned since the coup, have inevitably drawn sharp criticism from Western Europe. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

Peter Laurence observed that the negative side of the balance sheet was the one most remarked abroad, especially in the Council of Europe. Objectively it was a plus for Turkey that concern over human rights did not, in the end, lead to a move to have Turkey expelled or suspended. However, this was not how it seemed in Turkey; the resolution adopted by the Assembly offended Turkish pride and nearly caused it to withdraw. It might still have withdrawn had it faced with being taken to the European Commission of Human Rights. It was not considered to be helpful to Britain's general interests or indeed the legitimate cause of improving human rights in Turkey if this happened. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

The negative side of the balance sheet also affected the European Parliaments as well as some national parliaments, causing delays in the disbursement of aid. With the Bundestag undecided on aid, and implementation of the EU Fourth Financial Protocol frozen, it was not possible to be hopeful about OECD member countries later in the year (1982). On Anglo-Turkish relations political consultation deepened, the rapid conclusion of Britain's 1981 aid agreement again paid dividends and Britain's exports reportedly increased by 40% in value to over £200m. (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

The Ambassador regarded 1982 as being a "testing year". D. C. Wilson, Southern European Department of the Foreign Office, commented that:

"I am sure this is right. Substantial progress must be made in restoring democracy or popular support for the regime will wane. Externally, withdrawal from the Council of Europe could turn Turkey away from her European friends and further affect the prospects for financial aid, which her economic recovery still requires. And there is always the risk of some unfortunate action by Greece or Turkey in the Aegean or Cyprus. But, barring such pitfalls, the Ambassador is also right to conclude that the prospects, politically and economically, are reasonably good; certainly a great deal better than might have been expected two years ago." (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

He also commented that:

"Annual Review of Turkey for 1981 provided us with a very useful assessment of the Generals progress during their first full year in power. It is unfortunate but, as the Ambassador





point out, inevitable, that Western Europe should dwell upon the negative side of the balance sheet. Only bad news is news. But the result is that the prospects for financial aid from Western Europe this year do not look encouraging. For our part we shall certainly do what we can towards preventing an alienation of Turkey from the West, in unfreezing the Fourth Financial Protocol, and in getting a successful OECD pledging exercise off the ground. However, given the continued hostility towards Turkey in both the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, as well as the opposition in a number of Western European countries, including the FRG, towards giving further aid this year, these tasks will not be easy. Nevertheless, and despite the imponderables, there are as you say grounds for optimism on the internal front. If further progress is made towards the return to democracy and the economy continues to recover, the achievements will have been a good deal more than might have been expected two years ago." (TNA/FCO9/3668/WST014/3).

1982

In 1982, Turkey emerged satisfactorily from a testing 12 months. Much of the year was taken up with the preparation of the new constitution, which, after a slow start, was finally approved by an overwhelming majority in a popular referendum in November. The vote also confirmed General Evren as President for seven years and was essentially a vote of confidence in him. The outside world, however, criticised the constitution as being too restrictive, and this troubled the Turkish government. Strains between Turkey and Western Europe increased, in both the political and economic arenas. The Turks still maintained their Western commitment, but a feeling of frustration caused them to make more of cultivating their other relationships, if only to convince themselves that they had more than one option. The Greek factor was unhelpful, but the Turks did not overreact to Papandreou's tactics. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

The sudden departure in July of the economic overlord, Özal, over the money-broker debacle, diminished the drive behind the execution of the recovery programme, but the government held to it and the IMF and OECD assessments were favourable at the time of the report. The Turks entered 1983 in a mood of greater self-confidence as far as internal affairs were concerned. New party and electoral laws were expected to be completed in a matter of months and general elections were scheduled for October. However, the heavy handed nature of some trivial regulations had caused some resentment. These and the likely restrictions on party political activities would be seized on by Western critics. The strains in Turkey's relations with the Council of Europe and the European Community was expected to continue at least until elections were held. The UK maintained its credibility as an ally worth heeding. This was underlined by the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the appointment of the first English Ambassador in January 1983. British influence contributed to the common goals of NATO. The previous 12 months had been a testing time for Turkey, but the country came through





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relatively undamaged and faced the next twelve with greater self-confidence. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

Internally, the dominant issue was the preparation and promulgation of the new Constitution, which took up most of 1982. The Generals kept to their timetable. The Constitutional Committee of the Consultative Assembly started work rather slowly. It was not until 17 July that it produced a draft that was widely regarded as less than satisfactory, regarding both form and provisions on civil liberties. From then on, however, the tempo quickened and the Assembly were kept hard at work during August and September. What was more remarkable was the liveliness of criticism in the press and public when the ban on public political discussion was lifted to encourage debate on the draft. The last version, which emerged from discussion in the Assembly and review by the National Security Council, was published on 19 October, and approved by an overwhelming majority (91.3% of a 91.7% poll) in the referendum on 7 November. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

This was certainly more than the Generals had expected, even though they had manipulated the circumstances in their favour by forbidding any criticism of the nationwide campaign, which General Evren personally conducted, in favour of the new constitution and all propaganda for a "no" vote. Furthermore, General Evren linked his own personal prestige to the constitution through a provision whereby approval of the constitution automatically secured his election to the Presidency for seven years. Nevertheless, the voting itself was perfectly free. By its vote, the general population showed clearly its preference for continued stability and freedom from fear, at the expense of some restriction of civil liberties, to the risk of a return to governmental chaos. It also manifested its disregard for the former politicians, some of whom had done what they could privately to encourage a "no" vote. The vote was essentially a vote of confidence in General Evren and the military regime. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

But the outside world saw it differently. Criticism was directed at the restrictions on trades union and press freedoms, considered still excessive; at the greater powers invested in the President whose acts in certain circumstances could not be legally challenged; and at the 10 year ban from political activity on most of the leading members of the four main previous political parties. This criticism carried validity. Nevertheless, the constitution did provide for basic human and civil rights and, in the right hands, would permit the development of a genuinely democratic system. Foreign criticism also continued to be directed against the trials of left-wing trades unionists and members of the Peace Association and others on charges of unconstitutional activities under the existing penal law, and, more generally, against alleged violations of human rights. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

The Turkish Government for their part was upset not to have been given greater credit for realising their programme for a return to parliamentary democracy. They complained that





every time they took a step down the indicated path they were told that it was not good enough and something else was required; and that much of the criticism was misguided if not malicious. The result was increased strain rather than relaxation in Turkey's relations with Western Europe. With the Council of Europe, the position was so far held. The complaint against Turkey made by the "Gang of Five" (France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Norway) to the European Commission on Human Rights on 1 July did not after all cause Turkey to suspend its membership. The confidential advice conveyed to the Turkish Government from the British Government to be patient and not to overreact helped no doubt in this. The Turks subsequently applied for a delay of four months in which to answer the complaint. With the European Community, however, and in particular the Commission, tension built up. This was due partly to the persistent refusal of the Commission, in the form of Herr Haferkamp, for political reasons to make any move towards approving the Fourth Financial Protocol, and partly to the action taken to protect the Community market from increased imports of Turkish textiles. Having failed to get better terms from Community on the latter, the Turks imposed their own surcharges on a number of Community exports, explaining these not as retaliation but as protection of their own industries against unfair competition. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

The debate in the Council of Europe Assembly and the following one in the European Parliament were likely to add to the friction. Nevertheless, the Turks continued to maintain their commitment to Western ideals and their intention to apply for full membership of the European Community when the restoration of their parliamentary system was complete.

Frustration with the West largely excluded the United States and the UK; and there was spontaneous sympathy and support for Britain over the Falklands crisis. This frustration was, however, a contributory factor in the Turks devoting more time to cultivating their other relationships. With their immediate neighbours this continued to pay off in economic and commercial terms. With the more distant countries politics played a greater part. The Foreign Minister paid his deferred visit to Moscow in November; and in December Evren (no longer using the style of General) paid his first official visits as President to China, Indonesia, South Korea and Bangladesh. Earlier in the year he had paid the visits to Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia postponed from the previous year and also fitted in a visit to Kuwait. While these visits would be useful in both political and commercial terms, the Ambassador added that their significance should not be exaggerated. Their purpose was more to convince the Turks themselves that they were taken seriously in the world and had more than one option open to them. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

Within NATO and the European Community, the Greek factor had not helped Turkey. Revised command arrangements for the Aegean had still not been reconciled with Greek claims. The Allied autumn exercise in Thrace was cancelled at the last moment when the Greek





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Government made the inclusion of Lemnos a sticking point. And the signature by Greece, but not by Turkey, of the Law of the Sea Convention raised Turkish apprehension of a move by Greece to extend its territorial sea to 12 miles and thus cut the main Turkish ports off from direct access to the high seas. The Turks repeated that this would be unacceptable to them. Tentative moves to restart a direct dialogue with Greece, interrupted by Papandreou in 1981, were again suspended by Papandreou just before the NATO Defence Ministers' meeting in December over alleged violations of Greek airspace, denied by the Turks, during a Turkish military exercise. So far the Turks had not overreacted to the "stop-go" tactics of Papandreou and had repeated their readiness to discuss all outstanding problems with Greece bilaterally. Strictly, Cyprus was not one of these, but both governments had a close interest in a satisfactory solution of the problem, and throughout 1982 the Turks did not waver in their support for the intercommunal talks and the UN Secretary General. Equally, however, they remained obstinate against any unilateral concession in advance of a settlement satisfactory to the Turkish Cypriots, who were basically more intransigent than themselves. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

One of the more noteworthy events of the year was the dropping of the economic pilot, Turgut Özal. He had been the key figure in the economic recovery programme since its inception in January 1980, and had won the confidence of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and Western bankers. His departure in July was sudden. He was certainly not popular with everyone in either the public or private sectors because his free-market policies had hurt some people in both. However, they were clearly working and seemed to have the backing of the Prime Minister and the Generals. His undoing came from the application of a free market to the financial sector. Competitive interest rates encouraged a rash of brokers whose main aim was to attract deposits by offering ludicrously high rates. The inevitable crash began when some depositors failed to get either their promised interest or their deposits back. Confidence failed. A few months later when the major broking house, Kastelli, collapsed, the Finance Minister was told to go. Özal refused to work with his nominated successor, and went too. There was immediate speculation about a change of policy. The government, however, stated that there would be none and stuck to it. The new Finance Minister, Adnan Başar Kafaoğlu, who was an adviser to General Evren, had promised a package of measures designed to improve performance, particularly in the tax and banking fields. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

What was of greater concern was that the drive behind the execution of the recovery programme diminished with Özal's departure. No-one had taken his place. His duties had been split between the new Minister of Finance and a new Minister of State for External Economic Relations, Sermet Pasin. Neither had the authority or the will that Özal had to get things done and cut through bureaucracy. The power of the bureaucracy and the penchant or state control had begun to reassert themselves. Whether or not there was a causal connection,





economic performance began to flatten in the second half of the year. Exports had been estimated at about \$5.6 billion (the previous year they had been \$4.5 billion), although the target had earlier been raised to \$6.1 billion. Workers' remittances and tourism receipts would have fallen short of the previous year's figures. The broker debacle and the need to finance the purchase of agricultural products caused an unwelcome surge in the money supply in August/September. Nonetheless, the economic programme was still largely on target. The budget deficit, though larger than in 1981, had probably been financed by savings. The account deficit at the time of the report was provisionally calculated at less than \$1,000 million and was covered by receipts on capital account, including foreign aid. The Turkish contracting industry had a current overseas order book, largely in the Middle East, of at least \$13 billion. Inflation had been held down to between 25-30%, which recently permitted a slight lowering of deposit interest rates, and the economy had grown at an annual rate of about 4.5%. Both the IMF and OECD in their latest assessments gave a favourable verdict on the progress towards economic recovery. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

The Turks had started 1983 in a mood of greater self-confidence than a year previously. The new constitution was now behind them. Despite its imperfections it was their constitution, and they were obliged to no-one else for it. President Evren in particular had been encouraged by the vote of confidence in himself in his belief that he knew the popular mind better than anyone else and that he needed not pay overmuch attention to gratuitous advice from abroad. Internally this would help the achievement of the next steps in the return to democracy, namely the adoption of new party and electoral laws and the holding of parliamentary elections, already scheduled for October. The party law was expected to be in force by March, when new parties would begin to form, and the new electoral law soon thereafter. There was indeed already a good deal of political unrest behind the scenes as a prelude to the resumption of normal diplomatic activity. The Turks' main desire was that law and order should continue to prevail, and they were prepared to tolerate a degree of restriction in their personal and public life to ensure this. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

On the other hand, the heavy-handed nature of some of the regulations made during the year had been badly received in certain sectors. The reforms in the universities being introduced by the Higher Education Council had upset a large part of the academic establishment and led to some resignations. Rules on dress and hair style had been accepted in the civil service, but much less willingly in the schools and universities. They were symptomatic of an excessive concern with uniformity, which reflects more the military than a civilian attitude. These and similar ordinances were not unlikely to get the regime a better press abroad nor would the new party law. The signs were that it would impose controls on the parties' internal organisation (so as to prevent "dictatorial" direction by the bosses) and limit their organisation in the country, as well as on their activities and policies. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).





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They would not be permitted, for example, to promote communism (forbidden under the existing penal code) or other extremist or separatist doctrines. This was unlikely to arouse much opposition internally since it could be justified by reference to previous abuses, but would be a gift for external critics. Daunt expressed his fear, therefore, that strains would continue in the European Parliament and the Council of Europe at least until elections had been held, and that left-wing manoeuvring or wounded Turkish pride might still result in Turkey's suspension, or voluntary abstention, from the latter body. There would be strains too with the Community, or with individual members, over more substantive and issues, such as free movement of labour, textiles, and the Fourth Financial Protocol. With Greece there was a risk of more serious trouble if one side miscalculates, not over Cyprus, where the intercommunal talks look likely to continue their slow course, but in the Aegean over sea and air space, where the Turks simply did not trust Mr Papandreou's words or intentions. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

The UK, however, had maintained its credibility as a friend in need, whose word was listened to, if not always heeded, and could be relied on. The Turks in turn had served the British and Western, interest well enough in their efforts to promote peace in the Gulf; over Afghanistan; and within the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. They had of course done so with an inflexible regard to their own interests, because they saw the value of the Western connection to them as much as the British saw the geographical and strategic importance of Turkey to Britain. The Anglo-Turkish relationship was a valuable in this. It was agreeably underlined in the three-day celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the appointment of the first English Ambassador to Turkey that took place in Ankara from 13 to 15 January 1983 and at which Lord Belstead had represented the British Government. This got the New Year off to an admirable start in Britain's own and the common good. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

D. C. Wilson, Southern European Department of the Foreign Office, reviewed that:

"I agree with your general assessment that Turkey has come through a difficult 12 months well and now faces 1983 with somewhat greater self-confidence. There seems an incredibly good chance that the Generals will now complete the final stages of the return to democracy on schedule. The reactivation of the democratic process will then become this year's dominant theme. The West will be watching closely, and the conduct of the Generals will be crucial in the remaining months before the elections." (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

Wilson also commented that:

"I agree that there is unfortunately still scope for Turkey's relations with the West to get worse. An enforced or voluntary Turkish departure from the Council of Europe could well have serious longer-term effects for us all. We must hope, and try to ensure that Turkey can manage to stay the course. Her reaction to the Assembly's latest debate and Resolution appears





to have been sensibly thick-skinned and Evren in your farewell interview, sounded very sensible on this issue. But the robust response to the applications to the Human Rights Commission will not have gone down well with the "Gang of Five" or with the Assembly." (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

Despite the fact that the Turks remained on schedule with their plans for a return to democracy, or perhaps because of it, the mass trials were likely to continue to be a particular cause for concern that year and to remain a serious irritant in Turkey's relations with Western Europe. More releases on bail would have helped. Allegations about torture and the failure of the Turkish authorities to take adequate steps to deal with it were also likely to continue and to damage Turkey's reputation in a way which had practical as well as psychological implications. Britain's line, according to Wilson, should be to continue to point out to the Turks, quietly but firmly, how much damage they were doing to their standing in Europe unless they were seen to be taking seriously allegations of abuses of human rights. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

As far as Britain's bilateral relations were concerned, 1983 started well with the 400th Anniversary celebrations, and Wilson called for the British to ensure that it continued well with enough contact to sustain the relationship. The Ambassador considered that 1982 was a testing time for Turkey, but that it had come through relatively unharmed and faced the next year with greater self-confidence. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

Internally the preparation and promulgation of the new Constitution was the dominant issue. Peter Laurence reported on this in his despatch of 19 November entitled "Restoration of Turkish Democracy: The Second Step". The Constitution was approved by an overwhelming majority in November. The vote, which confirmed General Evren as President for seven years, could also be seen as a vote of confidence in the military regime. But, as the Ambassador recorded, the Turkish Government had been upset by getting criticism rather than credit from Western Europe for conducting their programme for the return to democracy. This had strained relations. Peter Laurence remarked that Britain's counsel helped to discourage the Turks from overreacting to the European Human Rights case. Turkey had stood its ground in the Council of Europe and, since the writing of the current despatch, had roundly rejected the allegations in the five applications to the Human Rights Commission. In Turkey's relations with the Community the strains had been economic as well as political, with the former reacting badly to safeguard action over Turkish textile imports. Turkey's differences with Greece also caused continuing strains both bilaterally and in NATO. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

Peter Laurence saw the departure from the scene in July of Özal as having diminished the drive behind the Government's execution of the recovery programme. Economic performance in the second half of the year was below expectations. The Government, however,





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had stuck to the programme and both the latest IMF and the OCED assessments remained favourable. Peter Laurence made no mention of the continuing mass trials in Turkey. These would undoubtedly remain an irritant in Turkey's relations with Western Europe. In particular, the DISK and Peace Association trials would continue to draw criticism, despite the release on bail the previous month of the defendants in the latter trial, who had been in custody since February 1982. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

The Southern European Department of the Foreign Office agreed in general with the Ambassador's assessment. The prospects for the completion of the return to democracy on schedule that year were good. However, the future of the new democratic experiment under the close supervision of the Generals remained unclear. In the short-term, D. C. Wilson suggested that Britain continued to do what it could to encourage the Turkish authorities to complete the return to democracy and closely monitor the human rights situation. He also suggested that Britain continued its policy of seeking to improve the Community's relations with Turkey (including, paradoxically, working to postpone an application for membership) and try to avert any moves in the Council of Europe which might lead to Turkey's expulsion or withdrawal. Fortunately, General Evren himself seemed to be taking a relaxed view about criticism of Turkey in the Council. (TNA/FCO9/4279/WST014/1).

1983

By 1 January 1983, the essential building blocks in President Evren's scheme for returning Turkey to democracy had been laid. The Constitution had been approved and General Evren elected President of Turkey for seven years in a civilian capacity. The way was clear to set in motion the procedures which would culminate in a General Election in the autumn, to be followed by the inauguration of a Grand National Assembly and the transfer of power from the military to a constitutionally elected government. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The timetable placed formidable demands on the Consultative Assembly and the National Security Council. In the spring it appeared that the legislation required for the formation of political parties and the conduct of the election was running behind schedule. The regime's critics inside and outside Turkey were not slow to predict that President Evren would defer the elections to allow more time to control the emerging political process. Since he assumed power, General Evren had proven that, having set his course, he was very unwilling to allow himself to be diverted from it. The commitment to a General Election in 1983 was no exception. 6 November was his chosen date and to 6 November he stuck. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

That date saw the largest Turkish electorate ever go to the polls in a record turn-out of 92% and vote in the Motherland Party of Turgut Özal by a clear majority over the rival Populist





and Nationalist Democracy Parties combined. Over a five week interval, marked by Denktash's declaration of an "independent Turkish state" in Cyprus and persistent rumours regarding the Generals' reluctance to hand over power, but following to the letter the procedures laid down in the 1982 Constitution, the Grand National Assembly was duly convened, its President (Speaker) elected, Ulusu's Government resigned and Özal took office. The Service Chiefs comprising the National Security Council of 1980-83 retired from the forces and moved upstairs to form the Presidential Advisory Council. The transition to civilian rule was complete. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The process was by no means straightforward. It involved controversial questions of judgment by President Evren and his colleagues in reconciling the wish to see democracy restored to Turkey with the determination that there should be no return to the factionalism and impotence which had characterised the governments of Demirel and Ecevit in the 1970s. Not surprisingly, the Generals opted for caution. They limited the election contest to three parties, none of which could be regarded as being associated with pre-1980 politics. They maintained the ban on any political activity by Demirel and Ecevit and other (extremist) former politicians. They struck hard against Demirel when he tried to get round that ban by blatant use of surrogates. They eliminated the parties with clear antecedents in the Justice Party and the Republican People's Party. They used the veto extensively to keep out of politics those whom they regarded as tainted, sometimes even very faintly, by the past. They also maintained tight control of the press and media, passing as one of their final acts a notably illiberal Press Law. Finally, they allowed the Martial Law judicial system to move laboriously forward with the major trials resulting from the disorders of the 1970s with no sign of an amnesty. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

For all this Turkey was subjected too much criticism by nearly all the Western countries. The severest critics had argued that the "democracy" produced by the Evren process was a sham and that the military, acting behind the scenes, would continue to be the dominating influence. Most important perhaps, they maintained that the Turkish record in the fields of human rights, prison conditions, trials and sentences for essentially political offences, press censorship and limitation of academic freedom were not consistent with the standards required of a country which was a member of NATO and the Council of Europe and aspired to join the European Community. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

There were grounds for all of these criticisms and particularly those on human rights. Much was still happening in Turkey that was unacceptable to Western opinion, and it was to be hoped that Özal would recognise for reasons of both justice and expediency the need to improve on that situation. However, on the political side the Ambassador believed that Britain had been right to keep its criticisms relatively muted. Harsher critics had taken insufficient account of the condition of Turkey when President Evren took over and of the widespread





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feeling in the country that the future owes little to the politicians of the past. There was considerable misunderstanding of the way the Armed Forces were viewed in Turkey. Comparisons with Argentina, Pakistan and Bangladesh were 'very wide of the mark'. The Army's right to intervene to preserve the integrity of the State was accepted by Turks with little question. Moreover, this time there was no personality like Menderes involved. That the Armed Forces should have remained in power for three years was not regarded as unwarranted. Nevertheless, equally so their duty to restore the country to civilian rule and the expectation that they would do so had never been in doubt here. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The elections of 1983 were not exemplary democracy. Some of the vetoes on personalities, and certainly the application of press censorship, were excessive. However, at the end of the day the President delivered. The electorate by their massive turn-out showed that they thought the exercise was worthwhile; the President had approved Özal's Cabinet; the political debate was beginning in the Assembly and media, and it was becoming clear that the political constraints which had characterised the military regime were beginning to relax. The President was no longer the clearly dominant figure. He was consulted, and he could express disapproval. However, as the last two weeks had shown, the initiative had passed to the Prime Minister and Parliament. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

Turkey's progress to parliamentary government kept to schedule. However, its economic performance was not so good. Throughout the year there was a sense of drift. The achievements of the previous two years were not followed up. In particular the growth in exports began to tail away while the rate of inflation first stopped falling and then began to climb. Continued export growth was vital if Turkey were to narrow its financing gap to a manageable size, attract renewed commercial lending and avoid a fresh debt rescheduling. Yet in the first ten months of 1983 exports grew by only 2.2%. External factors beyond Turkey's control were partly responsible, but apart from steady depreciation of the currency little was done to encourage exports. At the same time, the earnings from workers' remittances, tourism and foreign investment either declined or made little progress. Imports increased by 4.9%, despite the fall in oil prices. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The Minister of Finance continued until late into the summer to maintain that inflation would be kept to 20%. However, by then it had become clear that this figure was hopelessly optimistic. Poor harvests, expensive company rescue operations, a depreciating lira and a desire to soften some of the asperities of the recession in the pre-election period combined to fuel accelerating inflation. The final figure for 1983 is nearer 40% than 20%. Özal therefore inherited an awkward economic situation. He acted swiftly to get a grip. Interest rates had been raised to encourage saving and investment and to reduce inflation. Tax incentives were being introduced to reward exporters and savers, and to facilitate the prompt and honest payment of taxes. The foreign exchange regulations and the highly protective import regime





had been dramatically simplified and opened up. A major reshuffle of ministerial responsibilities and departmental structure was designed to institute greater control and coordination over economic policy and its implementation. The effectiveness of these measures remained to be seen but already the drift had been replaced by a sense of purpose and activity. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

1983 saw no change in the constant factors in Turkish foreign policy: on the positive side, solidarity with NATO, a close relationship with the United States and Germany (the latter complicated by the guest-worker problem), a growing one with the United Kingdom and a continuing aspiration to be regarded as a member of the European group of nations with full membership of the Community as an eventual, if distant, aim; on the negative side, a thoroughly uneasy relationship with the Council of Europe and the running sore of relations with Greece, exacerbated by the declaration of "independence" by Denktash which the Turkish Government either would not or could not prevent. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The declaration of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and its immediate endorsement by Turkey had ensured that any improvement in Greek-Turkish relations, let alone a solution to the Cyprus problem, had become much harder. The situation was still fluid. The Turks had made some positive moves. But it would take a full-scale effort by the United Nations Secretary-General, backed by a combination of diplomacy and pressure from the United States and the United Kingdom helped by Germany and perhaps Italy, although not France, to get the settlement process back on the road. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus added a further twist to the Cyprus conundrum but essentially represented the culmination of Turkish policy decisions taken in 1974. 1983 also saw a marked quickening of Turkey's foreign policy interest eastwards and into the Muslim world. Trade, the potential of the Arab oil producers as sources of aid and investment, the Iran/Iraq war, terrorism, and the search for recognition for Northern Cyprus among Islamic countries were all factors tending to deepen an interest which had been growing, albeit from small beginnings, in recent years. Apart from its commercial and trading links with Iran and Iraq - two of its most important export markets - Turkey's security interests too clearly dictated the desirability of an early end to the Iran/Iraq war. Turkey's sensitivity about its long south-east border with its unstable neighbours, Syria, Iraq and Iran, was increasingly apparent. Its concern about a possible revival of unrest in the area where many of its several million Kurds live was well-illustrated by the cross-border operation it had conducted in Iraq in May 1983. For all these reasons, the British Government could expect to see a continuation of the faster tempo of Turkey's Middle Eastern diplomacy during the coming year. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

Israel however loomed on the horizon. Turkey had been careful to avoid involvement in the Arab/Israeli entanglement. But the United States' presence in Lebanon was beginning to





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pose awkward choices. Turkey needed United States military aid to modernise its armed forces and play its NATO role. Now it had been asked for the use of the Incirlik base for the support of the United States Marines in Lebanon. It had granted limited facilities. But the move had met internal criticism and exposed Turkey to the charge of a pro-American/Israeli stance from the Middle East countries it needed to cultivate for political and economic reasons. The balance it had to strike was delicate. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

If the aims of Turkey's Eastern policy had been essentially protective up until that point in time, emphasis under Özal was expected to change. He appeared to be more willing to try to exploit Turkey's geographical position and Muslim roots in order to build up Turkey's economic and political strength. But Özal was a committed "Westerniser" and he saw such a policy not as an alternative but a necessary complement to Turkey's present alignment which would enable the country to pursue its relationship with and eventual entry into the European Community from a position of greater strength than it had at that time. Özal's realism on that score gave the Community a welcome breathing space. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

Had it not been for Cyprus, 1983 would have been an unreservedly good year. The already high standing of the United Kingdom in Turkish eyes was enhanced by Mrs Thatcher's electoral victory in June, by the British Government's unequivocal stand on terrorism and the feeling that, while criticising certain aspects of Turkey's internal policies, Britain was generally understanding of Turkey's circumstances and actively helpful within the Community, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. 1983 also saw a marked increase over previous years in ministerial and other bilateral high-level visits. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

But Cyprus brought a sour note to the year's end. The Turkish Government had been left in no doubt about the United Kingdom's reaction to any declaration of "independence" by Denktash. Yet the Turks seemed to have been taken by surprise at the force of Britain's initial response. They had accepted that and there was no sign so far that Cyprus was being allowed to spill over into other aspects of Anglo-Turkish relations. Indeed, the new Foreign Minister had asked specifically that it should be "de-coupled" from the general stream of Turkey's relations with the West. But as long as the Cyprus problem lingered, there was a risk of damage to Anglo-Turkish relations and to wider Western interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

British visible exports to Turkey seemed to have risen by between 8% and 10% in 1983 and should reach about £240 million. Britain's market share had slightly improved. But perhaps most significantly, 1983 saw the first major British defence sales to Turkey in the shape of Rapier (£150 million) and Sea Skua (£17 million) coupled with a serious interest on the Turkish side in developing co-operation with the United Kingdom in various defence-related





fields. Britain had a real opportunity to build on the breakthrough which had been made. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The Ambassador was also reasonably bullish about future prospects for trade. There was a quickening of interest in Turkey among British businessmen. Much useful fundamental business was being done and some high-profile contracts had been won, notably by Freeman Fox for the design of the second Bosphorus Bridge. There had also been some disappointments. It much depended on Özal's success in reinvigorating the Turkish economy. If he could restore confidence which would justify ECGD in extending full medium-term cover to Turkey, a considerable leap forward in British exports to this market would be in prospect. For medium and large contracts, the financial package which could be offered was crucial to success. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

Özal's victory gave him the chance to govern for the next five years and, eventually, to establish the Motherland Party as the main force on the right of Turkish politics. But he would have to maintain the unity of his Party inside and outside Parliament and he would need some early signs of success. He was asking a lot. His frontal attack on Turkey's economic problems would hurt important interests in the bureaucracy, business and the populace at large. Demirel was still far from being prepared to lie down and in the Correct Way Party (CWP), the Justice Party surrogate and now cleared for political action, there would be a ready focus of opposition. On the left, the Social Democrat Party (SODEP) did not yet suggest much dynamism and its prospects were weakened by Ecevit's decision to support the creation of a third left-wing party. But the success of the Populist Party in the General Election showed clearly that there was a sizeable leftist constituency, which would capitalise on mistakes by Özal. An early indication of the prospects would be provided by the municipal elections that were scheduled for March 1984 and also to be contested by those parties excluded in November 1983. The Motherland Party polling strongly would greatly strengthen Özal's position. However, were the CWP, SODEP and others to come through, his position could be undermined and doubt cast on the validity of the November 1983 election as a true reflection of popular choice. President Evren's hopes of a "new era" in Turkish politics would begin to look doubtful. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

As regards the military, the Ambassador did not believe that they would seek to influence unduly the daily conduct of government and politics. Government would be left to the Council of Ministers and Parliament and the central axis of power would rest between Parliament, the Prime Minister and the President. However, Özal was a realist. He could not afford to ignore the views of the Turkish General Staff, particularly on matters of internal and external security, and the Chief of the General Staff would remain a powerful figure. Equally, President Evren would not want to see the effort of the last three years wasted. The 1982 Constitution gave him a position from which he could influence the course of government





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more directly than his predecessors. The chairmanship of the new National Security Council could in certain circumstances provide possibilities of more direct intervention. But he would use his position with discretion. To do otherwise would cast doubt on Turkey's new democracy. But the knowledge that the President was a man of strong views with a record of decisive action may have a steadying influence. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The ambassador was inclined to think that Turkey coming through the next few years in reasonably good political and economic shape. He noted that the key would lie in the economy. Özal's approach was dynamic but risky. He was playing for high stakes for himself, his Party and his country's political future. The stakes were also high for Turkey's allies. Internal success would lead to external confidence and with it the prospect (Greece and Cyprus - notwithstanding) of an easier relationship between Turkey and the West. In those circumstances Turkey would be unlikely to question the advantage in its favour of the present alignment and would seek to reinforce it. Internal failure, and particularly one which led to renewed military intervention, would resurrect with increased force the tensions between Turkey and Western Europe. Turkey had shown that she resented criticism. A strong nationalism was extremely near the surface. In that situation "I would foresee a real risk of Turkey reviewing her position and moving to a stance which, to put it no higher, would be markedly less helpful to Western interests." (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

On the internal political front 1983 was in retrospect a good year for Turkey. The transition from military to civilian government was successfully accomplished and the transition from dictatorship to democracy in the electoral sense appeared to be well under way. These developments were due to President Evren. His overly cautious approach in the measures taken to restrict the political process prior to the election had been regrettable but understandable. He and his NSC colleagues were close enough to the centre of events prior to their takeover to be anxious above all to avoid a return to political anarchy and deadlock. Nevertheless, the pursuit of democracy by degrees would not be easy and involved a danger of satisfying no-one. The British Government was interested to observe how Evren and Özal developed their separate new roles and their relationship. For Evren, and perhaps even more his erstwhile military colleagues, the transition from ruler to referee would require a high degree of self-restraint. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

Although 1983 was a good year politically, it was not so economically. Whether it was incompetence or miscalculation or both which led to the drift that became increasingly apparent during the year, Özal's most pressing task had been made that much the harder. As the Ambassador pointed out, the key to his government's ultimate success or failure (and perhaps that of this latest democratic experiment) lied in the economy. Özal had certainly approached the problems he had inherited with dynamism and imagination. The risks in such an approach were all too apparent; but in his favour was his familiarity with the Turkish





economy and the time he was given prior to assuming office to refine the policies he would pursue. Only time would tell whether the policies he had put in place so quickly and dramatically would pay off. In terms of public expectations and perceptions the sight of a government aggressively confronting the problems must have been very stimulating and morale boosting, at least to the entrepreneurial classes, after the months of drift. Britain had a personal stake in Özal succeeding for political/strategic reasons, because Britain had contributed to the defence field. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

Externally the year came to be dominated by the Turkish Cypriot declaration of independence. How closely the Turkish military participated in advance of this event was still not entirely clear at that point. But the key elements must have given their tacit, and probably eventually their active, approval for it. This was despite the fact that the event itself and Turkey's inevitable recognition of it could not have been in Turkey's wider interests. It did further damage to Turkey's lacklustre image in Western eyes at just the time when the successful elections had begun the process of refurbishing it. There was an inevitable and unwelcome effect on Britain's bilateral relations. Britain had to contain its effects but also continue its efforts to influence Turkish policy on Cyprus in a more helpful direction. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The generals seemed to be intent on completing unfinished business before they departed and sometimes on doing so with more speed than skill. This mood affected last minute decisions on Cyprus. It also affected the field of human rights. The Peace Association trial sentences, and the enactment of the new Press Law, both provided ammunition for those claiming that a general election would change nothing. However incorrect this assertion may have been, there was little doubt that human rights issues would continue to be a major source of potential friction between Turkey and Western Europe. There would be expectations that Özal's government would take action to soften the harshness of existing policies and practices: there would be disillusionment and criticism when, as was almost inevitable, he did not move as fast as Western European critics wish. This would continue to be a subject in which there was a good deal of parliamentary interest. Britain would need to monitor closely any developments and continue to encourage the new government to take early steps to improve the human rights situation and disarm their critics. This Britain should do privately and not by 'strident, self-defeating, public criticism'. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

As regards the future, the local elections would be first touchstone and had the potential to ease some of the current friction between Turkey and Western Europe and show whether the experiment in sanitised democracy would work or whether the old factionalism and the old factions would re-emerge. Furthermore, although Özal's initial dynamism was impressive, he risked pushing the machinery of state faster than it was capable of operating. The question of relations with Western Europe would to some extent be determined by





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decisions in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly over the next few days. Britain had lobbied hard in favour of not rebuffing the Turks. Britain was conscious that a Turkey alienated from Western Europe was very much against Britain's interests and that the relationship should not be taken for granted. In this connection Britain would watch with interest how the Turks develop their economic and political relations with the Middle East. (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

The Ambassador believed that Turkey, under its new government, would weather the economic and political hurdles it now faced and would emerge in reasonably good shape. Turkey had in place a constitution and political institutions specifically designed to resist any tendency to revert to the chaos of the pre-Evren period; and a Prime Minister who was already showing great determination and had a proven economic record. There was also apparently a growing disposition on the part of Turkey's western critics to offer it the benefit of the doubt and accept it back as a fully paid-up member of the Western club. Provided the problem of Cyprus could be contained and Özal's strong economic medicine could be absorbed and achieve the desired results, the Ambassador's optimism may not have been misplaced. But Russell sounded a sharper than usual note of warning about Turkey's relationship with the West if things went badly for democracy and the economy. Furthermore, there was the possibility that the internal situation did not evolve as smoothly as Russell hoped. Sanitised democracy was a difficult concept to put into practice. The old tensions of Turkish politics remained just below the surface with the old actors still in the wings. Evren and Özal had yet to mark out clearly their respective territories, as did their supporters. Moreover, Özal, with his determination to galvanise the economy may have been pushing the country and its elephantine bureaucracy faster than it could go. Wilson commented, "I suspect that the year ahead will not be all that smooth." (TNA/FCO9/4833/WST014/1).

Conclusion

1980 witnessed the second military takeover in the history of modern Turkey. Had the takeover not happened, the year might have been remembered as that of the new policy for economic recovery, introduced by the minority Demirel Government in January 1980. However, that was all Demirel had achieved. Parliament reached stalemate, failing even to elect a new President. Governmental control steadily weakened, and political violence increased. The Generals took over on 12 September to end the violence, amidst general relief. The effect was instantaneous: Operations against the extremists were prosecuted vigorously, and the Junta won its first victory.

But having constituted themselves the sole legislative authority, the Generals had undertaken a heavy responsibility. They cleared the more important bills stuck in Parliament, and continued the previous Government's economic policy somewhat effectively, in particular encouraging the IMF and OECD countries to proffer further aid. Nevertheless, exports were





slow to respond, and the balance of payments, deficit and foreign debts did not decrease. Recovery in even 4-5 years' time looked optimistic.

Political activity had been banned and the security forces had to be rough. But the press was not censored, and action had been taken against some members of the security forces accused of ill- treating suspects. The Generals were faced with the more challenging task of the return to normalcy, to which they had committed themselves. A Civilian Government was appointed on 21 September. Work had begun on to revise the constitution. On 15 January 1981, General Evren announced the intention to convene a Constituent Assembly between 30 August and 29 October of that year.

As for the foreign affairs, the Association Agreement with the EC was reactivated. The Turks facilitated the resumption of civil aviation in the Aegean; the return of Greece, with whom relations improved, to the NATO military structure; and the reopening of the Cyprus intercommunal talks. They adopted a determined stance on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In the war between Iraq and Iran, their two main oil suppliers, they maintained in public a neutral position. But, their relations with the West were overshadowed by the imposition of visas by the West Germans and some others, which and by what Turks regarded as undue concern in the Council of Europe and elsewhere, of with their management of their own affairs. Nevertheless, what assets Britain had with Turkey were effectively used. The year of 1981 was pronounced to be celebrated as the year of Atatürk. It would show whether his principles combined with military authority and Turkish common sense would be a sufficient preparation for the next step in the Turkish experiment in democracy.

The year of Atatürk celebrations were used to stimulate patriotic feelings and popular support for the Generals. On the whole, the year saw positive outcomes. Law and order were further consolidated, and the economy made considerable progress, with the upward trend in exports continuing strongly. Turkey remained heavily in debt, but due to rescheduling, it started the New Year with an improved credit rating. The Generals' promised Constituent Assembly, which members had been selected, convened in October. They also announced a long considered new Universities Law which gave the Government greater administrative control over the institutions of the universal education.

On the other hand were the continued restriction of political and trade union rights and press freedom, and the dissolution of existing political parties, the last of which aroused little reaction internally. However, it was these negative factors that attracted most attention abroad, especially in the Council of Europe. Moves to expel Turkey were checked after General Evren announced the timetable for the return to democracy on 30 December and a parliamentary delegation visited Turkey in the New Year, but Turkish pride was wounded by restrictions over human rights. Relations became more difficult with the Federal Republic of Germany, and deteriorated with France. In contrast, relations with the US and UK





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strengthened, with British exports up about 40 per cent. Turkey continued to develop relations with its eastern, southern and Balkan neighbours, with some economic advantage. Relations with Greece were affected for the worse by Papandreou's advent to power. Nevertheless, Turkey maintained its steady support for the intercommunal talks in Cyprus.

1982 was a difficult year. Domestically, popular support for the Generals was dependent on substantial progress being made in restoring a parliamentary system. Externally, the financial aid that was necessary for Turkey's economic recovery was in danger should the Council of Europe decide to withdraw it over human rights issues. This would turn Turkey away from its European allies. Meanwhile, a potential offensive by Greece in the Aegean would provoke a serious Turkish reaction. Nevertheless, there still were grounds for optimism that Turkey would continue its political and economic progress in 1982.

As it turned out, Turkey emerged from 1982 satisfactorily. Much of the year was taken up with the preparation of the new constitution, which, after a slow start, was finally approved by an overwhelming majority in a popular referendum in November. The vote also confirmed General Evren as President for seven years and was essentially a vote of confidence in him.

The outside world, however, criticised the constitution as being too restrictive, and this troubled the Turkish government. Strains between Turkey and Western Europe increased, in both the political and economic spheres. The Turks still maintained their Western commitment, but a feeling of frustration caused them to increase their efforts to develop their other relationships, if only to convince themselves that they had more than one option. Greece's behaviour did not alleviate matters, but the Turks did not overreact to Papandreou's stop-go tactics.

The sudden departure of the economic overlord, Özal, in July, over the money-broker incident, diminished the drive behind the execution of the recovery programme, but the government held to it and the latest IMF and OECD assessments were favourable.

The Turks entered 1983 more self-confidently regarding internal affairs. New party and electoral laws were to be completed in a matter of months and general elections were scheduled for October. However, the heavy-handed nature of some trivial regulations had caused some resentment. These and the likely restrictions on party political activities were likely to be seized on by Western critics. The strains in Turkey's relations with the Council of Europe and the European Community would continue at least until elections had been held. The UK, however, had maintained its credibility as an ally, which was underlined by the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the appointment of the first English Ambassador in January 1983. British influence contributed to the common goals of the Alliance.

The process, instituted by Turkey's military leaders, to return the country to multi-party civilian government, culminated in a general election held on 6 November. Özal's





Motherland Party swept to power with a clear majority. Restrictions in the Political process meant that this was not yet a full democracy yet. However, it was Özal's government, not the military, who were now in charge. The promising economic trends of the previous two years failed to continue, and a sense of drift prevailed. Exports grew by little, and inflation was up. Özal has moved quickly to grip the situation with a series of radical measures.

Turkey's commitment to NATO and Europe remained firm, but an uneasy relationship with the Council of Europe and relations with Greece, exacerbated by "independence" in Cyprus, were negative factors. Development of ties with the Islamic world was an increasingly important theme in foreign policy, but one that was complementary to Turkey's basic Western alignment. Cyprus was the one sour note in an otherwise particularly good year for Anglo-Turkish relations, marked by an increase in Britain's exports, two large defence contracts and high-level visits in both directions.

Özal had the chance to govern for the next five years and to make his party a permanent force in Turkish politics. However, should he make any mistakes, particularly in his management of the economy, the opposition - both inside and outside the Assembly - were ready to take advantage. The military had taken a backseat, but President Evren retained an important supervisory role. It seemed reasonable that Turkey would come emerge from the next five years in reasonable shape. However, Özal was playing for high stakes, and the consequences of internal failure could be damaging for wider Western interests.

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