

COMING TO TERMS WITH THE PAST: NARRATING THE 12 SEPTEMBER
1980 MILITARY COUP

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is concerned with the meaning of the 12 September 1980 military coup at the present, and it aims to examine the representations and justifications of the coup, and the politics of coming to terms with it. In this study I analyze three perspectives about the coup that have been constitutive in forming the current public meaning of the coup: the political science literature about the 1980 coup, the discourse of the military and the narratives of the political activists of the pre-coup period as the witnesses/victims of the coup. In this study, it is argued that whereas the discourse of the military rests on an ostensible mechanism of justification of the coup, the literature on Turkish politics accepts the assumptions of the military as taken for granted and excludes the politics of coming to terms with the coup at normative and analytical levels. On the other hand although they share some characteristics of the discourse of the military, the narratives of the witnesses also open a way for questioning the coup and its effects up to the present.

Keywords: coming to terms with the past, 12 September 1980 military coup, memory and narrative

ÖZET

Geçmişle Hesaplaşmak: 12 Eylül 1980 Askeri Darbesini Anlatmak

Sema Binay

12 Eylül 1980 askeri darbesinin günümüzdeki anlamı üzerine odaklanan bu çalışmanın amacı darbeye ilişkin temsilleri, meşruiyet iddialarını ve darbeye hesaplaşma politikalarını analiz etmektir. Bu amaçla darbenin günümüzdeki kamusal anlamını oluşturmada etkin olan üç perspektif analiz edilmektedir: 1980 darbesi hakkındaki siyaset bilimi literatürü, askeri söylem ve darbe öncesinin politik aktivistlerinin anlatıları. Bu çalışmada, askeri söylemin darbeye ilişkin kendinden menkul bir meşruiyet temeline dayandığı ve siyaset bilimi literatüründe hem bu temelin sorunsallaştırılmadığı hem de darbeye hesaplaşma politikalarına analitik ve normatif olarak yer verilmediği iddia edilmektedir. Diğer taraftan, belli noktalarda askeri söylemle ortak özellikler taşısa da tanıkların anlatılarının darbeyi ve onun günümüze kalan etkilerini sorgulamanın önünü açtığı ileri sürülmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: geçmişle hesaplaşmak, 12 Eylül 1980 askeri darbesi, hafıza ve anlatı

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the representations and justifications of the 12 September 1980 military coup, and with the politics of coming to terms with it. In this study I focus on three perspectives about the coup that have been constitutive in forming the current public understanding of the coup: academic analyses, the discourse of the military, and the narratives of the witnesses. By tracing these perspectives I try to answer the following questions: How are the causes and consequences of the coup represented in the literature on Turkish politics? How is the coup justified within the discourse of the military and what are the implications of this justification for democracy in Turkey? How do the political activists of the pre-coup period, as the witnesses and victims of the coup, give meaning to the coup today? In what ways and to what extent do their narratives about the causes and consequences of the coup overlap or contest with the discourse of the military? What kind of truth claims do they make about the coup, and what are the effects of these claims in regard to a process of coming to terms with the coup?

Existing political science literature and the discourse of the military about the 1980 coup will be examined in the second chapter of the thesis. This chapter has two main arguments. The first one is that while analyzing the coup within the context of civil-military relations and the transition to democracy framework, the existing political science literature on the subject excludes subjective dimensions and analysis

of the discursive mechanisms effective in the justification of the coup by the military, and it also lacks a perspective of coming to terms with the coup with regard to the present problems of democracy in Turkey. Secondly, it will be claimed that the discourse of the military about the coup rests on a markedly anti-democratic view of social processes and an ostensible mechanism of legitimation. The third chapter of the thesis is composed of narrative analyses, around the questions stated above, of the in-depth interviews I have conducted with thirteen political activists of the pre-coup period, ten of them being from *78'liler Vakfi*¹, who call for a process of coming to terms with the coup with the aim of strengthening democracy in Turkey.

In this chapter that focus on the narratives of witnesses, I try to understand the relationship of their narratives with other discourses about the coup, the points of convergence and divergence as well as the political implications of the framework these narratives depend on regarding the project of coming to terms with the coup. The significance and promises of a project of coming to terms with the coup as well as the structural impediments against it will be discussed in the Conclusion. In the remaining parts of this introduction I will discuss the significance of the 1980 coup at present, provide information about the fieldwork conducted, and deal with the notion of 'coming to terms with the past' through theoretical perspectives and historical examples.

The 1980 Coup as Seen From the Present

As the third successful military coup in the history of the Turkish Republic, 12 September 1980 can be interpreted as one of the most important manifestations of the intervention of the armed forces into politics. Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic these interventions have taken different forms ranging from direct military

¹ *78'liler Vakfi* means The Foundation of those from the 78 Generation, throughout the text I will use the Turkish name.

takeovers to affecting the policies of the government, for instance through the decisions of the National Security Council. 12 September 1980 coup has been the most effective of these interventions in re-shaping the content and the means of making politics in Turkey. The effects of the coup have been decisive in restructuring the political and social configuration of the country, but suffice it here to mention the prevalence of the 1982 constitution, and the weight of the National Security Council in politics of the state.

The present study rests on the statement that today the 12 September 1980 coup stands between the states of oblivion and questioning in the public sphere. On the one hand, although the effects of the 12 September coup have been decisive, the following democratization process did not involve a process of coming to terms with the coup as in the other countries that witnessed *coup d'etats* like Argentina, Chile and Greece. Therefore, neither have the gross human rights violations during the military administration been publicly discussed, nor have those responsible for the anti-democratic practices of the period been put on trial. The long term effects of the coup necessitates a detailed and substantive research, but providing background knowledge about the immediate effects of the coup will be helpful at this point in order to illustrate the human rights violations and anti-democratic practices of the military administration. The dissolution of the parliament and cabinet, the closing of all political parties and two trade unions (DISK, the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Syndicates and the Confederation of Nationalist Workers Syndicates), the arrestment of all political party leaders and the declaration of a state of emergence were some of the immediate effects of the coup. But some statistics will also prove helpful in imagining the devastating consequences of the coup: In the first six weeks after the coup, the number of arrested people was 11.500, to be 30.000 at the end of

1980, and 122.600 at the end of the first year of military rule². During the whole process, more than 650.000 people were detained, police files were opened about 1.680.000 people, there were 210.000 political trials during which 7000 people were tried for their life, 50 of 517 death penalties were executed, 299 people died in prison, 30.000 people were fired from civil service, and 14.000 people were forfeited of citizenship, 39 tons of published material were destroyed, and 23.677 associations were closed down.³.

No legal proceedings about any of those practices of the military administration took place, as provisional Article no. 15 of the 1982 Constitution proscribes any claim of illegality against the coup and the military rule, hence makes a lawsuit against the responsible people of the period impossible. Therefore Article no. 15 of the 1982 Constitution stands as the most important legal obstacle against a juridical process of coming to terms with the 1980 coup. The article reads:

No allegation of criminal, financial or legal responsibility shall be made, nor shall an application be filed with a court for this purpose in respect of any decisions or measures whatsoever taken by: the Council of National Security formed under Act No. 2356 which will have exercised legislative and executive power on behalf of the Turkish Nation from Sept. 12, 1980 to the date of the formation of the Bureau of the Turkish Grand National Assembly which is to convene following the first general elections; the governments during the term of office of the Council, or the Consultative Assembly which has exercised its functions under Act No. 2485 on the Constituent Assembly. The provisions of the above paragraphs shall also apply in respect of persons who have taken decisions and adopted or implemented measures as parts of the implementations of such decisions and measures by the administration or by the competent organs, authorities and officials. No allegation of unconstitutionality shall be made in respect of decisions or measures taken under laws or decrees having force of law enacted during this period or under Act No. 2324 on the Constitutional Order.⁴

² Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey : A Modern History*. (London; St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 407.

³ Ayhan Ergene, "Son Klasik Darbeyle Yüzleşmek" in bianet (Bağımsız İletişim Ağı) website, available at: <http://www.bianet.org/php/yazdir.php?DosyaX=../2005/09/12/67050.htm> [25.07.2006]

⁴ Turkish reads: 12 Eylül 1980 tarihinden, ilk genel seçimler sonucu toplanacak Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisinin Başkanlık Divanını oluşturuncaya kadar geçecek süre içinde, yasama ve yürütme yetkilerini Türk milleti adına kullanan, 2356 sayılı Kanunla kurulu Millî Güvenlik Konseyinin, bu Konseyin yönetimi döneminde kurulmuş hükümetlerin, 2485 sayılı Kurucu Meclis Hakkında Kanunla görev ifa eden Danışma Meclisinin her türlü karar ve tasarruflarından dolayı haklarında cezaî, malî

On the other hand, however, the 25th anniversary of the coup witnessed calls for coming to terms with the coup for the first time with such intensity. The coming together of the political activists of the pre-coup period, naming themselves the 78 generation under the banner of *78'liler Vakfi* since the year 2000 signifies the first organized movement for questioning the coup and its effects. *78'liler Vakfi* has not yet been established legally as a foundation but is still an undertaking which brings together different organizational structures such as associations and cooperatives as well individuals from about twenty cities of Turkey. These structures and individuals are organized as councils in every city, and they hold country-wide meetings in every six months. *78'liler Vakfi* also publishes a bimonthly magazine called *Tükenmez*.

78'liler Vakfi advocates the view that coming to terms with the 1980 coup is not only necessary for settling accounts with the past, but also a fundamental condition for the development of democracy in Turkey. Problematizing issues such as the influence of the military in politics, or militaristic elements in Turkish culture, their political project of coming to terms with the coup is also very much related to the present problems of democracy in Turkey. The first achievement of the organization has been the removal of the restrictions on the civil, social and political rights of the people who were penalized according to the articles 31 and 32 of the Turkish Criminal Code before 1987 and thereby curtailed of their civil, social and political rights. The removal of these restrictions was especially important for paving the way for the re-integration of many political prisoners into public and political life. Therefore, this first achievement of the foundation has been significant for the

veya hukukî sorumluluk iddiası ileri sürülemez ve bu maksatla herhangi bir yargı merciine başvurulamaz. Bu karar ve tasarrufların idarece veya yetkili kılınmış organ, merci ve görevlilerce uygulanmasından dolayı, karar alanlar, tasarrufta bulunanlar ve uygulayanlar hakkında da yukarıdaki fıkra hükümleri uygulanır.

re-organization of the political activists of the pre-coup period around the project of coming to terms with the 1980 coup.

The foundation organizes symposiums, demonstrations, and press statements about the 12 September coup at regular intervals. The current campaign of the Foundation focuses on the revocation of the article no 15 of the 1982 Constitution to open the way for the trial of those who were responsible for the coup and its practices. In addition, they are establishing ‘Commissions for Investigation of Truths and Justice’ about many unenlightened incidents occurring before and after the coup such as the massacre on 1977 May Day, or unrecorded deaths under detention. These commissions bring together the witnesses, the lawyers, journalists and academicians and resemble the Truth and Reconciliation Committees in South Africa. The foundation used the 25th anniversary of the coup as the most important opportunity of bringing the issue of coming to terms with the coup to the public agenda. On 12 September 2005, they organized meetings in İzmir and Mersin, -the meeting in İstanbul was banned by the governorship, thus a press statement took its place-, bringing together more than sixty organizations such as political parties, trade unions, professional organizations etc, around the claim of the trial of the responsables of the coup. Therefore *78’liler Vakfi* is the single most important organization that introduces the question of the coup, and the politics of coming to terms with it, to the public agenda. The notion of coming to terms with the past has been in the public agendas of many countries and in academic discussions, especially after World War II. I will try to delineate those discussions below.

Coming to Terms with the Past

In 1959, Theodor Adorno delivered a lecture entitled “What Does It Mean to Come to Terms with the Past”, where he stated that “We will not have come to terms with

the past until the causes of what happened then are no longer active. Only because these causes live on does the spell of the past remain to this very day unbroken.”⁵ According to Adorno, the Federal Republic was more concerned with getting beyond the past, with avoiding difficult memory through “an unconscious and not-so-conscious defense against guilt”, than with the genuine working through that would be required to “break its spell”, not because of the persistence of fascist tendencies against democracy, but of fascist tendencies *within* democracy. Thus for Adorno, coming to terms with the past demanded a continual self-critical engagement with the past as well as with the present, rather than mastering or silencing the past.

When the period after World War II is considered, it appears that the question of ‘what should be the attitude towards a problematic past’ finds its answer in a wide scope of options ranging from forgetting and repression of the past to the questioning of and extensive coming to terms with the past⁶. Those who advocate the necessity of forgetting a troubled past argue that in specific conjunctures forgetting, as much as remembering, might constitute the ground for social consensus, democratic stability and compromise. For instance, Lowenthal states that “forgetting turns out to be more benefit than bereavement, a mercy rather than a malady. To forget is as essential as to keep things in mind, for no individual or collectivity can afford to remember everything. Total recall would leave us unable to discriminate or generalize.”⁷ He maintains that while individual forgetting is largely involuntary, collective oblivion, is mainly deliberate, purposeful and regulated. Therein lies according to Lowenthal, the art of forgetting –art as opposed to ailment, choice rather than compulsion or

⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, “What Does Coming to Terms With the Past Mean?” *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* ed. by Geoffrey Hartman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) p.129.

⁶ Mithat Sancar, “12 Eylül Vesilesiyle: Geçmişle Hesaplaşma Kültürü Üzerine ‘Bir Daha Asla’ Diyebilmek İçin” *Birikim* 198, (October 2005), p.29.

⁷ David Lowenthal “Preface” *The Art of Forgetting*, ed. by Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler. (Oxford: Berg, 1999), p. xi.

obligation. The art is a high and delicate enterprise demanding astute judgment about what to keep and what to let go, what to salvage or to shred or shelve, to memorialize or to anathematize. Thus he concludes that “artfully selective oblivion is necessary to all societies. Collective well being requires sanitizing what time renders unspeakable, unpalatable, even just inconveniently outdated.”⁸ Yet, when historical examples are taken into consideration it appears that rather than a purposeful and selective oblivion, forgetting the past is generally associated with the repression of the past finding its expressions either in a state of public reticence or in official prohibition of remembering. However, when the repression of the past is advocated by official policies, it can also be seen that the legitimation of this repression depends more on a politics of premeditated remembering rather than on total forgetting⁹. When the relation with the past is based on repression, forgetting, or premeditated remembering of the past, a clear line between the past and the present is drawn and while the responsibility of collective guilt of past atrocities is denied, looking to the future instead of the past is emphasized. The examples of such an attitude can be found in Germany, Austria and Japan during the years that Followed World War II, and in Spain after the Franco dictatorship. Yet this attitude has also started to be questioned in recent decades, and the term “coming to terms with the past”, implying a more critical engagement with the past, has been extensively debated and used not only with reference to the experience of fascism but also in other contexts in which the troubles of the past haunt the present.

Since the 1980s and 1990s the issue of “relations with the past” have become a growing field of diverse academic research that focus on the ways, meaning and objectives of remembering the past. The moving of the question of memory and its

⁸ Ibid., p.xii.

⁹ Sancar, p.30.

relation to national and other identities to the center of a variety of intellectual agendas followed political developments such as the increase of redress claims, the rise of identity politics, the politics of victimization and regret, an increased willingness of governments to acknowledge wrongdoing, as well as the breakdown of repressive regimes that have left difficult legacies behind¹⁰. Within this literature, the issue of “coming to terms with the past”, which was seen only as a problem of Germany and a few other European countries after World War II, is now acknowledged as a universal problem with regard to the question of how to deal with past atrocities and human rights violations after systemic transitions such as the downfall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, the apartheid regime in South Africa, and military dictatorships in Latin America.

As such, the pursuit of reparations and apologies by many groups for a wide array of past injustices has in recent years become a major preoccupation of the one-time victims, of their societies more broadly, and of scholars studying social change as well¹¹. Within these debates ‘past injustices’ signify a wide range of issues that arise from troubled pasts, such as the Holocaust, apartheid regime in South Africa, military dictatorships in Latin America and in elsewhere, and the legacies of the Communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Also the modalities of reparation may assume different forms, such as the trials of perpetrators, purges, truth commissions, rehabilitation of those wrongly convicted of crimes, monetary compensation, social policies designed to rectify inequalities rooted in unjust past social arrangements, memorials, changes in school history curricula, and more. Viewing reparations politics as a field, John Torpey suggests conceiving them as a

¹⁰ Jeffrey K. Olick “Introduction” *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*, ed. by Jeffrey K. Olick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 4.

¹¹ John Torpey “Introduction: Politics and the Past” *Politics and the Past: on Repairing Historical Injustices* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), p.1.

series of concentric circles¹². Accordingly, these circles progress from a ‘core’ of what has come to be known as ‘transitional justice’ through reparations and restitution of a material kind, to apologies and statements of regret, and finally to a concern with ‘collective memory’ and with processes that one might refer to as the pursuit of a ‘communicative history’. This conceptualization both reflects the chronological development of reparations politics, and represents an analytical framework distinguishing ‘ideal types’ of activities associated with coming to terms with the past that may in practice be found lumped together.

Within this framework, transitional justice is associated with the trials and purges of the perpetrators and collaborators of the atrocities and wrongs committed against individuals principally in the form of violations of human rights, as well as the establishment of truth commissions. Torpey maintains that while the conceit underlying transitology is that there is a generic ‘transition to democracy’, the particular type of rule that is being left behind, and the variety of paths away from undemocratic rule make a very big difference in determining what kind of transitional justice will occur¹³. The main difficulty with the transitional justice paradigm has been its foreshortened time horizons, which result in negligence of the fact that many of the historical injustices for which repair and reckoning have been demanded in recent times involve wrongs that occurred or had their origins far in the past and in societies with venerable liberal credentials. Thus Torpey warns that, while the transitional justice model takes the self-characterization of liberal societies too literally to accommodate the claims of justice, authoritarianism should not be thought of as a distinct regime type but, rather, as an element of political process

¹² Ibid., p.6.

¹³ Ibid., pp.7-8.

shared by many different systems of rule and associated with a variety of socioeconomic formations¹⁴.

On the other hand, violations of human rights in violent regimes, colonial conquest and expropriation have constituted major sources of demands for reparations. Regarding the human rights violations, the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC), signifying the transition from *apartheid* to 'nonracialism' in South Africa, have been the exemplary case in bringing out more of the truth than would have been possible in adversarial proceedings concerned with assigning guilt. Yet, while the TRC traded justice for truth, Torpey states that this exchange was deeply resented by many of those who had been victimized by the state security forces or by the families of those victims. Torpey conceptualizes the reparations claims alongside the axes of symbolic/economic and cultural/legal demands. The harms for which compensation are sought through those demands cover a wide range of issues from damages stemming from colonialism and slavery to human rights violations under military regimes, or from the inequalities suffered by blacks in the US to claims of responsibility of the international community in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Accordingly, the demands of reparation claims differ in each case, assuming, for instance, forms of material compensation or cultural recognition.

Regarding the demands of statements of apology and regret, Torpey suggests that whether apologies are important to the individuals who are members of groups that have been wronged in the past is likely to vary widely from person to person. Moreover, he states that while without compensations such apologies would not be taken very seriously, compensation without apology is likely to be dismissed on the grounds that 'it is not about the money', and any suggestion that it is may be

¹⁴Ibid., p.9.

regarded as cheapening the suffering of the individuals in question¹⁵. On the other hand, Olick and Coughlin state that the rise of regret is a product of ‘the transformation of temporality and historicity that is tied up with the decline of the nation state’ and its project of integrating and assimilating disparate groups¹⁶. Thus states can no longer ignore the subterranean histories of the many groups submerged or opposed in the nation-building process who now seek apologies and reparations for their forcible incorporation into the modern world system. As such, these claims of apology are also related with the representations of history and the voices that constitute history.

Then, the relation between coming to terms with the past and collective memory or ‘historical consciousness’ can be established with regard to the efforts to write ‘history from below’ and hence reveal the voices of those groups whose pasts have been resurrected. In that sense, the projects of reparation, remembering, and reconciliation involve the right to tell histories and have them listened to respectfully¹⁷.

Having explored the issue in general, at this point looking at concrete cases where the politics of coming to terms with the past after the transition to democracy from military regimes have been on the public agenda demonstrates how this process works, sometimes turning back but then again gaining momentum. Below, I will depict the cases of Greece, Chile and Argentina, as these countries are often referred to in discussions about the transition to democracy in Turkey.

In Greece, after the end of the military junta of 1967-74, a collective term that refers to a series of right-wing military governments that ruled the country in that

¹⁵ Ibid., p.23.

¹⁶ Jeffrey K Olick and Brenda Coughlin, “The Politics of Regret: Analytical Frames” *Politics and the Past: on Repairing Historical Injustices*, p.56.

¹⁷ Torpey, p.25.

period, the Karamanlis administration performed a very delicate balancing act to ensure a smooth transition from military dictatorship to pluralist democracy¹⁸. For the dejuntification of the system Karamanlis followed a very careful path because an indiscriminate revenge would have led to a strong reaction from junta supporters. During 1975 a number of televised trials were held for those responsible for the 1967 coup, for the leaders of the 1975 plot, for those responsible for the brutal suppression of the Polytechnic uprising, and for those responsible for the torturing of prisoners from 1967 to 1974. The sentences handed down were harsh, including life sentences and death penalties. Karamanlis commuted the death sentences to life imprisonment. Kaloudis states that despite criticism from the opposition, the new democratic government was successful in dealing with the "legacy problem", and the fact that those who were given life sentences are still in prison served as a warning to those thinking about subverting democratic institutions¹⁹.

In Chile, the military regime of fifteen years ended after Pinochet's defeat in the 1988 plebiscite. Baxter argues that Chile's transition was marked by a limited democracy with the persistence of several enclaves of authoritarianism, including continued impunity for widespread human rights abuses and the continued presence of the military in the society²⁰. However, despite these conditions, there has been a commitment to addressing the past and working toward reconciliation and democratization for the nation. The efforts to redress the past in Chile can be analyzed in three phases.

The first phase of promoting truth, justice, and reconciliation occurred on the national political level during Chile's first successor civilian government of Patricio

¹⁸ George Kaloudis, "Transitional Democratic Politics in Greece" *International Journal on World Peace* 17, no.1 (2000), p.45.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.47.

²⁰ Victoria Baxter, "Civil Society Promotion of Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation in Chile: Villa Grimaldi" *Peace & Change* 30, no. 1 (January 2005), p.122.

Aylwin. On 24 April 1990, the multi-partisan Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CNVR) was established²¹. The Commission worked for nine months, from 9 May 1990 to 9 February 1991, and investigated violations resulting in death or disappearance over 1973-1990, of which it recorded over 3.000 cases, and made various recommendations. The report the commission published was adopted as the official truth and launched nationwide by a tearful president, who apologized to the victims on behalf of the state. Although the political right and the military did not apologize for the crimes, as a result of the report, for the first time since 1973, they were unable to deny that repression had taken place. In January 1992, in compliance with the recommendations of the report, the government passed a Reparations Law to benefit about 7,000 individuals. In February 1992 it also created the National Reparation and Reconciliation Corporation (CNRR), which legally established the 'inalienable rights' of the relatives to find those who had disappeared. By September 1992 nearly 80 per cent of eligible families were receiving benefits, and by June 1999 US\$95 million had been paid out to the families and direct victims in pensions and education as well as health benefits²². Baxter maintains that while the CNVR represented a huge step forward in acknowledging that pervasive human rights violations were perpetrated during Pinochet's rule, it was a fairly limited attempt to deal with the past because it only focused on a small portion of the human rights violations that had occurred, mainly because the CNVR's mandate limited the commission to addressing only the individual cases that resulted in death and forced disappearance²³. This effectively ignored all of the survivors of torture and arbitrary detention, who were considered beyond the mandate. The CNVR also had to contend

²¹ Barahona De Alexandra Brito, "Truth, Justice, Memory, and Democratization in the Southern Cone," *The Politics of Memory: Transitional Justice in Democratizing Societies*, ed. by Alexandra Barahona De Brito et. al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.131.

²² Ibid., p.132.

²³ Baxter, p.123.

with sweeping amnesty laws installed by Pinochet before he left office that limited the ability of the commission to “name names” of perpetrators or to pursue formal prosecutions. Also wider institutional reforms were not very successful in that period. Reforms on the Arms Control Law, the State Security Law, the Code of Military Justice, the Organic Law of the armed forces, and the Penal Code, and thus the reduction of strong 'authoritarian enclaves' within the legal system could not be achieved. Justice was also fraught with obstacles. The president did not announce an official prosecution policy and was unable to derogate the Amnesty Law passed by the regime in 1978, covering all security force crimes between 1973 and 1978, instead, the President called for justice, 'as far as is possible'²⁴. According to what became known as the Aylwin Doctrine, he argued that, although the Amnesty Law precluded prosecution of the guilty, it should not prevent an investigation of the facts in order that families might find their dead. However, on 24 August 1990, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the constitutionality of the Amnesty Law, and between 1990 and 1993 it mostly disregarded the Aylwin Doctrine, sending the great majority of cases presented by relatives to the military courts, where they were closed with a 'preventive' application of the Amnesty Law. Brito maintains that of all the transitions, Chile's was arguably the most restricted, and it was the country in which the military retained the highest degree of power and legitimacy, since the Chilean regime succeeded in institutionalizing itself through a new constitution, radically transforming the juridical and ideological foundations of the political system²⁵.

Chile's second phase of promoting truth, justice, and reconciliation occurred largely in the national and international legal arenas during the mid- to late 1990s.

²⁴ Burito, p.133.

²⁵ Ibid., p.135.

Much of the impetus for the judicial involvement came from strong international pressure that called for criminal accountability for human rights abuses in Chile²⁶. The ultimate expression of this was the arrest and extradition attempts of Pinochet in 1998 to try him for human rights violations perpetrated against Spanish citizens during his regime. Pinochet eventually was released, but this event again renewed a debate about redressing the human rights abuses of the Pinochet regime. When the ex-dictator returned to the country, the Chilean Supreme Court stripped him of the constitutional protections against prosecution, although the courts ultimately determined that the aging ex-dictator's health was too poor for him to stand trial²⁷.

The third phase in dealing with Chile's past is being conducted by civil society organizations. The Pinochet case reignited the human rights movement inside Chile and prompted many human rights organizations and civil society groups to take more decisive action to raise questions about the past and to work to promote truth, reconciliation, and justice within society. On the one hand, several books and films dealing critically with the transition to democracy and the past history of human rights abuses have been published. On the other hand, while Pinochet was placed under house arrest in England, a new social movement of university students called Funa began staging demonstrations in front of the homes and businesses of the accused perpetrators of human rights abuses²⁸. Funa receives support from existing human rights organizations and organizations representing the families of the detained/disappeared in Chile. Baxter points out that one of the most important aspects of coming to terms with the past in Chile is that the society has tended to characterize their choices in a very stark manner²⁹, while in general, the government

²⁶ Baxter, p.123.

²⁷ Brito, pp.149-150.

²⁸ Baxter, p.124.

²⁹ Ibid., p.126.

tended to support the line that Chilean citizens must move forward and must put the past behind them, due to the fear that dealing with the past would destabilize the fragile transition to democracy and would sink the country back into a period of terror. However, victims of human rights violations do not have such an easy ability to forget about the past. Many survivors of the arbitrary detention and torture of the seventeen-year military rule never received formal acknowledgement during the CNVR process, and they continue to suffer psychologically and physically from the effects of torture. These victims did not even have a choice between justice or peace because neither option explicitly or officially was offered to them.

While many efforts to bring Pinochet to stand trial failed due to his medical condition, in November 2005, he was deemed fit to stand trial by the Chilean Supreme Court and was indicted on human rights, for the disappearance of six dissidents arrested by Chile's security services in late 1974, and placed under house arrest once more.

In Argentina, following the military coup against Isabel Peron on March 24, 1976, the armed forces acted with almost complete disregard for legal constraints in the "dirty war" against "subversives" and their supporting circles, implementing systematic policy of disappearances and killings³⁰. The military regime lasted until October 1983, following Argentina's defeat by the UK in the Falklands War in 1982, facing strong public pressure, the junta lifted bans on political parties and gradually restored basic political liberties. During the "dirty war", an officially documented total of 9,000 individuals were tortured, murdered, or "disappeared" (i.e. arrested and

³⁰ Luis Roniger, and Mario Sznajder, "The Politics of Memory and Oblivion in Redemocratized Argentina and Uruguay" *History and Memory* 10, no.1 (March 1998), p.135.

secretly executed without trial) at the hands of the state security forces; better estimates of the real totals reach 20,000 to 30,000³¹.

The first wave of confrontation with the authoritarian legacy took several parallel forms: the work of official commissions charged with inquiring into the extent of political violence and human rights violations such as the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP); the mobilization of civil society against the enactment of laws that created statutes of limitation and condoned crimes committed under orders; media coverage of the treatment of the issues; and literary and artistic work reflecting these experiences and events³². Adopting the discourse of human rights, these policies were designed to reveal the fate of the victims and grant them public recognition, while moving unevenly and under serious legal and practical constraints to punish in very limited ways some of those responsible.

The purpose of the CONADEP, established in 1983, was to collect testimony from all those willing to give it, and it received about 50,000 testimonies from victims of the repression and their relatives, requested thousands of reports and conducted inspections on the detention centers. From these testimonies, a final report was released in the form of book called *Nunca Mas* (Never Again), which served as the basis for the prosecutor's case against the military dictatorship and provided the basis for further investigation³³. The trial of the junta began on 22 April 1985, and lasted eight months. The members of the court chose not to use international laws covering genocide or crimes against humanity, instead, the foundations for the trial were national laws punishing torture, theft, kidnappings and murder. The judges

³¹ Sharon E. Lean "Is Truth Enough? Reparations and Reconciliation in Latin America" *Politics and the Past*, p.174.

³² Roniger and Sznajder, p.137.

³³ Luis Moreno Ocampo, "Beyond Punishment: Justice in the Wake of Massive Crimes in Argentina," *Journal of International Affairs* 52, no.2 (1999), p.680.

ruled that each of the commanders -but not the junta itself- had masterminded a plan for illegal repression and was responsible for the execution of kidnappings, thefts, tortures and murders, as a result five defendants were convicted and four were acquitted³⁴. While dissemination of information published by the CONADEP strengthened society's commitment to the rule of law, it brought anxiety to the barracks. On the one hand, President Alfonsín believed the ruling against the junta leaders was sufficient to serve society's thirst for justice without risking a military uprising, on the other hand, the judges opted to continue the investigation to include the remaining military chiefs and the lower-ranking officers. This meant that more than 1000 officers faced the prospect of prosecution--an alternative considered unreasonable by the government³⁵. Facing the threat of military rebellion, President Alfonsín sent to Congress a two laws that severely limited the possibility of prosecutions for abuses that took place during the military rule³⁶. First, he put forward a 'full stop' law, which set a 60-day deadline for the initiation of new prosecutions. Against continuing pressures from the military demanding a full amnesty, the 'due obedience' law passed in April 1987, which granted immunity to all army personnel ranked colonel or below on the grounds that they were following orders. Moreover, Alfonsín's successor Carlos Menem issued two general pardons to most military personnel who had been brought up to charges; some were awaiting trial, and some had already been convicted. As a result, by 1990 only 10 people had been convicted, and all were pardoned and released.

On June 14, 2005 Argentina's Supreme Court declared that the 'full stop' and 'due obedience' laws were unconstitutional and hence the way for hundreds of

³⁴ Ibid., p.682.

³⁵ Ibid., p.683.

³⁶ Rebecca Lichtenfeld, "Accountability in Argentina, 20 Years Later, Transitional Justice Maintains Momentum" *International Center for Transitional Justice Case Study Series*, (August 2005), p.3.

officials to be tried for crimes committed during the 1976-83 dictatorship was once more cleared. While human rights groups and lawyers set about the task of trying to bring the surviving police and military men and their agents to justice, in a BBC report on 21 June 2006 it was stated that few trial dates have been set since the court's ruling³⁷. In the same report one survivor of a clandestine detention center explains the difficulties of initiating new prosecutions as such: "The problem is that many repressors are dead, or some have lived to be tried but the witnesses are dead, and it is much more difficult to find proof after 30 years."

Whereas during the military regime, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, mothers of the dead and disappeared, who began holding vigils in April 1977 was the only group demanding investigation of these crimes, the efforts to come to terms with the military regime gained momentum with the re-democratization process. Many civil society organizations worked together using various strategies during the fight for human rights and the demand for justice in Argentina. While some groups based their actions on the accumulation of information regarding individual cases, others reacted in their neighborhoods, with local organizations and by participating in marches³⁸. In addition to investigations, human rights workers consistently promoted other types of initiatives, such as territorial marks of commemoration, the preservation of documents, and the creation of historical archives.

In general, despite its partial character, the disclosure of the experience of repression initiated a dynamic of self-reflection and triggered an intense public debate that ensured public awareness, in contrast with the period of military rule when such awareness had been restricted by state censorship. This debate not only called into question the previous positions of substantial sectors of civil society who,

³⁷ BBC, 21 June 2006, "Argentina Holds 'Dirty War' Trial", available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/americas/5099028.stm> [25.07.2006]

³⁸ Lichtenfeld, pp.6-7.

either out of fear or because of patriotic identification with their country, had kept silent or disavowed earlier criticisms of their society and of government policies, but also urged a national soul-searching. At the same time, the disclosure of past human rights violations generated a series of institutional crises around the structure of civic- military relationships.

In addition, throughout the period of redemocratization, governments and societies alike had to confront these disparate positions, of, on the one hand, the military and the extreme right, who claimed to have fought and won a war against subversion, and, on the other hand, of the persecuted, who claimed to have been victims of criminal acts by the military state and its agents. The failure to achieve shared interpretations and institutional resolution of the issues engendered a politics of memory and oblivion in these countries, i.e. the unresolved issues were projected into the realm of symbolic and cultural confrontation, through which various social sectors attempted to gain hegemonic status for their own vision of the past and its implications. Thus, through a politics of memory and oblivion, the polarized visions of the past were transposed to a struggle over cultural hegemony. Rather than disappearing, the issue of human rights violations acquired crucial implications for the reshaping of these societies' collective memory and identity.³⁹

Besides its promises, the general framework depicted at the beginning of this section and the cases discussed, also disclose a number of problematic aspects of the notion of coming to terms with the past. Firstly, while it is generally accepted that coming to terms with the past is related not only with revealing what had happened in the past but also with what remains of it in the present, the most important question that this process of revealing exhibits is the one about the relation between

³⁹ Roniger and Sznajder, p.140.

truth and justice. The cases of Chile and Argentina show that the exposure of past human rights abuses does not guarantee a consequent process of prosecution and punishment, but it sometimes even might function to preclude such a process. When the priority shifts from trying and punishing to forgiving and forgetting, there occurs a trade-off between ‘truth’ and ‘justice’, which becomes even more problematic when the fact that the truth and justice commissions were usually not only unable to reveal all the past injustices but also lacked any executive powers, is taken into consideration. In addition, both the practice of listening to and publicizing the stories of the victims, and the prosecution of the responsables generally occur at an individualized level, and this brings to the fore the question of how to acknowledge the deep social and cultural roots of the factors that led to those atrocities. The same cases also illustrate how the remnants of the past regimes continue to haunt the political systems and subjects in those countries, which grounds the process of coming to terms with the past on a delicate balance of forces. Regarding the issue, Lerche argues that:

To date, the majority of democratic transitions in countries with truth commissions has clearly been “top down.” They have most often been precipitated by a crisis in the previous authoritarian government, in response to which the ruling coalition divided into those wanting to continue the old style of rule despite the crisis, and those who felt a process of democratization could bring such benefits as renewed legitimacy (both at home and abroad) or more international investment. In this scenario at least some old elites remain in positions of power and they will only accept institutional arrangements which do not adversely affect their interests to any significant degree⁴⁰.

Thus, he concludes that while it is precisely the inability of transitional democratic institutions to provide justice that constitutes the most compelling rationale for truth commissions, an effort at *national* reconciliation cannot be limited to the three steps

⁴⁰ Charles O. Lerche III, “Truth Commissions and National Reconciliation: Some Reflections on Theory and Practice” *Peace and Conflict Studies* 7, no.1 (May 2000), p.10.

of acknowledgment, contrition and forgiveness⁴¹. This suggests that the long term constructive influence of truth commissions is their role as a bridge from a past where justice was denied and a present where it is not yet practically and politically possible, to a future where it can, in all its dimensions, become an integral part of the social order. In that sense, a process of national reconciliation must go beyond coming to terms with the past to seeking out and implementing more broadly equitable models of governance.

As a last point, although in accounts of Argentine and Chile the discourse of human rights is presented as enabling the social forces to carry the issue of human rights abuses into the public agenda, when the current entanglement of the human rights discourse with the neoliberal proposals of good governance⁴² and the functioning of this discourse within the international institutional structures are taken into consideration, such a reliance on the notion of human rights appears to carry more problematic aspects for the future. Dealing with this last point necessitates further discussion that exceeds the scope of the present study, suffice it to have a look at the description of this new world order based on the discourse of human rights by Tony Evans:

The argument begins with the observation that the current world order no longer reflects the tenets of realism, which assumed a strict separation between internal and external affairs. While once how a state treated its population was seen as an exclusively domestic affair, today the global configuration of economic, political, and social forces makes human rights, dignity, and welfare a legitimate interest for all peoples. Accordingly, membership in international society is conditional upon a state's professed respect for human rights. The failure to fulfill this duty offers the prospect of delegitimation, exclusion, and, in extreme cases, the threat of intervention. When a state fails to respect human rights, international society has a responsibility to take whatever action is necessary to protect the rights of those threatened by tyrannical and illegitimate governments. The increasing

⁴¹ Ibid., p.12.

⁴² Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.16.

number of instances in which human rights are cited as a justification for intervention is said to provide evidence of this new order⁴³.

Fieldwork

The third chapter of this thesis builds on the ethnographic research that I carried out in Istanbul, Turkey. The primary source of data that I use in the third chapter is provided by the in-depth semi-structured interviews that I conducted with thirteen left-wing political activists of the pre-coup period. While the interviews lasted one and a half hour on average, off-the record sections of the talk sometimes extended this duration. In the absence of a sampling frame, while selecting my informants I relied on snowball and purposive sampling methods. I tried to cover activists coming from different organizations and different socio-economic status. Seven of my interviewees are university graduates, two of them left university, two of them were high school graduates, and two other graduated from secondary school. Seven of the interviewees were men and six of them were women. Among the interviewees, there are two journalists, two writers, one housewife, and the others were either professionally working in *78'liler Vakfi* or earning their life through small enterprises. Six of the interviewees had been in prison during the military regime the durations changing from four months to nineteen years. Except two of them, all my interviewees stated that they continued to engage in political activities after the coup, some of them participated in feminist organizations and human rights associations, and some of them were members of the *Freedom and Solidarity Party*.

Ten of my informants were associated with the *78'liler Vakfi* at different levels; six of them actively worked in the establishment of the organization and still

⁴³ Tony Evans "International Human Rights Law as Power/Knowledge" *Human Rights Quarterly* 27, no.3 (2005), p.1047.

contribute to the formation and execution of its campaigns, and four of them support the organization by participating in its activities, such as meetings and demonstrations. Three of my interviewees were not connected with *78'liler Vakfi*, but they expressed that they support the activities of the organization.

My rationale for choosing most of my interviewees from the *78'liler Vakfi* for this study depends on two reasons. Firstly, being not only the witnesses but also the 'victims' of the coup as their lives were much affected by the practices of the coup, the narratives of these people prove to be an interesting case to show how personal narratives interact, overlap or contest with the hegemonic discourses about the coup. Secondly, as these people voice the demand of coming to terms with the coup today, the analysis of their narratives also reveals the possible promises, the contradictions, and the limitations of a political project of coming to terms with the coup, as well as exposing the subject positions that their narratives open up for making politics. On the other hand, the three interviews with people that were not connected with *78'liler Vakfi* also proved to be significant in demonstrating the effects of the organization on the dimensions of the collective and organized language of the people somewhat connected with it.

During the interviews, the interviewees were asked about how they evaluated the coup, the periods before and after the coup, and about what they thought of coming to terms with the coup. In analyzing the interviews I benefited from narrative theories and the collective memory studies, which I discuss at the beginning of the third chapter.

All of my respondents were ready and willing to share their views and experiences with me, and many of their stories were very much loaded not only with information but also with the sentimental weight of the fact that those stories had not

found an opportunity to be presented to the public before. On this point, I should admit that for me the most important difficulty of this study emerged when I tried to analyze their narratives. For one thing, I had to leave many parts of the interviews unrepresented in this study, especially those that were related to the experiences of torture and prison, since endeavoring to integrate those parts would surpass the scope of this study. Moreover, respecting and supporting the view that coming to terms with the coup is a very significant and prolific project, it took a considerable time for me to determine my own subject position with regard to their narratives, especially when I needed to adopt a critical stance. Acknowledging the limitations of this study, I nevertheless hope that I have not done injustice to the stories shared candidly with me.

CHAPTER II
THE 12 SEPTEMBER 1980 COUP IN LITERATURE OF TURKISH
POLITICS IN THE DISCOURSE OF THE MILITARY

In this chapter, the 12 September 1980 military intervention will be analyzed as it is presented in the literature of political science and the discourse of the military. In the literature of Turkish politics the 1980 military intervention is generally discussed within the contexts of democratization and civil-military relations. As such, the 12 September 1980 coup is usually seen as the last example of the periodical interventions of the armed forces to politics. The explanations about the causes of the coup give priority to different levels of analysis such as domestic politics, economic structures, and international relations. Regarding the aftermath of the coup, the case of Turkey is compared with other developing countries, most notably the Latin American countries which witnessed military takeovers in similar conjectures, within the framework of the transition to democracy literature.

In the discourse of the military the reasons that led to the coup are explained by referring to the preceding political and economic crisis which is perceived as threatening the existence of the Turkish Republic. The role of the military in this picture is presented to be the guardian of the state and the nation, with reference to the principles of Kemalism.

The 1980 Coup in Literature of Turkish Politics

In the analyses that focus on domestic politics, the stalemate of the party system, increasing violence, the collapse of governmental authority, and the high rate of inflation are generally referred to as the major aspects of the multi-faceted crisis that prepared the ground for the military takeover. In order to understand the development of these factors it is necessary to have a look at the general characteristics of politics in Turkey throughout the 1970s.

Turkey in the 1970s

In literature of Turkish politics, the fundamental characteristic of the 1970s is pointed to be the extreme fragmentation and polarization of the political system. Throughout the 1970s, while ideological polarization became effective through new lines of cleavages, the party system was also fragmented, and having no single party to establish a majority government during the period following the 12 March 1971 intervention, Turkey witnessed minority and coalition governments one after another⁴⁴. The start of this fragmentation and polarization is dated back to the introduction of the 1961 Constitution, which according to Heper and Keyman, besides re-institutionalizing the state and expanding the scope of basic rights and liberties, also made possible the development of ideologies on the left and the right, and thus, the gradual crystallization of a class conflict⁴⁵. Thus it is claimed that by the end of the 1960s, politics moved towards an ideological debate along the left

⁴⁴ After the 1973 elections, despite its electoral success (%33 of votes) the RPP failed to gain an overall majority in the assembly, and Ecevit formed a coalition government with Erbakan's Islamist National Salvation Party. After Ecevit's resignation in September 1974, in March 1975 four of the right wing parties formed a coalition under the leadership of Demirel, known as the first Nationalist Front government. In the 1977 elections the RPP won % 41 of the votes but its 213 seats were still insufficient to form a single-party government. After Ecevit's minority government failed to get the vote of confidence, Demirel founded the second National Front government with the NSP and the NAP. The second National Front government ended in December 1977 to be followed by Ecevit's minority government. After loosing the ground for JP in the by-elections, Ecevit resigned in October 1979, and Demirel founded a minority government in November.

⁴⁵ Metin Heper, E Fuat Keyman "Double-Faced State: Political Patronage and the Consolidation of Democracy in Turkey" *Middle Eastern Studies* 3, no.34 (October 1998), p.264

versus right division. Class politics began to emerge during this period⁴⁶ as industrialization was taking root in the country, and during the 1970s ideological differences deepened⁴⁷.

Within this framework, Ergüder argues that although the classical center-periphery cleavage continued to be effective, with the 1960s other factors constituted the multi-dimensionality of Turkish politics through the late 1960s and the 1970s⁴⁸. These other factors were the developments in socio-economic structure, urbanisation, rising of new social groups such as the working class and the entrepreneurs, increasing communications between the urban areas and the countryside, the rising importance of religion and ethnicity in social and political cleavages, use of violence as a form of political expression, and intensified ideologization. Sayarı maintains that the trend towards greater ideological polarization after the 1973 election manifested itself at several different levels, such as the level of elite interactions, the mass electorate level, and the level of government-opposition splits and patterns of coalition building⁴⁹. He states that the ideological polarization in the mass electorate level was partly a consequence of the strategy of tension employed by the extremist leftist and rightist groups and partly of the antagonistic ideological exchange between party elites transmitted to the people through the mass media. He adds that the increase of the ideological distance between parties tended to aggravate the long-

⁴⁶ Two incidents are specifically referred to for illustrating the development of working class politics. The first is a massive march –known as the 15-16 June incidents in 1970, where industrial workers in the Istanbul-Izmit area joined to protest a new law regulating union organization and collective bargaining. The march, involving over 100.000 demonstrators, was the largest and most violent workers' protest in Turkish history. The second is the celebrations of May Day in 1976, to be publicly celebrated for the first time since 1924, which was organized by the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers (DISK) with participation of more than one 100,000 people (See Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p.168.

⁴⁷ Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür, *Turkey: Challenges of Continuity and Change*.(New York: Routledge, 2004), p.25.

⁴⁸ Üstün Ergüder, "Changing Patterns of Electoral Behaviour in Turkey" *Readings in Turkish Politics* ed. by Metin Heper (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 1980), Vol.II, p.693.

⁴⁹ Sabri Sayarı, "Turkish Party System in Transition" *Readings in Turkish Politics*, pp.628-629.

standing social cleavages such as the religious, sectarian and intra-communal cleavages, giving rise to a new and potentially destabilizing bipolar configuration along a pro-left/pro-laicist/pro-alevi versus anti-communist/pro-islam/pro-sunni division. The changing of the electoral system from a simple plurality system to proportional representation, which provided the minority parties with the opportunity to be represented in the parliament led these cleavages to have a voice in the party system with emerging minority parties such as the Turkish Labour Party (TLP) in the 1960s and the National Salvation Party (NSP) and the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) in the late 60s and 70s.

As to the electoral patterns of the period, writing in the aftermath of the 1973 elections, Özbudun stated that a “detailed analysis of the changing electoral fortunes of the JP and the RPP suggests that such changes were not merely the result of the movements of the floating vote at the center, but were associated with a major realignment in the mass coalitional bases of the major parties, a phenomenon most clearly visible in the big cities”.⁵⁰ He concludes that while socio-economic modernization tends to increase class-based political participation and to decrease communal based political participation, such concepts as center and periphery lose their meaning and new divisions would emerge both within the center and within the periphery.⁵¹ However, Kalaycıoğlu rejects Özbudun’s claim that in Turkey political behavior tends to be shaped by the emerging realignment patterns that are in congruity with the patterns observed in the development of industrial capitalism in western countries, since he argues that it would not be realistic to expect the functionalist cleavages to replace the primordial alignment patterns, such as kinship, in a society still having a large rural population and a middle class that still depends

⁵⁰ Ergun Özbudun, “Voting Behaviour in Turkey” *Electoral Politics in the Middle East: Issues, Voters, and Elites* ed. by Jacob M. Landau et. al. (London: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), p.108.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp.124 and 135.

on state intervention to the economy, which he defines as a neo-patrimonial socio-political structure⁵².

On the other hand, according to Kemal Karpat the concentration of rural migrant settlements around the major cities of Turkey was one of the major factors that contributed to the social and political change and the political polarisation of the 1960s and 1970s since the people who had migrated from villages to the city were unable to adapt to city life because of low income and educational insufficiency and hence were unable to achieve upward mobility⁵³. While economic development and the end-result of the unequal distribution of income altered the traditional structures and old systems of values and beliefs, these facts also sowed the seeds of extreme feelings of insecurity among the public which had already been alienated in cultural terms. This insecurity was sought to be overcome through the adoption of traditional religious and nationalist identities, which in turn led to the rise of rightist sentiments. On the other hand, disputes over unequal distribution of income urged the mobilization of the leftist movement, specifically Marxist ideologies.

Regarding the issue of migration and mobilization, Mardin argues that the social mobilization of the masses did not lead to the urbanisation of the peasants, but rather what was observed starting with the 1960s was the peasantisation and ruralisation of Turkish life⁵⁴. When trying to accommodate the newly mobilized masses in the social, economic and cultural infrastructure of Turkey, within a very massive however vertically limited mobility framework, strains arose, some of which resulted in student violence, and some in the retreat of the people to religion and

⁵² Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "1960 Sonrası Türk Politik Hayatına bir Bakış: Demokrasi-Neo-Patrimonyalizm ve İstikrar" *Türkiye'de Politik Değişim ve Modernleşme*, ed. by. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, Ali Yaşar Sarıbay (İstanbul : Alfa, 2000), pp.393-397.

⁵³ Kemal Karpat, "Turkish Democracy at Impasse: Ideology, Party Politics and the Third Military Intervention" *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2, no.1 (Spring/Summer, 1981), p.18.

⁵⁴ Mardin, Şerif, "Youth and Violence in Turkey" *Readings in Turkish Politics*, p.568.

history, and both of these groups were alienated from the sociopolitical and cultural structures of the society.

Causes of the Coup

Depending on the background described above, Tachau and Heper juxtapose the aspects of the crisis that led to the military takeover in 1980 as follows: the fragmentation and polarization of Turkish politics in the 1970s, the latter being extended to important social sectors such as organized labor, the teaching profession and the civil bureaucracy; escalating waves of violence caused by extremist militants; massive outbreaks of communal conflict marked by an ominous emergence of inter-ethnic and inter-sectarian cleavages; and rampant inflation accompanied by serial industrial slowdowns and shortages of consumer and import goods. They argue that, for the military all these dimensions fused into one major failure of the system, that is, the complete erosion of governmental authority⁵⁵.

While Tachau and Heper emphasize the multi dimensionality of the crisis, Özbudun points to growing political violence and terrorism⁵⁶ as the immediate reason for the intervention, specifying that the incidence of political violence reflected a growing ideological polarization between the Nationalist Action Party (NAP), and to a much lesser extent, the Nationalist Salvation Party (NSP) on the

⁵⁵ Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, "The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey" *Comparative Politics* 16, no.1 (October 1983), p.25.

⁵⁶ Although the tempo and intensity of violence gradually increased by the second half of the 1970s, it reached its climax on May Day 1977, just before the general elections. In the meeting staged in Taksim Square, shots designed to create panic were fired into the massive crowd, and 34 people were crushed to death. During the following Ecevit government the violence continued to increase and it no longer consisted exclusively of reciprocal killings by left-wing and right-wing extremists but assassinations began to target specific individuals like the famous journalist Abdi İpekçi. On the other hand there were attacks on the Alevi community in cities like Malatya, Sivas and Kahramanmaraş by the militants of the Nationalist Action Party. After the massacre in Kahramanmaraş, where 31 people were dead and hundreds wounded, the government declared martial law on 25 December 1978. Despite the strengthening of the martial law regime, neither the assassinations of prominent figures nor the attacks on the Alevi community came to an end. The daily figures of deaths were about 20 per day at the beginning of 1980, and there was a major attack on the Alevi community in Corum in July 1980. [See Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.170-173 and Mehmet Ali Birand et. al *12 Eylül : Türkiye'nin miladı* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 1999) pp 132-133.]

right, and many small radical groups on the left⁵⁷. Pointing out that “the 1973 election campaign and its aftermath witnessed an increasing ideological polarization between the major parties, and the issue distances between them became ‘exceptionally’ large by normal standards”, Özbudun maintained that the major third party revolts preceding the elections (especially that of the NSP) revealed the incapacity of ‘politics as usual’ to aggregate and integrate emergent political demands⁵⁸. Whereas Özbudun takes the issue of violence as reflecting ideological polarization, others point out the direct involvement of the NAP in the incidents of violence. Ahmad states that during the Nationalist Front government the state was parceled out between the parties which used the ministries assigned to their members to provide patronage for their support, and the strong presence of the Nationalist Action Party in the cabinet helped legitimize the neo-fascist philosophy throughout the country. Accordingly, NAP’s young militants, the Grey Wolves, saw themselves as part of the state and operated with greater confidence in creating a climate of terror, designed to intimidate their opponents⁵⁹. Claiming that the response of such leftist fractions as Dev-Sol and Dev-Yol added to the confusion and facilitated the task of the right, Ahmad nonetheless marks a difference between the terrorism of the left in the early 1970s and that of the right and left in the mid- and late 1970s. He states that in the early 1970s, the left hoped to ignite a revolution by inspiring the workers to rise with anti-western and anti-capitalist actions like kidnapping American soldiers, whereas in the mid-1970s the aim was to cause chaos and demoralization to create a climate in which a law and order regime would be

⁵⁷Ergun Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000), pp.35-36.

⁵⁸ Özbudun: “Voting Behaviour in Turkey”, p.108.

⁵⁹ Ahmad, pp.165-166.

welcomed by the masses as the savior of the nation⁶⁰. Likewise Zürcher maintains that the struggle between right and left was an unequal one since during the Nationalist Front governments of 1974-77 the police and the security forces had become the exclusive preserve of the NAP⁶¹.

In addition, Özbudun states that the enormous bargaining -more correctly, blackmailing- power these two minor parties gained and which they used to obtain important ministries and to colonize them with their own partisans, depending on the balance of the political forces in parliament and the inability or unwillingness of the RPP and the JP to agree on a grand coalition or a minority government arrangement, has been crucial in explaining the crisis of the system. Indeed, the point that the existence of a strong government “capable of appealing to the citizens' basic loyalties and mobilizing the masses around common symbols and feelings”⁶², which could bring the economy under control as well as systematically and efficiently ferret out and prosecute those responsible for organized violence⁶³, could have been effective in overcoming the crisis, is common to the perspective that explains the coup by referring to internal dynamics. Özbudun argues that, while statements by military leaders make it clear that they had considered an RPP-JP government highly desirable and saw the lack of such cooperation as the primary cause of the breakdown, it would be erroneous to attribute the lack of cooperation between the two major parties chiefly to the uncompromising attitude of, and deep personal animosity between their leaders, because the logic of the prevailing political situation also dictated polarization⁶⁴. Accordingly, he states that the party system displayed

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.163-164.

⁶¹ Zürcher, p.276.

⁶² Kemal Karpat, *Studies on Turkish Politics and Society: Selected Articles and Essays* (Boston: Brill, 2004), p.274.

⁶³ Tachau and Heper, p.25.

⁶⁴ Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics*, p. 41.

some of the functional characteristics of an extreme (or polarized) multiparty system since the JP was pulled to the right by its partnership with the NAP and the NSP, and the RPP was pulled to the left by the small but vocal radical groups to its left. Nevertheless he agrees with others that the ideological differences between the two major parties were not great enough to preclude a grand coalition of the two, and an accommodation between them would have been welcomed by most of the important political groups in Turkey, including the business community, the leading trade union confederation (Türk-İs), the military, the press, and the president of the republic, and it would have been acceptable to a majority of the JP and RPP deputies⁶⁵.

Whereas all the explanations discussed above refer to the internal dynamics of politics in Turkey, and while leaving space for contingency they treat the economic crisis as one factor among others, from a political-economy perspective Ahmad argues that the military intervention of September 12, 1980 cannot be understood if located only in the general crisis Turkey had been undergoing in the few years prior to the coup⁶⁶. He states that what was often referred to as the signs of the crisis indeed conceal the crisis of capitalism in Turkey, the origins of which are to be found in the history of Turkey's capitalist transformation. Accordingly, the political implications of the industrialization wave of the 1960s became evident by the late 1960s, and could firstly be observed in the alienation of the undermined independent producers of local small scale industries from the Justice Party, which they saw as the party of the monopolies and foreign capital, and subsequently in the emergence of smaller parties like NSP and NAP to result in the fragmentation of the right. At the same time, small holders' losing their land to the capitalist farmer led to

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.39.

⁶⁶ Feroz Ahmad, "Military Intervention and the Crisis in Turkey" *Turkey: The Generals Take Over*, *MERIP Reports*, 93 (January 1981), p.11.

the migration from the countryside to the towns and cities, and this also threatened landlords who lived off rent, hence they also ceased to support the JP⁶⁷.

Agreeing that the success of industrialization accelerated the differentiation within social classes, Keyder argues that by the early 1970s, parallel to the conflicts within the bourgeoisie, within the working class an economic as well as political rift between organized labor and the much more numerous groups employed by small capital or within the marginal sector could be observed. That the trade unions were growing stronger and more political in their demands was one factor in the forming of this rift, the second was a “vast concentration of marginally employed, marginally urbanized, and politically volatile groups in shantytowns” as a result of both the rapid growth of subaltern groups of marginally employed and the increasing difficulty of absorption of rural migrants to urban areas⁶⁸. Within this framework, a population with 51 % under 19, high rates of unemployment among young workers, a big bourgeoisie unable to establish its political ideological and economic hegemony, regional inequality in development that fueled ethnic and religious strife, and the divided working class constituted the social background of the crisis⁶⁹.

Exacerbating all these was the crisis of the import substitution industrialization displaying itself through the difficulties in obtaining foreign exchange, shortages of fuel and other inputs in the face of the world economic crisis, leading to the breakdown of the uncompetitive oligopolistic structure of the protected economy. Keyder adds to this picture the ideological climate of the country, where “rapid social transformation threatened traditional belief systems and combined them in bizarre forms with a savagely individualistic market ideology and a desperate

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp.12-13.

⁶⁸ Çağlar Keyder, “Economic Development and Crisis” *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives* ed. by İrvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.303.

⁶⁹ Çağlar Keyder, “The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy” *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives*, p.59.

search for a new source of authority”. In this picture while the consequence of growing social differentiation and politicized conflict was an increase in demands from the state, popularly elected policy makers were reluctant to experiment with a different policy package that might be unsuccessful and politically disastrous, hence they attempted a series of palliative measures that aimed to postpone the moment of taking radical measures⁷⁰. According to this explanation the coup, emerges as “common peripheral fate”.

However, Roger Owen states that, by 1980, the economic situation had much improved as a result of the introduction of the economic stabilization plan agreed with the IMF in January 1980 and the revival of United States military aid once the American administration decided that it needed a strong Turkey as an ally against the forces unleashed by the Iranian revolution⁷¹. Regarding the issue of violence, Owen seconds Feroz Ahmad who notes that the martial law declared in thirteen provinces in December 1978 should have done much more to reduce political violence than it actually did. Calling attention to the puzzling point that the military was able to bring the situation under control immediately when it took power in September 1980, Owen argues that, on the one hand, it may have had something to do with the fact that the generals were not unhappy to allow matters to deteriorate so as to provide a better justification for their own coup, and on the other hand, it may also be that the police force had become so highly politicized and so heavily infiltrated by NAP supporters before 1980 that it was no longer capable of effective action⁷².

Moreover, as the explanations that focus on internal political dynamics as the reason behind the coup are, to a certain extent, in congruity with the explanations of

⁷⁰ Keyder, “Economic Development and Crisis” p. 303

⁷¹ Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p.87.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.88.

the coup by the military itself, Owen notices that “we must always be careful before accepting a military's explanation of its own motives at face value, particularly when it is accompanied by a concerted public relations campaign designed to present the army as a neutral arbiter and servant of the national interest, forced unwillingly to intervene in a situation of social chaos and total administrative breakdown”⁷³. Accordingly, he directs attention to the internal dynamics of the military as the reason for the intervention. Among these, the first is the fear that the conflict will spill over into the barracks, and the second is the concern that the deteriorating economic and social environment is harmful to the military's interest in terms of recruitment, arms production and the activities of the huge Armed Forces Assistance Fund (OYAK) set up to manage military pensions in 1961.

While the role of international politics are generally discussed in the context of the effects of international organizations during the transition to democracy, the involvement of the US or its support to the coup is generally accepted in analyses about 12 September from an oppositional stance. For instance Ertuğrul Kürkçü states that the 12 September coup is an onset of stability on the Southern flank of the NATO, taking into consideration the dangers against the continuation of the US' regional hegemony such as Greece's withdrawal from the military structure of the NATO, the Iranian revolution, the anti-US and pro-Soviet regimes in Iraq and Syria⁷⁴.

Characteristics of the Coup

In the literature on Turkish politics, when discussing the characteristics of the 1980 coup, the previous interventions in Turkey, and the examples from other countries in

⁷³ Ibid., p.193.

⁷⁴ Seyfi Öngider, “Türkiye’de Geleneksel Siyaset İktidarı Orduyla Paylaşma Sanatıdır” [interview with Ertuğrul Kürkçü] *Son Klasik Darbe* (Istanbul: Aykırı Yayıncılık, September 2005), p.21.

the Middle East and Latin America constitute two main reference points. The relatively quick transition to democracy, the appeal of the military to popular support rather than to organized sectors of the society, and the relations of the military with the former politicians are the basic issues that are discussed.

Karpat states that the first outstanding feature of the 1980 intervention was that it had been planned well ahead of its time by the General Staff in consultation with the field commanders, and this planning included not only the specific tasks to be performed by individual officers, but also the basic constitutional principles, the type of institutions that would be established, the division of labor between 'the state' and the government, and the sort of mechanisms that would be needed to ensure smooth functioning after the return to civilian rule⁷⁵. He also maintains that the coup was not envisaged as a permanent military regime but aimed toward the eventual re-establishment of civilian parliamentary rule 'once the army put the government house in order'. According to him, the 1980 intervention was different from the previous one in that it did not have the organized support of a political party or social group, thus the military's plans for takeover and for the civilian regime that would emerge afterwards needed to take into consideration public opinion and necessitated the approval of the people⁷⁶.

On the other hand, Ahmet Evin maintains that the fact that the military did not enter any coalition with other elite groups was due to the fragmentation of the civil bureaucracy and the division of the intelligentsia along ideological lines. While in this picture the military acted as the sole representative of the state, this in turn reinforced the impression that the 1980 regime was guided more by the objective of

⁷⁵ Kemal Karpat, "Military Interventions: Army-Civilian Relations in Turkey Before and After 1980" *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s* ed. by Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1988), p.149.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.150.

establishing military authority over the state than restoring the authority of the state⁷⁷.

According to William Hale, what is remarkable about the military interventions in Turkey is that each of them has been followed by a return to civilian government after a relatively short period. The fact that the Turkish army has proved exceptional in this respect indicates that the conditions which have determined its actions have differed significantly from those of other countries⁷⁸. He points out three factors as conditioning the army's view of its political task; its political inheritance from Atatürk and the earlier periods, Turkey's international situation, and its own experiences during and after the two previous interventions.

Within this framework Atatürk's legacy is an ambiguous one; on the one hand it advocates the principle that the army must take no part in politics, but on the other hand it encourages the army officers to think of themselves as the vanguard of revolution⁷⁹. The second factor is related with Turkey's membership in NATO and the Council of Europe, which involves formal obligations to respect democratic principles. Hale argues that it is hard to prove the importance of this factor in the decisions of the Generals, but impossible to dismiss it entirely. The third factor is related to the need for the generals to preserve unity and the command hierarchy within the army. Hale maintains that this factor has been effective both in confining authority to the National Security Council after the military takeover and in the efforts of the military rulers to provide laws and constitutional machinery which, they believed, would prevent an eventual return to anarchy⁸⁰. He states that the

⁷⁷ Ahmet Evin, "Changing Patterns of Cleavages Before and After 1980" *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, p.211.

⁷⁸ William Hale, "Transition to Civilian Governments in Turkey: The Military Perspective" *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, p.159.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.160-161.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.163-164.

military was determined to suppress anarchy, to right the economy, and to re-establish an elected civilian administration, and they achieved all three aims, but the army's greatest problem was not in dealing with the terrorists but with the politicians. Accordingly, at the beginning they hoped that the old party leaders would allow the members of their parties to participate in the new government, but when this hope proved to be impossible, they determined to kill them politically⁸¹.

According to Ergun Özbudun, like the one in 1960, the 1980 intervention involved a complete break with existing institutional schemes⁸². Accordingly, the military wielded significant political influence in the making of the new constitution, leading to political regimes rather different from the old one and in the transition to democracy the military carefully controlled the conditions and the modality of the transition. For Özbudun, the characteristics of the 1980 intervention that differ from the 1960 intervention were that the former was carried out by the top level of the armed forces within the hierarchical chain of command; and it chose not to collaborate with any political party or any other civilian political institution while outlawing all existing political parties⁸³. Moreover, he states that the 1980 intervention was different from the one in 1960 with regard to the nature of the policies they followed. Whereas the 1960 coup resembled moderating coups, the 1980 regime, except for its relatively short duration, passing more than six hundred laws affecting almost all aspects of social, economic, and political structures, is reminiscent of the bureaucratic authoritarian military regimes in Latin America and elsewhere⁸⁴. According to this view, the similarities of the 1980 regime in Turkey with the bureaucratic authoritarian regimes are as follows: the 1980 coup in Turkey

⁸¹Ibid., pp.174-175.

⁸² Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics* p. 24.

⁸³ Ibid., p.25.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.26.

followed a period of deep economic crisis, brought about by the failure of ISI policies, and this crisis marked the end of the populist coalition forged by the DP and the Justice Party (JP), the radicalization of the urban working class, and the growth of authoritarian tendencies within the middle class because of a fear of communism. Furthermore, the 1980 regime pursued policies aimed at shifting the basis of the economy from an import substitution to an export promotion model while restricting the mobilization of the popular sector. The aim of the military regime to restructure the economy and society can also be seen in its efforts to demobilize the working class and depoliticize the society at large, especially by outlawing all cooperation between political parties and other civil society institutions such as trade unions, professional organizations, and voluntary associations⁸⁵.

However, according to Dankwart Rustow, there is a fundamental contrast between the temporary interventions in Turkey and the long-term interventions by the military in other Third World or Mediterranean countries, such as Korea, the Philippines, Argentina and Brazil in the 1960s, Chile in the 1970s, Nasser in Egypt, Reza Shah in Iran, Franco in Spain, or the colonels' junta in Greece⁸⁶. He states that whereas those other coups established repressive authoritarian or personalist regimes, the Turkish military on each occasion assumed power for a strictly limited period, relinquishing it as soon as law and order were restored and democratic institutions strengthened. Turkey's soldiers, aside from serious excesses during each of their three interventions, on balance have acted as a temporary and progressive political force, taking seriously their self-chosen role as the guardians of the constitutional order. Rustow asserts that while it was not until the basic laws adopted during the 1980 military intervention that Turkey was able to achieve a workable balance

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.27.

⁸⁶ Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Turkey's Experience in Historical and Comparative Perspective" in *State, Democracy, and the Military : Turkey in the 1980s*, p.242.

between executive and legislative powers, avoiding the earlier dangers of extreme majoritarianism and excessive party splintering, in a true test of their constitutional commitments, President Kenan Evren and his colleagues promptly accepted the voters' verdict, no matter how distasteful at the moment⁸⁷. Rustow concludes that the maturity of the Turkish electorate, the resourcefulness of its economic and political leadership, and the generals' readiness to bow to the voters' verdict are likely to make further military interventions unnecessary.

Ahmet Evin argues that contrary to popular belief, the primary purpose of the military in intervening was not to take over policing functions to establish law and order, but rather it was to protect the state by reducing its vulnerability in the face of intra-elite conflict⁸⁸. He adds that a second and equally important factor was the danger that the fragmentation and conflict within and among civilian institutions would adversely affect the military organization itself⁸⁹. To this picture, Owen adds that there was a similar military interest in getting out of the political scene as quickly as possible, in order to protect the military from political rivalries⁹⁰.

According to George Harris, when the generals moved to take power in 1980, they acted on the premise that the regime required more extensive adjustments than in 1971. Yet, he maintains, from their conduct as rulers, they demonstrated that they had not lost faith that with the proper rules a healthy democratic order could be devised⁹¹. Accordingly, the aims of the military leaders were to create a new order that would have to rule out the political extremes of left and right, to guard against excesses by the politicians, to increase the chance that the party receiving the most

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.243.

⁸⁸ Evin, *Changing Patterns of Cleavages*, p.204.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.204.

⁹⁰ Owen, p.193.

⁹¹ George S. Harris "The Role of the Military in Turkey in the 1980s: Guardians or Decision-Makers?" *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, p.193.

votes secured a working majority in the parliament, and to find ways to discourage a proliferation of parties. While these aims were tried to be carried out by the new constitution, the political parties' act and the election laws, Harris claims that it would be a mistake to regard the 1982 Constitution as much more authoritarian than the 1961 Constitution. He asserts that the adjustments embodied in the 1982 Constitution were designed to provide ways to prevent parliamentary deadlock or to end it through such expedients as elections. He also adds that the 1982 Constitution did not accord the military establishment important new powers; while it added precision to the composition of the National Security Council and provided for staff, the main change to previous practice was to specify that 'decisions of the National Security Council ... are to be given *priority* consideration by the Council of Ministers', whereas previously these decisions would be *recommended* to the Council of Ministers⁹². According to Harris, the depth of the political crisis when the generals took over and the confidence inspired by the fatherly approach of General Evren assured that the populace at large accepted the military intervention as legitimate, and because it was not only those on the left that were detained but also the extreme right militants were pursued, the period of military rule would end without leaving the residue of bitterness at partiality which the earlier experience had left⁹³. Harris concludes that the guardian role of the armed forces was well established after the transition to democracy, but the post-1980 pattern appears to be one of shared-decision making in security matters, whereas he points out the persistence of almost all Turks in pursuing an elective parliamentary process as the most favorable sign for the future of Turkish democracy⁹⁴.

⁹² Ibid., p.194.

⁹³ Ibid., p.196.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.199.

On the other hand Heper argues that the main target of the 1982 constitution was the pre-1980 politicians⁹⁵. He states that post-1980 elites in Turkey no longer trusted the politicians for the internal as well as external security of Turkey and for related matters, including the socialization of the young. While the military became the ultimate guardian of the Republic, now there was an enlarged role for the military in the form of the National Security Council, which came to have greater powers than under the earlier regimes⁹⁶.

Transition to Democracy

There seems to be an agreement between scholars writing about the military interventions in Turkey over the claim that each time the military intervened –in 1960, 1971, and 1980-, democracy was restored quickly and smoothly, suggesting that the soldiers' intention on each occasion was a moderating coup rather than the creation of a lasting military regime. As demonstrated above, while some scholars explain this relatively rapid transition by the military's commitment to the principles of democracy, others emphasize the concerns related with the internal dynamics of the military. Still some others point to the influence of international dynamics that have been effective in the transition to democracy. For instance İhsan Dağı argues that the view that explains transition to democracy with the commitment of the Turkish military to a democratic form of government ignores the constraining impact of the international environment on the decisions of the military leaders⁹⁷. Focusing on the effects of the European Community and the Council Of Europe over issues such as the timetable for the return to democracy, human rights, extension of detention period, Dağı states that although it is impossible to say that European

⁹⁵ Metin Heper, "Conclusion" *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s* p.252.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.253.

⁹⁷ İhsan Dağı, "Democratic Transition in Turkey, 1980-83: The Impact of European Diplomacy" *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no.2 (April 1996), p.124.

pressures forced the military regime to restore democratic institutions, its significance and contribution to the process cannot be denied, and the cumulative impact of the west was effective. Turkey's historical commitment to Westernization and its accompanying quest to integrate politically, economically and culturally into Europe determined the position of the military in restoring democracy⁹⁸.

On this point it can be claimed that although they differ in explaining the motives behind the restoration of democracy or the dynamics effective during this process, the scholars generally see the relatively quick transition to democracy as a positive aspect of the 1980 intervention, and the residuals of this process regarding the future of democracy in Turkey are under-emphasized. In this respect Ergun Özbudun's evaluation of those residuals becomes important. According to him, although each of the military interventions in Turkey lasted only a reasonably short period, on each occasion the military gained important exit guarantees that enhanced its role in the subsequent democratic regime⁹⁹. Within the model Özbudun draws on, transitions to democracy from military regimes are characterized by the fact that the transition process is initiated and controlled by the authoritarian power holders, which implies that the authoritarian power holders are almost always able to determine the conditions for their extrication from government and to obtain certain guarantees, usually called *exit guarantees*, of a share of power in the coming democratic political order¹⁰⁰. Exit guarantees are often incorporated into the new constitution adopted prior to the first free elections in the hope that constitutional status will enhance their effectiveness and staying power. He groups these guarantees under five headings: tutelary powers, reserved domains, manipulation of the electoral

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.136.

⁹⁹ Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics* p.105.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.106.

process, irreversibility of the actions of the military regime, and amnesty or indemnity laws.

The first group of exit guarantees aims to create certain tutelary powers for the military over the policies of the freely elected governments, and they involve exercising “broad oversight of the government and its policy decisions while claiming to represent vaguely formulated fundamental and enduring interests of the nation-state.”¹⁰¹ One way of accomplishing this is to incorporate into the constitution certain substantive values cherished by the military, the examples of which can be seen in many provisions of the 1982 Constitution, referring to the territorial and national integrity of the state and to the modernizing reforms of Kemal Atatürk. Özbudun states that an even more effective method of introducing tutelary supervision is to create military-dominated formal institutions entrusted with the constitutional duty of preserving such values. The two examples of this are the enhanced powers of the National Security Council after the 1980 intervention, and the broad and ambiguous notion of national security that defines national security as the protection of the constitutional order of the state, its national existence, and its integrity; the protection of all of its interests in the international field, including political, social, cultural, and economic interests; and of interests derived from international treaties against all external and internal threats¹⁰². A third way of granting the military tutelary powers is through ambiguous constitutional references to the role of the Armed Forces as 'guarantors' of the constitution and the laws. Although the 1961 and 1982 Turkish constitutions do not entrust the military with such an overall guarantorship role, Article 35 of the Military Internal Service Code gives it the task of “protecting and safeguarding the Turkish motherland and the

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.107.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp.107-108.

Turkish Republic as defined by the Constitution”, and this article was invoked by the military leaders to legitimate their interventions in politics¹⁰³.

The second group of exit guarantees, reserved domains, indicate removal of specific areas of governmental authority and substantive policy making from the purview of elected officials, thus the civilian democratic governments are kept from exercising effective authority over a large and important segment of the state. The most important example of the reserved domains in the Turkish case is the growing autonomy of the military; by the 1982 constitution, in addition to maintaining acquisitions from the 1971–1973 period, the armed forces were exempted from oversight by the newly created State Supervisory Council (Article 108), no judicial appeals were allowed against decisions of the Supreme Military Council, under the Law on the State of Siege (Law 1402), as amended in 1980, no judicial appeals could be made before administrative or civil law courts against decisions of martial law commanders; further, their civil law responsibility could not be invoked for personal damages they caused, the same law allowed martial law courts to try cases involving crimes—even those committed outside martial law regions -provided they were connected with a case under trial before a martial law court- and finally, the same law substantially broadened the competence of these courts by including a large number of criminal offenses within their scope¹⁰⁴.

Thirdly, departing military regimes may attempt to manipulate the electoral process to preserve for themselves a larger share of power in the coming democratic regime. The simplest way to accomplish this aim is to elect the leader of the outgoing military regime president, or some other key officer, in the new democratic regime. This occurred in the election of Kenan Evren as the president of the Republic in 1982

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.110.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.111-112.

under highly unusual circumstances; as the presidential election was combined with the constitutional referendum; a “yes” vote for the constitution was considered a vote for the presidency of Evren, the sole candidate¹⁰⁵. Bans on political activities of the former politicians, the strict control of the parties that would enter the elections in 1983 by the National Security Council are other examples of electoral manipulation.

Fourthly, departing military regimes may attempt to make some of their actions irreversible or at least difficult to reverse, as the Transitional Article no. 15 of the 1982 Constitution provided that laws passed by the ruling military council could not be challenged for unconstitutionality before the Constitutional Court, even after the transition to democracy. Özbudun argues that although, like any laws, such laws remained subject to change or repeal by parliament, this restriction on the competence of the Constitutional Court constituted an important roadblock to attempts to clean up the “authoritarian debris” as Brazilians call it¹⁰⁶. Passing more than 600 laws that regulated such vital areas as elections, political parties, the judiciary, the police, martial law and emergency rule, local governments, universities, the Radio and Television Corporation, associations, trade unions, public professional organizations, collective bargaining and strikes, the press, and the right to assembly, among many others, Özbudun states that the authoritarian debris left by the National Security Council was much greater than that of its predecessor¹⁰⁷.

Lastly, one of the most common exit guarantees for departing military regimes is an amnesty law on crimes, particularly human rights violations, committed by the leaders and officials of the regime. In Turkey, the military regime incorporated guarantees against judicial investigation and prosecution of the ruling military councils, members of the government, and all officials acting on their orders

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.113.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.114.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.115.

against criminal and civil proceedings, into the constitution; no recourse to any court was allowed involving those officials' criminal, financial, or civil responsibilities by the Transitional Article no.15¹⁰⁸.

While Özbudun states that the 1983 Turkish transition is almost a textbook example of the degree to which a departing military regime can dictate the conditions of its departure, he adds that nearly twenty years after the transition, however, a significant degree of civilianization seems to have occurred¹⁰⁹. Whereas developments such as the constitutional amendments, and the changes in the ruling of the National Security Council had been effective in that civilianization, he points out that in the post-1983 period, civilianization was less a matter of formal constitutional change than one of informal practice and adaptation as can be seen in efforts of Turgut Özal¹¹⁰.

In general however, within the literature delineated above, the transition to democracy after the coup is seen as an accomplished process. I claim that there are a number of problematic aspects in these accounts regarding the representation of the 12 September 1980 coup. The first one is that the literature on the 1980 coup is relatively limited when compared to the 1960 and even 1997 interventions, and hardly displays a critical attitude towards the coup. While the explanations of the military about the causes of the coup are generally taken for granted and remain unproblematized, to a certain extent, the 1980 military coup is depicted as a natural consequence and resolution of the economic and political crisis the Turkish society experienced in the 1970s. Moreover, the statements of the military, such as “the military acts as a guardian of the state”, “it is unwilling to stay in power for long, and is committed to the ideal of democracy” are very commonly accepted without paying

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.116.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.117.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.118.

due attention neither to the discursive mechanisms of legitimation of the coup employed in those statements nor to the effects of such statements on the future of democracy in Turkey. While one of the most important of those effects, the dominance of the military in politics is sometimes discussed for instance with reference to the role of the National Security Council, issues such as the anti-democratic character of the coup, or the gross human rights violations during the military administration are far from being included in the epistemological horizons of the debate on the 1980 coup. As such those debates are marked not only with what they include but also with what they exclude. One aspect of these exclusions is that, the effects of the coup on the daily lives of the people, on their subjectivities, and the relation of the military coups with the militarist elements of Turkish culture remains un-studied. In addition, when the issue is discussed only within the framework of civil-military relations, the only relevant actors included are the military and the politicians, and other social actors and social processes are deemed irrelevant. Moreover, the coup is already accepted to be a past event, and neither its effects on the present nor its anti-democratic remnants are problematized. While the case of Turkey is compared and contrasted with other developing countries, most notably Latin American countries, the processes of coming to terms with the military regimes in those countries that include various social actors and last for long periods are either totally neglected or seen as less important within the larger frameworks of political science such as the models of bureaucratic authoritarianism and civil-military relations. As such the 1980 coup remains to be merely an academic field of study, taken its place in the dusty pages of history, and hence is far from being a subject of a political process of coming to terms with it.

The Coup According to the Military

In this section the causes of the coup, and the views of the military regime regarding democracy and society will be examined. In doing this I will primarily rely on *12 September in Turkey, Before and After*, a book prepared by the General Secretariat of the National Security Council (NSC) with the aim of setting forth the ‘real’ reasons for the coup, and the speeches of Kenan Evren.

In the military communiqué No 1. read by Kenan Evren on radio and television, the general situation of the country and hence the causes of the coup were stated as¹¹¹:

The state, with its main bodies, has been rendered unable to function, the constitutional institutions have assumed a contradictory and muted silence and the political parties have failed to bring about the unity and togetherness and to take the necessary measures which could have saved the state because of their sterile bickerings and unconciliatory attitudes. Accordingly, the subversive and secessionist forces have increased their activities to the utmost, endangering the security of life and property of the citizens. Instead of Kemalism reactionary and other warped ideologies have been produced and promoted in a systematic manner and all the educational institutions from the elementary school to the universities, the administrative system, judiciary organs, internal security organization, labor institutions, political parties and the citizens even in the most remote corners of the country have become the targets of attacks and suppression and pushed into the threshold of a civil war and division. In short, the State has been incapacitated.

As such, while the life and property of the citizens, the principles of Kemalism and the state are pointed out to be in danger of extinction, the coup is presented as the only option for the military, which saw itself responsible for “safeguarding and protecting the Turkish Republic” in accordance with its Internal Service Act. Indeed the 35th article of the Internal Service Act of the Turkish Armed Forces, which states that “the duty of the armed forces is to protect and safeguard the Turkish land and the Turkish Republic as stipulated by the Constitution”¹¹² is offered as the only legal

¹¹¹ General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey: Before and After*, (Ankara: General Secretariat of the National Security Council, 1982), p.221.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.224.

basis of the military take over, and as such constitutes the claim of the legality of the coup. Yet in doing this, the Internal Service Act of the Armed Forces, and the duty it assigned to the armed forces, is situated above all the constitutional institutions of the country and the constitution itself, which has also been changed after the coup.

In the words of Kenan Evren : “this action [the Armed Forces’ taking over the state administration] was carried through as an obligation, for there was no other way of preventing the breakdown and destruction of the nation and the state.”¹¹³ In *12 September in Turkey, Before and After*, it is especially emphasized that this obligation is something above politics and the armed forces “have never nursed political ambitions and have never aspired to be a political force”¹¹⁴. Thus, the 12 September intervention was “conducted within the framework of the existing chain of command, based on the principle of absolute obedience, to ensure that the armed forces themselves did not get stuck in the quagmire of politics”¹¹⁵.

Moreover, it is maintained that the armed forces have always been loyal to and respectful of the basic principles of the democratic order, and active in defending and protecting the democratic system. Accordingly, whenever faced with the necessity of safeguarding the Turkish Republic, the armed forces have undertaken this task for the sole purpose of preserving the happiness and welfare of the Turkish nation and the integrity of the country. They did so for the re-establishment of a democratic order, and having completed their mission they left the power in the hands of a civilian administration in accordance with the rule of a democratic society. On this point it is helpful to look at the definition of democracy according to the military¹¹⁶:

¹¹³ Kenan Evren, “Preface” *12 September in Turkey : Before and After*, p.ix

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.x.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.ix.

¹¹⁶ General Secretariat of the National Security Council, p.11.

Democracy means a system of open discussions, leading to the discovery of what is best and real. In democratic societies, the opposition parties and the parties in power debate the various issues in the context of their programmes, rules and traditions, but in mutual understanding and within the bounds of tolerance. Any government lacking sufficient support obviously cannot legislate the measures which it hoped to enact.

The most striking aspect of this definition of democracy is that it is perceived only on the level of party politics, and basic rights and freedoms are not mentioned. As such, the most important component of democracy is a strong government that is able to take the necessary measures. In addition democracy is seen from an instrumentalist perspective and its aim is stated as the ‘discovery of what is best and real’. What the word ‘real’ indicates here is that before the coup the actors of the democratic system were engaged in futile and useless discussions. In Turkey, it is claimed that the democratic and parliamentary system has run into difficulties and impasses, from time to time, and in 1980, it was finally paralyzed by a combination of political negligence and treason that could have led to the destruction of the nation.

In the picture depicted above, on the one hand the military forces are positioned above politics, appointed to defend and protect the democratic system, on the other hand politics and politicians are presented as the causes of the impasse that the country ran into, hence necessitating military intervention. Describing the years between the October 1973 and June 1977 elections, the NSC states that: “Because of their futile bickerings and pursuit of their personal interests, the political parties failed to adapt to the necessities of the new situation. The political malaise gradually caused social and economic tensions in the society.”¹¹⁷ The general amnesty introduced in 1974 is seen as one of the causes of “the new wave of anarchy and terror in subsequent years” because “terrorist leaders and ideologues imprisoned for trying to poison Turkish youth with archaic ideologies alien to Turkish society were

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.12.

all set free”¹¹⁸. The accusation of politicians for ‘putting their personal ambitions and party interests before the interests of the nation’, and therefore preventing the functioning of the parliament as well as the solution of the problems of the country continues to be repeated in elaboration for the period from the 1977 elections to the intervention. In this period, it is claimed that “the partisan attitudes permeated even the smallest organs in the structure of the society” and their malfunctioning caused everything to be worse¹¹⁹. In addition to charging political parties with overstaffing the government offices and state economic enterprises with their supporters, the NSC also asserted that professional chambers were turned into centers of political activity.

For instance, under a subheading “terrorism and strikes hand in hand” it is stated that: “legal strikes as a right of workers, had been degenerated, the complicated medium being consciously exploited to utilize worker rights as a tool of ideologies” the aim of which, in parallel to terrorism and violence, is to destroy the country economically and socially¹²⁰. Similarly it is claimed that the national education system is seriously damaged, and the youth was being subject to “the consequences of sterile political polemics”¹²¹. Deviation of education from national standards is explained as such: “the bloody hands of anarchy now extended to elementary and secondary school of children, students and teachers being divided into camps of antagonism. Education deviated from principles of Atatürk and children were influenced by various foreign ideologies.”¹²²

Talking about the incidents which occurred on May Day 1977, the sole responsibility of the deaths is ascribed into ‘the left-wing organizations’ and their ‘bloodthirsty militants’: “the fanatics who shouted ‘Freedom for the People’ created

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.15.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.27.

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp.45-46.

¹²¹ Ibid., p.16.

¹²² Ibid., p.50.

the most bloody incident in Turkey's recent history. They had ruthlessly carried out the orders given them by foreign powers against their own countrymen."¹²³ Therefore the 'anarchical situation' is depicted as instigated by foreign powers and backed by foreign ideologies. This depiction of the destructive effects of 'foreign powers and ideologies' indeed reflects a very deeply rooted distress of the Republican elite about the interference of the west into the affairs of Turkey. Mardin demonstrates how this strain in Atatürk's thought, reflecting the conviction that 'Turkey could only lift itself by its own bootstraps, that it should be wary of foreign assistance for its modernization, that the latter always involved a danger of interfering into the affairs of Turkey' parallels the deep-seated disillusionment of the Young Turks towards the West.¹²⁴

Moreover, the officers' analysis of what had gone wrong in Turkey and how it ought best to be put right, raises important questions regarding the military's efforts to restructure Turkey's political system and to sanitize it from what it regarded as harmful political influences. Seen from their perspective, while the background of all the problems caused by several decades of rapid economic and social change disappears, those problems are presented as either not tackled properly by power-hungry and narrow-minded politicians or as deliberately exacerbated by misguided Turks under the influence of dangerous foreign ideologies. This in turn, brings the natural conclusion that the way ahead was to create a structure in which new national parties led by public-spirited persons could develop constructive policies in isolation from the harmful influences of class or interest groups located in the wider society. While the closing of former political parties and the bans on former politicians are

¹²³ Ibid., p.17.

¹²⁴ Şerif Mardin, "Continuity and Change in the Ideas of Young Turks", *RC Occasional Papers*, (Ankara: Yenişehir Matbaası, 1969), p. 9.

thought to serve this end, against the danger of foreign ideologies, the authentic ideology of the Turkish nation is pointed out to be Kemalism by the military:

The Kemalist pattern of thought, and the proper pride in being a Türk, lie at the heart of the Turkish Republic. The principles of Atatürk are the cornerstone of this structure. When these basic principles were strayed from, fratricidal and separatist movements began to emerge in the country. If Atatürk's principles are not followed faithfully and conscientiously, and if these are not accepted as the basic pillars of the Turkish Republic, it will be impossible for a modern, civilized, healthy, consistent, humane and stable state administration to function.¹²⁵

The obvious contrast between the adjectives chosen to describe the 'anarchists' and the functioning state administration is very striking. While 'the fanatics', 'bloodthirsty militants' try to 'poison' the Turkish youth with 'archaic' and 'alien' ideologies, the Kemalist pattern of thought is depicted as the guarantee of a 'civilized', 'healthy' and 'humane' state administration. I think the usage of this medical language can be read as a signifier of the organic view of the society as perceived by the military; a healthy body, i.e. the Turkish nation, of which Kemalism signifies the mental structure and the army the physical power, defends itself against destructive external threats. In this picture, youth, which is the most important component of the functioning and re-production of this body, needs to be protected from the influence of outside powers that threaten organic stability. Moreover, the conflation of the notions of state, nation and country in the picture depicted above is also worth considering. The apparent ease of the usage of all these notions in place of one another, thought together with the organic view of the society reflects the dominance of corporatist elements and statism in the ideology of the military, through which the state is taken to be the categorical equivalent of the society and the nation, the nation being a unified body free of any divisions be it class or ideological differences.

¹²⁵ General Secretariat of the National Security Council, p. 75.

The employment of medical language in the discourse of the military also has other implications. To give but one example, in a speech made in 1981, Kenan Evren compared the 12 September intervention to a medical operation¹²⁶:

... bir hastalık teşhis edilemezse ilacı da bulunamaz. İlacı da bulunamadığı içindir ki hastalık bütün vücudu sardı. İşte bu durumda iken her zaman olduğu gibi, Türk Silahlı kuvvetleri, millettten aldığı güçle duruma el koymak zorunda kaldı ve hastalığın tedavisine başladı. Bu hastalığın ilacı birlik ve beraberlik ruhunun yeniden canlandırılması ve kaybolan kanun ve nizam hakimiyetinin tesis edilmesiydi. ... hangi hasta ameliyat masasına isteyerek yatar? Ama ameliyattan sonra sıhhatine kavuşur. İşte biz de hastayı ameliyat masasına yatırdık, ameliyatını yaptık, şimdilik iyilik safhasına gidiyor.¹²⁷

Peter Conrad defines medicalization as a process by which nonmedical problems become defined and treated as medical problems, usually in terms of illnesses or disorders¹²⁸. While the key issue in medicalization is a definitional one, the social control power coming from having the authority to define certain behaviors, person or things, it also has practical and political implications. One of these implications concerning our subject matter is envisioning the society as a bodily constitution that needs rehabilitation. The fact that the reflections of this vision go beyond the employment of medical metaphors in the discussion of social/cultural/political problems can be seen in the construction of projects that consider the political convicts as psychological deviants and hence develop strategies of rehabilitation relying on the disciplines of neurology, genetics and psychiatry¹²⁹. The political prisoners of the military administration period give examples of how they were brought before psychiatrics who questioned them in order to reveal what was deviant

¹²⁶ Kenan Evren, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanı Kenan Evren'in söylev ve demeçleri*. [12 Eylül 1980-12 Eylül 1981] (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1981), pp.339-40.

¹²⁷ English reads: In the absence of a diagnosis, no medicine can be developed against a disease. It is because no medicine was found that the disease has conquered every part of this body. The Turkish Military Forces were forced to take matters in hand with the power the nation bestowed on them and began to cure the disease. The medicine for this disease lay in the revitalization of the spirit of unity and solidarity and the reestablishment of the threatened sovereignty of law and order. Where is the patient who willingly lies on the operating table? Yet, she will gain his health after surgery. So, we put the patient on the table, operated on her, and, for now, she recuperates.

¹²⁸ Peter Conrad, "Medicalization and Social Control" *Annual Review of Sociology* 18, (1992), p. 209.

¹²⁹ Nurdan Gürbilek, *Vitrinde Yaşamak*. (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001), p.71.

in their psychology, whereas they had been exposed to severe restriction and harsh tortures in prison conditions¹³⁰.

The military administration's attitude towards the political prisoners found its best expression in Kenan Evren's statement "should we nourish them instead of executing them"¹³¹. That this attitude has not been subject to change was proved in a television program recorded at Muğla University on 1 March 2006 with the participation of Kenan Evren. During the program Evren particularly expressed that he was not regretful for staging the coup, and added that had there been the same conditions he would do the same thing¹³². In addition, he stated that he did not have any qualms of conscience about the sentences of death that were executed during the military administration, and described the coup as a 'revolution'. While Evren's explanations were applauded by the present student crowd, he asked them why they did not ask about torture. He answered his own question by stating that he felt sorry when he learned that some prison officers had tortured the prisoners, and immediately proscribed torture. Invoking the punishment of a police officer and a non-commissioned officer because they had inflicted torture, he concluded that today there is still torture, in the USA and Iraq, too.

There took place extensive debates in the media after this program, many of them indicating that neither the 12 September coup, nor its consequences have been sufficiently and publicly discussed. This chapter also supports this view and suggests that the extension and deepening of the discussion about the 12 September coup and its consequences as well as the discourse of the military would give fruitful insights about the present state of democracy in Turkey.

¹³⁰ Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, *Asılmayıp Beslenenler: Bir 12 Eylül Hesaplaşması* (İstanbul: Babil Yayınları, 2004), p.26.

¹³¹ Turkish reads: "Asmayalım da besleyelim mi?"

¹³² Radikal. 3 March 2006. *Evren: Pişman Değilim*. available [online]: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=180255> [25 June 2006]

CHAPTER III

NARRATING THE 12 SEPTEMBER 1980 COUP

In this chapter I will endeavor to undertake a narrative analysis of the interviews I have conducted in order to understand how the people who were politically engaged before the coup interpret the causes and the consequences of the coup today, how the coup becomes effective in their attributing meaning to their activities in the pre and post coup periods, and what ‘coming to terms with the coup’ is for them. While doing this by analyzing the possibilities that their narratives about the coup open for making politics in the present and the limitations of these possibilities that the same narratives reveal, I will try to understand to what extent their narratives about the coup are in congruity with the other discourses about the coup and to what extent these narratives can be subversive of the hegemonic discourse about the coup.

Before beginning the analysis of the interviews, I will shortly discuss the theoretical background that informs the conceptual framework of narrative analysis. Drawing on Hayden White and Jerome Bruner’s discussion of narrative, Ewick and Silbey argue that to qualify as a narrative a particular communication must minimally have three elements or features; the first is reliance on some form of selective appropriation of past events and characters, the second is the temporal order of events, and the third is relatedness of the events and characters to one another and

to some overarching structure, often in the context of an opposition or struggle¹³³. Bringing together these elements, Hinchman and Hinchman define narrative as “discourses with a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience, and thus offers insights about the world and/or people’s experiences of it”¹³⁴. I draw on this definition of narrative in analyzing the interviews and try to expose the sequential and temporal order of the narratives, as well the insights about the coup that they reveal.

Moreover, Ewick and Silbey maintain that the narrative is celebrated in social sciences on two grounds. The first is the claim that narratives have the capacity to reveal truths about the social world that are flattened or silenced by an insistence on more traditional methods of social science, since narrative is not just a form that is imposed upon social life, but constitutive of which it represents¹³⁵. The second claim is that narratives have significant subversive or transformative potential as they allow the silenced to speak by giving voice to the subject. These two claims together build up the argument that the multiple stories which have been buried, silenced, or obscured by the logico-deductive methods of social science have the capacity to undermine the illusion of an objective-naturalized world which often sustains inequality and powerlessness. However, Ewick and Silbey argue that as socially organized phenomena narratives are implicated in both the production of social meanings and the power relations expressed by and sustaining those meanings. They particularly specify that when narratives emphasize particularity, and when they efface the connection between the particular and the general, they help sustain

¹³³ Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey, “Subversive Stories and Hegemonic Tales: Towards a Sociology of Narrative” *Law and Society Review* 29, no.2 (1995), p.200.

¹³⁴ Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman, “Introduction” *Memory, identity, community : the idea of narrative in the human sciences* ed. by Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman (Albany,: State University of New York Press, 2001) p.xvi.

¹³⁵ Ewick and Silbey, p.199.

hegemony, whereas when narrativity helps bridge particularities and makes connections across individual experiences and subjectivities, it can function as a subversive social practice¹³⁶. Relying on this framework, in analyzing the narratives, on the one hand I try to depict what kind of a ‘truth claim’ about the coup is present in the interviews and from which subject position this claim is expressed, and on the other hand I discuss to what extent these narratives can subvert the hegemonic discourse about the coup and in which aspects they remain within it, focusing not only on the content of the narratives but also on the discursive mechanisms used in constituting those narratives.

In analyzing the interviews, during which the period before the coup and the coup itself have constituted the main temporal borders of the talks, I also benefited from the insights provided by social memory studies. An underlying assumption of all these studies is that memory is not made up of a revival of past events in the human mind but the past is a “construction” reflecting the concerns and interests of the present¹³⁷. Accordingly, the past is being constantly re-configured according to the needs of the present and it legitimizes the present. With this insight, while working through the interviews, I also try to analyze the specific interests of the present that are effective in the narration of the past, and the mechanisms of the process of constructing the past in the present. In doing this I try to understand the constitutive relationship between the hegemonic discourse and the particular narratives, drawing on Davison’s account of ‘politics of memory’. Davison argues that the political contestation over remembrance, i.e. the making, circulating and contesting of the collective narratives of memory, indicates a complex hegemonic process that operates within a number of different ‘socio-political spaces’ or ‘social

¹³⁶ Ibid., p.200.

¹³⁷ Barry Schwartz, “Memory as a Cultural System. Abraham Lincoln in World War I” *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 17, no.6 (1997), p.22.

arenas' each constituting different types of collectivity¹³⁸. These collectivities range from the networks of families or kinship groups to the public sphere of nation states and transnational power blocs. In this process, in the more intimate groupings individuals exchange personal stories about a common experience and these stories begin to circulate within private social arenas. For these stories to reach more extensive public recognition, these private groups must create agencies that are capable of recasting their narratives into a new, integrated collective form and projecting them into a public arena where they speak to others. Davison claims that in this making-public of collective memory a process of transformation and representation is at work so that the new, sectional public narrative shapes the individual and common/shared memories from which it is composed, selects some while excluding others, and frames them within its preferred narrative tropes. Moreover, this memory from below is often articulated under extreme pressures and privations, is silenced and marginalized, and held to the level of private remembrance by the hegemonic public narratives, especially those instituted publicly from above by the state. Therefore, while the private memories can have the power to secure political effects only by becoming public narratives, the official discourses try to keep them privatized in order to deny the responsibility for abuses of power and injustices committed.

During the interviews, the interviewees were asked about their political socialization and objectives in the 1970s, activities they were involved in; how they remember the general situation of Turkey in the 1970s; the causes and consequences of the coup according to them, and what coming to terms with the coup means for them. Within the narrative structure that comes out through the answers given to

¹³⁸ Graham Davison, "Trauma, Place, and the Politics of Memory: Bloody Sunday, Derry, 1972-2004" in *History Workshop Journal*, 59, 2005 pp. 153-154

these questions, the coup occupied the central point of the temporal and sequential order of the narratives. Firstly, the sequential order of the narratives was centralized around the coup as it was placed within a clear framework of casual explanation regarding both its causes and its effects. The coup was told as a traumatic event, anticipated but not prepared for; having extensive but at the same time planned effects; not only changing the political, economic and cultural atmosphere of the country dramatically and suddenly but also distorting the ‘real story’ of the pre-coup period which was claimed to be the genuine reason behind the coup. Secondly, the temporal structure of the narratives also centers on the coup as the periods before and after the coup were always compared and contrasted with each other through continuous sliding of the temporality of the narrative time, the coup stood as the constant reference point of the comparison. Compared and contrasted by moving back and forth between the past and the present, these two periods were told to be completely different from each other and this difference was generally verbalized around the moral degeneration trope. The manifestation of this difference at the subjective level has been around the clear contrast between the importance of collectivity before the coup and the ascendancy of the feeling of loneliness after the coup. And lastly, what is meant by coming to terms with the coup always exceeded the limits of calling the responsables of the coup to account and was articulated with references to the present state of the military and democracy in Turkey. In some interviews a process of questioning and coming to terms with the coup was seen as an enabling possibility for today that might contribute to the development of democracy, but in others it was seen as an already missed opportunity. In what follows I will elaborate each of these points.

The Coup as a Traumatic Event

Standing at the center of the temporal and sequential order of the narratives, the coup was associated with a number of key phrases such as planning, success, power, and crime. As such the coup was represented as being a result of a long planning process, supported by the US, very successful in its operation and in reaching its long term effects which were at the same time its specifically articulated objectives, welcomed by the people because it represented power, yet criminal because of the injustices involved in its planning as well as in its practices. In this representation the notion of ‘the coup’ was often used as a substitute for the military, and it was personified to a certain extent by attributing it characteristics like purposefulness, criminality etc. This representation of the coup constitutes one part of the truth claim as it is manifested in the interviews, whereas the other part consists of the representation of the other side, i.e. the interviewees themselves and/or more generally the left, the ones against the coup. This representation is made through concepts that are the mirror image of the ones used to characterize the coup: first, there are the claims of being blameless and having sincere ideals with regard to the pre-coup period, which are contrasted with the criminality and the US backing of the coup. The left was told as unprepared for the very well planned coup; and while the coup was powerful and welcomed by the people the left was told as being traumatized and abandoned by the people, hence the success of the coup meant the defeat of the left.

To begin with, in all the interviews, I was told that there was a long process of preparation behind the coup, which included not only the military-strategic planning of the coup but also the escalating problem of violence in the period before the coup. While in the discourse of the military the 1970s was described as a chaotic period in which the state organs were rendered ineffective by the irresponsible

attitudes of the politicians regarding the prevailing anarchy and terror, and this situation in the country was put forth as the legitimating ground for the coup, the interviewees claimed that the atmosphere of violence was particularly stirred up so as to constitute a justification for the coup which was planned long before in the face of the rising opposition of the 1970s. It was generally stated that the militants of the extreme right were backed by the state with the aim of creating an intimidating atmosphere in which the people should welcome the coup as the ‘savior of the nation’ that restores the rule of law and order. To give one example of these statements:

Gerçek yüzünü bilmeyenler için darbe bir kurtarıcıydı. Doğru, yani bu çatışmalı ortamdan insanlar zarar görmüşlerdi, evlerine kapanmak zorunda kalmışlardı, hava kararınca İstanbul’da bile kimseyi göremiyordunuz sokaklarda, her yerde bomba patlıyor, aileler çocuklarını merak ediyor, bugün de sağ eve dönecek mi diye, üniversitelerde sürekli olaylar çıkar, bir kaos bir kargaşa ortamı vardı, zaten bu da çok bilinçli bir biçimde yaratılmıştı zaten, yani darbenin altyapısı oluşturulmuştu, buna da farkında olmayarak destek veren çok solda insanlar da vardı. Desteklendi bu kaos ortamı. O kaos ortamından sonra tabii ki halk bunu bir kurtarıcı olarak karşıladı.¹³⁹

While this interviewee stated that some people from the left also contributed to this chaotic atmosphere, he was an exception among the interviewees as most of them claimed that the violence was not primarily caused by the left and even if the left took part in acts of violence it did so in order to legitimately defend itself and the people from the attacks of ‘fascism’. In these narratives, the statement that ‘a civil war was imposed on the country’ appeared often, and it was added that assuming a position against the attacks by the left was inevitable, sometimes despite their

¹³⁹ Kemal Bey, English reads: The coup was a saviour for those who were unaware of the real situation. It is true that the conflicts harmed the people. They got imprisoned in their houses. Even in Istanbul, you couldn’t see anyone on the streets once the sun set. There were bombs exploding everywhere. Families were anxious. They didn’t know whether their children would survive that day and come home again. There were constant clashes at the universities. The time was one of chaos and agitation. It was actually aimed to be so. The infrastructure of the coup had been established. There were also very leftist people who contributed to this unconsciously. The chaos was promoted. The people naturally saw the coup as a savior after this chaos.

(All names I use here are pseudo-names, since during the interviews, it was decided to be so. The only real name is that of Celalettin Can, one of the prominent figures from *78’liler Vakfı*)

willpower. What accompanied the statements about the legitimacy of the position of the left within this struggle against ‘fascism’ were assertions like ‘we were innocent’ and ‘we had honorable ideals’ which persistently followed the statements about the violence that escalated especially in the second half of the 1970s. Here is how one interviewee narrates the period before the coup:

12 eylül darbesi gelene kadar ülkedeki, hani ben şeye katılmıyorum tabi ki bu tanımlama, her gün bilmem kaç kişi ölüyordu, bunu biz yapmıyorduk, bu net. Yani hani biz, bizim gibi hani hakikaten biz böyle çok böyle şey karşılıksız girmiştik çok gençtik, kadınlı erkekli, ... O kadın ve erkek çok böyle temiz duygularla, çok zor bir şeydi, yani kendinizi bir ateşin ortasına atıyordunuz, hani her an bir çatışma oluyordu okullarda sokaklarda mahallelerde. Buna hani gözü kapalı girmek herhalde çok böyle farklı niyetler taşımak anlamına gelmeseydi gerek, hani insanların bir oturup düşünmesi lazım bu gençler ne istiyordu, niçin hani böyle bir ülkedeki yükselen muhalefetin içinde yer alıyorlardı.... Bunlar düşünülmeden hani o dönemde suçlu ilan edildik. Yani her gün gazete manşetlerinde 12 eylül darbesi olana kadar manşeti açtığımızda bütün bu işleri biz yapıyoruz onların hiç günahları yok her şey bizden sorulacak gibiydi ve darbeyi hazırlamaktı aslında. Çünkü hani bu ülke de çok bağımsız değildi, darbe yapıldığında da Amerika dedi bizim çocuklar başardı dedi, kutladı. Çok uzun bir süreç, 12 eylülün hemen arifesinde olan bir şey değildi ancak son bir yıl bu iş kızıştırıldı. Yani bu ülkeye işte bir iç savaş dayatıldı, her gün çatışma haline dönüştürüldü sokaklar, şeyi soruyor insanlar, bu kadar bu çatışma aletleri nereden geliyordu, yani bu karşılıklı bir şeydi. Bütün bunlar konuşulmadı tabi”¹⁴⁰

Indeed the view that the atmosphere of violence and insecurity that could target anyone without exception has been very effective in legitimating the coup, and that the coup was upheld by society since it created a sense of relief is not peculiar to the

¹⁴⁰ Necla Hanım: Until 12 September in this country... I don't agree with this... The idea that so many died every day and... We were not the ones responsible. This is certain. I mean we actually got involved in all that without any wish for personal gain. We, both women and men, were very young. . . . It was very difficult for those women and men with such naive feelings. We were blindly risking ourselves. Every moment there was conflict at schools, on the streets, in the districts. Having been involved in all that with eyes wide shut, we couldn't have had hidden aspirations, right? The people should stop for a moment and ask themselves what these youths wanted, why they were involved in the rising opposition in such a country. . . . In that period, we were accused without any consideration of all this. I mean... Every day in the headlines, it looked as if we had done all that, as if they were all innocent, as if we were the ones to be blamed for everything. This actually was aimed to be so to prepare the public for the coup. Because this country was not so independent either. The USA congratulated the coup, they said that their men had succeeded. . . . It was a very long term thing. It didn't come about just before September 12 but the situation was instigated in the previous year. A civil war was enforced on this country. The streets were made into fighting arenas every day. People were asking each other where the arms came from... It was something mutual, therefore. This of course was not discussed further.

interviewees but commonly shared in analyses of the coup¹⁴¹. In the interviews, the rejection of responsibility about the violence and the assertion of being righteous and having honorable ideals on the one hand appear to be the ‘truth claim’ of the interviewees, and on the other hand they constitute the first aspect of the positioning of the subjects themselves through opposing the claims of the military. In addition to this claim of being blameless about the violence, there is another aspect of this subject position that can be observed in the narratives about the process of politicization. While in all interviews, the 1970s were pointed out as a period during which society was generally politicized, the interviewees especially emphasized the authenticity and sincerity of their politicization, which again is in contrast to the identification of the political movements of the period as backed by foreign ideologies and powers by the military. The first aspect of this claim of authenticity and sincerity is grounded on the assertions that their politicization was conditioned by the concerns about the problems of the country. In the words of one interviewee:

O yüzden yani o zaman üniversitede okuyup, üniversitede okumasına da gerek yok, köyün şehre çok göç verdiği yıllar o zaman, köyden şehre gelip de politize olmayan ya da birtakım sorunlara kafa yormayan insanlar yoktu. O zamanın hatta sağcılarını bile şimdiki sağcılara göre daha böyle ülke kaynaklı düşünüyorlardı.... Yani ideolojik saflaşmalar daha böyle ülkeye dair idi.¹⁴²

Secondly, it was also asserted that this politicization was based on voluntariness and was not motivated by personal interests. To illustrate:

O kadar kişisel çıkarlar önemli değildi ki, bizim bir sürü, bir sürü insan işini okulunu, e mesela ben de öyle, benim iyi bir işimi filan bırakıp sendikada mesela üçte bir maaşla çalışıp, yani. Şimdi böyle birşey deniyor, gönüllülük hareketi filan diye. ... Şimdi biz gönüllü olmayan bir hareketi zaten

¹⁴¹ See for instance Seyfi Öngider, “12 Eylül bir Çeşit Lobotomidir” [interview with Ömer Madra] *Son Klasik Darbe*, p. 67

¹⁴² Huseyin Bey: Therefore every single university student or rather just anyone who came from a village to the city in those times of migration from the rural areas to the city, were politicized or intellectually busy with certain problems. Even the rightists had more of a their-own-country-focused approach than the current right wing. . . . Thus, the ideological fronts were more concerned with the country than they are now.

düşünmüyorduk ki. Yani bana çok komik geliyor. Sanki gönüllülüğü yeniden tanıtmak gibi birşey. Gerçi bugüne kadar da benim için öyledir, bizim benim gibi insanlar için de hala öyle. Gönüllü olmayan hiçbir çalışma yoktu. Hatta gönüllü değil hayatımız hani bütünüyle değiştirecek kadar şey yapmıştık. Hiçkimsenin aklına, evim yok, arabam yok, zaten yok Türkiyede tabi daha da yoksul bir ortamdı, herşeye rağmen bu açıdan gelişme var elbette, ama felsefe şey değil, hani o değildi.¹⁴³

Therefore, the self-representation of the interviewees position them against the discourse of the military through the rejection of the ‘blames’ ascribed to them by the military, and by emphasizing their innocence and sincerity. The subject position opened in this way enables them not only to exonerate themselves and criminalize the coup, but also to represent themselves as acting in the name of general interests rather than personal interests.

While stating themselves to be the ones who actually cared about the country and its problems, and thus rejecting the accusation of being backed by foreign powers and ideologies, the interviewees also reflected this accusation back to the military. Common to all interviews, it was claimed that the coup was supported by the US and indeed that the US was involved in the planning of the coup in order to protect its interests in the Middle East, and in the continuation of the capitalist system in Turkey in a tranquil atmosphere. Almost all of my interviewees referred to Paul Henze’s, -who was CIA's Turkey Station Chief during the coup-, statement ‘Our

¹⁴³ Zehra Hanım: Personal interests were not important, they were put aside, to such an extent that many, many people from among us left their schools, quitted their jobs... As for me, I quitted the good job I had so as to work in a trade union with a salary that equalled only one third of what I formerly earned, you know what I mean? Recently, a phrase has been coined that reads “the volunteerism movement”. Well, back then, we did not think about (the possibility of) a movement that was not organized on a voluntary basis. So, the recent phrase sounds really funny to me; it is as if this very phrase entails a redefinition or representation of volunteerism. Of course, I hold on to what I understood as volunteerism back then, the same is still the case for people like us or me. Back then, there was no endeavour that was not voluntary. Actually, the term “voluntary” would not be sufficient to characterize what we did, we did so many things that our lives changed altogether. Nobody would think about “I don’t have an apartment [house], or car” etc. Well, formerly, of course, it was harder to make a decent living in Turkey in any case; we lived in a poorer context; there is some progress, despite everything, as regards this matter. However, our philosophy was not that [to make a decent living or gain more], you know, it was not that.

boys have done it!’ that he uttered when he was informed about the coup in Turkey, as an ex post facto explanation of US support for the coup. Sometimes his name was not remembered, sometimes confused, but all the interviewees had the image of an authority from the US saying ‘our boys have done it!’ which was cited to prove the involvement of the US in the coup. Here is one of these expressions:

Sorun, yükselen muhalefeti bastırmak. Burası amerikanın arka bahçesi, Amerika her istediğini yapmak durumundaki ki zaten darbeden sonra da zaten bizim çocuklar bu işi başardı, demesi Carter’ın bunu çok güzel ifade ediyor. Amerikanın uzun vadeli planları vardır. Ve kumanda ettiği ülkeleri de bir şekilde o planlar doğrultusunda konumlandırmak ister.¹⁴⁴

Thus, as can be seen in this explanation, not only is the allegation of ‘being supported by foreign powers’ reflected back to the military, but also the possibility of talking from a position of ‘being concerned about the problems of the country in a sincere way’ is affirmed once more.

At this point, it should be noted that the statement that the coup was a result of a long planning process is very commonly accepted, especially after books like the memoirs of Kenan Evren¹⁴⁵, or Mehmet Ali Birand’s books about the coup, which exposed the details of this planning process, were published¹⁴⁶. In addition, as it was stated in the previous chapter, the involvement of the US or its support for the coup is generally accepted in analyses about 12 September from an oppositional stance. While the narratives of the interviewees are certainly nourished by these kinds of analyses, the deployment of these statements within the narrative structures confirm that they are all ex post facto explanations, constructed at the present.

¹⁴⁴ Nebile Hanim: The problem was to crush the rising opposition. This is the backyard of the USA. The USA could do anything it wanted. It is not for nothing that after the coup Carter said “Our boys have done it!” The USA has long term plans and wants to situate the countries under its command according to those plans.

¹⁴⁵ Kenan Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları* (Turkey: Milliyet Yayınları, 1990-1991)

¹⁴⁶ Mehmet Ali Birand, *12 Eylül: Saat: 04.00* (İstanbul : Karacan Yayınları, 1984) and Mehmet Ali Birand (et. al) *12 Eylül : Türkiye'nin Miladı*, (İstanbul : Doğan Kitap, 1999)

When thought together, these statements not only explain the causes behind the coup as perceived by the interviewees at the present, but they also open a subject position for the interviewees that places them against the discourse of the military. In talking about the preparation of the coup, this subject position is sustained through appropriating the opposites of the characteristics ascribed to them by the military, like ‘having honorable and sincere ideals and being rather innocent about the violence’. However, in talking about the coup itself, in describing it and the society of the post-coup period, the usage of the same discursive formation with the military becomes more apparent in the narratives. Moreover, not only is this subject position destabilized by the tensions this discursive formation creates, but also the notion of ‘coming to terms with the coup’ becomes problematic within this framework. I will discuss these points below.

According to the interviewees very well planned, the coup was also a very successful operation, regarding the strategic and military details of the intervention, which took into consideration even the possibility of resistance, and was very swift and effective in taking control of the situation as well as in dissolving the organizations that could be a threat against itself. When I asked my interviewees what they remembered from the day of 12 September, and their immediate reactions to the coup, the answers varied. Some of my interviewees, who also experienced the 12 March 1971 intervention, said that they had had an opinion about what might happen, but compared to the 12 March intervention they had not realized that the 12 September coup would go that far. Besides thinking of the 12 March intervention, two of the interviewees stated that the coup evoked the image of bloody military coups as known in Latin American countries, in fact one of them mentioned the famous movie *Missing*. In his words:

Ben o zaman Beykoz'da oturuyordum, birisi telefon etti radyoyu aç diye, radyoyu açtım, saat üç falandı sabaha karşı üç dört falandı, ondan sonra işte Kenan Evren konuşuyor, yalnızım evde de kimse yok, işte sokağa çıkma yasağı falan konmuş, arka taraftan böyle balkondan bakıyorum, işte cipler gelip gidiyor evlerden birilerini alıp götürüyorlar falan, şeyi hatırlattı bana, Latin Amerika'daki darbe filmleri vardır ya Missing falan gibi böyle bir şey¹⁴⁷.

Another interviewee, who had been arrested for four months after the coup, stated that many people were already arrested on the night of the coup, and taking into consideration the fact that she was only a sympathizer she had not expected to live through such hard times. Learning about the military takeover usually from the radio, some of my interviewees said that their immediate reaction was to hide or destroy the documents of their organizations, and then to leave the places they were living in as they expected to be arrested. Some of my interviewees were arrested after the coup, and some were not, but those who were not arrested also expressed that they went through a period of hiding and waiting to see what would happen. Then they witnessed large scale detentions and dissolution of the political organizations. In this atmosphere, the protection of organizational structures seems to have been the most important means of resisting the coup for those who were not arrested. In the words of one interviewee:

Tabi darbeye karşı mücadele ettik, yani bu mücadele ikili bir mücadeledir, bir yandan politik örgütlenmemizi korumaya çalıştık, yeni insanlar kazanmaya çalıştık. ... Diğer yandan yani İzmir'deki işte politik çalışma içerisinde olan arkadaşlarımızla ilişkilerimizi sürdürüyor idik. Darbeye ve darbecilere karşı bir yandan yani politik söylemlerimizi halkın moral motivasyonunu arttırmaya yönelik mesela yazılamalar, pullamalar gizli yayınlar çıkarıyor idik.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Nevzat Bey. English reads: Back then, I was living in Beykoz. Someone called me and told me to turn on the radio; it was 3 or 4 in the morning; after turning on the radio, I hear Kenan Evren speaking; I am alone, nobody is home; you know they had put a curfew order, so I look outside from the balcony, see the military jeeps coming and going, taking with them some people out of their homes. This scene reminded me of something: you know the Latin American movies on the military coups, like Missing or something... It was like that.

¹⁴⁸ Yusuf Bey. English Reads: Surely, we struggled against the coup; you know, such a struggle has two dimensions: on the one hand we tried to preserve our political organization and to organize more people. On the other hand, we were keeping up our relations with our friends who were, you know, doing political work in Izmir. Meanwhile we were trying to articulate political discourses against the

The common point of all the answers about the ‘moment’ of the coup and their immediate reactions was the sense of ‘being caught unprepared’, although this was not always specifically articulated. Most of the interviewees said they were waiting for the coup although they were not sure when it would happen, when I asked if they were expecting the coup. For instance, one of them said that after the 24 January Decisions the coup seemed inevitable, about which he wrote an article in the publication of his organization, and another said that when she had heard the speech of Kenan Evren on the 30th of August, she was almost sure that the coup was approaching. Yet, the following statements indicate not only that the possibility of a coup was discussed only as a theoretical assertion about which no practical precautions were taken, but also that the statements about ‘knowing that the coup was likely’ were ex post facto judgments, and moreover, this possibility was not perceived at the subjective level. To give but two examples:

Yani kiři olarak tarihe dönüp bakıldıđı zaman herkes darbe geleceđini biliyordum diyor. Ama genellemesine bir darbenin geleceđi solda beklenen bir haldi. Ama o tarihte olacađına dair ben herhangi birřey beklemiyordum.¹⁴⁹

Açıkçası ben düşünmemiřtim. Bir sürü insan gözücüyordu filan dedi sonradan yani darbenin olacađı yani çok açıldı filan denildi. Ama ben yani řahsen onun pek de farkında deđildim darbe olacađının.¹⁵⁰

At this point, whether stated to be anticipated or not, the concepts of ‘shock/trauma’ begin to constitute the main trope around which the effects of the coup, be they the immediate or long-term effects, are discussed. While the coup was perceived as a very successful operation, witnessing its immediate effects, i.e. the large scale

coup and the ones effecting the coup, publishing illegal material and distributing leaflets, writing slogans on the walls so as to enhance the moral motivation of the people.

¹⁴⁹ Huseyin Bey: In person, everybody says they knew there was going to be a coup. The general expectations on the part of the left had pointed towards a pending coup. But I myself was not expecting anything about the particular date it was going to happen.

¹⁵⁰ Zehra Hanım: To be honest, I didn’t predict it. After the coup, many people said that it was predictable, that it was obvious. But I myself was not really aware that the coup was coming.

detentions, dissolution of all the political organizations and the lack of any substantive reaction against the coup, as well as the moment of realization about the effects of the coup on society, were qualified as a 'shocking experience'. Expressions like 'I was shocked' or 'it was shocking' were very commonly used to describe the period after the coup, while this shock indicated the astonishment that was felt after the coup. Behind this astonishment was the feeling of facing a completely different social and political configuration, which was told to have emerged immediately after the coup, and which found its expression in the phrase of 'falling into a different world'. The state of 'being caught unprepared for the coup' constitutes one dimension of this shock/trauma, which makes the observation and experience of the following large scale detentions and the dissolution of all the political organizations even more dramatic. However, although many interviewees said that they felt a kind of shock as they faced the changes in society after the coup, felt either immediately after the coup or as they were released from prison, some of them explained the strength of this shock with their inability before the coup to perceive the fact that the roots of the change in society were indeed present, even then. Here is how one interviewee told how she felt after the coup:

Biz de kendimizi dışarda ben mesela ya bu şey gibi, bu tuhaf hiç hapiste olmakla falan ilgisi yok. Yani hakikaten ben de kendimi başka bir gezegene düşmüş gibi hissettim, şimdi başka bir gezegene düşsen aslında bilirsin ki başka bir gezegendesindir yani başının çaresine bakarsın, burası dünya değil dersin. Şimdi hem burası dünya, hem de bizim tanıdığımız dünya değil. Yani Bu çok çok ağır bir şey. Bu işkence kadar, yakınlarını kaybetmek kadar travmaydı bizim için. Yani her şeyin, üstüne hayatımızı kurduğumuz her şeyin bu kadar birdenbire tepetaklak olmuş olması, o da işte şey dediğim gibi, yani biz 78lerden itibaren o kendi içimizde hissettiğimiz şeyleri ipucu olarak değerlendirip şöyle hesaplaşıydık, o anda yaşamakta olduğumuz, belki 80den sonra insanlar işte en hani örgütlü yerlerde cunta geldi diye sevindikleri zaman o şoku yaşamayacaktık. Hani devrimci hareketlerin çevresinde bulunan hatta devrimci hareketin içinde bulunan insanların bile a kurtulduk, bunu bir adeta şey gibi yaşamaları hani kurtuluş gibi, işte en azından faşistlerin saldırıları duracak işte gibi yaşamalarını, yani o gaflete düşülmezdi. Hakikaten gafil avlanıldı, yani bu mevcut şeye, yeni duruma

adapte olmayı çok zorlaştırdı. Yani hepimiz sudan çıkmış balığa döndük. Tam manasıyla, bunun hiç içerde olmakla ilgisi yok. Hatta içerdekilere biz üzülyorduk, yani çıkınca ne yapacaklar diye. Çünkü biz de o şoku yaşadık. Yani. Sanki bütün ülkedeki bu insanlar gitmiş, yerine başka insanları doldurmuşlar. Tabi bu mümkün olamaz değil mi, yani bu mümkün değil. Demek ki bizim bakışımızda var bir şey. Ya da biz hani 78 79lardan itibaren aslında eskiden olduğu gibi daha hareketin legal şeylerden alanlardan çekilmesiyle aslında kopmuşuz ki hayattan bu değişimi fark edemedik. ... Bu dönüşümü hissedemedik işte bu da çok önemli bir şey. dolayısıyla bu çok büyük bir şok olarak yaşandı.¹⁵¹

Yet, not in all interviews the reasons of the shock are explained as such and it remains in the narrative only as a metaphor for the abruptness of the changes after the coup. On the other hand, in the interviews with the members of the *78'liler Vakfı*, the notion of trauma emerges as the extended metaphor for both the case of the leftists and the situation of society in the post-coup period as 'traumatic'. The metaphor of trauma functions in several ways throughout these narratives. Firstly, referring to a metaphor of trauma enables one to describe the long term effects of the coup in a more structural and consistent frame than when referring to the notion of 'shock'. As such, 'the traumatic experience of the coup' becomes capable of consummating the psychological, economic, social and political effects of the coup that occurred in a long period of time, the combination of which establishes the chain

¹⁵¹ Zeynep Hanim: We, on the other hand, the ones who were not in prison... I, for instance... it was like... bizarre, it had nothing to do with being in prison. I really felt as if I fell down onto another planet. If you were to fall onto another planet, you would know that you are on another planet. You would accept that it is not the earth and you would take care of yourself accordingly. However it was both the earth and not the earth we got to know. This was so very difficult. This was as much of a trauma for us as torture and losing our beloved ones. Everything but everything our lives relied upon turned upside down. As I said... If we had followed the things we felt inside us as clues and came to terms with the situation from '78 on, perhaps we wouldn't have been so shocked to see people become happy to see the junta after the 80s, even in the most organized areas. I also mean the people around and even in the revolutionary movement, who reacted to the coup as if they were saved at that moment, as if the fascists would eventually stop attacking. We wouldn't have been so heedless. We acted so incautiously. This made it much harder to adapt to the new situation. We were thus all in a daze. It had nothing to do with being in prison at all. We were even sorry for the ones in prison, wondering what the hell they would do when they came out. Because we ourselves also experienced that shock. I mean, it was as if they evacuated the country and put in other people instead. But this can't be the case, can it? It can't be. So there was something wrong with our perspective. Or we lost our connection with life from '78, '79 on when the movement withdrew from legal areas. We couldn't recognize the change. . . . We couldn't feel the transformation. This is so very important. Hence it turned out to be a big shock for us.

of causality in the narrative structure that explains the emergence of a new society after the coup. To give but one example:

Şimdi burada tabii topyekün bir saldırının arkasından ciddi travma geçirmiş bir toplumu gözardı etmeden değerlendirmek gerekiyor, yani bu o kadar büyük bir travma ki yani demin söylediğim gibi bir yandan psikolojik olarak saldırıyor bir yandan ekonomik olarak saldırıyor bir yandan yani baskıcı bir ortam oluşturuyor, senin sesinin çıkmasını engelliyor kendini ifade etmeni engelliyor, ve baştan sona sol düşüncelerin özgürlükçü düşüncelerin ilerici yurtsever düşüncelerin çok kötü durumlar çok kötü duruşlar olduğunu ifade ederek başka bir angajman yapmaya çalışıyor. Tüm bu durumlar içerisinde bu toplumun gerilemesi bu toplumun ciddi biçimde kötü düşünmesi geri düşünmesi normal. Çünkü çalışmalar tümüyle buna göre.¹⁵²

As such, the expressions of trauma exceed the subjective perceptions of the interviewees about these immediate practices of the coup, and are pointed out to be the genesis of the political atrophy of the post-coup society. While in this narration, trauma is represented as a corollary of the repressive policies of the post-coup period, and equated with social retrogression, in another interview, drawing an analogy between the human psyche and the social situation, trauma is represented as a 'psychological disability' resulting from a forced process of forgetting:

Türkiye toplumu en politik yıllarını o yıllar yaşadı ama Türkiye toplumu o yıllarını unutmak zorunda kaldı. İnsan hayatında çok önemi olan bir günü unutmaya kalktığınız zaman insan ruhu sakat kalır. Ama Türkiye toplumu bir tarihi dönemi unutmaya mahkum edildi. Dolayısıyla ruhsal olarak sakatlık var, travmatik bir durum var. İşte suç oranlarına bakın, tepkilerine bakın, onu görürsünüz toplumda.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Yusuf Bey: We, as a matter of fact, have to cautiously evaluate a seriously traumatized society after a full-fledged attack. It is such a big trauma that it works through psychologically on the one hand, economically on the other hand. On yet another side, it creates an oppressive environment, it takes away your voice, bans you from expressing yourself. It shows leftist, liberal ideas, progressive patriotic ideas to be very bad attitudes to create a certain front. Among all these, it is normal that this society goes back, that people have bad intentions and think regressively. Because all the attempts are oriented toward this end...

¹⁵³ Celalettin Can: Turkish society had its most political years in those times, but Turkish society had to forget those years. When a person attempts to forget a very significant day of his life, his soul gets handicapped. But Turkish society was condemned to forget a historical period. So there is a psychological disorder, a traumatic situation. For instance, look at the crime rates, the social reactions. You'll recognize this in society.

In both of these narratives, the coup is represented as a collective traumatic experience, and it is stated that this problem needs to be overcome by the whole society. The political implications of this usage of the metaphor of trauma are worth considering. On the one hand this generalized usage of the trauma metaphor can be seen as indicating the possibility of going beyond particularity and appealing to common interests for the whole society, since in this way one can generalize the effects of the coup as concerning the whole of society, not only the particular injuries of those who were arrested, tortured, etc. Yet, on the other hand, the usage of the trauma metaphor indicates the appropriation of medical discourse, which was deployed extensively by the military, also by the interviewees. Whereas in the discourse of the military the period before the coup was represented as a 'diseased' situation of society, healed through a military operation, in the interviews the narrative functioning of the metaphor of trauma transposes the illness to the post-coup period, the symptoms of which can be either 'social retrogression' or 'crime rates'. The common point of these two perspectives is the medicalized view of society, which not only defines social/political problems in medical terms thus disregarding the contextual determinants of the problems, but also presupposes the possibility of a 'healthy' society, associating healthy minds and correct behavior with the health not only of individual bodies but with the collective of society, in Platonic sense¹⁵⁴. Moreover, in both accounts 'society' is seen both as the 'site' of the disease and as the passive sufferer of the disease; as being unable to remember its past it also cannot face with the consequences of this traumatic forgetting in the present. Thus since society is unable to recognize the illness it suffers from, it is natural that it needs a 'healer' or 'someone to remind itself of its past' to overcome the traumatic

¹⁵⁴ Mark Nichter, and Margaret Lock, eds., *New Horizons in Medical Anthropology: Essays in Honour of Charles Leslie*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.241.

situation. In this context, it can be argued that the congruence with the discourse of the military is not the only problematic aspect of the usage of the trauma metaphor, as it also has consequences regarding the very political problem of coming to terms with the coup.

In all the narratives of the members of the *78'liler Vakfı*, that describe the situation as traumatic, the politically engaged people of the pre-coup period, or 'their generation' as they formulate it, were pointed out as bearing the potential of agency for helping society remember its past, hence initiating a process of questioning the coup for the sake of coming to terms with it. Yet in the same interviews, the metaphor of trauma also functions to explain the political immobility and incompetence of the left after the coup, as the coup signified not only the following repression and violence but also the breakdown of the hopes and motivation for changing the world that were expressed to characterize the politically engaged generation of the pre-coup period. To illustrate:

Bizim kuşak fedakar bir kuşaktı, çoğu okulunu bıraktı, yaşamının özel yaşam denen kısmını terketti, herşeyi devrime göre tarif etti. Tabi 80 darbesi, 80 darbesinden sonra işkenceler ağır dertler hastalıklar peşinden gelen uzun mahpusluklar falan, bir travma yarattı, bizim kuşakta bir kırılma yarattı. Çok büyük umutlar birdenbire kaybolduğunda bir kere zaten travma yaratır bir de kişilerin kendi gündelik hayatları bu kadar zorluk altında kalırsa bu daha da örtüşür, bizim kuşak o anlamda nasıl derler kırgın kırık bir kuşak. Hala inançlarını koruyor hala işte dayanabildiği noktalarda dayanıyor ama tabi bir yanımızı da konformist yapmış.¹⁵⁵

Morover, trauma is not only seen as a problem lived collectively, but also as an individual experience that many people from the left went through after the coup.

¹⁵⁵ Huseyin Bey: Our generation was self-sacrificing. Many quit school and what is called the privacy of their lives. Many defined everything *par* revolution. Of course the 1980 coup and, afterwards, long imprisonments following torture, big problems, and illnesses, caused a trauma. This offended our generation. If big expectations disappear all of a sudden, it triggers trauma anyway. When people bear so much difficulty in their daily lives as well, it gets worse. Our generation is, how do you say... an offended, split generation. It has preserved its beliefs. It is still resisting where it can, yet the situation has of course partially turned us into conformists.

When I asked the interviewee who previously said that society experienced a trauma after the coup, to elaborate more on what he meant by trauma, he said the following:

...şimdi aslında tabi bunu şöyle ele almak lazım, şimdi bu travmayı bir toplumun yaşadığı travma olarak ele almak lazım bir de aslında 12 eylül öncesinde ve sonrasında politik faaliyetler içerisinde yer alan bireylerin yaşadığı travma olarak ele almak lazım. Şimdi insanlar aslında istedikleri birşeye akıl olarak beyin olarak hazır iseler psikolojik olarak hazır iseler ve de hakaten bu noktadaki durumları duruşları bilgileri noktasında hazır iseler aslında travma yaşamazlar ama buna eğer çok hazır değillerse, ... ya da bu uzak görüşlülükten uzaksalar bir travma yaşarlar. Bunu tabi şöyle örnekleyebilirim, yani şimdi cezaevlerinde tabi binlerce tutsak yaşadı, ve bunların içerisinde birlikte yattıklarımız yanyana birçok şey paylaştığımız arkadaşlarımız farklı farklı siyasi yapılardan gelen arkadaşlarımız oldu. Şimdi tabi çok objektif değerlendirdiğimizde bunların bir kısmının bugün alternatif bir devleti yani bir sosyalist sistemi kurmaya yönelik bilgileri becerileri inisiyatifleri ve böyle birşeyi istemenin karşılığında duran işte işkencedir ölümdür uzun yıllar cezaevidir gibi durumları çok fazla düşünemediklerini ve buna çok hazır olmadıklarını gözlemledim. Bu mesela bir travmaydı aslında.¹⁵⁶

While in this way the experience of being in prison and being exposed to torture is signified as a traumatic experience, in the continuation of the interview, the scope of the trauma was expanded to include the experiences lived after prison. The interviewee qualified the situation of those who lived the trauma according to him, as retrogression, implying their retreat from political engagements, and specified also this retrogression as a trauma. Defined as a retreat from politics, the healing of this trauma could only be possible through a re-politicization, but he stated that in many cases this possibility was even more postponed by the problems the ‘traumatic subjects’ faced ‘outside of prison’, like the necessity to earn money, to look after

¹⁵⁶ Yusuf Bey: Well, we should actually handle it like this. We should see this trauma on the one hand as a trauma experienced by society, and on the other as a trauma experienced by the individuals engaged in political actions before and after September 12. Well, if the people are ready for their goal intellectually and psychologically, if they are really ready in terms of their position, attitudes, knowledge in that respect, they don’t experience trauma. But if they are not so ready, . . . or if they don’t foresee well, they get traumatized. For instance... There were thousands of prisoners in prisons. Among them were friends with whom we served gaol, with whom we shared a lot. They had come from various political bodies. Looking at it very objectively, I have observed that some of them lacked the knowledge, talent and initiative they needed to build an alternative state, that is, a socialist system. Nor did they take into consideration or were ready for the price they might have to pay for such an aim... Torture, death, long imprisonment. This was a trauma.

their families etc. What is worth considering in this narrative is the discrepancy between what is meant by social trauma and individual trauma since while the former was presented as the outcome of multi-dimensional repressive policies, the personal experience of trauma was signified as the result of personal insufficiencies -either to get prepared for the possible negative practices of the coup like torture or prison, or to overcome the difficulties lived after the coup and to re-engage in political struggles. Therefore, while the generalized usage of ‘social trauma’ leads to abstraction from the concrete context, the individualized usage of the same notion leads to the reduction of the problem to individual weaknesses. If this view had been peculiar only to this interviewee it could be seen only as an individual assessment. However, not only have the appeal to the metaphors of illness and medical discourse been very common within the left in discussing political issues, as Gürbilek maintains¹⁵⁷, but also the metaphor of trauma is often employed in analyses about the situation of the left in the post-coup period. For instance Kaptanoğlu argues that what made the 1980 coup a traumatic experience for the left in Turkey cannot be explained merely with the violence and repression the coup introduced, according to him it was the acceptance of the coup by the people, whom the left believed to be with them, that actually traumatized the left¹⁵⁸. Thus, he uses trauma not only as a metaphor but qualifies the experience of the coup as an actual trauma, and proposes a process of remembering and giving meaning to the traumatic experience in front of the witnesses, for re-integrating the traumatic experience in narratives and history in order to come to terms with the loss.

At this point, I should emphasize that not only does the discussion of whether the experience of the coup was an actual traumatic instance exceed the scope of the

¹⁵⁷ Gürbilek, p.78.

¹⁵⁸ Cem Kaptanoğlu, “Yapısal Travmadan Tarihsel Travmaya Türkiye Solu ve Kafka” in *Birikim* 198, (October 2005), p.73.

present study, but it might also do injustice to the authenticity of the experience of my interviewees that needed to be transmitted in the form of narratives through the interviews. Thus, my concern here is rather to point out the political implications of the appeal to the metaphor of trauma in the narrative structures. I will try to discuss these implications on a theoretical level below.

In a medical sense, trauma is a highly individualistic experience. According to psychoanalysis, the traumatic effects of a shocking event or circumstance upon the psyche are manifested unconsciously in a range of bodily symptoms and disturbances, in neurotic behaviours, in nightmares and hallucinations, and in amnesia. These can all be read as symbolic expressions of an experience which is difficult or impossible to make sense of, assimilate, or integrate with the ‘ordinary’ sense of oneself¹⁵⁹. Later this medical concept was extended to encompass the structures of the mind, developing a broader psychological and social reference. Erikson points out that if ‘trauma’ in its customary medical usage refers first and foremost to the shock and the event causing it, in psychological literature the term is redefined to refer to the state of mind resulting from the shock, which disconnects the person involved from their relationship to the world¹⁶⁰. Rather than conceiving trauma as caused solely by a discrete happening, Erikson argues that it should be considered as the outcome of a constellation of life experiences; that, in fact, trauma may arise not only from an acute event but also from a persisting social condition.

While Erikson broadens the scope of events that can lead to trauma, within the trauma literature others point out the collective aspects and consequences of

¹⁵⁹ Kim Lacy Rogers, Selma Leydesdroff, and Graham Davison, “Introduction” *Trauma and Life Stories: International Perspectives* ed. by Kim Lacy Rogers et. al. (London: Routledge, 1999), p.1.

¹⁶⁰ Kai Erikson *A New Species of Trouble: The Human Experience of Modern Disasters* (New York: Norton and Company, 1994), p.228.

trauma¹⁶¹. According to Edkins, trauma, which is an event involving extreme physical force and violence, induces feelings of utter helplessness and an intense sense of betrayal by those whom the traumatized previously regarded as reliable and as a source of comfort. Consequently, any illusion of social order that the traumatized might have had is shattered, along with the meaning it bestowed on their life. In addition to the traumatized, the perpetrators of the trauma and even the observers may be affected by the trauma because of a sense of shame for their active role in creating the trauma or for their inability to prevent it. Thus, she argues that trauma creates a powerful incentive to question long-held assumptions and beliefs about how the sociopolitical order and individual personhood are constituted. It also provides an opportunity to challenge the status quo, by bolstering the re-inscription of the trauma into everyday narrative through the practices of remembrance, memorialization, and witnessing -which consequently become sites of struggle over meaning and its power implications. Similarly, Susan Rose argues that recovering from trauma is not just an individual act but a collective process, and to speak out about the trauma is to ‘break through the silence’ that surrounds it: a silence that is socially as well as psychologically determined, by defence mechanisms and survival strategies deployed by survivors, witnesses, and abusers themselves to minimize or deny the pain of abuse and the violence that caused it. Thus, Rose maintains that “speaking out is a political as well as a therapeutic act, and as such, is a claim to power”.¹⁶²

Yet, the process and possible consequences of speaking out about trauma appear to be more complicated when actual cases are taken into consideration. Kali

¹⁶¹ Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.15.

¹⁶² Susan Rose “Naming and Claiming: The Integration of Traumatic Experience and the Reconstruction of Self in Survivors’ Stories of Sexual Abuse” *Trauma and Life Stories*, p.164.

Tal maintains that medicalization is one of the three strategies of cultural coping with trauma –the other two being mythologization, and disappearance. Medicalization focuses our gaze upon the victims of trauma, positing that they suffer from an "illness" that can be "cured" within existing or slightly modified structures of institutionalized medicine and psychiatry¹⁶³. While medicalization reduces trauma to an individual problem to be cured, through discussing the specificity of torture as trauma, Viñar maintains that defining an individual as a victim and the process of medicalization segregate and alienate the tortured individual from the status of a citizen, from the position of his or her fellow human beings and alter-ego¹⁶⁴. In addition, discussing the case of asylum seekers in Switzerland, Gross points to how identification with the trauma discourse in order to become 'good refugees' and to achieve legal status leads not only to retraumatizing effects but also becomes a threat to migrants' personal meanings and narratives of survival¹⁶⁵. Gross further argues that through the dominant trauma discourse the concrete individual and collective involvement in migration politics and practices and the livelihood of migrants are kept unconscious, thus the fundamental questions about basic aspects of state and society such as "who are we as a political community, and what do we want" are trivialized.

While these examples illustrate the problematic instances of identifying with the status of 'traumatized', on a more general context, Wendy Brown provides an analysis of how "violation" has become the foundation in liberal democracies for a "politics of identity" based on injury, a politics that mobilizes the suffering self and

¹⁶³ Kali Tal. *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.7.

¹⁶⁴ Marcelo N. Viñar "The Specificity of Torture as Trauma: The Human Wilderness When Words Fail" *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 86, no.2 (April 2005), pp311-333.

¹⁶⁵ Corina Salis Gross "Struggling with Imaginaries of Trauma and Trust: The Refugee Experience in Switzerland" *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 28, no.2 (June 2004), p.163.

its memories of injury in the pursuit of particular claims on power, often through legal processes. Brown discusses how injury has become one of the major foundations for legitimated political identities in liberal democracies and argues that such a politics of injury necessarily becomes “invested in maintaining an injured status.” She argues¹⁶⁶:

When social “hurt” is conveyed to the law for resolution, political ground is ceded to moral and juridical ground. Social injury...becomes that which is “unacceptable” and “individually culpable” rather than that which symptomizes deep political distress in a culture; injury is thereby rendered intentional and individual, politics is reduced to punishment, and justice is equated with such punishment on the one hand and with protection by the courts on the other.

In a similar vein, Colvin quotes John Torpey who in his discussion of the recent global flourishing of a politics of memory in the fight for reparations, argues that this ‘reparations politics’ has “arisen in part as a substitute for expansive visions of an alternative human future of the kind that animated the socialist and decolonization movements of the last century”¹⁶⁷ While Torpey argues that this new politics of memory trades a future-oriented, progressive politics of human possibility for a past-oriented politics of compensation through legal procedure, Achille Mbembe maintains that the discourses of victimization entail a “quest for authenticity”, a “nostalgia for a lost, original self”, and a desperate “mining of the past for the future”¹⁶⁸.

In another relevant discussion, about the functioning of the truth commissions, Humphrey argues that:

Truth commissions ritually invert the position of the victim in the politics of pain by shifting the focus from terror to trauma . With pain as their fulcrum

¹⁶⁶ Wendy Brown, *States Of Injury : Power And Freedom In Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) pp.27-28.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in: Christopher J. Colvin “Ambivalent Narrations: Pursuing the Political Through Traumatic Storytelling” *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 27, no.1 (May 2004), p.84.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.85.

they seek to objectify and institutionalise the truth claims of victims through public truth telling. In the political shift from terror to trauma there is an implied difference in the state's perspective on pain. In the former, pain is the medium through which society establishes its ownership over individuals' while in the latter, 'pain is the medium available to an individual through which an historical wrong done to a person can be represented, taking sometimes the form of describing individual symptoms and at other times the form of a memory inscribed on the body'. One emphasises the conditionality of social participation, the other the morality of social participation. The truth commissions then aim to morally reconnect victims, those put beyond the protection of law by state impunity, with the wider society¹⁶⁹.

Therefore the possible political drawbacks of the appeals to medicalizing discourse and the metaphors of trauma may be pointed out as obviating historical processes, such as the existence of state-connected terror, individualizing problems, trivializing the fundamental political questions while opting for the moral and judicial grounds for struggling, and lastly, sticking to a lost past at the cost of the present and the future. The most important reflection of these problems in the narratives analyzed here can be observed in the discrepancy within the narrative structures that emerges when the link between the given conditions and political objectives needs to be established. While the experience of the coup is told as a traumatic experience, the demand of reparation cannot be articulated as a therapeutic process, but the moral values of the past function to justify the ground that informs the objective of coming to terms with the coup.

Talking about a 'Lost' Past

I have already mentioned that the coup stands at the center of the temporal and sequential order of the narratives. As such it also functions as the point of comparison between the periods before and after the coup. In what follows I will try to analyze this relationship between the past and the present, trying also to grasp the

¹⁶⁹ Michael Humphrey, "From Victim to Victimhood: Truth Commissions and Trials as Rituals of Political Transition and Individual Healing," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 14, no.2 (2003), p.175.

political implications of this representation of the past and its relation with the present.

During the interviews, the 1970s were always told in comparison with the post-coup period which was characterized by the lack of the positive features of the 1970s. While the key terms of politicization/de-politicization were generally used in this comparison, moral values appeared to be the main trope around which not only the differences of the periods before and after the coup were verbalized but also the meaning of politics was articulated. As such, the period before the coup is exalted through the claim of the presence of strong moral values, the period after the coup is described through the metaphor of moral degradation.

In many interviews, it was expressed that the ‘actual story’ of the 1970s is forgotten today not only by society in general but also by the people who were engaged in political struggles during that period. Thus, sometimes specifically expressed, sometimes there as a latent motive, the claim of a different truth about the 1970s was present in all the interviews. At the center of this truth claim resides the assertion that what characterized the Turkish society of the 1970s was the unprecedented mobilization of the people, consequent to the large scale migration to cities and industrialization, which ended up in the politicization of society through democratic struggles. It was expressed that the grounds of this politicization of society were the concerns about the country and efforts to find solutions to its problems, and this was shared by the “whole society”. In contrast to the identification of the political movements of the period as backed by foreign ideologies and powers by the military, my respondents described the politicization of society as a process of the enlightenment of the people and their claim to basic rights and liberties. One interviewee described the period as:

70'in başlarında, 70'lerde devam eden ve milyonlarıyla sokağa çıkan bir toplum düşünün yani, devlete rağmen kendi iradesini alan ve yurttaşlaşmaya ve özgürleşmeye başlayan bir toplum. Ve Türkiye'de ilktir aslında bu politik anlamda, ha bir 46'da 50'de vardır, toplum sokağa biraz çıkmaya kalkmıştır, DP'ye entegre edilmiştir. Ama 70lerdeki daha başkadır, daha sol daha emekçi ve doğrudan halkın kendisi, sokağa çıkmıştır. ... Tarihin en güzel dönemini 70'li yıllarda Türkiye toplumu yaşamıştır, ilk defa sokağa o zaman çıkmıştır, o dönemle barışmazsa geçmişle barışamaz. ki Türkiye toplumu 1970'lerde çocukluktan delikanlılığa geçiş sürecini yaşıyordu, politikleşmek aslında şeyliktir, rüştünü ispatlamaktır, Türkiye toplumu politikleşiyordu, bu anlamda çocukluktan delikanlılığa bir geçiş yaşıyordu, ve delikanlılık ta çocukluktan ileri bir evredir.¹⁷⁰

This characterization of the 1970s as witnessing an unprecedented mobilization of the people is not unique to my interviewees but common to the analyses of the coup from a leftist position. For instance Ömer Laçiner describes the period as¹⁷¹:

[12 Eylül öncesini asıl karakterize eden olgu] Türkiye toplumunun, yönetenlerin toplumsal hiyerarşinin zirve katmanları hariç halkın çoğunluğunun, ülke tarihinde belki de ilk kez kendi durum ve geleceğini tartışmak, dert endişe ve umutlarına cevap aramak için güçlü bir silkinişle ayağa kalktığı, onu hep edilgen tutmuş bağları çözmeye, önyargılarını terk etmeye hazır taze bir enerjiyle harekete geçmiş olmasıdır.¹⁷²

In the same vein, Murat Belge maintains that an atmosphere of social dynamism and optimism prevailed after the 12 March intervention, and following the urbanization of the social structure, all political parties and movements were under the influence of a current of futurism. This common projection of a favorable future could be

¹⁷⁰ Celalattin Can: Imagine a society, in which millions of people go out on the streets at the beginning of and throughout the 70s. A people, despite the state, using their will, liberating themselves, becoming citizens. Politically, this was actually the first of its kind in Turkey. There were also some incidents in '46 and '50 when people started to go out on the streets bit by bit. They got integrated into the Democrat Party. But the 70s were a different case. More leftists, more labourers, the people themselves went out on the streets. . . . In the 70s, Turkish society experienced the most beautiful period of its history. It went out on the streets. If it doesn't make peace with that period, it can't make peace with its past. Moreover, Turkish society was passing from childhood to youth in the 1970s. Becoming politicized is actually proving one's maturity. Turkish society was being politicized. It was in a passage from childhood to youth in this sense. Youth is a more advanced state than childhood, eventually.

¹⁷¹ Ömer Laçiner, "Yarın İçin Bir '12 Eylül Öncesi' Tarihine Dair Notlar" *Birikim* 198 (October 2005), p.22.

¹⁷² English reads: [What originally characterizes the period before September 12 is the fact that] Turkish society, that is, the majority of the people except the governing class and the top of the social hierarchy forcefully shook its chains and stood on its feet in order to discuss its present and future, to find out about its problems, cares and expectations. Turkish society moved afresh, ready to unchain itself from what had always pacified it, to leave behind its prejudices.

observed in the slogans of different parties, ‘move for heavy industry’ and ‘the Great Turkey’ being two of them¹⁷³. While these slogans of the two right-wing parties reflect the dominant paradigm of developmentalism, the RPP, which shifted to a more leftist discourse with the slogan ‘left of center’, supporting the rights of workers and recent migrants to the cities, designed its electoral campaign of 1973 around the concept of ‘change’ promising a new order under its new leader, Bulent Ecevit¹⁷⁴.

Against this background, throughout the narratives the concept of ‘change’ also appears as the focal point of the politicization that characterizes the 1970s. The belief in the possibility of change is described as the decisive characteristic of the young generation of the 1970s, as many of my interviewees emphasized that they used to believe that they could change Turkey and the world. Beyond that, the belief in change is also pointed out to be shared by the whole society, and this general state of optimism and dynamism is presented as a wave of politicization that was directed towards the left. It was expressed that the masses inclined to the left, and being a leftist was honorable. Yet, this inclination towards the left is expressed as taking place more at the level of values than at the level of actual politics. The quotation below illustrates how one of the interviewees expressed the identification of moral values with the left:

Eskiden hani, mesela hiçbir bilmedin bir mahalleye giderdin o bakkal için şey denirdi, çok namuslu adam, iyi adam falan, ve o adam solcu olurdu. Yani bu bizim yaptığımız bir şey değildi, bizim yaşadığımızdı. Yani solla birtakım değerler şey, şimdi o değerler tamamen yok oldu.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Murat Belge, “Önsöz” *12 Yıl Sonra 12 Eylül* (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 1992), p.20.

¹⁷⁴ Meliha Benli Altunisik and Özlem Tür, p.27.

¹⁷⁵ Zeynep Hanım: In those times, for instance, there was this thing. You would go to a district and hear them call the grocer a very honourable, good man. That man would be a leftist. This was not something we made but something we experienced. The values of the left. All those values have disappeared now.

The emphasis on values is effective not only in characterizing the inclination of the politicization of society towards the left, but also in describing the general atmosphere of the 1970s. The Turkish society of the 1970s is told to have had very different values from those of the post-coup period. Altruism, caring for others, and idealism are some examples of the virtues that were cited to illustrate those different moral values. One of my interviewees defined his generation as ‘damned if we wanted something for ourselves¹⁷⁶’, and others emphasized that personal interests had no value for them to the extent that they could change all their lives in the name of serving for social interests. Within this framework of explanation, the notion of collectivity appears to be the most important aspect of the political socialization of the interviewees, and their subjectivity. When talking about the process of their politicization, or the political activities they engaged during the 1970s, all my interviewees posited themselves into a collective identity position and talked from the perspective of a “we” rather than an “I”. This ‘we’ sometimes represented the whole generation that were in their youth in the 1970s, sometimes the leftists, and sometimes the organization that they belonged to. Indeed, the construction of a collectivity and a collective identity through an organization appeared to be what gave meaning to their activities beyond the specific aims of those activities. To give but one example, talking about a strike in a textile factory before the coup, one of my interviewees explained the success of the resistance with its being internalized by every worker. At this point, even the fact that the strike did not reach its anticipated objectives but rather resulted in the workers being discharged does not effect the perception of success:

Belki eksikliklerimiz de oldu direnişte ama çok güzel bir örgütlenmeydi o yüzden başarılı da oldu. Altı ay süreyle fabrika kapandı sıkıyönetimle birlikte

¹⁷⁶ Turkish reads: “kendisi için bir şey istiyorsa namert olan”

hareket ettiği için devletle birlikte hareket ettiği için sıkıyönetim bastı, sonra iflas gösterdi işyeri, tüm işçileri çıkarttı. İşte ikiyüzelli üç yüz kişi gözaltında kaldı. Altı ay boyunca kapalı kaldı fabrika. Daha sonra tekrar açtılar.

_Aynı işçileri alarak mı?

_Yok çoğunu çıkarttılar, çıkartılan işçiler artık on yedi yıllık filan işçiler vardı, ustabaşları vardı.¹⁷⁷

While the notion of collectivity is placed at the center of their politicization, the existence of the values described above is told to be not only the characteristic of the people who were engaged in political struggles but moreover a characteristic of all social relations. In addition, when describing the 1970s, the references to these values usually accompanied the statements about the strength of the social opposition in this period. In the words of one interviewee:

70ler daha özgürlükçü, daha bağımsızlıkçı, insanlar hani birbirleriyle kurdukları ilişkilerde bu ülkeyi sevme bu ülke için bir şeyler yapma kültürünün halk tarafından toplum tarafından daha benimsenir bir şekilde hatırlıyorum, yani insanlar birbirini daha fazla seviyorlardı, insanlar birbiriyle daha fazla dayanışma içindeydi, ve toplumsal muhalefet, hani aşağıdan gelen bir dalga denir ya, çok güçlüydü¹⁷⁸

Generally speaking, while altruism was marked as the most significant value of the 1970s, caring about one's self-interests, lack of social solidarity, corruption and social apathy were pointed out as the signifiers of the moral degradation that dominated the post-coup society up to the present. Even the political and economic changes after the coup are generally discussed by referring to the changes in the values of society. For instance, while talking about the economic policies of the Özal governments as being one of the consequences of the coup, one of the interviewees

¹⁷⁷ Nebile Hanim: Perhaps we lacked some things in the resistance, but we were very well organized. That's why we succeeded. The factory shut down for six months, since it sided with martial law, with the state. Martial law swooped down on the factory. Afterwards, the employer pretended to be bankrupt and threw out all the workers. Around 200 or 300 people were taken into custody. The factory didn't work for 6 months. Only after that, they opened it again.

- Did they hire the same workers?

No, they fired most. Among the fired ones were masters and workers who had worked there for 17 years or so.

¹⁷⁸ Necla Hanim: The 70s were more liberal, more independent. As far as I remember, society and the people in their relations with each other took the culture of loving this country and doing something for this country more seriously. Thus the people loved each other more. They felt more solidarity and the social opposition, that is, what is called a movement from below, was very strong.

referred to Özal's statements like 'my officials are shifty' and 'it makes no difference to violate the constitution for once'¹⁷⁹ in order to illustrate the dominance of short term interests as well as bribery and corruption in this period. Moreover, as the presence of strong moral values was connected to the strength of the social opposition in the 1970s, the lack of these values in the 1980s is evaluated with regard to the de-politicization of society. The quotation below illustrates how the concepts of the atomization and alienation of individuals, the dominance of materialistic values, and the loss of the former values come together around the notion of moral degeneration in connection with the de-politicization of society:

Bunu oluşturan şey 12 Eylül. Apolitik bir gençlik, sorgulamayan, okumayan, yazmayan bir gençlik, her şeyi elinden alınmış bir halk, aman nasıl bir an önce köşeyi dönerim duygusu, bilinci pompalanmış bir halk, kardeşin kardeşe yabancılaştığı bir halk. Eskiden biz küçük küçük gecekondularda yaşırdık, kalabalık ailelerle yaşırdık. Herkes gelirdi orda bir lokma ekmek yerd, yani asla kimsenin yüzüne bakmazdık ve herkes çok mutluydu, küçük gecekonduda. Ama şimdi insanların evi var, arabası var, bilmem neyi var, çocuğunu özel okulda okutuyor ama mutsuz. Komşusuyla da asla bir şey paylaşmaz. Çekirdek aile dışında hiçbir şeyi paylaşmaz. Babamdan bir şeyleri nasıl kopartırım hesabında, işte kardeşime daha az yevmiye nasıl veririm, bunun hesabında. Bu hale dönüştük. İnsanlar kendine yabancılaştı. O bizim değerlerimiz yok edildi. Ahlaki olarak korkunç bir yozlaşma.¹⁸⁰

Not only in this interview but also in others the 12 September coup is pointed out to be the cause of all the dissolution of the values and the de-politicization of society. However, Madra states that although seeing the 12 September coup as the only reason behind the creation of an apolitical youth and the general de-politicization of society is a convenient way of thinking, the effects of the neo-liberal wave should

¹⁷⁹ Turkish reads; 'benim memurum isini bilir' and 'anayasayı bir kere delmekle birsey olmaz'

¹⁸⁰ Nebile Hanim: September 12 created this. An apolitical youth. A youth that doesn't question, read or write. A people who have been deprived of everything. The idea to ease into wealth in no time. A people whose consciousness has blown up like a balloon. Where one brother was alienated from the other. We used to live in tiny squats in those times, in crowded families. Everyone would come there to share one piece of bread. We never looked down on anyone. Everyone was so happy in that tiny squat. Now however, people have houses, cars and what not. Their children go to private schools. Yet they are not happy. They wouldn't share anything with their neighbours either. They wouldn't share anything outside the nuclear family. One is more busy with how he can extract this or that from his father, how he can give less allowance to his sister and brother. We have turned into this. People are alienated from themselves. Our values are destroyed. This is a terrible moral deterioration.

also be considered at this point¹⁸¹. According to him, the effects of the neo-liberal wave that include the pervasion of a television culture, and the replacement of the values of solidarity and communion with those of materialistic values are a world wide phenomenon, and should not be seen merely as the results of the 12 September coup limited to the Turkish context. In addition, Ömer Laçiner points out that the politics, political movements and parties incurred losses of importance and function with the passage to the post-modern period which was dominated by the mentality that is shaped by the notion of consumption¹⁸². Accordingly, he adds, it was inevitable that the political institutions and field of activity that the postmodern era inherited from the modern era, the framework of which had been defined by prioritizing the process of production, should lose its importance and energy to a certain extent. Laçiner specifies this point in order to emphasize that a process of coming to terms with the coup should include questioning the a-political condition of neo-liberalism that reduces the scope of politics only to identity and group politics. Yet, in the interviews, these contextual determinants were either totally absent or when mentioned they were also presented as the consequences of the coup, for instance the execution of neo-liberal economic policies were expressed to be one of the specific aims of the coup.

Therefore, the truth claim about the periods before and after the coup that is expressed in the narratives is shaped by the comparison of the relevant periods through an appeal to moral values. Within this framework, the period before the coup is designated as the embodiment of the ‘good and right’, while the period after the coup is signified with their lack. In what follows I will try to discuss the political implications of this truth claim made through a moralizing discourse.

¹⁸¹ Öngider, p.73.

¹⁸² Laçiner, p.16.

Wendy Brown discusses the relationship between truth, power and politics by drawing on Nietzsche's account of morality. In Nietzsche's account, she argues:

Morality emerges from the powerless to avenge their incapacity for action; it enacts their resentment of strengths that they cannot match or overthrow. Rather than a codification of domination, moral ideas are a critique of a certain kind of power, a complaint against strength, and an effort to shame and discredit domination by securing the ground of the true *and* the good from which to (negatively) judge it.¹⁸³

In this way, morality itself becomes a power, but born of weakness and resentment, it fashions a culture whose values and ambitions mirror the pettiness of its motivating force. Morality depends on a discursive boundary between truth and power, while 'our truth' is legitimized through its relation to worldly powerlessness, 'their truth' is discredited through its connection to power. Herein lies the supreme strategy of morality based on *ressentiment* which denies that it has an involvement with power, that it contains a will to power or seeks to (pre)dominate. Arguing for moving toward an analysis as thoroughly Nietzschean in its wariness about truth as postfoundational political theory must be, Brown contends that "surrendering epistemological foundations means giving up the ground of specifically *moral* claims against domination, and moving instead into the domain of the sheerly political: 'wars of position' and amoral contests about the just and the good in which the truth is always grasped as coterminous with power, as always already power, as the voice of the power."¹⁸⁴

Elsewhere, Brown argues that a refusal to come to terms with the particular character of the present together with a certain narcissism with regard to one's past political attachments and identity that exceeds any contemporary investment in political mobilization, alliance, or transformation account for 'left melancholy' in the sense of Walter Benjamin. The irony of melancholia, she claims, "is that attachment

¹⁸³ Brown, p.44.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p.45.

to the object of one's sorrowful loss supersedes any desire to recover from this loss, to live free of it in the present, to be unburdened by it. This is what renders melancholia a persistent condition, a state, indeed, a structure of desire, rather than a transient response to death or loss.”¹⁸⁵ While ‘left melancholia’ is Benjamin's name for a mournful, conservative, backward-looking attachment to a feeling, analysis, or relationship that has been rendered thinglike and frozen in the heart of the putative Leftist, Brown warns that:

If the contemporary Left often clings to the formations and formulations of another epoch, one in which the notions of unified movements, social totalities, and class-based politics were viable categories of political and theoretical analysis, this means that it literally renders itself a conservative force in history—one that not only misreads the present but also installs traditionalism in the very heart of its praxis, in the place where commitment to risk and upheaval belongs.¹⁸⁶

The relevance of Brown’s framework for the narratives I try to analyze resides in her rejection of the moral claims against domination, and the relationship of the left with the past. While in her framework moral claims are associated with a denial of involvement with power whereas the ‘truth’ of others is criticized because it is involved with power, in the narratives analyzed here, the relationship between morality, power and politics appear to be a more complicated one. When thought in accordance with Brown’s framework, the conflation of politicization with the presence of moral values in the pre-coup period and the association of the disappearance of those values with de-politicization in the post-coup period is problematic. It is problematic in the sense that, it might trade off the politicization of the problem for the sake of the ‘truth’ that resides in the claims of morality, and hence disempowers the subjects that speak through this moralizing discourse. However, within the narratives, the period before the coup referred to as the

¹⁸⁵ Wendy Brown, "Resisting Left Melancholia" *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* ed. by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003) p.458.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.462.

embodiment of the ‘good and right’ constitutes the ground for a critical view of the present. As such, the positive aspects of the period before the coup like the importance of the collectivity and the politicization of society become the main points in describing the effects of the coup on society as wiping off those positive aspects. As such the effects of the coup are generalized to whole society and the way for questioning those effects collectively and for coming to terms with the coup is tried to be opened. Therefore, while a moralizing discourse in contrasting the two periods before and after the coup is appealed to, the notions of ‘good and right’ that this discourse depends on are also tried to be politicized. Notions such as collectivity and selfishness exceed the limits of being only moral values and are associated with the political character of the periods they dominate. On the other hand, the past is associated with the utopia of a good society according to which the present state of affairs can be critically viewed. While, as will be discussed in the following subheading of this chapter, certain characteristics of attachment to a lost past and to its political configurations exist in the narratives about the coup besides the presence of certain residuals of the formations and formulations of the old left, those elements, interestingly enough, at the same time function to constitute the ground for a critique and politicization of the present. At this point the project of coming to terms with the coup establishes the link between moral claims and politics.

Coming to Terms with the Coup

As I have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, during the interviews, the temporal reference point of the talks always moved between the past and the present. It was especially so during the interviews with the people from the *78'liler Vakfi*, as talking about the past or the present, they referred to the notion of ‘coming to terms with the coup’. When I asked them and others about what ‘coming to terms with the

coups' meant for them, or what could be done to make this possible, a common theme in all answers was that this coming to terms with the coup was not something related only with questioning the past but very much related to the present reality of Turkish society. As a very general point, it was emphasized that facing and coming to terms with the 12 September coup, is a prerequisite for the development of democracy in Turkey. As I have noted above, the period before the coup was perceived to be deliberately planned in order to justify a military take over. At this point my interviewees pointed out that coming to terms with the coup first of all indicates revealing the forces behind this planning process and hence disclosing those who were responsible for the murders and massacres that took place before the coup. In the words of one interviewee:

_hesaplaşma ne demek sizin için
_yani tabi çok genel hatlarıyla, 12 eylülün bu toplumdaki beyinlere taktığı prangayı kırmak. 12 eylülün bu topluma giydirdiği deli gömleğini üzerinden çıkarmak. Bunun içi adım atmak bunun yolunu açmak. Çok genel anlamıyla bu. Tabi en önemlisi Türkiye'nin demokratikleşmesi sürecine ciddi bir katkı sunmak. Bu katkının birinci noktası nerden geçer. Birinci noktası Türkiye'de darbecileri yargılamaktan geçer. Sadece darbecileri, 12 eylül darbesini yapanları değil 12 eylülün önceki ortamı yaratanları da. Yani bu 1 Mayıs katliamını yapanları da, Bahçelievler katliamlarını yapanları da, 16 martta üniversiteye bomba atanları da, o mekanizmayı sorgulamak gerekiyor. Sadece onunla sınırlı değil. Bu bugüne kadar uzanan bir süreç.¹⁸⁷

Secondly, almost all of my interviewees stated that in other countries that witnessed military coups, such as countries in Latin America and Greece, the leaders of the coup were brought before the court, and in Turkey too those who were in charge of

¹⁸⁷ -What does coming to terms mean for you?

Kemal Bey: In very general terms, I can say, to unchain the brains in this society which September 12 put in fetters. To take off the straightjacket September 12 made this country wear. To gradually make way for this to happen. In very general terms, this is it. Of course the most important thing is to contribute considerably to the democratisation of Turkey. What would be the first step of this contribution? To judge the coup regime. Not only the regime, the ones who carried out the coup, but also the ones who created its conditions before September 12. I mean also the ones who carried out the May 1 massacre, the ones who started the Bahçelievler massacre, the ones who bombed the university on March 16. We have to investigate that mechanism. This is not enough either. It is a process extending into our present.

the coup should be brought to stand trial. For this to be possible, it is acknowledged that the provisional article no.15 of the 1982 Constitution, which states that no allegation of criminal, financial or legal responsibility can be made with respect to any of the decisions or measures taken by the Council of National Security and with respect to other persons who adopted or implemented those measures, should be repealed from the constitution. The *78'liler Vakfi* has already launched a campaign for the abolition of article no. 15 in 2004, and the members of the organization see the abolition of this article as that which will make possible the calling into account of those who are responsible for the coup and hence as the beginning of a process of coming to terms with the coup. At this point, not only the prosecution of the military leaders of the coup, but also of those who were responsible for practices of torture and other violations of human rights during the post-coup period is emphasized as an important aspect of coming to terms with the coup.

Moreover, as the effects of the coup were stated to cover a long period of time up to the present, it is stated that the questioning of the coup is also very much related with bringing to light other illegal activities and major scandals, like the Susurluk event that occurred in the period after the coup. At this point the continuous dominance of the military in politics is stated to be the major indicator of the troubles of democracy in Turkey, being the corollary of the fact that the coup has not been questioned. From the beginning of interviews to the end, there were frequent references to the Şemdinli incidents¹⁸⁸, which were accepted to be the most important contemporary signs of the dominance of the military in politics. Therefore what is

¹⁸⁸ On November 9 2005, a bookstore was bombed and one civilian was killed in Semdinli, a district located in south-east Turkey in the Hakkari province. The perpetrators of the attack turned out to be members of a gendarmerie special operations unit. The incident brought forth the question of illegal operations of the state in fighting terrorism. During the period I conducted the interviews, the trial of the noncommissioned officers involved in the bombing was continuing, while the Chief of General Staff rejected the broadening of the case to include higher ranks of the military.

meant by coming to terms with the coup extends beyond the prosecution of those who were responsible and indicates the beginning of a period of transparency. As such, taking the perpetrators of the coup to court appears not to be the ultimate goal of a process of coming to terms with the coup, but one step in a wider process of democratization, which can then extend to embrace the prosecution of those who were responsible for other illegal activities of the state. In this way the call for facing the coup implies a call for democratization oriented towards the whole society, motivated not only by personal desires of vengeance, but with many concerns about the present and the future of the country. Within this framework even the punishment of the responsables of the coup seems less important than their being brought to trial. In the words of one interviewee:

Dolayısıyla bu hesaplaşmak ve yüzleşmek bu karanlık örtünün kaldırılıp her şeyin bütün çıplaklığıyla toplumun önüne konulmasıdır. Ha bunların suçluların yargılanıp ceza alması benim çok da derdim değil aslında. Cezaevlerinde yatmasınlar, ya da işte başka yaptırımlara uğramasınlar çok önemli değil bu, zaten son yıllarda birçoğu hayatta değil, zaman içerisinde hayatta kalan da olmayacak belki, ama bir şeffaflık dönemine girelim, bu olmadan demokrasinin olabileceği gerçekten demokratik bir toplumu yaratabileceğimize inanmıyorum.... Bizler bir kin duyduğumuz için filan değil, yok böyle bir şey, bize işkence ettiler, cezaevinde yatırdılar, şunu yaptılar bunu yaptılar filan diye böyle bir kinimiz yok, bunun için değil, toplumun geleceği için ülkenin geleceği için gerekli bu.¹⁸⁹

Formulated as a call to bring the responsables of the coup to trial, which could be the first step for further democratization, coming to terms with the coup goes beyond the limits of a legal project and affirms the characteristics of a political project in the exact sense marked by the effort to represent the general interest and temporally

¹⁸⁹ Ismail Bey: Therefore coming to terms with and facing the past, means to take away this dark veil and reveal the naked truth before the eyes of society. Indeed I don't care much about whether the guilty will be judged and punished. They don't have to serve time in gaol or be subjected to other punishments. This is not very important. Many of them are not alive anymore anyway. Perhaps none of them will be left in future. But let us pass into a period of transparency. I don't believe we can create a democracy and a really democratic society without this. . . . This is not because we are spiteful. We don't have a grudge against them because they tortured us, imprisoned us, did this or that to us. Not because of that but for the future of this society and country is this necessary.

bounded as it is, to appeal to the problems of the present. Yet, some other aspects of what is meant by coming to terms render this project more complicated than a definite political project. One of these problematic factors is the repercussions of the metaphor of trauma, and the other is the question of ‘who are the subjects that will carry out this project?’

As I have noted above, the metaphor of trauma was used to qualify the effects of the coup, and, it was asserted that the coup not only frightened and depolitized the people, but the traumatic effect the coup created on society also led to a forgetting of the past. At this point, however, the project of coming to terms with the coup exceeds its temporal boundaries and turns into a wider project, comprising both a process of social reconciliation and of remembering.

The process of social reconciliation finds its expression in the phrase ‘society must face its past and its responsibility about what has been experienced’. To give the context:

Ve toplum gemiřiyle bir řekilde hesaplařmazsa, gemiři bir řekilde aıęa ıkmaza ve sularından arınmazsa yzleřerek, rahatlaması zgrleřmesi, kendisiyle barıřık hale gelmesi mmkn deęil. Bir kere bunu grmek gerekir. Bir bařka boyutu nedir, bu lkede kendisiyle kavgalı bir toplum demokrasi kurabilir mi, mmkn deęil, kuramaz. Kendi darbecileriyle hesaplařmayan kendi yařadıklarıyla hesaplařamayan kendi ortak olduklarıyla hesaplařmayan bu lkede demokrasinin kurulması mmkn deęil yani.¹⁹⁰

Thus beyond those who were directly affected by the consequences of the coup, it is claimed that the whole society should be ready to face not only the coup but also what happened before and after the coup as well as its own responsibility in all of these. This process of questioning is pointed out as *sine qua non* for the democratic

¹⁹⁰ Celalettin Can: If society doesn’t come to terms with its past, if it doesn’t wash away its sins, if its past is not revealed, it is not possible for this society to relax, to liberate itself, to be in peace with itself. We have to accept this first and foremost. Another dimension is that a society in conflict with itself can’t establish a democracy. Can it? No, it’s not possible. In this country which can’t come to terms with its coup regime, with its past, with what it also shared responsibility for, it is impossible to establish a democracy.

forces in society to attain the powers that they had before the coup and hence to answer the call for coming to terms with the coup. However, as it is not clear how the ‘whole’ society can acknowledge its responsibility, remembering the past indeed entails a change in the subjectivities of the members of society. Herein the questioning of what happened in the past and of its relation with the present necessitates the development of a historical consciousness:

Ama bunu yapabilmek için de önce insanların oturup bunun üzerine kafa yorması gerekir. Yani biz ne yaşadık ve biz ne istiyoruz üzerine bir tarih bilinci, tarihi açığa çıkarmaları gerekiyor. Ne yaşanmıştı, bugün sizin yaptığımız böyle bir şey. Bugün 80 yılında doğanlar bu işten habersiz, haberli olanlar da kendi yakınları yaşadığı şekilde yansımadır. On beş yaşına geldiğinde ailesindeki öğreniyor, veya 80 darbesinde 10 yaşında olanlar farkında oluyor bu işin biraz daha, yani bu farkında olmanın bir biçimi de ailesi bu işi yaşamışsa ondan dolayı da etkilenmiş olarak öyle yaşıyor, ama o kuşakta doğanlara dönün bakın 12 eylül darbesi sizin için ne ifade eder, yok.¹⁹¹

Conceptualized as a process of remembrance, coming to terms with the coup thus implies remembering the political mobilization and the values of the 1970s. On the one hand, this process entails the possibility of telling the alternative story of the interviewees’ about the 1970s, -which is claimed to have been kept in private memories and not given the opportunity to be told in the public sphere-, therefore making clear the meaning of the 1970s and of the coup for them before the public, i.e. what were their objectives and motives before the coup as leftists, as well as what took place after the coup. On the other hand, the process of remembrance is presented as an opportunity to empower the democratic tendencies in society, since if forgetting what happened in the 1970s enabled the coup to suppress people more

¹⁹¹ Necla Hanim: But to be able to do this, people have to ponder on it and devise ways. It is necessary to have a historical consciousness of what they lived and what they want now. They have to reveal history. What was experienced? What you are doing today is something like this. Those who were born in the 80s don’t know about this stuff. The ones who are aware of it, on the other hand, know it in the way their relatives experienced it. They learn about what their families went through when they turn 15. Or those who were 10 years old during the 1980 coup are also more aware of the situation. This is also the case when they themselves lived through it together with their family. If you look at the generation born in the 80s, however, you see that September 12 means nothing to them.

easily, remembering might evoke the memories of a process of politicization and hence provide the example for a re-politicization. Here is how one interviewee expressed his ideas about this remembrance:

70'lerdeki daha başkadır, daha sol daha emekçi ve doğrudan halkın kendisi, sokağa çıkmıştır. Ya niye sokağa çıktı, niye dövuştü o halk, tarihin bir başka döneminde değil de niye 70li yıllarda çıktı, peki çıkarken kendisini nasıl ifade etti, nasıl yaşadı, aşklarıyla arkadaşlıklarıyla dostluklarıyla nasıl yaşadı, ve Türkiye tarihinin tarihsel olarak ortaya çıkan hangi damarının uzantısıydı, yani hangi tarihsel bir damarın uzantısıydı 70'lerdeki o sokağa çıkış ve bugün onun hangi damarı devam ediyor. Çünkü biz bugün bir demokrasi mücadelesi vereceksek, bir aydınlık Türkiye mücadelesi vereceksek bir yerde halka dayanmak zorundayız, halka da yakın bazı örnekler sunmak zorundayız, yani, sen bir dönem sokağa çıktın, şunu yaptın, bunu yaptın, demokrasi mücadelesi verdin, seni ancak bir darbeye engelleyebildiler, yine yapabilirsin¹⁹².

As such the two-fold project of reconciliation and remembrance, on the one hand, indicates a critical attachment to the past as the repository of the immanent possibility of politicization that needs to be revitalized. To a certain extent, this appeal to the past is conditioned by the structural limitations present within the political conditions of Turkey, which makes questioning the recent issues such as Şemdinli incidents difficult, and hence it is understandable. Yet, on the other hand, I think the critical aspect of this formulation of the project is its reliance on a conceptualization of the people as a separate, distinct, single organism with a mind, or a will, or a memory of its own. However, to speak of a group as some integral entity with a will and capacity of its own is to commit the fallacy of "concrete generalization," namely of treating a generalization as though it were some concrete entity, since that group cannot be experienced separately or independently from the

¹⁹² Celalettin Can: The 70s are different. More leftists, more labourers and eventually the people themselves went out on the streets. Then why on earth did those people go out on the streets and fight? Why in the 70s and not in any other period of history? How did they express themselves on the streets? How did they experience that period in their love relations, their friendships, their comradeships? Which vein of Turkish history did the 70s movement follow historically and which vein of it is in existence today? If we want to struggle for democracy, for a bright Turkey, we have to rely on the people at one point. Then we have to show the people some examples and say: "You have gone out on the streets in that period, you have done such and such things, you have struggled for democracy, they could only stop you with the coup, you can do it again."

members who comprise it¹⁹³. Moreover, concretized as such, this conceptualization of the people sustains the old division, common to the Turkish left, between ‘us’, i.e. the politically engaged people, and ‘society’, the entity that those political persons must depend on and at the same time lead, which is expressed to have had very dramatic consequences in some interviews, as will be exemplified latter.

Of course, such generalizations are the necessary tools of social science with regard to analytical purposes; however, the employment of such generalizations in the formulation of political projects obscures the question of who will be the agency of those projects. Then, if society is not a living substance that can actually be experienced separately or independently from the members who comprise it, and hence cannot be the ‘subject’ to acknowledge its responsibility, who is to tell the alternative story, and initiate the process of questioning? While at the organizational level the *78’liler Vakfi* signifies the coming together of people who were actively involved in politics before the coup with the aim of initiating a process of questioning and coming to terms with the coup, the difficulties they met in this process reveal the difficulty of mobilizing people for such an objective. During the interview, Celalettin Can, the first person to initiate the project of *78’liler Vakfi*, said that when he launched the idea of organizing around such an objective for the first time and tried to contact people for this purpose, the reactions were very negative at the beginning. He said that even the people who were exposed to the harshest practices of the coup thought that such an initiative was doomed to fail. What is more striking was that he said that the people who were more sympathetic towards this idea were those who ‘retreated’ from the ‘revolutionary struggle’ after they graduated from university, and thus were not so deeply affected by the coup. He said

¹⁹³ Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, “Collective Memory -- What Is It?” *History and Memory* 8, no.1 (June, 1996), p.3.

that they had the feeling of “completing an unfinished project” and approached the idea with a sense of nostalgia. Today the foundation is organized in twenty cities, and continues the public campaign for the abolition of the article no. 15 of the 1982 Constitution.

The interviews I have conducted with the members of the organization provide insights not only about the subjective dimensions of coming to terms with the coup but also about their perceptions of society and politics. While talking about coming to terms with the coup one interviewee stated that they want ‘justice and questioning’, and when I asked what he meant by justice and questioning he answered by categorizing the issue at the subjective and social levels. The first thing he emphasized was that at the outset every member of the 78 generation should question himself about what s/he lived, where s/he stands and what s/he demands today. In his words:

Yüzleşmeden kastım şudur, bir kere yüzleşmek ikili olarak ele almak gerekiyor, bir her bir 78linin kendisi ile yüzleşmesi ve de bu 78linin ya da bu 78’lilerin politik önderliğinde ya da politik etkilemesiyle yönlendirmesiyle toplumun kendisiyle yüzleşmesi. Şimdi 78linin kendisiyle yüzleşmesinde şu söz konusudur, yani ben işte 12 martları 12 eylülleri yaşadım, bugün neredeyim, nerede duruyorum, yani geçmişte işte sosyalizmi isterken bugün neyi talep ediyorum, ne yapıyorum noktasında değerlendirmeleri yapması gerekiyor, kendini bir yere koyması gerekiyor bir yere oturtması gerekiyor. Ve bu oturtma süreci içerisinde de yani ne gibi bir faaliyet göstermesi gerekiyor. Şimdi buna bir karar vermesi lazım, bunun yanı sıra kendisi gibi bu ülkede yatmış çıkmış, yatmamış dışarda kalmış birçok politik arkadaşının ya da politik arkadaşına nasıl bakıyor, nasıl değerlendiriyor. Bunlarla yanyana gelmek istiyor mu istemiyor mu, gelirse ne olur, gelmezse ne olur. Şimdi bu konuda yüzleşmesi gerekiyor.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Yusuf bey: What I mean with ‘facing’ is this. First of all, it has two meanings. On the one hand, the facing himself of each member of the ‘78 generation. On the other hand, society’s facing itself under the political guidance of this particular member or members of the ‘78 generation. When someone faces himself, it is a matter of remembering that he lived through such things as March 12, September 12, and of asking himself where he stands today, that is, what he demands and does today while he wanted socialism in the past. He has to situate himself somewhere. He has to eventually decide what course of action he should follow during this questioning. Moreover, he has to find out how he sees and evaluates his many political friends, those who served gaol and were released, and those who were never imprisoned. Does he want to be side by side with them again? What would happen if he were, and what if he were not? He has to face this issue.

What can be seen from the quotation above is that coming to terms with the coup is perceived to be related with the very present not only at the level of society but also at the individual level. In order to initiate a process of questioning at the social level, it is claimed that those individuals firstly need to face their own reality. At this point, they face not only the reality of a totally changed world, but more importantly the question of the meaning of existence in this world. Compared with the period before the coup when politics stood at the center of every construction of life, especially those who were in prison pointed to a dramatic moment after the coup when they realized that they needed to build a new life after being released, i.e. they had to earn money, look after their families etc. Facing up to the necessities of this new life was even more dramatic as the former collective structures of life had dissolved. At this point, for those people coming to terms with the coup at the subjective level appears to be related with their own political stance which requires achieving a balance between the necessities of private life and the requirements of a political life that used to be the only meaningful and familiar life form.

In addition to these subjective dimensions, it was stated that to come to terms with the coup, and to assume the leadership of such a project, the left must also face its own history. Many interviewees stated that not only had society forgotten the 1970s but the left also forgot, and became alienated from its own story. While the politicization of the 1970s and its dynamics constitute one side of this ‘story of the left’, on the other side lies the ‘failure’ of the left and the dynamics of this failure. What I conceptualize as the ‘failure’ of the left comprises many issues that were referred to during the interviews, such as being unprepared for the coup, losing touch with the people and a confusion about ‘the demands of the people’, the lack of resistance against the coup, the dissolution of the political organizations and their

inability to regenerate after the coup, and the astonishment felt when facing the consequences of the coup. All of these issues were raised during the interviews frequently, but while they were extensively deliberated upon in some interviews, they were just mentioned in others. I will not deal with all of these issues here and confine myself to giving but one example in order to provide an insight:

Şöyle de bir şey, yaşadığım birşeyi anlatayım, 12 eylülde bizim için dava açıldığında mahkemeye gittik, ben çok böyle sempatiyle karşılıyorum, migros arabaları ümraniyede yoksul halka dağıtılmış, Migros arabaları getirilip halka ortalığa, çok yoksul, halkın o anki ekonomik şeyini düşünün onu alan halk daha sonra 12 eylülde geldi tanıklık yaptı bunlar verdi dedi bize. Şimdi burda acaip de bir tablo var yani çok düzgün birşeydi hani yoksul halka Migros hani, şey diyeceksiniz zorla arabaları götürme ama kendi için değildi, halk içindi. Yani siz yoksuldunuz yoksullaştırılmıştınız yok sayılıyordunuz ekonomik olarak çok şey bir noktadasınız ve biz de size böyle bir katkı, gidip gecekondularında çalıştılar onlara evler yaptılar, Türkiyenin dört bir yanında böyle şeyler ama orada kendilerini doğru anlatamadılar. Yani siyasi bir irade olarak anlatmak gerekmiyordu, siyasi bir güç olarak anlatmak gerekmiyordu, onları yanımıza çekeceğimiz bir kültür yaratamadık. Yan yana yürüyebileceğimiz, biz başka bir yerde duruyoruk, onlar başka bir yerde duruyordu biz onlar için bir şey yapmaya çalışıyorduk, onların da bunu isteyip hani bizimle birlikte bir iş yapabilme şeyini oluşturamadık.¹⁹⁵

In this chapter, through the narrative analysis of the interviews conducted with a sample of politically active people before the 12 September 1980 coup, I tried to demonstrate how the witnesses of the coup remember and expresses their ideas about the coup, the causes and consequences of the coup, and coming to terms with the coup. This analysis shows that while the claims about the politicization of the pre-

¹⁹⁵ Necla Hanım: It was also a matter of... I shall tell you something I have experienced myself. We went to the court when they sued us after September 12. I was really optimistic. The freight trucks of Migros had been appropriated and the goods dispensed to the poor in Umraniye. Imagine the trucks brought and the goods given out publicly. Imagine the economic conditions. They were so poor. The people who first took the goods then came to testify against us in court after September 12. They said that it was us who had given everything to them. There is a bizarre picture before us here. It was a very decent thing to do. To smuggle the goods for the poor. You might say 'You shouldn't have taken away the trucks by force' but it was not for us, it was for the people. They were poor, they were made to be poor, they were considered to be simply nothing. They were economically in a very bad situation. That was how we helped them. Some of us also helped them build their squats. Such things were happening all over Turkey. But we couldn't express ourselves sufficiently to them. It was not a matter of showing ourselves as a political will and a political power. We couldn't create a culture with which we could reach out to them, a road on which we could walk hand in hand. We were standing on one side, they on the other. We were trying to do something for them but we couldn't create the environment for them to also want this and work with us.

coup period constitute the 'truth claim' of the interviewees, the discursive mechanisms applied in the descriptions of the coup and its consequences share some of the same characteristics with the discourse of the military. The qualifications made to describe the coup and the people against the coup are the mirror images of each other, and the use of a medical discourse exhibits the same patterns of concretizing the 'social'. While the shock/trauma trope is used in describing the coup and its effects, in the comparison of the periods before and after the coup, moral values constitute the common reference point. While the appeals to medicalizing discourse, to metaphors of trauma and to moral values include the dangers of obviating the historical process, individualizing the problems, and sticking to a lost past, when the link between the given conditions and political objectives needs to be established, there occurs a rupture within the narratives which makes jumping to the political level possible. Thus when defined as a temporally bounded project the objectives of coming to terms with the coup appear to be grounded on a concretely political level. Yet, when the calls for remembrance of and reconciliation with the past are included within the very same projects, there that are deployed are also problematic conceptualizations of the 'social/people' and the 'subject'.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The present study is concerned with the meaning of the 12 September 1980 military coup at the present, and it aims to examine the representations and justifications of the coup, and the politics of coming to terms with it. There are two main assumptions that this study rests on: the first is that today the 1980 coup stands between the states of oblivion and questioning. The second is that different processes of obtaining knowledge, seeking recognition, and institutionalizing acknowledgement about the true nature and consequences of what took place in the past are necessary for democracy. Conceptualized as coming to terms with the past, such a process contributes to moral, political, and legal disassociation from the crimes of the previous regime; to the establishment and stabilization of a new democratic legitimacy; and to the creation of the basis for civil normality and justice.

In accordance with this perspective, in this study the political science literature about the 1980 coup, the discourse of the military and the narratives of the political activists of the pre-coup period as the witnesses/victims of the coup are analyzed with regard to the questions of how they contribute to the understanding of the coup at the present, and to what extent they reveal the possibilities or obstacles for a process of coming to terms with the coup.

Based on the review of the literature on Turkish politics, I argue that the limited literature about the 1980 coup takes the explanations of the military about the coup for granted and does not problematize issues such as militarism, and human rights violations. While comparing the coup and the following transition to democracy in Turkey with other cases, this literature also neglects the politics of coming to terms with the military regimes in those cases. Focusing on macro level analyses that examine structures, traditions of civil-military relations, and political parties, this literature does not take into account those subjects who were effected by the practices of the coup or are still questioning its effects, neither as its 'object' of analysis nor as relevant social actors. As such, it sees the coup and its effects as already a past event and hence anticipates no need for or possibility of coming to terms with the coup in Turkey. There emerges the subject position of the academician who studies the 'objective' causes and characteristics of the coup, focusing on the 'big actors' and structures, who neither questions the remnants of the military regime at the present nor discusses the relation of those remnants with the current problems of democracy. Within this literature, then, the relations of the past and the present, and the need for coming to terms with the coup are under-emphasized.

The discourse of the military on the other hand, rests on an ostensible mechanism of justification of the coup that is based on their self-ascribed role of 'guardians of the state and the nation'. This discourse places the military above all constitutional structures of the country, and while perceiving society from a medicalized perspective as an organic unity, ascribes the responsibility of all the problems caused by several decades of rapid economic and social change either to the 'irresponsible' politicians or to a 'handful of anarchists' backed by foreign

ideologies and powers. Democracy within this framework means nothing more than the smooth functioning of the system through the existence of a strong government.

At this point, the thesis turns to those subjects who demands a “coming to terms with the coup” and analyzes their narratives about the coup. Making a different truth claim about the period before the coup, comparing the periods before and after the coup by appealing to metaphors of moral values that also have political connotations, describing the coup as a traumatic event, these narratives share some of the same characteristics of the discourse of the military, but they also open up subject positions that enable one to approach the coup from a critical perspective and to see the necessity for coming to terms with it.

The similarities between those narratives and the discourse of the military appear in the self-representation of the interviewees themselves, which was made through reflecting the accusations of the military back to itself and through the usage of concepts that are the mirror images of the ones used to characterize the coup by the military? However, the subject positions that emerge from the totality of these narratives are more complicated, sometimes ambiguous and contradictory, but generally politicized. The first aspect of this subject position is that it always refers to a collectivity as the condition of making politics. While talking about the period before the coup and their political socialization, the subjects always posit themselves to a collective ‘we’ and explain issues from the position of that collective subjectivity. The positive features of that collectivity are generalized to the whole society in talking about the pre-coup period. When talking about the post-coup period that is marked by the dissolution of these collective political structures of the pre-coup period, appeals to collectivity gain the form of generalizing the effects of the coup to the whole of society. Within this framework, while the metaphors of

trauma function to represent the consequences of the coup as concerning the whole society, the project of coming to terms with the coup is also presented as necessitating the development of a collective consciousness about the causes and consequences of the coup as well as about the possible promises of such a project with regard to the future of democracy in Turkey.

The second and more ambiguous aspect of this subject position then reveals itself in the relations of the subjects with that social totality. Representing themselves as concerned with the problems of the country, as having honorable ideals, and being far from pursuing personal interests, these subjects, witnessing the decreasing importance of those values after the coup feel lonely and alienated in the post-coup society and are in a continual search to face and overcome that alienation and loneliness. While they assert that they have the very same ideals and values today, they also state that the effects of the coup and the changing conditions both of the country and of their private lives raise difficulties in transposing those ideals and values to a political perspective and stance. Describing the Turkish society of the pre-coup period as highly politicized and leaning towards the left, and their lives in that period as totally built upon political objectives and the possibility of changing the world, facing the fact that the whole world around them is changing in the opposite direction, the subjects claim that they need to look backwards and question what was wrong in their past. Although to a certain extent they continue to see themselves in the position of vanguards of society, most notably in initiating the process of coming to terms with the coup, on the one hand they admit that there were problematic aspects in their relations with the people in the past, as they had failed to connect their ideals with the demands of people; on the other hand they search for a political language that will enable them to establish the links between the present

needs and problems of society and their project of coming to terms with the coup. While that project opens unconventional ways for problematizing not only the coup itself but also the current problems of democracy -regarding for instance the influence of the military in politics and uncovered illegal activities of the state-, it also directs attention to the structural impediments present both before this project and the development of democracy at the present.

The most important obstacle standing before coming to terms with the 1980 coup has been the provisional article no. 15 of the 1982 constitution which prevents bringing those who were responsible for the coup and its practices before the court. However, this article is far from being the only impediment and other contextual determinants of Turkish democracy are also worth considering. The 1982 constitution provides the general framework of these contextual factors. The 1982 Constitution envisions a state divorced from politics and a de-politicized society¹⁹⁶. To give some examples: it brought a state-controlled Council of Higher Education to supervise the universities; banned political parties from forming auxiliary branches; proscribed the labor unions, professional associations and university faculty members from engaging in political activities, and allowed the government to confiscate newspapers and periodicals before their publication.

Within this framework, while the military played a dominant role in the restructuring of the rules for political participation and representative electoral institutions, it also exercised direct controls on the transition process. Accordingly, the role of the National Security Council has been the most important indicator of the dominance of the military in politics, not only in the immediate aftermath of the coup but up to the present. It was only with the process of application for full membership

¹⁹⁶ İlkay Sunar and Sabri Sayarı, "Democracy in Turkey: Problems and Prospects" *State, society and democracy in Turkey* ed. by İlkay Sunar (İstanbul : Bahçeşehir University Press, 2004), p.88.

in the EU that the restricting framework of the 1982 Constitution could be somewhat reformed, by tipping the balance in favor of civilian membership within the NSC and turning the council from an administrative body into an advisory one. However, the military continues to exercise its influence in politics through unofficial channels. The expansion of the notion of 'national security' to include not only external threats but also internal ones defined as threats against the regime provides the ideological background of this influence, as has been observed clearly during the so-called 28 February post-modern coup, which was staged against an allegedly Islamist threat against the Republican regime.

The more recent and relevant examples of the contextual limitations for democracy in Turkey can be found in the new Turkish Penal Code and Anti-Terror Law. Particularly under the article no 301 of the Penal Code which restricts freedom of expression, writers and publishers such as Orhan Pamuk and Hrant Dink have been sued for 'insulting Turkishness'. Under the same Penal Code, writer and columnist Perihan Mağden has also been sued for allegedly "discouraging people from military service" in her magazine article titled "Conscientious Objection is a Human Right". The new Anti-Terror Law accepted on June 2006, on the other hand, broadens the definition of terror to every action that is suspected of supporting terror organizations, is also alleged to limit the right and freedom of expression, as it brings with it the possibility of many more prosecutions of writers and journalists for writings that do not support or advocate the use of violence.

Against this background then, the project of coming to terms with the 1980 coup becomes even more important as it bears the potential not only for questioning the causes and consequences of the coup but also for starting a process of wider questioning concerning the problems of democracy in Turkey which are still marked

by limitations in rights and freedoms as well as by the direct and indirect influence of the military on politics. However, examples from other countries that have been discussed in the Introduction of the present study show that such a process, if far from being an easy one, may last for years by moving backwards and forwards. The present study then aims to be a modest contribution to that thorny process.

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