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1973: the *Metapolitefsi* that never was

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Despite the abundant literature on the Greek democratic transition of 1974, the dictatorial regime's failed self-transformation attempt of 1973 (the so-called 'Markezinis experiment') has attracted very little attention. Based on the account of the nature and structure of the regime, and of the tactics of the actors (regime elites and counter-elites) during the transition period, this article tries to account for this short-lived and ill-fated attempt, the outcome of which has condemned it to oblivion.

The 'Markezinis experiment' fell into oblivion after the restoration of democracy in Greece, and it has been represented as a sham rather than as a failed self-transformation attempt by the dictatorship. Nevertheless, it poses some questions that need to be addressed, such as why six years had passed since the beginning of the dictatorship before the regime made its only attempt to transform itself, why this attempt met with such vehement opposition not only from both counter-elites and society but also from within the regime elites, and what course the democratization process in Greece might have taken had the 'Markezinis experiment' been successful. The answers to these questions will be sought in the nature and structure of the regime, which placed certain constraints on the margin of action of the agents during the transition, as well as on its relations with the counter-elites.

The 'Markezinis experiment' from a theoretical perspective

Papadopoulos' attempt in 1973 to put an end to the dictatorship while trying to ensure that his interests would be institutionally guaranteed in the future democracy is called '*reforma*'[1] in democratization studies: the decision of the regime's ruling group to open a window of liberalization, allowing some degree of participation by the opposition in elections. The underlying reason for such a move is the conclusion of the dictatorial elites that it is not in their interest to perpetuate a regime that has outlived its usefulness: 'that system which they have led and presumably benefited from no longer meets their needs or those of their society. Hence they take the lead in modifying the existing political

1 'Reform', in Spanish; it denotes the regime's self-transformation from dictatorial to democratic.

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system and transforming it into a democratic one.'[2] The reason for the regime elites opting for liberalization is that 'some have gotten what they wanted ... and are prepared to withdraw to the enjoyment of private satisfactions' or 'wish to see the transition stop at a limited liberalisation which protects their tenure in office' or even 'aspire to elected positions in the emergent regime.'[3] Therefore they choose a reform that will provide sufficient guarantees for their security, impunity and corporate interests. The factors that will be considered here for explaining the outcome of the 'Markezinis experiment' are the nature and structure of the regime, the way they affected its relations with the counter-elites, and the tactics of the regime elites and the counter-elites during the transition.

The nature of the regime is a necessary condition that influences the regime elites' motives and circumstances of handing power to civilians. The study of the regime's hierarchy, the developments in its internal structure and the possible differentiations within its ranks can produce an explanation for the reasons for the transition. Some regime groups may have an opportunity to create links with certain social and political forces, which facilitate and support the regime's self-transformation towards a more liberal form, while other groups (the military hard-liners being the example *par excellence*) may see the dictatorship as indispensable and vehemently oppose any reform. Moreover, the degree of institutionalization of the regime is an additional explanatory variable for the transition, since institutions and organizations that a regime may have created during its time in power may gain support for it in civil society and assist the outgoing elites in the transition process.

Structural explanations also have to include the role of leadership in the regime's lifespan. The presence of a leader whose position is unchallenged, at least from within the regime, is a key element for the transition because of its significance in offering some form of retrospective legitimacy to the previous regime (important in securing the goal of polity continuation and avoiding a violent rupture), as well as in giving the opposition elites a credible interlocutor during the uneasy transition period. It is also of primary importance in guaranteeing the neutral position of the army towards the *reforma*, as a transition is problematic 'when the incumbents cannot count on the loyalty of the armed forces'.[4]

However, the nature of the regime and the extent of its institutionalization are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the outcome of the transition; another necessary condition is the tactic of the actors in handling the transition process. How is a democratic transition achieved with an agreement between elites and counter-elites? There may be both hard-line anti-regime and moderate transition-seeking oppositions. Thus the

2 S. Huntington, 'Will more countries become democratic?', *Political Science Quarterly* 99 (1984) 193–218.

3 G. O'Donnell, P. C. Schmitter, and L. Whitehead (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore 1986) 17.

4 Y. Shain and J. Linz, *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions* (Cambridge 1995) 57.

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onus is on the outgoing regime elites to rally support amongst the regime groups opting for change and to form alliances with the opposition based on creating conditions of trust: the regime elites need to reassure their counterparts convincingly of their good intentions. Furthermore, Shain and Linz agree that 'a critical factor ... is the belief of the opposition and the public at large in the incumbents' genuine intention; a view shaped greatly by the government's liberalization policies'.[5]

For such a successful transition by *reforma* to occur, however, the acceptance by the counter-elites that democracy is not necessarily brought about by democrats (rather, 'circumstances may force, trick, lure or cajole non-democrats into democratic behaviour and ... their beliefs may adjust ... by some process of rationalization or adaptation'[6]) has implications for their attitude during the transition process. On the one hand, it is preferable for the regime elites to achieve their target with the minimum concessions possible, gain the opposition's acquiescence, and channel its reaction into the more easily regulated electoral campaign rather than into demonstrations and political unrest.[7] On the other, the democrats are faced with the dilemma of either agreeing to negotiate, the dictators being the stronger negotiating partner, or of rejecting this compromise, thus perhaps missing a historic opportunity. Owing to the fact that a transition is an uneasy time when 'despite concessions at the edges, the essential power structure remains intact',[8] in most similar cases the democrats can do little if anything against a dictatorial regime that commands overwhelming support in the powerful state apparatus, whose intervention would have fatal results for the transition. For this reason, realism and compromise among political elites are a *sine qua non* for the successful conclusion of a transition process.

Since 'liberal democracy is the most important immediate political goal',[9] political pragmatism suggests that the most effective tactic is to accept the offer by the soft-liners in order for the democrats to achieve this goal while at the same time pressurising them for more concessions through negotiations. The window of opportunity that the regime elites open cannot be missed, even if it means, at an initial stage, a fragile democracy that may temporarily not fully satisfy the expectations of the democratic opposition and the people.

It is along those lines that the aborted effort at self-transformation of the Greek dictatorship will be examined. After discussing the nature of the dictatorial regime and its

5 Ibid., 56.

6 D. Rustow, 'Transitions to democracy: Towards a dynamic model', *Comparative Politics* 2 (1970) 337–63.

7 On this see T. Eisenstadt, 'Eddies in the Third Wave: Protracted transitions and theories of democratisation', *Democratisation* 7 (2000) 3–24.

8 G. Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratisation* (Basingstoke 2000) 48.

9 C. Gillespie, 'Models of democratic transition in South America: Negotiated reform versus democratic rupture', in D. Ethier (ed.), *Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Southern Europe, Latin America and Southeast Asia* (Basingstoke 1990) 45–72.

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leadership, our attention will shift to the transition process of 1973, and to the account of elite and counter-elite tactics in view of the *reforma*.

Nature of the regime

Isolation kept the monolithic military regime from forming alliances that might have offered broader support at the crucial time of the transition. A lack of institutionalization deprived it of any provision for an institutional evolution towards a different form of rule. Moreover, disunity accounted for the six-year internal struggles which eventually frustrated its self-transformation.

The Greek dictatorship was proof that 'the military oligarchy ... has neither a comprehensive programme nor a perspective into the future... it has no provision for succession'.[10] It was a 'veto military regime', imposed by officer groups ranking mainly from captains to colonels, who acted independently of the higher officers and the rest of the armed forces to promote their corporate interests (Kakaounakis counts fourteen different military groups that participated in the coup[11]). It confirmed the remark by Clapham and Philip that 'no military regime ... is able to maintain an uncomplicated unity of military and political command ... in anything but the short term: a matter of some two or three years at most.'[12] The officers involved acted as a sub-elite eager to secure its interests in the challenging social and political framework of pre-dictatorship Greece, while its individual members were ambitious to be promoted in the army hierarchy and to obtain government positions. The various factions were constantly involved in a struggle for more influential government posts and ascent in the military hierarchy (Woodhouse speaks of 'an unstable alliance of diverse and ambitious rivals'),[13] a struggle that gradually transformed the dictatorship into a one-group regime. Nevertheless, the strong but inconspicuous pockets of inner subversion and conspiracy abounded: the regime saw one crisis after the other,[14] and the vicious cycle would culminate in Papadopoulos' overthrow in November 1973.

The total absence of any ties with civil society, any political party with substantial support, or any organized interest reflected the complete isolation of the colonels: the regime 'lacked military unity or political clientele, elements that were a *sine qua non* for its transformation to a clientelistic authoritarian regime'.[15] The willingness of some civilians to collaborate with the colonels did not compensate for their rejection by the vast majority of the pre-1967 political class (former minister Panagiotis Pipinelis, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs until his death in 1970, being the most remarkable

10 K. Legg, *Politics in Modern Greece* (Stanford 1969) 241.

11 N. Kakaounakis, *2650 μερόνυχτα συνωμοσίας* (Athens 1976).

12 P. Clapham and G. Philip, 'The political dilemmas of military regimes', in P. Clapham and G. Philip (eds), *The Political Dilemmas of Military Regimes* (London 1985) 1–26, whence the term 'veto regime'.

13 C. M. Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels* (New York 1985) 32.

14 S. Grigoriadis (*Ιστορία της δικτατορίας*, Athens 1975) enumerates one serious crisis per year from 1969 to 1973.

15 T. Veremis, *Ο στρατός στην ελληνική πολιτική* (Athens 1997) 268–9.

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example). Similarly, the attempt by figures such as former minister Evangelos Averoff to come to terms with the regime, 'building bridges' between the colonels and the politicians, as he (in)famously put it, had no tangible effect until 1973. Nevertheless, this opposition 'kept him [Papadopoulos] isolated internationally but it could not topple him',[16] as it was too weak when faced with the sheer force of arms.

In addition to the above factors was the failure of the regime to institutionalize itself, in spite of drafting a 'Constitution' in 1968 that remained a dead letter. The colonels were continuously facing an 'institutional deadlock, which was precisely the legal expression of their political isolation'.[17] Furthermore, not a single constitutive body was created during the dictatorship years, and thus the important policy and decision making was left almost exclusively to Papadopoulos and his followers. Moreover, because of its oppressive nature, the absence of links with civil society, and the obsolete ideologies and mentalities of its elite, the regime was unwelcome to the people but not actively opposed by them.[18] This situation is partly explained by its initial economic success and the 'paternalist, but not corporatist social policy'[19] that initially stifled the people's discontent. However, the regime failed to capitalize on this success by refusing to withdraw from power[20] and, from the time that economic growth gave way to stagnation, the simmering discontent started turning into widespread impatience and resentment.

Regarding the relations among the anti-elites (the pre-dictatorial political class opposed to the regime), they were distant, uncoordinated and fragmented. The pre-1967 schisms were not easy to overcome in a climate of disagreement about anti-regime tactics, which was a product of the cleavages caused by the civil war and its difficult aftermath. The hegemonic tendencies of the KKE (Communist Party of Greece), and Andreas Papandreou's PAK (Pan-Hellenic Liberation Front) reflected 'the pre-1967 fears of the Left that it might get totally absorbed by the Centre ... as well as a difference over what forms the resistance against the dictatorship should take, the PAK supporting even

16 P. Murtagh, *The Rape of Greece: The King, the Colonels and the Resistance* (London 1994) 239.

17 A. Manesis, 'Ο εύκολος βιασμός της νομιμότητας και η δύσκολη νομιμοποίηση της βίας', in G. Athanasatou, A. Rigos and S. Seferiadis (eds), *Η Δικτατορία 1967-1974* (Athens 1999) 37–52.

18 The resistance groups were described as 'fragmented, small in number, isolated, short-lived and aiming more at making their presence felt rather than seriously threatening the regime'; see G. Notaras, 'Δικτατορία και οργανωμένη αντίσταση', in Athanasatou et al. (eds), *Η Δικτατορία 1967-1974*, 187–98.

19 D. Sotiropoulos, 'Η κοινωνική πολιτική της δικτατορίας', in Athanasatou et al. (eds), *Η Δικτατορία 1967-1974*, 115–31.

20 There was a 'climate of economic euphoria' (mainly from 1970 to 1973) in which 'for the price of the loss of one's individual and collective political autonomy, one could enjoy the privilege of ... the distributive function of the state': D. Haralambis , 'Η δικτατορία ως αποτέλεσμα αντιφάσεων της μετεμφυλιακής δομής του πολιτικού συστήματος και οι αρνητικές της συνέπειες', in Athanasatou et al. (eds), *Η Δικτατορία 1967-1974*, 75–91. Makarezos, Minister of Economic Co-ordination from 1967 to 1973, claimed in his interview to have warned the other leaders that they should leave office by the end of 1971 *at the latest* (his emphasis).

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violent resistance, whereas the KKE considered it potentially damaging'.[21] In a report in April 1972, the British ambassador, Sir Robin Hooper, noted that

> the democratic opposition of the 'old' politicians is ineffective and of advanced age. A return to the pre-1967 political regime should be considered improbable. If there is a change, this will most probably come from a new military coup that will lead to a regime more authoritarian than the current one.[22]

Owing to those factors, as well as its short six-year duration, the regime was perceived by the people and the anti-elites to be a parenthesis that would somehow end sooner or later, rather than a legitimate and considerable partner for a negotiated regime transformation. At the start of the transition, therefore, Papadopoulos lacked a facilitating structure for the implementation of his decision to transform the regime, as well as assistance from within the regime and from the counter-elites, which were as hostile and distrustful towards him as they had always been in those six years.

1973: The eve and start of the transition

Although it seemed to the British ambassador in January 1973 that 'there is no reason why Papadopoulos should not hold on to power as long as Salazar or, to use a more recent case, as General Franco',[23] things were far from idyllic for the dictator by that point. The struggles within the regime had reached a stalemate, and Papadopoulos' faction was isolated from all other military groups as well as from the political counter-elites. Reaction against the dictatorship was taking shape even within the armed forces, as a failed naval officers' coup in May of that year, the first such serious incident after six years of dictatorship, had proved.[24] Furthermore, repeated student demonstrations earlier that spring were evidence of rising tension between the regime and civil society. In addition there were the mounting pressures from abroad, especially from the EEC, which Greece was trying to rejoin: in May 1972 the EEC Commission had announced that it regarded the return to democracy in Greece as 'one of the basic conditions of association'.[25] The regime, however, was by no means under an imminent threat: despite its internal frictions and the growing opposition, its situation was far from critical. The economy was not in crisis,[26] and despite the aforementioned student

21 Interview with Grigoris Farakos. For the schisms among the pre-1967 parties and elites see also Murtagh, *The Rape of Greece*.

22 Foreign Office Papers: FCO 9/1705, 4/4/1972.

23 Foreign Office Papers: FCO 9/1709, 2/1/1973.

24 For details about the suppression and aftermath of the attempted coup see N. Papadimitriou, *Η εξέγερση του Ναυτικού* (Athens 1985).

25 S. Verney and P. Tsakaloyannis, 'Linkage politics: The role of the European Community in Greek politics in 1973', *BMGS* 10 (1986) 79–194.

26 For the condition of the Greek economy by late 1972-early 1973 see N. Mouzelis, *Modern Greece: Facets of Underdevelopment* (London 1978).

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demonstrations and the failed naval coup, the only cause for concern for Papadopoulos (although not in the short term) was the regime's internal disunity. In the spring of 1973 the dictatorship was not facing major problems for the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, bearing in mind that things might deteriorate in the long run, Papadopoulos considered the time opportune to proceed with a limited *reforma*. He believed that he still had some room for political manoeuvring and embarked upon the transition, first by formally abolishing an already defunct monarchy and proclaiming the 'Republic', of which he became the President (he was sworn in in August), and secondly by reforming the 1968 'Constitution' to guarantee for himself and the army extensive powers and close control of political life in a weak and non-inclusive future democracy. According to the amended 'Constitution', all matters of defence, internal security and public order were in the hands of the President, leaving the government substantial powers only in foreign policy and the economy. By the same token a series of measures were taken, aiming at convincing both the opposition and the international community of the regime's good intentions: a general amnesty was granted, and thus the last remaining political prisoners were released; martial law was rescinded throughout the country; and censorship was eased.[27]

These manoeuvres by Papadopoulos prove that the dictatorship had served its purpose: as he considered that he could enjoy certain privileges under a non-dictatorial form of rule, the regime was of no more use to him. With those privileges constitutionally guaranteed so that they were incontestable, and with the future political developments properly channelled, the regime could end its life smoothly and give way to some form of rule that would continue to serve the interests of Papadopoulos and his followers. That is how he had conceived of the regime change, at least in the opening stages of the *reforma* in the summer of 1973, excluding certain opposition personalities and parties (such as Andreas Papandreou, who had been in exile since 1968, and obviously the KKE, which had been declared illegal since 1947) from participation in the elections. Of course, this would not lead to complete democratization; as it was, the best it could produce was another case of *democradura*.[28]

Papadopoulos' problem was, as already mentioned, that he was much more isolated than he could imagine, especially in the armed forces. After six years in power he had lost control of the army and at that time the real power was gradually slipping into the hands of the hard-liners. For the latter, as well as for the military as an institution, the attempt at

27 A detailed account of the 'liberalization' measures of 1973 is given in Grigoriadis, *Ιστορία της δικτατορίας*. Significantly, the Spanish *reforma* started with the PCE (communist party) excluded from any negotiation with the regime elites until Prime Minister Suárez surprised the hard-liners by announcing the legalization of the party; also some political prisoners (accused of terrorist action) were still in prison. See R. Carr and P. Fusi, *Spain: Dictatorship to Democracy* (London 1979); and R. Graham, *Spain: Change of a Nation* (London 1984).

28 Again from Spanish, this word denotes a problematic democracy, where the existence of institutions beyond government and parliamentary control (such as, most notably, the army and the Head of State) hinder the smooth functioning of the democratic constitution.

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regime transformation would inevitably lead to the loss of their privileges (political power, social prestige, rapid promotions in key military and government posts). Moreover, Papadopoulos' accession to the presidency of the 'Republic' meant very little, as it did not guarantee more loyalty to him on behalf of the aforementioned regime groups than he had acquired in the previous six years. Having developed an efficient network of information and support in the army, the hard-liners' leader Dimitrios Ioannidis was closely following Papadopoulos' moves, waiting for the opportunity to topple him: 'as Papadopoulos was rising in the regime hierarchy, he was becoming more and more dependent on Ioannidis, who assured the commitment of the army for him'.[29]

With almost no support among the counter-elites, Papadopoulos turned to the only political figure who offered some legitimacy to his *reforma*. Although politically a negligible entity in Greece after he parted ways with the head of the Greek Rally party, Alexandros Papagos, in the 1950s, Spyros Markezinis had a predictive capacity (Meletopoulos calls him 'a really progressive bourgeois element' and an 'impressively radical personality' in Greece[30]). In an interview in February 1967, he had accurately foreseen that there would be no elections that year 'because the time of the Unknown Colonel is coming!'[31] He had never collaborated with the regime, so he believed he could play a key role in the transition and its aftermath. However, Markezinis had to cope with a regime whose frictions were unknown to him, as well as with a hostile civil society and a suspicious opposition.

The tactics of the actors and the collapse of the transition

Gradually, after Markezinis joined up with Papadopoulos, first by holding talks on the formation of a civilian government in the summer of 1973 and then by becoming Prime Minister, Papadopoulos realized that intransigence was not the best way to gain acceptance and legitimacy for his *reforma* within or outside Greece, which led to a gradual softening of his position. Markezinis would not accept Papadopoulos' limited liberalization plan, and kept asking the latter to accept the participation of all political forces in the elections (Andreas Papandreou and the KKE included), and to amend the Constitution in a more pluralist direction, hoping to curtail presidential powers. As a result Papadopoulos agreed to allow participation in the elections planned for 1974 to a wider political spectrum than he had initially intended, as well as to accept an amendment to the authoritarian 'Constitution' in a more liberal direction (limiting the military supervision in politics). Thus Markezinis seemed to have secured both Papadopoulos' hope of uncontested political leadership and his own ambition to be the political driving force of transition and to have a key role in the future democracy, a role he would never achieve on his own. As he put it, 'I did not have any illusions: in the elections

29 Veremis, *Ο στρατός στην ελληνική πολιτική*, 267.

30 M. Meletopoulos, *Η Δικτατορία των Συνταγματαρχών* (Athens 1996) 378, 380.

31 S. Markezinis, *Σύγχρονη πολιτική ιστορία της Ελλάδος* (Athens 1994) 149.

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I would get 15%. I hoped, however, that finally the old parties would participate and we would come to terms on forming a government.'[32] This divergence in goals between a hasty but cunning Papadopoulos and a seemingly more cautious Markezinis was offering a chance to the opposition to demand a proper regime liberalization from both men.

A crucial flaw, however, was the lack of a roadmap for elections after the formation of the interim cabinet. Papadopoulos and Markezinis were improvising; they were far from having developed sound tactics for the way to the elections. For instance, an immediate liberal revision of the authoritarian constitution in force at the time might have played into Markezinis' hands, presenting the political opposition with the dilemma of accepting participation or leaving the road open to the regime to shape the country's post-dictatorial politics. This dilemma is illustrated by a letter sent in late August to Konstantinos Karamanlis by Konstantinos Tsatsos, a former minister in the Karamanlis cabinets and later President of the Greek Republic. He was concerned about what the rank and file of the ERE (National Radical Union) might do if Karamanlis did not participate; Tsatsos claimed that some of them might take their chances under Markezinis or Nikolaos Makarezos,[33] as they would not like to be excluded from the new Parliament.[34] However, if this were to be effective, it should have taken effect immediately after Markezinis took office, along with the call for elections inclusive of all political parties. Nevertheless, when Markezinis was sworn in (1 October) the amendment was postponed till an unspecified time 'on the way to the elections', which were supposed to be called at some point in 1974.

Markezinis started courting the anti-elites, the 'old political class'. He was one of them until the 1967 dictatorship, which he had not joined. The rejection of his offer to the politicians to participate in the elections in spite of his repeated pledges that they would be free and fair, and of the opportunity they were given to press the regime for more concessions needs an explanation. Had they accepted participation dependent on guarantees of inclusion and fairness on behalf of Markezinis, and had their criteria not been met, they would have been totally justified in boycotting the elections, and denouncing the *reforma* as a sham. This is precisely what some of them, such as the former minister Georgios Rallis, were suggesting. Rallis stated that the politicians should

> unite and seek to form a majority that will allow for the radical amendment of the Constitution... It is wrong to decide on an abstention from the elections now... it is necessary to stake without delay our concrete claims, without the satisfaction of which the terms 'free' or 'fair' elections will be, as set by the regime, void of any content.[35]

32 S. Markezinis, *Πολιτικαί αναμνήσεις* (Athens 1979) 411, where he gives a detailed account of the protracted negotiations between himself and Papadopoulos, their initial divergence and the concessions by the latter.

33 Makarezos was the third man in the dictatorial triumvirate (along with Papadopoulos and Pattakos); there were rumours he was preparing to run in the elections with his own party.

34 See K. Karamanlis, *Αρχείο. Γεγονότα και κείμενα* (Athens 1994) for this letter.

35 G. Leontaritis, *Σάββας Κωνσταντόπουλος, τα άγνωστα ντοκουμέντα* (Athens 2003) 166–7.

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However, such voices were ignored by the leaders of the major pre-dictatorial parties: Mavros of EK (Centre Union) and Kanellopoulos of ERE were firm in the rejection of what they called a farce, and consistent on the stance of 'no discussions with the junta' that they had adopted for the previous six years. In October Mavros stated that 'the proposed elections have but one purpose: to legitimize the dictatorship, providing it with a castrated Parliament which will not have the power to debate, let alone decide, any of the nation's vital issues'.[36]

The reaction of the Left was not unanimous; two non-communist leaders, Ilias Iliou and Leonidas Kyrkos, claimed that the 'Markezinis experiment' offered a way for the organized anti-regime forces and the people to proclaim their opposition to the dictatorship, making the most of the possibilities that the elections offered to show the shortcomings of the opening. As Kyrkos stated,

> it is by the very process of events that the people would be made to react against the dictatorship: when the elections were held, and the apparatus of the dictatorship mobilized against the opposition, then the latter, backed by the mass public, would respond by escalating its reaction ... [the democrats had an opportunity to] show everyone (international observers, journalists etc.) how violent and tyrannical the regime was ... and even in a Parliament where the junta would have the majority, there would be a powerful opposition, backed by a fiery people.[37]

The KKE, contradicting its own line during the dictatorship 'to exploit, even under the harshest conditions, any legal provisions that the people's movement may find,'[38] rejected the 'experiment', calling it a farce. Andreas Papandreou also held firm on his anti-regime line. Interviewed in September, he said 'anyone who participates in the elections and, in general, in the political processes of the regime will be a new Quisling and will never be forgiven by the people'.[39]

The most prominent political figure, Karamanlis, did not take up a clear-cut position: he kept silent, a stance which, for some, was a sign that he doubted the possibility of democratization under Papadopoulos and Markezinis. According to his associate and post-1974 Minister Ioannis Varvitsiotis, he would have liked the 'Markezinis experiment' to have succeeded,[40] but was too cautious to break his silence from the beginning

36 Grigoriadis, *Ιστορία της δικτατορίας*, 38. Nevertheless, Zournatzis recalls Mavros, in July 1973, prompting Markezinis to accept the offer from Papadopoulos to form a government immediately. Perhaps the cause of this change of heart within three months was the failure of Markezinis to meet Mavros' expectations.

37 Interview with Kyrkos; Farakos partly explained the attitude of the above Left-wing leaders as an attempt to distance themselves from the official, 'orthodox' KKE line.

38 KKE, *Έκθεση και συμπεράσματα για τα γεγονότα του Νοέμβρη* (Athens 1976) 18.

39 A. Papandreou, *Από το ΠΑΚ στο ΠΑΣΟΚ* (Athens 1976) 58.This position of Papandreou's, consistent with his attitude during the dictatorship years, was considered by both Kyrkos and Farakos as an attempt to win over the more radical youth and opposition groups to his cause.

40 Rallis basically agreed with Varvitsiotis but said Karamanlis was sceptical about the possible success of his return to Greece, and that Karamanlis would by no means agree to become Prime Minister under Papadopoulos, an action which would legitimate the dictatorship *a posteriori*.

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and waited to see how the transition would develop. Furthermore, as Rallis recalled, Karamanlis was worried that if he returned to Greece, people's interest in his initiative would soon die out without having achieved much.

Although the politicians ignored Markezinis' pleas, they did not envisage any alternatives for a peaceful return to democracy: in short, Papadopoulos had to be ousted, as well as Markezinis, who had associated himself with the regime. They even ignored the advice of European diplomats: the Dutch ambassador wrote on 18 October that the ambassadors of the EEC countries, who were meeting regularly to discuss the situation in Greece, agreed that 'the leaders of the ERE and the Centre Union would not act in the best interests of Greek democracy if they were to abstain from the general elections'.[41] They were also unaware of the hard-liners' forces who were eager to seize power. On the other hand, the presence of Papadopoulos as 'President of the Republic' with extensive powers was not helpful in reducing the fear that this would be a smokescreen for the dictatorship. Memories of the coup and the persecutions that followed were too recent for the opposition to rely on Papadopoulos' good will alone.

Markezinis was also not effectively distancing himself from the regime. In his short term as Prime Minister he gave the impression that he was overshadowed by the discredited dictator. This fact neutralized any momentum Markezinis could gain for his *reforma* and made him appear to be Papadopoulos' puppet, thus giving his opponents a good reason for being sceptical. It is fair to bear in mind, however, the short time he had in which to prove himself. The short eight weeks of his premiership were insufficient for him to ease the concerns about his 'experiment' effectively. The Greek *reforma* needed much more time to hatch than it did. He was also mistaken in thinking that his good intentions were enough to convince the people of his democratic commitment; only later did he realize that mere public statements were not sufficient.

Nevertheless, Markezinis was proceeding with a protracted and outspoken preparation for the elections unaware that he was dealing with ruthless military officers, whose long experience in conspiracy and subversion was lethal for his *reforma*. Ioannidis, head of the ESA (Greek military police) had acquired so much influence in the army that every officer displeased with Papadopoulos was turning to him to complain about corruption among the officers occupying government posts, as well as about Papadopoulos' 'betrayal of the Revolution', which was giving way to the same political class it had overthrown six years earlier. Markezinis was too slow and conspicuous in his manoeuvring, holding public meetings with ex-politicians, and thus providing the hard-liners with valuable information about his plans (such as the significant fact that the announcement of the timetable for elections was planned to take place on 17 November), and facilitating their subversive plans. It is quite surprising that Markezinis has been blamed for being so

41 C. Barkman, *Ambassador in Athens* (London 1989) 121. This is in sharp contrast to the Spanish anti-elites' decision to support the *reforma* in their country. For more details see D. Share, *The Making of Spanish Democracy* (London 1986).

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conspicuous about his intentions, whereas he has been accused ever since of exactly the opposite, that is, of not sincerely intending to democratize Greece. In his defence, he lacked information about the developments in the army. When he did receive any information, he became anxious and hastened to alert Papadopoulos who, in turn, was overconfident that the officers would not rise up against him, although 'rumours about an imminent coup were on the streets; it was openly discussed even in the Ministry of Defence for some time', as Makarezos recalled. Thus he ignored information about Ioannidis' conspiracies, despite it originating from credible sources such as the Mayor of Athens, the British ambassador, and even US ambassador Tasca.[42]

It is also important to emphasize that Markezinis was the victim of an extremely adverse conjuncture, namely the students' uprising in November 1973. As Kyrkos noted, without the liberalization during that summer which gave some freedom of movement and organization to the students, especially in Athens, the Polytechnic uprising would never have happened. Markezinis missed a chance to distance himself adequately from the regime die-hards in the way he reacted to the opening stages of the uprising and to the brutal repression that ensued. Clearly his reaction was elitist, since he did not believe in the power of civil society to influence decisions taken by leaders. He ignored the early demonstrations and focused on his plan for elections, while everyone's attention was turning to the student-occupied Polytechnic campus. During the first days of the demonstrations an observer noted that 'no attempt was made either to disperse the crowds or to halt the supplies of money, food and medicines pouring into the School, or to jam the student radio. The crowds grew larger.'[43] The escalation of the events shocked him and Papadopoulos, and their reaction was spasmodic and erratic. In successive meetings with other regime officials they were undecided on how the police should deal with the demonstrators until the situation had got completely out of hand. Restoring 'public order' after the demonstrations had spiralled out of control meant brutally suppressing the uprising by bringing back the army: this is the apparatus *par excellence* of a dictatorial regime eager to contain its challengers. This suppression was carried out in a brutal and clumsy way, as the British ambassador commented:

> the Athens garrisons did not have a competent leadership, were badly trained and incapable of suppressing demonstrations. It was decided to send tanks whereas the infantry would have been more suitable. They opened fire indiscriminately... Had the authorities acted from the beginning with effectiveness and determination, there might not have been bloodshed.[44]

42 See Markezinis, *Σύγχρονη πολιτική ιστορία της Ελλάδος* for details on the alarming information he received in the days before the coup.

43 K. Andrews, *Greece in the Dark. 1967-1974* (Amsterdam 1980) 195. Even the KKE report on the Polytechnic events partly considers this 'an honouring of the liberalization plan': KKE, *Έκθεση και συμπεράσματα*, 55.

44 Foreign Office Papers : PREM 15/1611, 20/11/1973.

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Finally, even after the bloody conclusion to the events Markezinis gave a press conference in which he spoke of 'enemies of the nation and of democracy who want to obstruct the country's smooth path to elections'.[45] Saying this at a time when everyone was thinking of the victims of this suppression and when his own downfall was imminent, condemned him in the eyes of the Greeks forever. This infamous press conference was to be the last and best remembered given by Papadopoulos' puppet echoing his master's voice.[46] The Polytechnic events delegitimized the 'Markezinis experiment' and politically stigmatized its protagonist after the actual restoration of democracy in 1974. The counter-elites took full advantage of the opportunity they were given to discredit the *reforma*, calling for an escalation of demonstrations, visiting the Polytechnic campus, and encouraging the students' protest against Markezinis.[47] The British ambassador observed in his report that the politicians

> openly encouraged the students, well aware that this could lead to violence. The politicians, who from the beginning had expressed opposition to the colonels, used the students in their effort to provoke the government into taking oppressive measures that would put an end to the programme of Markezinis ... To a large extent they got what they wanted and now should ... accept their responsibilities... if the Markezinis experiment fails or if the regime collapses – which is less likely to happen – the prospects a moderate democratic government that will respect the international treaties and obligations of Greece are indeed limited.[48]

Ironically, Markezinis found himself caught in a dilemma: for the politicians he was a renegade who accepted a deal with the regime in exchange for a junta-appointed premiership; for the military, he was an outsider who undertook the task of ending the regime which had 'saved' Greece from communism, chaos and corruption six years earlier. This is why Markezinis' pledges, which were too timid to convince the opposition, had nevertheless gone too far for the hard-liners. The members of the military hierarchy refused to give up their power and, ironically, were the only ones who took those pledges seriously.

The hard-liners' coup of 25 November led to what was widely perceived as a worse dictatorship and to the fierce suppression of any reaction against the regime. In a memorandum Averoff sent to General Ghizikis, newly appointed 'President of the Republic', he wrote that in the first days after the coup 'there prevailed everywhere a sense of general relief and joy, of lively optimism for the future, a feeling of devotion toward the Armed

45 Quoted in Grigoriadis, *Ιστορία της δικτατορίας*, 111.

46 For instance, the KKE's radio station accused both men of 'Goebbels-like tactics', aiming to distort the meaning of the uprising by presenting it as 'a rampage of vandals' ('Voice of truth' broadcast, 19/11/1973).

47 Again here, it is useful to bear in mind that the Spanish opposition followed exactly the opposite tactic, abstaining from any violent demonstrations that might have given the hard-liners an excuse for intervention. See J. Arango, *The Spanish Political System: Franco's Legacy* (Boulder 1978).

48 Foreign Office Papers: PREM 15/1611, 20/11/1973.

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Forces. These feelings however were short-lived. Hopes were disappointed.'[49] A report by the British ambassador in early December shared this pessimistic view: 'behind a cabinet of mediocrities, the real sovereigns of Greece are Ioannidis and his men. The main line of their ideology is "back to 1967" and the cracking of (political and economic) corruption that characterized the Papadopoulos regime. One thing is henceforth certain: the future of Greece is gloomy.'[50]

Thus the outcome of the 'Markezinis experiment' was the opposite of what soft-liners as well as democratic opposition actors wished to see: the restoration of hard-line authoritarianism that would stubbornly refuse to remove itself from power until the ill-fated intervention in Cyprus one year later.

Conclusions

'It was chimerical to believe that under Markezinis Greece could democratize... there might have been a certain liberalization, but it would have fallen far short of the democracy the Greek people would have wanted ... it was good that the "Markezinis experiment" failed, because thus it facilitated the radical change of 1974', the former Secretary General of the KKE Grigoris Farakos noted.[51] Indeed the regime, monolithically military as it was, lacked a socio-political basis and support from other interest groups. Furthermore, the internal struggles – a consequence of the divergence of goals among the officers that imposed it, and of the fact that Papadopoulos was never uncontested – and its failure to institutionalize itself, had made its self-transformation improbable. All this resulted in the fact that the 'Markezinis experiment' was faced from the outset with a double opposition, from the military die-hards and from the political counter-elites. One needs, therefore, to acknowledge a 'structural deficiency' that blocked the Greek *reforma*. Nevertheless, in 1973 some conditions that might have allowed a democratic transition were also present: the regime's ongoing lack of legitimacy, the end of a favourable economic period, the first signs of organized anti-regime collective action, the divergence between Papadopoulos and Markezinis on the transition schedule. All the above factors had created a window of opportunity in which the 'Markezinis experiment' might have cleared a path to democratization. Although it is debatable how many concessions Papadopoulos would have made, his need for legitimacy might have been further exploited.[52]

49 Cited in Andrews, *Greece in the Dark*, 306. This change of heart is also portrayed in G. Bonanos, *Η Αλήθεια* (Athens 1986). Also, Ioannidis told Pattakos in December 'we are not joking: this is a dictatorship. We will send all our opponents into exile on the islands and stay in power for thirty years!'

50 Foreign Office Papers: FCO 9 1717–6/12/1973.

51 See also D. Haralambis, *Στρατός και πολιτική εξουσία* (Athens 1985) for the view that the self-transformation of the Greek dictatorship was a structural impossibility.

52 The Dutch ambassador noted, after a meeting with Markezinis in December (Barkman, *Ambassador in* Athens, 145): 'I was indeed impressed by what he [Markezinis] had been able to get Papadopoulos' agreement for – even after the disturbances'.

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It was a failure for Papadopoulos and Markezinis, as shown by the hasty and ill-prepared way they managed the transition (too conspicuous for the hard-liners, unconvincing for the counter-elites, chaotic and indecisive during the Polytechnic events). Moreover, they were hindered by the prompt and utter rejection by the politicians, and the Polytechnic uprising itself did not help the *reforma*. Huntington's 'guideline for democratizers' that 'opposition groups who wanted democracy should not have boycotted the elections authoritarian leaders did call'[53] is thus supported by the outcome of the 'Markezinis experiment': the counter-elites bear some of the responsibility for the outcome since they offered no alternative to the *reforma* roadmap for peacefully ending a dictatorship backed by tanks and military police.

However, even without the rejection by the opposition, the deep divisions within the regime, which were not obvious at the time, and the hard-liners' opposition were enough to bring the 'experiment' to an end. Markezinis was running out of time and he lacked information about the military threat his 'experiment' was facing. Thus the 'experiment' was a hostage to fortune – that is to say, to Ioannidis and the hard-liners, the real overlords of the army.[54] Markezinis therefore missed a historic chance to call the free and fair elections he had claimed he intended to hold in the autumn of 1973, take the hard-liners by surprise and show his good will to the opposition and the people. Had he acted in that way, the outcome of his experiment might have been different, as the then Chief of Staff wrote: 'had the elections been declared in the first five days of November, and had new developments got underway, what followed [the Polytechnic events and the 25 November coup] would never have happened'.[55] Nevertheless the question as to whether the unfavourable nature of the regime could have been overcome had the agents acted in different ways, will never be answered, but will remain open to speculation. Arguably, in the event that the 'experiment' was successful,

> democracy would not have been immediately restored, and the regime would have cleared a critical hurdle in its search for a broader base of support, and would have gained a minimum degree of wider acceptance that was the *sine qua non* of its viability in a form other than sheer repression.[56]

Despite this, the heavy cost Greece and Cyprus paid for the radical change of 1974, and the opportunities offered by even a seemingly minimal liberalization cannot be ignored. For all their faults, and far from attributing any democratic credentials to them, Papadopoulos and Markezinis had started a tentative process of transition. Ironically, the only outcome of the 'Markezinis experiment' that nobody wanted was the one that finally occurred: a return to authoritarianism. The nature of the regime proved too big an

53 S. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (London 1991) 190.

54 Markezinis had alluded to this (*Σύγχρονη πολιτική ιστορία της* Ελλάδος, 183), interviewed in September 1973: 'if I fail, power will pass into the hands of a Greek Gaddafi'.

55 Bonanos, *Η Αλήθεια*, 135.

56 P. N. Diamantouros, 'Regime change and the prospects for democracy in Greece: 1974-1983', in O'Donnell et al. (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 138–64.

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obstacle for both men to overcome; their shortcomings in dealing with the complexities of an uncertain transition and the bloody suppression of the Polytechnic uprising made their failure even more deplorable. It was most unfortunate for Greece that a *reforma* that would neither compromise the democratic expectations of the opposition and the people nor burden the country with the Cyprus trauma proved impossible to achieve.

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