

# Regime Dispensability and Democratic Transitions: A Case Comparison of Spain and Turkey

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**ABSTRACT** *Democratic transitions are usually complex and uncertain processes, and specifying paths to democratisation is a tentative process. One of the controversial and less explored paths is that of regime self-transformation. An attempt is made in this paper to explain this kind of transition with the notion of regime dispensability, a situation in which the dictatorial regime is abandoned in favour of a non-dictatorial one, using two countries that experienced such regime-initiated democratic transitions, namely Spain and Turkey, in a comparative framework. Dispensability is linked to the nature of the dictatorial regime and is used as a tool to account for causes of, and regime groups that can bring about, the regime's transformation, as well as for the implications of self-transformation for the future democracies.*

**KEY WORDS:** Dispensability, democratic transition, Turkish transition, Spanish transition

## **Dispensability in regime-initiated democratic transitions**

In democratisation studies, it is generally accepted that the transition from a dictatorial regime to a democracy is mostly the result of the dictatorship's collapse or crisis, caused by pressures from home or abroad, failure in economic performance, defeat in war or splits within the regime ranks. However, there have been cases of transitions that have not been caused by events similar to those described above, that is, a distinct type of transition(s) where the outgoing regime elites, keeping control of the transition process and at the same time having achieved certain guarantees for their interests, deliberately gave their place to some form of democracy. In this situation, democratic transition can be explained by reference to the notion of regime dispensability, a notion that has not been used to account for democratic transitions in the literature. Despite this, the analytical approach of dispensability can contribute to the understanding of certain conjunctures, not of outcomes, of democratic transitions. An attempt will be made in this article to put dispensability in context by trying to apply it on two dictatorial regimes that became

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'dispensable' for their own elites and to account for its effects on the emerging democratic regimes.

The two cases of democratic transition initiated by the regime elites that will be examined, Spain and Turkey, set an interesting comparative framework, as they refer to different cases of regimes as well as outcomes of transitions. Spain in 1976/77 has been the *par excellence* transition in democratisation studies, and has set the paradigm for transition through negotiated regime self-transformation; however, at the time, questions and doubts were raised about the predispositions of the elites and the success of the transition itself. The second case, the Turkish transition of 1983, presents a paradox: the regime transformed itself, although this was led by the most anti-democratic elite, the military. This transition has been criticised to the extent that the poorly performing democracy was precisely the goal of regime disposability.<sup>1</sup> This offers a basis of comparison between the two countries' transitions, based on the similarity of the reasons for disposability, as well as on the difference in the outcomes. Those cases will hopefully elucidate the usefulness for the introduction and use of disposability for democratic transitions.

### A Framework for Disposability

The term 'disposability' was coined by O'Donnell and Schmitter, who hold the view that members of the elite of a regime opt for democracy because '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' (O'Donnell & Whitehead, 1986, p. 17). Thus, regime disposability is a situation in which a non-democratic regime, having outlived its usefulness for the regime elites for a variety of reasons, can be dropped in favour of a democratic one. It is distinguished from other, 'non-consensual' forms of transition such as regime collapse, revolution, coup, or even extrication caused by 'a sudden loss of legitimacy' that non-democratic regimes suffer, forcing them to hand power to civilians.<sup>2</sup> The elucidation of the common features of the transitions under examination presupposes the understanding of the nature of non-democratic regimes that are prone to this transformation, the reasons and the time of disposability, as well as the elite groups for which the regime becomes dispensable. It also poses an important question relating to the kind of democracy that can emerge from the transition process. The next paragraphs dwell upon these issues.

This transition type depends upon certain characteristics such as the nature of the non-democratic regime (whether it was a one-party regime, civilianised, military-dominated, etc) and the reasons for which the previous democracy was overthrown. A dictatorship instituted as the reply of certain power groups to pressures from below for democratic concessions or to an open challenge to the political or economic status quo, may not have the same objectives as one that was imposed by one sole elite (such as the military) aiming to achieve a lasting control over the politics of a country. Accordingly, the roots of the transition should be traced in the reasons for the existence of the regime itself. Another structural characteristic is the duration of the regime in power. A regime that is a short-lived discontinuity between democratic breakdown and restoration is rather different to one that lasts long enough to institutionalise itself and bring substantial changes to a country's political, social or economic framework.

Regime nature has furthermore to do with the structures, which the regime may create during its time in power, and which can provide links with groups broader than the ones that brought it about. A regime articulated in bodies that communicate, rather than dictate, its decisions to the mass public (and, at the same time, receive some form of feedback on these decisions from the people), one that has created institutions survivable in a non-dictatorial context (such as a political party, pressure group or movement), or one enjoying some support from organised interests, can keep in touch with the socio-political reality of a country, and continue after the end of the dictatorship as a legitimate player in the democratic game. This also explains why large parts of the organised opposition elites and of the people may accept that the regime elite remain in power for some time after the transition. On the contrary, the complete isolation of a regime (in the case of a monolithic power group with a view only to serving its narrow interests, such as a military faction) can deprive it of vital information on the dispositions of counter-elites and people, and consequently of a basis upon which to build a consensus for its elite's institutionalisation of interests.

The above issue has to do with the reasons a regime becomes dispensable. There have been quite a few explanations for this kind of transition, but the analysis here takes the focus away from suggestions put forward by the cultural and developmental schools, such as that democracy will emerge because of the fulfilment of certain economic and cultural preconditions,<sup>3</sup> as well as from broader groups, such as social class,<sup>4</sup> in favour of smaller ones such as the ruling elite and the counter-elites. However, it cannot disregard certain structural arguments that point to the internal problems (of economic or social nature) that a non-democratic regime has to cope with and which contribute to it being considered dispensable.

One should concur with the view that the 'institutionalisation of uncertainty'<sup>5</sup> that comes with democracy makes elites subject themselves to the contingency that accompanies a democratic transition; a risky task to pursue. For such a transition to occur, therefore, the outgoing elite must have tried first to guarantee the institutionalisation of its own interests before accepting to institutionalise uncertainty and proceeding to the transition. It is therefore accepted that rationality, in the sense of a calculated risk taken in order to transform a regime, is a useful explanatory tool for regime dispensability. For some scholars, regime-initiated transitions are usually brought about because the elite often perceive the regime as dispensable, as the costs of repression exceed those of toleration, as in Dahl's classic formulation (Dahl, 1971). In a number of cases of democratisation, dictatorial regime elites 'concluded that the costs of staying in power ... had reached a point where a graceful exit from power was desirable' (Huntington, 1991, pp. 127–128). Furthermore, as Przeworski has pointed out, the cost of staying in power is burdened by intensive anti-regime pressure: 'faced with the alternative of an open, possibly violent, conflict – the outcomes of which may be highly beneficial but also quite risky – and of a democratic solution, which requires compromise but provides security, political forces involved in the regime transformation may opt for the democratic compromise' (Przeworski, 1988, p.70).<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, rationality and dispensability in this logic of analysis are linked to Huntington's suggestion that 'the established elites within an authoritarian regime ... see their interests served by the introduction of democratic institutions' (Huntington, 1984, p. 214) and they therefore opt for reform. In such cases, the regime elite find a chance to pre-empt the opposition and 'unilaterally liberalise the political arena as a strategic move to prevent its

removal and, more to the point, the installation of a democratic regime over which it has no control' (Casper & Taylor, 1996, p.5). So they decide to abandon the non-democratic regime in favour of a more democratic one that will provide sufficient guarantees for their security, impunity and their corporate interests.<sup>7</sup> In this conception of transition, political actors are seen as utility maximisers in a broad sense: 'elite groups will only support democracy insofar as they feel certain that their interests will be looked after under more democratic conditions' (Sorensen, 1993, p. 30).

Along with the reasons for dispensability comes the issue of its timing. Is there a certain time at which the elites perceive that their interests can be satisfactorily safeguarded, so that the dictatorial regime becomes dispensable, and if there is, when does it come? It seems that the most favourable time for the regime elites to initiate the transition is one of absence of serious or threatening pressure from civil society and/or the counter-elites. The lack of such pressure makes it easier for them to institutionalise their interests either by negotiating with the opposition or by imposing such a transformation; it also eases the possibility of dissidence within the regime on the issue of the transition.

This kind of dissidence poses another question: which groups is the regime dispensable for? Dispensability does not necessarily imply unanimous rejection by all regime elites. Some groups of the dictatorial coalition may favour democratisation, others may support a limited reform or liberalisation, while others may oppose reform altogether. For certain elites (the military usually is the most prominent example) democratisation means loss of power and privileges, and they therefore may react to the attempt of change, causing a split within the regime's ranks.<sup>8</sup> Such a development might jeopardise the plans of the outgoing elites, subjecting them not only to the pressures of the opposition, but also to those of the potential hardliners, the victory of whom might mean a reversion to authoritarianism. This divergence makes it interesting to investigate whether dispensability is a potential cause of rupture within the regime.

Finally, there is the question of what form of democracy the agreement among, or the balance of power between, the parts involved in the transition process will lead to. This type of transition presents the apparent paradox of democracy being (re)introduced by non-democrats, as was first pointed out by Rustow: 'circumstances may force, trick, lure or cajole non-democrats into democratic behaviour and... their beliefs may adjust in due course by some process of rationalisation or adaptation' (Rustow, 1970, p. 345).<sup>9</sup> Could the fact that the dictatorial elites consider the regime dispensable provide a guarantee that it will be transformed into a liberal democracy – and who will make the most of this transformation? How can the interests of the outgoing elites be institutionally guaranteed in order to reflect a potential compromise between them and the counter-elites in the democracy to be? One must have in mind the contingency intrinsic to democratic transitions, involving 'processes of change which do not necessarily end in predetermined outcomes of equilibria or consolidation, and which may not proceed in predicted and necessary sequences' (Whitehead, 2002, p. 34). This contingency also concerns more unpredictable factors, such as elections, involved in the process of transition: 'even deeply manipulated elections may lead to surprising opposition victories. Even tightly controlled elections tend to strengthen opposition parties and generate pressures for further reform' (Schedler, 2001, p. 14). The point to be made here is that dispensability only explains the *reasons* for transition, and does not guarantee democratisation as an outcome.

## Spain: From Dispensability to Liberal Democracy

### *Nature of the Previous Non-democratic Regime*

The Spanish transition had its roots in the nature of the Franquist regime and in its internal, but not necessarily fatal, crisis after the death of Franco. The regime elite consisted of a range of diverse groups (the military, the *Falange* and *Movimiento* bureaucrats, the Church, the *Opus Dei* group, and so on) that had allied during the civil war in order to face the political and social challenges of the republican and left-wing parties. However, after the end of the war and once the threat was suppressed, the coalition was difficult to sustain because of the divergence of interests among the groups vying for power and influence in decision-making. Yet, as the civil war had produced an individual leader in the face of the *Caudillo*, the various interest groups also depended on the dictator's appeal. There was a continuous breaking and remaking of internal alliances and a balance of forces in the ranks of the authoritarian regime. This was what made the latter, according to Linz's definition, a 'semi-pluralist' system, 'with limited, not responsible, political pluralism; without elaborate and guiding ideology ... and in which a leader ... exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones' (Linz, 1970, p. 255). Linz was also the first to speak of factions that were 'not dominant or represented in the governing group but ... willing to participate in power without fundamentally challenging the regime ... [those groups had] some share in the government or in the political power structure but oppose[d] some aspects of it' (Linz, 1973, pp. 191–192). In this feature of the regime one can find an explanatory key to its future successful self-transformation. Franco's leadership was the element of cohesion, as he played on the contradictions and clashing interests of the factions; with him gone, the link between the various elite groups was lost. Much of the pressure to reform the regime came from a number of those groups, which preferred, for their own reasons, a *reforma* fruitful for their interests to a continuation of franquism.

### *Reasons and Timing for the Dispensability of the Regime*

The main structural factors that helped the regime overcome its internal crises and stabilise itself were its economic success until the early 1970s and the weaknesses and divisions within the ranks of its opponents. It was the death of Franco in that political conjuncture that gave to some of the *familias* strong reasons for considering a way out of the dictatorship and signalled the decisive turn in their preferences: 'the forces that united in 1936 to save themselves were to split in 1976 to save themselves yet again, albeit this time with an accommodation to the forces of democracy' (Preston, 1986, p. 5). There was no visible threat in 1975–76 as the opposition was not strong enough to threaten its stability, the people were mostly passive and fearing a repetition of the civil war, and the students and workers were not able to cause any serious harm to the regime at least in the short term.<sup>10</sup> As was rightly stated by Share, the crisis of the regime in 1975 was internal and political, due to the incapacity of the *familias* to find a viable solution to the succession problem. The major causes of the erosion of the regime's coherence were the inability of any faction to gain hegemony, or to achieve a balance among the clashing interests, and the 'internal chaos within the franquist political class and the concomitant uncertainty created over the political future' (Share, 1986, p. 160). The regime was at the same time too weak in popular support to continue as it had done up to that point, but also too strong in terms of the state apparatus it commanded to be destroyed by sheer force. It is at that point

that one can perceive regime dispensability: the situation led different power groups to draw different conclusions on the viability of the regime and on what had to be done. Among these groups were the *aperturistas* (conservative technocrats, Christian democrats, liberal military and clergy), the *continuistas* (franquist technocrats, integralist Catholics), and the *ultras* (extreme rightists, old Falangists, and right-wing senior army officers).

For the *aperturistas* the main objective was to safeguard their interests in a new institutional context that could guarantee economic stabilisation in a free market framework (for the economic interest groups and the technocrats) and political stability and moderation (for the political groups emerging from within the regime as well as for the moderate military). Another substantial reward for the *aperturistas* was the integration of Spain in the EEC. It was exactly the opposite for the rest of the regime groups, which had closely associated themselves with franquism and saw their future linked with the perpetuation of the dictatorship under a new leader but keeping the same institutions of the regime. Those groups, however, were out of touch with the political reality of their country because of their age or ideology, refusing to accept the changes that had transformed both Spain and its international environment.

#### *For whom did the Regime become Dispensable?*

There were two factors that made the objective of the *aperturistas* much easier to attain. The first factor was, as is widely accepted in the literature, the support of the king. Juan Carlos' position was precarious: his nomination in 1969 guaranteed him the support of institutional bodies of the regime designed by Franco, such as the Council of the Realm, the Cortes, and the army. But nothing similar could be assumed for the political opposition or the people of Spain. Therefore, *continuismo* with little or no concessions to the opposition would, in the long run, harm the king's interests because in that case the army and a minority of the political elites would be the only ones who would openly support him<sup>11</sup> making him seem as the continuation of the anti-democratic tradition of the Spanish monarchy. He could not act in this way if he wanted to broaden the basis of his political legitimisation, both at the level of the elites and of the people. On the other hand, the acceptance of a democratic regime would mean that he could retain his throne and legitimise the monarchy through the process of a widely-accepted programme of institutional engineering. This could eventually be achieved through cooperation with the regime *aperturistas* who would also prefer to end the deadlock created with the death of Franco and legitimise their power within the country and abroad by incorporating it into a liberal democracy's structures.

The second factor that facilitated the transition was the fact that most of the opposition forces had, by 1975, understood that the regime could not be overthrown without bloodshed.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the best they could hope for was an opening to full democracy on behalf of the soft-liners through negotiations and concessions. A transition process of the regime along those lines appeared to be conditional upon the willingness of the soft-liners and the opposition moderates to engage in negotiations with a view to finding a common ground in the post-dictatorial institutional setting, in order to conclude an agreement for the gradual opening to free and fair elections. The emergence of a pro-democratic civil society provided a fertile ground for striking a widely accepted agreement with the anti-elites for a peaceful transition. It also presupposed caution when dealing with the hard-liners, because of the resources of coercion that the latter controlled.



It is along those lines that the replacement of the *continuista* Arias Navarro – the representative of the old guard of the regime who hoped to maintain much from francoism by keeping the reforms to a minimum and luring the opposition to accept them without harming the main structures of the regime<sup>13</sup> – with the *aperturista* Suarez, can be explained. Arias was also ideologically attached to the monolithic regime structure that he had served for a long time, incapable of realising and accepting the changes needed. Suarez, on the other hand, was a typical regime bureaucrat, ambitious but at the same time cautious in his path, using the political machinations of the franquist system and his personal acquaintances to rise in the *Movimiento* and then to form the Union of Spanish People in 1975.<sup>14</sup> He belonged to a generation of Spaniards who had not lived through the civil war or were too young to have vivid memories of it, and for whom the regime was also dispensable inasmuch as they could continue their political careers after the *reforma*. He turned the situation the way Juan Carlos and the *aperturistas* would like, in the beginning not as audaciously as to alarm the hard-liners, and at the same time not so timidly as to frustrate the opposition. However, it should be remembered that his appointment raised disappointment and doubts about the intentions of the king, and fears of a reversion to authoritarian politics.

The above fears did not come to pass, though, as Suarez and the king took careful but firm steps to dismantle the regime without provoking a violent response from the hard-liners, or a massive upheaval from the opposition that would ignite a reaction from the hard-liners. The process followed by the soft-liners (i.e. convincing the Cortes to vote for the Reform Plan, thus institutionally ending the regime;<sup>15</sup> gaining the positive vote of the people on the Plan, thus acquiring the democratic legitimacy necessary to sustain the institutional position of the monarchy in the new democracy; and finally the surprise legalisation of the communist party, which proved the democratic commitment of the *aperturistas* and totally surprised the extremists) has shaped the paradigmatic transition case of the third wave of democratisation. It should also be borne in mind that the inclusion of the counter-elites in the transition offered the *reforma* a vital legitimacy, as the opposition accepted a compromise with the *aperturistas* on the basis of an agreement that included the recognition of the constitutional monarchy; the free market economy; the firm placement of Spain in the West; the acceptance of liberal democracy; a set of social rights; and the introduction of local autonomy. The first free elections of June 1977 that followed gave Suarez's Union de Centro Democratico (UCD) (comprising all ex-regime moderates for whom the regime had become dispensable) what they sought for almost one year: democratically acquired power.

### *The Result: Liberal Democracy*

Liberal democracy as the outcome of the transition was not easily foreseeable in Spain in 1976. The stability and institutionalisation of the regime in the previous decades had convinced many people, experts on Spanish politics included, that it would outlive Franco, perhaps with some alterations at most mellowing its bluntly oppressive parts and allowing for some institutional expression of opposition. Very few rightly predicted that the transformation would be so radical that it would give its place to 'democracy without adjectives' so soon after the death of its leader. Despite the early uncertainties of the post-transition period, the Spanish democracy took root and consolidated itself. The credit for the paradigmatic self-transformation was earned not only by the pro-democratic

elites, but also by persons that should have possessed anti-democratic credentials less than two years before the transition. For the latter, it became possible to transform the regime into a democracy in which they could continue to enjoy the privileges that they had acquired by non-democratic means. The criticism by some, that the regime basically changed some outside characteristics but in reality had the same persons running the country after the elections, is grounded up to the point that these critics correctly saw in the *reforma* the institutional mechanism to preserve the interests of some elites. However, this criticism can only apply up to a certain point, as was proven with the 1982 electoral victory of the PSOE.

### **Turkey: From Dispensability to ‘Difficult Democracy’**

#### *Nature of the Previous Non-democratic Regime*

The Turkish dictatorial regime of 1980, imposed by the military as an institution, has been considered in various scholarly accounts as a predominately ‘moderator’ regime type. In this kind of regime, according to the categorisation of Clapham and Philip, the professional military feel obliged to intervene in order to ‘sort out the mess’ created by factional politics, and after a period of ‘corrective government’ to hand power to a ‘cleaned up’ civilian political system.<sup>16</sup> The army, as the ultimate guarantor of the unity and stability of the Turkish state, decisively reacted to the political crisis of the late 1970s by imposing the dictatorship. The incapability of the major parties to form stable coalition governments, the persisting incapacity of the Parliament to elect a President of Republic, the rising Islamism, centrifugal tendencies in the periphery, and unchecked violence from left and right wing extremism were perceived as menacing the established political order. The coup had the dual scope of putting an end to that presumed threat and of stabilising the control of the military over institutions and political processes. The regime was, therefore, supposed to be a parenthesis during which the military were determined to radically transform the Turkish political and institutional setting in order to guarantee the stability of the future democratic regime (at least what the military meant by ‘democracy’). At the same time they would tie up the democracy-to-be with certain institutional arrangements guaranteeing the grip of the army on the state structure and decision-making apparatus, before handing power over to civilians (of their choice).

A crucial feature of that regime was its isolation from most political and other elites. The military proceeded with the implementation of their programme without any support from the intelligentsia, the civil bureaucracy, or any professional group in Turkey. Nevertheless, they did obtain the backing of the technocrats and businessmen represented by Turgut Özal, secretary of the State Planning Organisation (SPO) before the coup. Özal, as Deputy Prime Minister in the government formed by the military, was the link between the regime and the groups who were willing to see implemented in the economy a programme of market-oriented reforms and liberalisation. The technocrats saw in this programme a window of opportunity for the modernisation of Turkey by doing away with state intervention in the economy, which could not have taken place before 1980 because of the political and institutional instability of the country. Therefore, an *ad hoc* alliance between military and technocrats was created, but it was to be a precarious one, given that the interests and goals of the aforementioned groups were not necessarily identical.



*Reasons and Timing for the Dispensability of the Regime*

The programme of reforms that the military started implementing was calculated to last about two years, after which they would call new elections. In Turkey, therefore, regime dispensability depended upon completion of the prerequisites set by the ruling military in view of reforming the constitutional framework of the country and the institutionalisation of their interests. Having embarked upon the economic and institutional reforms, and having also effectively neutralised all opposition, the regime announced in December 1981 a timetable for the return to civilian government. It set an approximate date for a referendum on a constitutional draft in the autumn of 1982 and for national elections to be held about one year later. The regime rushed to adopt the new constitution before proceeding to elections, in order to institutionally tie up the new democracy. It has been rightly observed that 'the perceived need to control, to avoid the disorder of the 1970s, shines through almost every article of the 1982 constitution. It orders the working of the state in every detail, setting out exactly how parliament will operate, how presidents will be elected, how soon governments have to be formed' (Dagi, 1998, p.148).

The constitution envisaged all the liberties and civil rights of a modern democracy, although it provided for their suspension or limitation in the event of internal or external dangers, in view of which extended powers were to be given to the President (e.g. dissolution of Parliament). The government, in the face of such circumstances, was able to rule by decree, thus bypassing the National Assembly, and the National Security Council (renamed 'Presidential Council') could decide without consulting the Parliament. Some scholars described the system of government that the 1982 constitution established as 'a modified or weakened form of parliamentarism' (Özbudun, 2000, p.60). Severe constraints were imposed by the constitution on the freedom of association and on the right of labour unions to organise and take collective action, making it impossible to develop social democratic parties in Turkey.

The military submitted the newly drafted constitution to a referendum in November 1982. However, as free discussion and criticism of the draft was not allowed, the Turkish people had no choice but to accept it, knowing that rejecting the constitution would mean prolonging the country's military rule. Once they had gained the approval of the constitution the military felt confident enough to proceed to their chosen *reforma*. Evren, the leader of the regime, became President of the Republic and called elections for October 1983. A law on political parties passed in the summer of 1983 prevented 'excessive politicisation of citizens and groups, keeping political parties internally more democratic, and rendering both political parties and the party system more stable' (Dodd, 1990, p. 88).<sup>17</sup> This did not leave many options for a contingent outcome of the electoral process, since the potential winner of the elections would first have to obtain the army's blessing.

*For whom did the Regime become Dispensable?*

The alliance of the military with businessmen and technocrats proved to be short-lived. The non-military groups did not need the generals' support as soon as social and economic 'order' was restored and elections were pending. This was made clear in July 1982, when Özal resigned from his post in order to run in the elections with his own party. Özal represented the 'civilian' element in the regime, which did not obediently accept

the generals' prerogatives in ruling the country through their party (in April 1983 ex-General Turgut Sunalp announced he would form the Nationalist Democratic Party (NDP) and run in the elections) and sought to have its own say in the country's politics. This became obvious when Özal was asked but refused to join the NDP. He had the support of the private sector that saw a good opportunity to make considerable profits with him in office. Thus, the alliance within the regime was brought to an end, with the military supporting Sunalp and the private sector (mostly businessmen, industrialists, and 'well-to-do younger technocrats and professionals who would have had to wait 10 to 15 years to enter politics under the old system' – Ahmad, 1984, p. 10) backing the Motherland Party of Özal. Eventually, the people would decide among the options that the regime had left open. Özal emerged victorious, having achieved a personal triumph (as he had run the entire campaign based on his personality) and managed to gain an absolute majority in the Parliament (for the first time since 1969). The army bowed to this unexpected result and accepted a handover of power to him. However, with Evren as President of the Republic and a powerful institutional arsenal in their hands, the military had, to a large extent, guaranteed for themselves close control of the country's post-dictatorial political life.

#### *The Result: A 'Difficult Democracy'*

The 1983 transition has been called 'almost a textbook example of the degree to which a departing military regime can dictate the conditions of its departure' (Özbudun, 2000, p. 117). The outcome of the transition was the one planned by the military from the very first day of the coup: a 'corrective' intervention that would come to an end as soon as it had provided the army with enough institutional tools for controlling the weak democracy-to-be from the backstage. At the same time the military would guarantee that there was to be no return to the chaotic pre-1980 political and economic situation. They reformed the constitution so as to enjoy an unprecedented autonomy in policy making, a direct influence in politics, and, finally, the safeguarding of their institutional and corporate interests. Then they judged that they could successfully hand power over to their chosen successors. So, in the case of Turkey, regime dispensability was not supposed to lead to full democracy. It was pointed out that the generals' regime was guided in its actions more by the objective to establish a military authority on the state than by the desire to restore the authority of a democratic state. Indeed, 'the idea that democracy meant not just the installation of an elected majority government but also the right to express radical or minority opinions, tended to command little support among the [Turkish] military' (Hale, 1994, p. 270). Thus, the transition 'ensured not a strong, vibrant democracy, but a perverted one, skewed toward the interpretation of elite interests whose procedures and politics are subject to military review' (Hagopian, 1990, p. 164).<sup>18</sup>

The problematic democracy that emerged from the 1983 transition also owes its nature to the ruthless suppression of any substantial opposing force that had preceded the elections and the tight, almost semi-authoritarian, constitutional regulations that the military introduced. It is worth saying, however, that the generals were not so effective in changing the political and social structure of the country as extensively as they would have liked. From the time that the essential democratic institutions started to function, democracy became an issue that escaped the narrow margins of a dictatorial constitution and of an armed elite supervising politics, as was shown with Özal's electoral victory. Nevertheless,

**Table 1.** Regime nature and elite coalitions

Country	Regime type	Elite coalitions
Spain	Authoritarian, 'semi-pluralist' regime	Military, <i>Movimiento</i> , Church, <i>Opus Dei</i> , Bourgeoisie
Turkey	Veto-moderator military regime	Military as institution impose the regime, economic technocrats/ businessmen partially support

**Table 2.** Regime dispensability at transition time

Country	Situation at time of transition	Regime dispensable for ...
Spain 1975–76	Death of Franco-succession crisis; splits within regime; stagnant economy; opposition pressure (strikes, demonstrations)	Juan Carlos, <i>Tacitos</i> , <i>Opus Dei</i> technocrats, younger <i>Movimiento</i> members
Turkey 1983	Constitution voted; opposition neutralised; elections with only 'loyal' parties	Military as institution

**Table 3.** Interest accommodation at time of transition and transition outcome

Country	Regime elite coalition at time of transition	Reaction of counter-elites	Outcome
Spain	Split between <i>aperturistas</i> and <i>continuistas</i>	Political opposition joins <i>aperturistas</i> , pact possible, hard-liners isolated → free and fair elections	Democracy restored and consolidated
Turkey	Military proceed alone, businessmen/technocrats support Özal's MP	Political opposition excluded, no pact → controlled elections but Özal's victory	Problematic democracy

the army acquired a strong institutional position in the weak democracy that came out of the dictatorship, a fact that still hinders Turkey's ongoing efforts towards democratic consolidation.

## Conclusions

By using the notion of dispensability, this article has tried to offer a comparative view of the Spanish and Turkish cases of regime-initiated democratic transitions. As these cases show, dispensability can help to account for a transition inasmuch as it can expose the way that regime elites expect to see their interests served under a non-dictatorial regime as well as they were under a dictatorial one. Whether they will successfully accomplish this objective depends on their ability to negotiate or dictate their conditions of exit, and to influence the institutional arrangements of the new democracy in a direction serving their interests. Clearly, dispensability *per se* is a necessary but not sufficient condition for transition to democracy (in Spain the democrats' pressure and the soft-liners' carefully-planned tactics were also necessary; in Turkey the whole transition process was regime-controlled).

The first factor upon which dispensability greatly depends is the nature of the regime. It is important to examine the reasons for which a dictatorship prevailed, the ambitions and expectations of the groups that imposed and/or supported the dictatorship and the possible development and change of its internal structure with time (for a comparison of the two regimes' natures see [Table 1](#)).

As for the reasons for which, and the time in which, transition starts, the conclusion is that it is a matter of calculation on behalf of the regime elites, the goal of which is the arrangement of the post-dictatorial institutional setting in a way that their privileges are institutionally respected by the rest of the political forces of the country. The different conjunctures in the two cases reveal that regime crisis is not a necessary condition for dispensability (there were signs of crisis in Spain but not in Turkey). On the contrary, a time of relative calm and stability may prompt the elites to initiate the opening of the regime, provided they consider the circumstances opportune for a settlement of the interests that they want to perpetuate under the democracy. Dispensability, therefore, should be traced in the incentives and possible rewards that the conjuncture offers to regime elites to initiate the transition process (the balance of forces in the pre-transition time convincing them to proceed confidently about the post-transition arrangement).

In terms of the elites for which dispensability occurs, the two cases show that this argument transcends the civilian/military dichotomy: in Spain, the military were not among the groups that considered the regime dispensable, but in Turkey they were. The question is, for which elites will it be possible to accomplish their interest accommodation in the future democratic regime? In Spain this was impossible for the military; whereas in Turkey it was possible, under certain conditions. What should also be taken into account is that, precisely because there may also be groups that see their interests closely linked with the dictatorship, dispensability can be a divisive factor for the regime, as those forces may react to the transition attempt. In order to specify for which groups the regime will become dispensable, therefore, one has to examine which of them can expect to be rewarded based on the transition conjuncture (for the comparison of the two cases in terms of dispensability see [Table 2](#)).

Dispensability as an explanatory tool seems at this point to meet its limits: it has to be recognised that, notwithstanding its usefulness in explaining reasons for, and recognizing groups that may initiate, a democratic transition, it cannot determine the outcome of this process, let alone guarantee that a liberal democracy will emerge. This is because the study of the actors' tactics during the uncertain transition period transcends the narrow time frame of the pre-transition conjuncture, to which dispensability refers. The analytical power of dispensability lies in the fact that it lets us take stock of a number of preconditions of transition by regime transformation. However, during the transition time, unforeseen events may take place that escape the calculations of regime elites, alter the balance of forces and lead to quite different outcomes than those which the elites originally intended. For instance, the transition may contain an element of risk for the regime soft-liners: will the opposition forces come to terms with them? Will there be reaction by regime groups possibly opposing the transition? The fact that both things happened in Spain illustrates the uniqueness of that case, and the application of the framework of dispensability in other cases is necessary for further testing its merits. The unexpected outcome of the Turkish elections for the military is another proof of the contingency that accompanies the transition, even when the outgoing elite believes it is in full control of this process (see [Table 3](#) for the comparison of the transition processes and their outcomes).

Regime dispensability is one of the main reasons why democracy is not always brought by democrats and with democratic means, but by the interest calculation of certain dictatorial elites that they will be at least equally well off under a democracy. This process is open-ended: although dispensability constitutes a necessary condition for this sort of transition from authoritarian rule, offering a framework within which regime elites attempt to accomplish it, in no case does it preclude a positive outcome for democracy. The elite manipulation and the *garantismo* that may accompany the transition mean that in some cases regime groups may intend 'not only to fall short of immediate democratisation but also in fact to relegate democratisation to some unknown future at best' (Di Palma, 1990, p. 124). The price of the successful outcome of such an experiment may be an uneasy time of 'difficult' democracy that can, nevertheless, make space for the democrats to press for a more inclusive one. Having faith in the function of institutions, one can assume that if this window of opportunity is explored, and even if a weak democracy succeeds the dictatorship, it will only be a temporary stage on the way to democratic consolidation.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Ahmad (1993), Evin (1994), Rouleau (2000).
- <sup>2</sup> For an account of those forms of transitions see Share (1987); see also the comments of Stepan (1986) on re-democratisation initiated from within the regime.
- <sup>3</sup> For examples of this school of analysis see Lipset (1981), Vanhanen (1992), Perez-Diaz (1993), Putnam (1993).
- <sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Rueschemeyer et al. (1992) and Collier (1999).
- <sup>5</sup> As Przeworski (1991) put it.
- <sup>6</sup> This viewpoint is shared by Eisenstadt (2000, p. 16) who concedes that 'authoritarians only decide to liberalise because of perceived threats'.
- <sup>7</sup> For those points see Huntington (1991).
- <sup>8</sup> See also Casper and Taylor (1996) where they speak of the regime elites obtaining 'guarantees of continued influence' by exiting from direct control.
- <sup>9</sup> Also Huntington (1984, p. 212): 'almost always, democracy has come as much from the top down as from the bottom up; it is as likely to be the product of oligarchy as of protest against oligarchy.'
- <sup>10</sup> 'From a particular moment of the transition, there seems to be no clear relationship between this [working class] pressure and the principal political events' ... [by the start of the transition] the working class movement was poorly organised and labour unions were weak (Maravall, 1982 pp. 14, 205). Also, 'the increase in civil disorder ... can not be said that was threatening the regime per se, at least in short term' (Share, 1986, p. 186).
- <sup>11</sup> Powell (1996, p. 70) quotes an official socialist publication of October 1974 in accordance with which the monarchy was 'another Francoist institution, in view of which the only option left to decent Spaniards was to fight against it.'
- <sup>12</sup> Share (1986, p. 46) quotes Carrillo: 'violent change doesn't make sense where the security forces dispose of sophisticated weapons and where the memory of the civil war is a powerful disincentive to political violence.'
- <sup>13</sup> Arias was repeatedly saying 'what I want is to continue Francoism (quoted in Powell, 1996, p. 93).'
- <sup>14</sup> 'Groomed in the intricacies of the Francoist power structure (his very means of survival), Suarez was well qualified to understand where and how it was best dismantled' (Graham, 1984, p. 150).
- <sup>15</sup> 'For any change in the system to occur legally, the key players were the council of the Realm and the Cortes' (Alba, 1978, p. 255).
- <sup>16</sup> The 'moderator' type is characterised by 'fairly high (though variable) unity and differentiation [from civil society], combined with fairly low threat [from civil society] and moderate autonomy [in political organisation]' (Clapham & Philip, 1985a, p. 9). Hale (1994) insists on the 'moderator' characteristics, while Tachau and Heper (1983) consider it a 'guardian' regime.
- <sup>17</sup> See also Özbudun (1990) for the electoral system and the law on political parties.
- <sup>18</sup> This conclusion of Hagopian concerns Brazil but applies in the Turkish case as well.

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