

Ideology, context and interest: the Turkish military

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Since the founding of the Turkish Republic, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) has enjoyed a pervasive sense of its own prerogative to watch over the regime it created and to transcend an exclusive focus on external defence. If the TAF's confidence and ability to do so was not palpable during the years of single-party rule (1923–46), Turkey's multi-party political system has since 1946 been characterised by the military's capacity to control the fundamentals of the political agenda in its self-ordained role as guardian of the Republic.¹ By internalising this role as a central 'mission of belief', the military has been able to interpret internal 'political' conflicts in the language of internal security threats, and reduce 'national security' to a military-dominated concept. On four occasions (1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997), the military intervened in and reshaped Turkish politics, although it always returned control to civilians after a short time. The fourth intervention, on 28 February 1997, marked a qualitative change, when the military-dominated National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, NSC) brought down a constitutionally elected coalition government headed by the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, WP), thus altering the relationship between the military, the state and society. The process of change that the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma

1 In the 'guardian state' model, the military regards itself as the Platonic custodian of a vaguely defined national interest. A. R. Luckham in his seminal article makes a distinction between four sub-types of military guardianship. The first is 'Direct Guardianship', where the military views itself as the unique custodian of national values; the second is 'Alternating Guardianship', where the dynamics are the same but the military alternates in and out of power; and third is 'Catalytic Guardianship', whereby the military in question may not wish to rule itself but installs governments favourable to itself. The last category is 'Covert Guardianship': the military may submerge and yet retain the capacity for direct action by supporting in the long term a political order that supports national security. The Turkish military's political role can be said to have shifted between each of these sub-types over time. See A. R. Luckham, 'A Comparative Typology of Civil–Military Relations', *Government and Opposition* 6, 1 (1971).

Partisi, JDP)² government has set in motion since its election victory in November 2002 in terms of curtailing the TAF's political prerogatives and tutelage must also be understood within the context of a major shift in the regional and international power balance after the Iraq war and the democratic reform requirements of the European Union (EU).

A chief feature of Turkey's parliamentary democracy since 1950 has been the formidable presence of the military in public affairs. Another fundamental premise of the regime has been the long-standing Kemalist commitment to identifying Turkey as 'European'. The issue of the military's proper role has created severe difficulties during Ankara's long wait at the doorstep of the EU, which has prescribed a package of political preconditions that must be fulfilled if Turkey is to successfully gain entry into the European fold. While the military's self-defined political role requires that it remains involved in social and political conflicts with little or no accountability, the EU's entry criteria make it clear that the military must be subjected to the democratic control of civilian authorities. The lack of effective civilian control over the armed forces in Turkey has often contradicted democratic norms of civil–military relations. The EU accession process has provided an opening for a wider debate on the link between democracy and national security. It has also raised questions about the proper relations between military and civilian authorities in a democracy in an era of declining military budgets and changing threats. As a result, there is a rising consensus that without effective parliamentary oversight of the armed forces and without bringing Turkish democracy's norms in line with EU requirements, the military's attitude of permanent vigilance towards internal security can make that democracy insecure, conditional and crisis-prone.

However, the challenges to fostering a democratic role change in the TAF are formidable: while the post-communist states have constructed democratic civil–military institutional frameworks from scratch,³ similar reforms

2 The main predecessor of the JDP was the WP, which was founded in 1983 and closed down by the constitutional court in January 1998 on the grounds that it had become a focal point of anti-secular activities. With its closure, a five-year ban on the political activities of its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, and on five other top policy makers was imposed. It was succeeded by the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi), founded in 1997, which, like its predecessor, was closed down, on 22 June 2001, for its anti-secular activities and for violating the constitutional stipulation that a permanently dissolved party (the WP) cannot be reconstituted. In August 2001 the movement split into a traditionalist wing, the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi, FP), founded in July 2001 and a reformist wing, the JDP.

3 Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Slovenia are typical examples of this. According to Anton Bebler, 'perhaps the most striking feature of civil–military relations in Slovenia today is their lack of salience as a political issue, accompanied by widespread public indifference.'

in Turkey must take place against a backdrop of a deeply rooted tradition of civil–military imbalance. According to that tradition, the military perceives itself as a legitimate actor in political decision making without any meaningful checks and balances, and feels entitled to publicly promote different ideas about democracy and national security than those held by elected representatives.

The ultimate justification for the political predominance of the military rests on its guardianship of Kemalism, the state’s official ideology, of which fundamental components are secularism and territorial unity. TAF’s legitimisation of its dominant role lies in its identification of its ‘interests’ with those of the nation; it sees its mission as a continuing transformation of the country’s values in the direction of Western modernity. Secularism is the pillar, the principle and the proof of this role. It requires the disestablishment of Islam as the state religion and the establishment of a new modality of state control over it; the construction of a homogenous national identity linked with the logic of Westernisation and modernisation; and the creation of a strong state.

On the other hand, the tutelary powers and institutional prerogatives of the TAF also depend on its self-conscious attempts to steer civilian policies in a direction that will not challenge the military’s special position in politics and society. To do so the army resorts to two methods: first, it either threatens to stage another coup or issues public statements, often derogatory, regarding government policies; and second, it constructs the concept of national security in such a way as to legitimise the political role of the military as guardians. Given the external pressures on Turkey to improve its human rights and democracy record in order to join the EU, the crude device of a coup has become increasingly implausible. In addition, the military’s legally and culturally unchallenged position as the whistleblower of politics has made any ‘coup’ redundant. The TAF therefore tends to exert political influence by highlighting threats to national security.

Like its counterparts elsewhere, the Turkish military maintains the Republic’s security, officially defined as ‘the protection and maintenance of the state’s constitutional order, national presence, integrity, all political, social, cultural and economic interests on an international level, and contractual law against any kind of internal and foreign threat’.⁴ What is striking about this definition

In practice, civil–military relations in Slovenia have become relations between a civilian sector whose personnel were themselves civilians until only recently’: see Anton Bebler, ‘Civil–Military Relations and Democratic Control of Armed Forces in Slovenia, 1990–2000’, paper presented at The Seventh Biennial Conference of ERGOMAS, Prague, 6–10 December 2000, p. 30.

⁴ *White Paper – Defence*, Ministry of National Defence, 1998, p. 12; *Beyaz Kitap 2000* (White Paper 2000), Milli Savunma Bakanlığı (Ministry of National Defence, 2000), part 3, p. 2.

is the broad and complex character of security. It includes not only the traditional national defence framework against external threats, but also non-military objectives pertaining to economic, social, cultural and political goals, fusing purely military missions with political ones. If, as Mary Kaldor argues, ‘the nature of security policy contributes to the design of institutions and the implicit contract with the society’,⁵ then in Turkey the definition of national security is crucial in reproducing the TAF’s role as the guardian of the regime and in undermining any civilian input in security policy.⁶ When the military monopolises threat perception and security policy formulation, it can then use these threats as justification for relying solely upon military power to guarantee security, just as it can exaggerate the extent of threats to serve its corporate interests. In Turkey, many aspects of national security have since the 1971 intervention been incorporated into laws regulating public order, limiting freedom of expression and association, inhibiting public debate and stifling the opposition and the media.

The record of Republican history shows an interplay between two dynamics of military motivation: while the Turkish military manifests a genuine ideological commitment to upholding the secular framework of politics, it also pursues a rather formidable contest of power with constitutionally elected civilian leaders. Blending the two perspectives enables us to see beyond the straitjacket of cultural–historical legacy that much of the literature on the Turkish military uses to explain the continuity in its mission. More importantly, this merged pattern of motivations can explain why the military’s exercise of power has changed over time. The institutional, attitudinal and ideological behaviour of the Turkish army has varied according to changes in political conditions, which have called for recalibrations of the military’s own interests, societal credibility, hierarchical discipline and political capacity. By shifting the focus to a myriad of factors affecting the military’s proactive and/or habitual policies, this analysis also takes into account the ability of both military and civilian actors to learn from history.

The common thread in this matrix is that both interpretations predict a modern rationale for ‘anti-politics’ in the Turkish military’s self-appointed

White Papers are published by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), but not at regular intervals. The pages of reference to the latter are from its web format in Turkish (the English version not being available on the web).

⁵ Mary Kaldor, ‘Europe at the Millennium’, *Politics* 20, 2 (2000), p. 61.

⁶ For instance, on 29 April 1977, the general staff announced a radical change to the country’s National Military Defence Concept (NMDC) without consulting the civilian government. It shifted the priority of the security threat from external to the internal threats of Islamic fundamentalism and Kurdish separatism, in that order.

role as the nation's guardian. This has led military leaders to view diversity and socio-political pluralism as obstacles to the emergence and preservation of a strong, modern state.

Anti-political reasoning framing the historical role of the Turkish military

Ever since the inception of the Republic, the military has exhibited a tendency to be politicised while claiming to be above or against politics. The formal separation of the military from politics⁷ in the early Republic was not intended to establish civilian supremacy in a way commensurate with its Western European and American counterparts; its only aim was to inhibit the military's potential as a rival source of power to the ruling group.⁸ Early Republican tradition set by Atatürk, by separating the army from ordinary political affairs,⁹ contributed to the army's perception of itself as 'above' political conflict, another anti-political vision, which assigns a sense of self-importance to the institution without requiring it to understand the political world it is situated in.

The anti-political pattern of thought prioritises 'order and progress, the latter being contingent upon the former';¹⁰ an outright rejection of politics, which is perceived as being the source of 'underdevelopment, corruption, and evil';¹¹ and an instrumental recourse to elections 'in order to give a veneer of democratic legitimacy to authoritarian direction of the state and society'.¹²

7 The Ministry of Religious Affairs was abolished and reduced to a government department in 1924, on the grounds that 'for religion and the military to be interested in politics leads to various negative results': M. Kemal Atatürk quoted in Mahmut Goloğlu, *Devrimler ve tepkileri 1924–1930* (Ankara: Başvur Matbaası, 1972), p. 9.

8 This is the view shared by a number of writers. Examples are Dankwart A. Rustow, 'The Army and the Founding of the Turkish Republic', *World Politics* 4 (July 1959), p. 549; Daniel Lerner and Richard O. Robinson, 'Swords and Ploughshares: The Turkish Army as a Modernising Force', *World Politics* 13 (1960–1), p. 22; William Hale, 'Transitions to civilian governments in Turkey: the military perspective', in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (eds.), *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1988), p. 174.

9 The doctrine of an apolitical army in the early Republic, however, ensured, via the military backgrounds of the leading politicians, that military was incapable of posing a threat to the existing ruling class but remained available for political support when and if needed. See Metin Heper and Frank Tachau, 'The State, Politics and the Military in Turkey', *Comparative Politics* 16, 1 (1983), p. 20.

10 Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies, 'Politics of antipolitics', in B. Loveman and T. M. Davies (eds.), *Politics of Antipolitics, the Military in Latin America* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 13.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

This understanding of democracy is marked by a zero-sum perception of conflict and a view of opposition and criticism as threats to the regime. The anti-political perspective reflects an understanding of democracy as a matter of political responsibility and rationality, rather than of responsiveness to society.¹³ Professor Heper succinctly points out that in the eyes of the military, the 'foes' of this instrumental rationality are elected politicians, 'who were often suspected of indifference toward the long-term interests of the nation',¹⁴ and 'the masses who had not yet attained a higher level of rationality'.¹⁵

However, the Turkish military's role as 'guardian of Turkey's ideals' does not lead it to take a praetorian¹⁶ role in politics, as its notion of guardianship incorporates a utopian standard of democracy. The military institution controls the actions of politicians in accordance with its own maxims in order to make sure that Kemalist ideals are fulfilled. Furthermore, the TAF has adopted a refined concept of autonomy, refraining from destroying civilian–military boundaries and wielding executive power directly, whereas praetorian armies ruin the bases of democracy and replace civilian authorities. The Turkish officer corps' conception of their role in politics has always been imbued with the notion that culture and politics should be subordinated to Kemalism as the highest morality of the nation. Meeting any threat to the 'highest' morality of the land becomes an imperative of national security. This understanding is fully internalised within the military institution as a normative 'role belief'.

The anti-political reasoning of the TAF detracts from any consideration of the strictly 'political' determinants that mediate between societal, economic and military powers. It presupposes an excessive degree of consistency and coherence in the Kemalist ideology and dispenses with the effects of 'political' and 'social' changes that can alter the historical and cultural relationship between the civilian forces and the military. It also reduces Turkey's political life to a dichotomy between the modernising and secular state elite, spearheaded by the military bureaucracy and its civilian allies, and the popularly elected and 'traditionally oriented' political class. As a result, this world view masks the profound contradictions and cleavages within the political–

13 Metin Heper, 'The Strong State as a Problem for the Consolidation of Democracy, Turkey and Germany Compared', *Comparative Political Studies* 25, 2 (1992), p. 170.

14 Metin Heper, 'Consolidating Turkish Democracy', *Journal of Democracy* 3, 3 (1992), p. 106.

15 Metin Heper, 'The Ottoman Legacy and Turkish Politics', *Journal of International Affairs* 54, 1 (2000), p. 72.

16 Irving Louis Horowitz, 'Military Origins of Third World Dictatorship and Democracy', *Third World Quarterly* 3, 1 (1981), p. 42.

social landscape, pushing actors into simplistic modern–traditional, secular–anti-secular dichotomies.

If we accept that ‘the military policy is always conditioned by political factors outside the civil–military relations’,¹⁷ which specify the proper role of the military and the relationship of civilian and military leaders as seen by the rest of the actors in politics, new coalitions or new ‘thresholds of antagonism’ between the two sides do necessitate a revision of the cardinal principles of Kemalism and the role of the military. As I will show below with regard to the analysis of the interaction between the military and the current government, it may well be that Turkey’s capacity to reset the civil–military balance depends on whether or not the government is politically secure, if not from the threat of a military intervention, then from the threat that the military leaders will publicly contest, criticise or veto their policies. The safer from ‘military threat’ the government feels, ‘the greater is [its] potential margin to attempt reforms even at the cost of antagonizing the armed forces’.¹⁸

Crises and the rationale of coups

The ultimate form of anti-politics is military intervention to suspend politics and reshape the political situation or system. The moral rationale for Turkey’s coups was the salvation of the Republic, a rationale that in turn hinged on the existence of a ‘crisis’ or ‘maxi-’ and ‘mini-breakdowns’ in a Linzian sense.¹⁹ Restructuring political life in the aftermath of each such crisis involved both dynamics of Turkish military involvement in politics analysed above: while the TAF created continuity in its role as the sole guardian of the national interest, it simultaneously subsumed the Kemalist ideals to its own agenda and strategy, manifesting a proactive role in reproducing its power. Each intervention has created a conservative straitjacket for socio-political life, setting the institutional and moral parameters of politics for the decades to come. The fact that the 1960, 1971 and 1980 coups were also pre-emptive measures, designed to deal with the division between radicals and moderates within the

17 J. Samuel Finch, *The Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1998), p. 162.

18 *Ibid.*

19 Juan J. Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 28–38. In Linz’s schema, the process of breakdown is related to the key leaders manifesting a ‘disloyalty’ and ‘semiloyalty’ to the system. The former embodies a willingness to use force, fraud, asking for the military’s support and other illegal means to obtain and keep power, while the latter involves forming governments and alliances with disloyal groups or to encourage, tolerate or cover up their anti-democratic actions.

TAF itself illustrates that the military also intervened to retain its own position and prerogatives.²⁰

In each intervention the TAF relied on and assembled different civilian coalitions. The TAF has justified its interventions by claiming that as the overseer of the modern and secular tenets of the regime, it has smoothed the development of democracy and progress by removing obstacles and crises: authoritarian one-party government in 1960; political disorder and anarchy in 1971 and 1980; and reactionary Islam in 1997.

The 1960 coup was brought about by a number of factors: the government of the day, the Democrat Party (DP), represented the rising frustrations and discontent of the urban intelligentsia, emerging industrialists, professionals and countryside, in the post-war era of more openness, against the repressive single-party regime of 1923–50. It also favoured less *étatisme* and bureaucratism, and a relaxed secularism. This created unease among the old elite. As a party born in the single-party era, the DP shared with the ruling elite a belief in social engineering, a dislike and fear of any dissidence/opposition and the same preference for a system devoid of effective political checks and balances. At the same time the DP leaders also felt a deep sense of distrust towards the civilian and military bureaucracy. The symbiosis between the Republican People's Party (RPP), the country's only party during the Republican era, and the military, was a major source of concern to the DP. Partisan use of the army by the DP government to repress the RPP was met by the same political strategy on the part of the RPP. A vicious circle of politicisation of the military together with a series of authoritarian policies by the DP triggered the seizure of power by the TAF.

Although characterised by some as a 'modernising/reform coup' because the overall framework was to support 'a modernizing and democratizing society under the rule of civilian supremacy',²¹ the 1960 coup failed to set a new status quo where the army would return to its normal functions. Delegitimising electoral democracy and politicising the military while expanding democratic rights and freedoms created irreconcilable trends. It is not correct to assume therefore that the 1960 coup left a clear and straightforward legacy regarding any aspect of politics in Turkey, let alone its subscription to the Kemalist tradition, although the coup-makers established their connections with Kemalist principles by promising to oversee a "legal revolution" that would return

20 Semih Vaner, 'The army', in I. Schick and A. Tonak (eds.), *Turkey in Transition* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 239.

21 Lerner and Robinson, 'Swords and Ploughshares', p. 40.

the state to the principles of Atatürk'.²² To the extent that Kemalist reforms of the single-party Republic had been a radical process, changing the face of the country, it also laid the groundwork for the DP to rise as the party of the expectant periphery.

The coup was, then, in this sense backward looking, an attempt to recreate the elitist structure on which the Kemalist revolution had been based. Such a system was fundamentally incompatible with the democratic forms which gave representation to all elements of the population. Thus the Kemalist elite – of which the military played such an important part – could not be reestablished by constitutional fiat unless the franchise were restricted to the point of denying democracy.²³

In line with the ambiguous nature of 1960 coup's tradition, many adopted the 'easy' perspective that the emergence of left- and right-wing student violence by the 1960s resulted from the expansion of individual liberties and excessive pluralism introduced by the 1961 constitution which destabilised the regime and led to the 1971 intervention. It is more apt to say, however, that the creation of new cleavages and actors – such as the Turkish Labour Party – as a product of socio-economic modernisation of the country in the 1960s, combined with the Cold War dynamic towards ideological contestation, transformed Turkey's politics. Republican statist became social democrats, even flirting with the extreme left, while Turkey's centre-right turned strongly anti-communist, coalescing with extreme nationalist and conservative forces. The centre-right government failed to move against the unrest caused by street violence, which turned into terrorism. On 12 March 1971 the high command of the TAF sent a memorandum to the president of the Republic, threatening to seize power if the parliament did not act to implement socio-economic reforms to end anarchy. The government was forced to resign and a civilian-cum-military government took over until the next elections in 1973.

The 1980 coup and the ensuing military regime (1980–3) led by General Kenan Evren represent the resurrection of the 'guardian' mission of the military to save 'the state and its people from social division, economic breakdown, and the anarchy and violence for which the parties and politicians were responsible'.²⁴ Indeed, nation-wide polarisation of the left and right and the unprecedented violence between them; intercommunal strife; the pull of the RPP

22 Lucille W. Pevsner, *Turkey's Political Crisis: Background, Perspectives and Prospects* (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 30.

23 George Harris, 'The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics, Part II', *Middle East Journal* 19 (Spring 1965), p. 176.

24 Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), p. 149.

towards the extreme left and the Justice Party (JP) to the militant right-wing flank; and the breakdown of law, order, parliament and the government prior to the intervention played into the hands of the high command and enhanced its legitimacy. The only counter-assertion comes from the then prime minister, Süleyman Demirel, who claims that the military deliberately refrained from using its martial law powers to quell the anarchy so as to discredit the government and to prepare the ground for the coup.²⁵ However, the civil-war situation in the country prompted the populace at large to give their full support to military action without worrying about its anti-democratic nature. The military closed down political parties, parliament, professional associations and trade unions, arresting their leaders, declaring a state of emergency throughout the country and reversing the democratic rights and freedoms granted by the 1961 constitution.

The breakdown of Turkey's political, social and economic life before the 1980 coup 'was likened to the war of 1919–1923 by the coup-leaders, when internal and external enemies combined in an attempt to destroy the Turkish state'.²⁶ The coup-makers regarded the political changes they intended to make as the means by which Turks could return to Kemalist principles – above all populism, nationalism and secularism, in order to end 'fratricidal and separatist' strife. According to Kenal Evren, the chief of staff and leader of the coup, 'the Kemalist pattern of thought and the proper pride in being a Turk lie at the heart of the Turkish Republic'. The military authorities systematically classified the perpetrators of terror and anarchy before the coup in terms of 'degenerate' Kemalism and anti-Kemalism.²⁷

The 1997 intervention: why different?

The TAF's assertion of its political role through the NSC intensified after the 1995 general election: leading military officials began making pointed public references to the secular nature of the state and brokered a coalition government between the two centre-right parties to block the Islamist WP from power. When the WP finally came to power at the head of a coalition government with Çiller's centre-right True Path Party (TPP) in June 1996 (called Refahiyol), the army watched with alarm as the WP promoted religious observance in public and developed closer ties with Islamic countries. The military sent a column of tanks through the Ankara suburb of Sincan after the local

25 Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, *AP-ordu ilişkileri: bir ikilemin anatomisi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), pp. 181–205.

26 Pevsner, *Turkey's political crisis*, p. 10.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

WP mayor and the Iranian ambassador to Ankara made speeches in support of the *şeriat*. Finally, the NSC meeting on 28 February 1997 issued the coalition government with a list of demands designed to eliminate the 'creeping Islamisation' of Turkey and to fortify the secular system. The pressure applied by the NSC, in tandem with the civilian component of the secular establishment, led to the resignation of the government, the closure of the party by the constitutional court and the banning of its key leaders from active politics.

On 29 April 1997, the general staff announced a radical change to the country's National Military Defence Concept (NMDC): it shifted the priority of security from external threats to the internal issues of Islamic activism and Kurdish separatism. The TPP's previously harmonious relationship with the military also changed radically after the Refahyol experience. Çiller made a complete U-turn, from a position of regarding the armed forces as the best guarantor of democracy²⁸ to challenging the military's role in guarding secularism on the basis of popular sovereignty and 'national will'. At some point, she even built up 'her own' civilian security forces within the Ministry of Interior.²⁹

It is certainly true that 'no major element of Turkish politics at present can be understood without reference to the February 28 process'.³⁰ Few analysts would dispute that the choices made and strategies followed since 28 February 1997 have proved fateful for Turkish political and economic life, leadership style, political alignments, civil society and bureaucracy. The military assumed an enlarged and heightened political role. Another difference of the 1997 intervention was the fundamental shift towards the military bureaucracy's involvement in everyday politics, resulting from its deep distrust of civilian authority and the role of Islam in political life. Since then, it has become increasingly commonplace for senior commanders to make oral statements or issue written declarations either individually or jointly to reiterate their position on 'fundamentalism'.

The ousting the Refahyol government signalled the start of the military's plan to refashion Turkey's political landscape along Kemalist lines without

28 In an interview with Mehmet Barlas on TGRT TV Channel on 22 February 1997, she openly stated: 'Our army can do the civilianisation and democratisation very well.' Excerpts from this interview were published the next day in the Istanbul daily *Türkiye*.

29 Ümit Cizre, 'From Ruler to Pariah: The Life and Times of the True Path Party', *Turkish Studies* 3, 1 (2002), p. 94.

30 Cizre and Çınar, 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process', *Relocating the Fault Lines: Turkey beyond the East – West Divide, South Atlantic Quarterly*, special issue, ed. Sibel Irzik and Güven Güzelde 102 (Spring/Summer 2003), p. 310.

actually having to take over power directly. The term the '28th of February Process' was coined to indicate the re-establishment of the basic assumptions of the Kemalist model without a classical coup and with the help of the civil society. Moreover, the central discourse of the establishment since the late 1990s with regard to pro-Islamic platforms represents a total reversal from the Republican pattern of state–Islam relationship, which had previously allowed for negotiation, compromise and reconciliation between Turkey's political Islamists and the establishment.³¹ This earlier mode proves the non-zero-sum game character of the power struggle between the secular state elite and Islamists of various shades. Although the Kemalist leadership's construction of a secular nation-state 'eliminate[d] Islam from their definition of the concept of nation; in practice, . . . they continued to give a certain consideration to religion'.³²

Since 1997, the high command has been convinced that Islamic reactionism is lying in wait, ready to subvert the secular foundations of the Republic. The secular establishment's natural reflex is therefore a permanent state of alert. Retired General Huseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, former chief of the general staff, expresses this sentiment: 'Radical Islam may appear gone one day to reemerge the next day . . . it is not possible to say that the danger has vanished.'³³ The high command believes that by sticking to a 'purist interpretation of the Kemalist bases of the republic',³⁴ the secular establishment can continue restructuring politics on a permanent basis. That is why Kıvrıkoğlu said in a press briefing on 3 September 1999 that 'the 28th of February is a process. It began in 1923 and from [that] date until the present it has kept up the momentum against the threat of *irtica* [reactionary Islam] . . . If necessary, the 28th of February will continue for ten years. If necessary, one hundred years. If necessary, for the period of a thousand years.'³⁵ Kıvrıkoğlu reiterated this position in April 2002 when Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, former mayor of Istanbul and present chairman of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) and current prime minister, made strong criticisms of the TAF's handling of the war in the south-east: 'We don't believe that they [the JDP] have changed . . . We did not say that the 28 of

31 Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, 'Parameters and Strategies of Islam–State Interaction in Republican Turkey', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28 (1996).

32 Paul Dumont, 'The origins of Kemalist ideology', in Jacob Landau (ed.), *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), p. 30.

33 'Kıvrıkoğlu: Sinsi irtica', *Radikal*, 14 June 2001.

34 Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 71.

35 Sedat Ergin, 'Askerden 12 mesaj', *Hürriyet*, 4 September 1999.

February will last a thousand years for nothing.³⁶ Similarly, according to the former admiral Salim Dervişoğlu, who took command of the navy six months after 28 February and played an important role in the process, the 28th of February represents the 'continuity' of the 'reaction against the incidents that violate the principle of secularism since the advent of the republic'.³⁷

Historically speaking, the coups have had a conservatising effect on both the military and the civilians. Not only have the highest echelons of the military turned out to be defenders of the status quo, they have become a stifling force compelling political parties and movements to toe a centrist line.³⁸

Turkey's coup tradition shows that from the military's vantage point, 'rational democracy' is the key concept underpinning the 'true essence of Kemalism', the military elite's substantive and procedural understanding of politics: on the surface, provided the elected authorities function according to the rational democracy framework, there is no danger of military intervention. But the history of coups shows that military's definition of rational democracy is such that there are limits to party competition, ideologies to be espoused, political bargaining between partners within coalition governments, political mandates, styles of leaderships and strategies. All too often, the military justifies its involvement in major policy decisions on anti-political grounds: that 'too much politics' is to blame for conflict and bad policy decisions.

On the civilian side, the interventions have precipitated a certain 'style of power holding' on the part of politicians, characterised by short-time horizons, lack of self-confidence, reliance on their political base and an unscrupulous use of politics as a means of generating economic benefit for politicians and their friends. A political class threatened by the role of the military, both formal and informal, cannot give up its patronage resources easily, as it has to calculate the political payoff of patronage activities against the benefits of combating ineffective government, corruption and stasis. It is more than likely that the civilian political class will not terminate their personal profiteering by launching reforms that would reduce the prominence of the military in politics as long as the shadow of the 'guardian' role remains. The foremost concern of such a leadership will be to extract short-term gains, rather than risk a costly long-term strategy of reform. Indeed, the fear and insecurity on the part of the DP government between 1950 and 1960 emanating from the

36 'Kıvrıkoğlu Erdoğan'a sert', *Radikal*, 24 April 2002.

37 Hulki Cevizoğlu, *Generalinden 28 Şubat itirafı: 'Postmodern darbe'* (Istanbul: Ceviz Kabuğu Yayınları, 2001), p. 76.

38 Cizre and Çınar, 'Turkey 2002'; Dwight J. Simpson, 'Turkey: A Time of Troubles', *Current History* 62, 365 (1972).

military and the old guard led by İsmet İnönü, the leader of the opposition RPP, played a large part in its determination to cling to power, which hastened the 1960 intervention.³⁹

The Turkish right and the maintenance of the anti-political guardianship role

Traditional hostility between the successors of the DP and the military, both in emotive terms and also in a genuine struggle for power, should not obscure a major feature of the historical maintenance of the TAF's guardian role: during much of the multi-party era, the military actions of the bureaucracy have not been prompted by fear of a challenge to its guiding role from the political left. Instead, it has acted on the well-founded belief that the principal threat to its prerogatives and privileged position is a centre-right government with strong enough popular support to enable it to challenge the TAF's role and build on a power base that would shift the balance in favour of civilian authority.⁴⁰

However, centre-right, centre-left and ultra-right political ideologies and movements in the Republic have frequently ratified the military's decisions and, to varying degrees, supported the military elite's definition of the 'enemy' and the strategies to fight against it: 'communism' during the Cold War; 'reactionary Islam' and 'Kurdish' separatism in the post-Cold War times. In theory, the only time centre-right forces could have presented a real threat to the 'rules of the game' was in the post-1980 period, when the modernism of the new right articulated a religious dimension to Turkish identity. Some tensions arose between the two sides during the first Gulf War, but on the whole, the military welcomed and supported the new Turkish-Islamic synthesis because it believed that this ideology strengthened national unity and social solidarity, eased the dislocations caused by the full liberalisation of Turkish capitalism and defused potential opposition by the left.⁴¹ The relationship between the neo-conservative civilian elite and the military rested on an open-ended set of arrangements whereby civilians managed politics by technical solutions, worked within the post-1980 institutional framework and implicitly agreed not to question the role of the military.

39 George Harris, 'The Causes of the 1960 Revolution in Turkey', *Middle East Journal* 24 (1970), p. 449.

40 Dankwart Rustow, 'Transition to democracy', in Heper and Evin (eds.), *State, Democracy and the Military*.

41 Kemal Karpat, 'Military interventions: army-civilian relations in Turkey before and after 1980', in Heper and Evin (eds.), *State, Democracy and the Military*, p. 156.

After the military intervention in 1960 the JP, the successor to the DP, became the dominant party of the centre-right. In the 1960s the JP challenged the military by emphasising political freedoms, demanding an amnesty for the imprisoned and politically banned politicians of the DP, and by continuously stressing the 'national will' over the military's will in order to develop a power base from the ruined image of the DP. However, the military benefited from the fact that neither the DP nor the JP was unambiguously committed to political and economic liberalism. As parties of the rural periphery, their existence depended on the most significant cleavage within the existing power balance, that between the central bureaucratic elite and the rural periphery. The appeal of both parties 'was not ideological but . . . rooted in the social structure of Turkey'.⁴² Political and economic liberalism had only limited relevance for this core constituency of small peasants and rising urban commercial groups. They were organically linked to the state by statist subsidies and protections.

More significantly, the tension between the Western/European and other/Islamic facets of Turkish national identity had not yet reached the stage of an open contestation about who was a genuine 'Turk'. Certainly, the 1960s and 1970s show that 'Europeanisation' and secularism were not limited aspirations during the Cold War, although the anti-communist ideology of the state further reinforced the conservatism of the periphery. Until the 1980s, the rising Turkish bourgeoisie wanted freedom from the straitjacket of state bureaucracy, not necessarily a liberal state per se. In sum, the DP and JP voiced popular resentment against the state in a basically pro-state discourse.⁴³ As a result, containment and cooptation of peripheral elements through Turkey's centre-right forces within a Westernist/secularist frame reinforced the military's traditional role and prerogatives and the integrative power of the state.

The military has written increasingly authoritarian constitutions after each intervention to alter the formulation of public policy and the relationship between state and society in favour of a political system comprising its own values.⁴⁴ The liberal character of post-1960 restructuring of political and social life may seem an aberration at first, but it can best be understood if put into perspective: American military aid and the modernisation of the army officer corps fostered a growing interest in social and political affairs, which then surpassed that of the civilian ethos of the DP government.⁴⁵ The commander

42 W. B. Sherwood, 'The Rise of the Justice Party in Turkey', *World Politics* 20 (1968), p. 55.

43 Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, 'Liberalism, Democracy and the Turkish Center-Right: The Identity Crisis of the True Path Party', *Middle Eastern Studies* 32 (April 1996).

44 Semih Vaner, 'The army', p. 238.

45 Lerner and Robinson, 'Swords and Ploughshares', p. 41.

of the War College, Talat Aydemir, who made two failed coup attempts in 1962 and 1963, explains the politisation of the military in his memoirs: according to him, while the education system in military schools was archaic and repressive until 1949–50, from that date onwards the staff officers were trained in a more liberal American system, which increased their technical professionalism as well as intellectual capacity. In the 1960s the insecurity and uncertainty of the JP, which suffered from factionalism within the party, rising social turmoil, ideological fragmentation in the system, weak authority and its status as the successor party of the DP, also increased the military's bias against the civilians.

The return to competitive politics after the 1980 intervention, on the other hand, was shaped by the intention to avoid the destructive instability of the past, which, the generals believed, was caused by self-interested political actors. The military rulers (1980–3) and the ruling party from 1983 to 1991, the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi, MP), altered the social bases of politics, the institutional framework for party competition⁴⁶ and undermined the power of the old parties and political class. Globally induced electoral trends also found their way into Turkey with the increasing personalisation of political representation by individual leaders, expressed by the rise in the 'personal vote' or the 'Americanisation of political competition'. This development put a premium on the personal image of the prime minister, reinforcing the already undemocratic malaise of leader-based parties.

It is also important to underscore that as a result of the depth of the state's crisis in 1970, the armed forces had greater autonomy from social forces in 1980 than had been the case in previous interventions. The shift to economic liberalism was predicated on the creation of a socially disciplined and depoliticised society. In other words, the military and its political successors promoted economic liberalism through a conservative-authoritarian political agenda that narrowed the bases of political participation, banned the existing political leaders, parties and venues, strengthened state institutions and expanded the TAF's political privileges constitutionally. This process entailed a new phase of modernisation and entry into the global economy and politics.

The adoption of the neo-liberal agenda caused a convergence in the political debate and led to a sterility of alternative ideas and values. The 1980 intervention was one fundamental source of today's disconnection between state and society. By the end of the 1980s, the coup had created its own loyal clientele: there was now a sizeable and complex middle class that accepted

⁴⁶ İler Turan, 'Political parties and the party system in post-1983 Turkey', in Heper and Evin (eds.), *State, Democracy and the Military*.

economic neo-liberalism, opted for an individualistic and hedonistic lifestyle and regarded any form of the social state as pathological. Apart from frowning at overt military intervention, however, the new middle classes were not critical of the political presence and role of the military. This acceptance of the military's role suggests that one reason why civilian governments have consistently acceded to the TAF's definition of the rules of politics is the diminished potential of the public sphere to create alternative ideas, energy and creativity in searching for new ways in which the state–society–citizen nexus can be made responsive to new needs, aspirations and hallmarks of democracy. This complacency, in turn, further contributes to the difficulty of establishing effective civilian actors in politics.

During the 1980s and 1990s, while Turgut Özal, former leader of the MP, emulated the global trend of shifting emphasis from party competition to 'effective governance', the right wing was not able to form a coalition capable of inhibiting the formal or informal political influence of the military. While the ideological background of the left was more democracy friendly, the tradition of the JP and its successor, the True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi, TPP), was more supportive of a conservative and illiberal state. Therefore, attitudinal and legal shifts in post-1980 Turkey brought to the fore the tensions, limitations, contradictions and fault-lines of the Turkish right, as much as those on the left.

The restrictive provisions of the 1982 constitution, which emphasised 'the consolidation of the democratic authority of the state,' were essentially in tune with the pre-1980 JP line. Until the rise of Tansu Çiller (1993–2002), the successor of Demirel as the leader of the TPP, the JP–TPP tradition adopted a double-discourse policy on civilian–military relations: on the one hand, the leadership basically followed a conciliatory line towards military involvement in politics, but at certain crisis junctures, when civil–military relations were at a low ebb, the leadership made feeble efforts to reassert a discourse of supremacy of the parliament and primacy of the popular will.⁴⁷

Demirel, who since 1964 had seen three interventions, remained prepared to make strategic compromises with the military. His whole career was based on an extremely skilful balancing act between the two dimensions of this historical double-discourse. The best example comes from his days in opposition in the 1980s: in calling for greater democratisation, he emphasised anti-militarist ideas, the rule of law and expansion of political participation. This anti-militarist

47 Ümit Cizre Sakalhoğlu, 'The Anatomy of the Turkish Military's Political Autonomy', *Comparative Politics* 29 (January 1997), p. 155.

stance and rhetoric was the most radical any mainstream political party had adopted in Turkey, because it openly questioned the constitutional role of the NSC and expressed concern over the changed power relations between the armed forces and the political class. The party hierarchy demanded the establishment of the principle of civilian control over the military. The MP was portrayed as 'the emanation of the coup . . . using . . . the political influence of the military for furthering its political fortunes'.⁴⁸

In 1990, while he was still in opposition, Demirel demanded a reorganisation of civil–military relations to establish civilian control over the military.⁴⁹ But two years later, when he was the prime minister, he permitted a bill placing the chief of general staff under the minister of defence⁵⁰ to be defeated by the votes of his party members in the parliamentary committee on defence.⁵¹ The same bill was again defeated eight months later in the same committee by the same deputies.⁵²

Tansu Çiller approached the military differently, departing from the traditional line of the party with her adoption of a more consistent discourse.⁵³ Abandoning any pretence of reasserting civilian supremacy, Çiller praised the armed forces, as she was reluctant to risk the military's reaction and upset the status quo. She also hoped to score a political victory on the Kurdish issue by defeating the uprising by military means. Çiller explained her policy thus: 'We were accused of governing by leaning on to the military . . . Which politician and political party in any country has come to power by bickering with its own army?'⁵⁴ Indeed, when in August 1993 and 1994 the question of the appointment of the general chief of staff arose, Çiller refrained from undertaking any

48 Süleyman Demirel, *Türk demokrasisi meydan okuyor: DYP genel başkanı Süleyman Demirel'in 1989 mali yılı bütçesi vesilesi ile TBMM'de yaptığı konuşmalar* (Ankara: DYP Basın ve Propaganda Başkanlığı, n. d.), p. 133.

49 Süleyman Demirel, '12 Eylül vaadleri tutulmadı', *Milliyet*, 28 May 1990. Demirel, in this interview with an Istanbul daily, openly stated: 'In Turkey, the place of the chief of general staff is, in fact, above the minister of defence. Is Turkey a military republic? . . . The place of the chief of general staff should in fact be below the minister of defence . . . In which country in the world does the chief of general staff see [the] president every week and brief him?'

50 The issue of the chief of general staff being accountable to the minister of defence, rather than the prime minister, is of great significance in Turkey for those advocating the establishment of liberal democracy along the lines suggested by the EU and those who see this type of division of authority as indicative of subordination of the military to the civilian authority along Western lines.

51 Cizre, 'Ruler to Pariah', p. 88.

52 See *Hürriyet*, 15 January 1993.

53 Ümit Cizre, 'Tansu Çiller: Lusting for power and undermining democracy', in M. Heper and S. Sayarı (eds.), *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey* (Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002), p. 203.

54 *Ibid.*

initiative that would displease the high command, and endorsed the wishes of the hierarchy on the issue. Doğan Güreş, the chief of staff she chose, and who was later elected as deputy on the TPP ticket in 1995, reiterated the harmony between Çiller and the armed forces: 'The prime minister acted like a tiger, the armed forces liked it. I worked with ease with all the prime ministers, with Özal, Akbulut, Yılmaz and Demirel. But with Çiller I worked with even more ease.'⁵⁵

As a result, critical policy choices and initiatives on fundamental questions such as the Kurdish issue have been hampered by right-wing governments' legacy of legitimising the status quo and therefore reinforcing the skewed equilibrium in civil–military relations in the military's favour.

The military and civilian protagonists of the 1997 intervention saw the roots of reactionary Islam in the 'irresponsible' use of Islam for partisan purposes by the political class. They therefore attempted to marginalise the forces of political Islam by disciplining representative institutions, strengthening the centre-right and centre-left and implementing security-minded policies in the public. They were not interested in the promotion of regime capabilities through more effective governance, political legitimacy and expanded democracy.⁵⁶ Their logic was guided by the rationale that structural changes could be introduced without any corresponding transformation in political ideas. However, their restructuring of the political system only served to bring out the state-friendly and state-dependent features of centre-left and centre-right parties and to stifle their vision, creativity and appeal.⁵⁷ Both left and right became preoccupied with preserving the status quo and failed to generate any new, forward-looking ideas.⁵⁸ The establishment's single-minded concern with securing the country against potential threats originating from Islamism and Kurdish nationalism stifled public debate on key issues, and led the existing political class to subcontract the resolution of crucial problems to the civil–military bureaucracy.⁵⁹ In sum, all political persuasions adopted a new rendition of the 'politics of inertia', a politics that was characterised by 'the absence of political synergy or a credible parliamentary alternative, and the officials' abject disregard for the concerns of those they represent'.⁶⁰

55 Cizre, 'Ruler to pariah', p. 92.

56 Cizre and Çınar, 'Turkey 2002', p. 316.

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 316–17.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 318.

59 Menderes Çınar, 'Mission Impossible', *Private View* 2, 5 (1997), p. 76.

60 Cizre and Çınar, 'Turkey 2002', p. 318.

The roadmap for Turkey's entry to the EU, drawn at the Helsinki European Council's meeting on 10–11 December 1999, has forced the heirs of the 28th February process to dilute their 'all-or-nothing' mentality towards Islam in politics. Pitting the rhetoric of 'contemporary life', which in Turkey is associated with Western secularism, against the opposite imagery of 'Islamic anachronism' was one way for Ankara to endorse Western values. In the post-Helsinki era, there was also a shift of discourse on the part of the military establishment to an 'argumentative rationality' when engaged with its domestic and international critics over accusations of democracy and human rights violations.⁶¹ Rather than denying the violations of democratic norms, the argumentative discourse affirmed the democratic deficiency in Turkey's political life, but tried to justify the suspension and limitation of democratic rights and norms on the grounds that as part of the military's campaign against internal enemies, particularly Kurdish insurgents, these measures were 'exceptional' and 'corrective'.

However, since the 11 September attacks, the Turkish general staff has moved towards a more conservative-nationalist position with regard to Ankara's fulfilment of the EU's Copenhagen Criteria. The high command is of the opinion that the conditions for fulfilling democracy are 'compromises', and as such they are too high a price to pay for being included in a bloc which displays a negative bias towards Turkey and will therefore create barriers to accession. Tuncer Kılınç, former secretary general of the NSC, told an audience at the Ankara War Academy in early March 2002 that 'the EU will never accept Turkey . . . Thus, Turkey needs new allies, and it would be useful if Turkey engages in a search that would include Russia and Iran.'⁶²

*The military and the Justice and Development Party:
continuing or breaking the modus vivendi with the right*

The moderate Islamist JDP's election victory in November 2002 reaffirmed the military's perception of political Islam as an internal security threat. But the JDP drew a critical lesson from the failed coalitions of the 1990s, and as a result sought to change the status quo via efficient performance on the basis of two positions: first, a discursive denial of its Islamist pedigree and the adoption

61 See Thomas Risse and Kathryn Sikkink, 'The socialization of international human rights norms into domestic practices: Introduction', in Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink (eds.), *The Power of Human Rights, International Norms and Domestic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 2–3.

62 See Jon Gorvett, 'Turkish Military fires warning shot over EU membership,' *The Middle East* 323 (May 2002), p. 33.

of a moderate and non-religious discourse in its place; and second, securing Turkish inclusion in the EU not just as a reform strategy, but also as a way of transforming the domestic power balance.

With the EU accession process in mind, the government's reform packages since November 2002 have included the expansion of freedom of expression; the abolition of the death penalty and anti-terrorism provisions that authorised punishment for verbal propaganda against the unity of state; the provision of retrial rights for citizens whose court decisions are overturned by the European Court of Human Rights; permission for education and broadcasting in the Kurdish language; and some softening of the intransigence of Turkish foreign policy towards the Cyprus question. The sheer volume and speed of the reforms, as well as the consensus of support behind them, have helped change the popular perception of civilian governments as underachieving, unstable and corrupt. More significantly, through a number of deliberate policies, the ruling party has tried to create enough elbow room to make decisions free from the tutelary control of the military. This process, in turn, has increased its ability to initiate pro-civilian reforms in spite of disquiet amongst the secular establishment.

As the JDP government has included in its political reform agenda the alteration of the existing system of civil–military relations, the TAF has been provoked into upholding its ‘guardianship’ mission, because it has continued to regard the government's discourse and true intentions with deep suspicion. The global reshaping of the world after the Cold War has had two contradictory policy implications for the Turkish military's role in public life: first, the explosion of military-defined internal security threats has encouraged the tendency for more security, less democracy and more vigilance from the TAF. In the 1990s, there was an increase in laws pertaining to internal security, anti-terrorism and the maintenance of public order. These laws criminalise certain political activities, constrain public debate and expand military jurisdiction over civilians. However, second, partly as a backlash to these repressive measures, partly under the firm impetus of the idea of entry into the EU, an impressive movement towards internalisation of European political values has dramatically increased the costs of ‘more security’. This development has prompted reform and the scaling down of the TAF's political influence.

Of the democratic reforms that Turkey has undertaken, none are more important and controversial than those related to the Turkish military's power and autonomy in the 2000s. The democratic reform package of July 2003, which was formally put into effect on 7 August 2003, shows that the current military–civil equation in Turkey is characterised by greater dynamism than

expectations of historical–cultural continuity in the civil–military relationship would allow. The package contained an amendment to some articles of the Act on the National Security Council and the General Secretariat of the NSC that tipped the balance of power in favour of civilian leadership. The August 2003 laws are a distinct legislative accomplishment by historical standards because the political role of the military has been based on the NSC, an institution long considered to be ‘the shadow government’.⁶³ The reforms not only repealed the NSC’s executive powers and turned it into an advisory body, they also increased the number of civilian members to a majority.

From many perspectives, the August 2003 package of laws, also called the 7th Harmonisation Package, has compelling political and theoretical significance for the civil–military power equation. By converting the NSC into an advisory body that has little effective influence over national policy, the AKP government knowingly took the risk of a confrontation with the military leadership. This step showed that the government now felt itself to be in a secure enough position to establish civilian supremacy. The 8th Harmonisation Package, passed on 21 May 2004, further increased civilian oversight over the defence budget and removed military representatives from the Council on Higher Education (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu, YÖK) and the Supreme Board of Radio and Television (Radyo Televizyon Üst Kurumu, RTÜK). It also abolished state security courts, which tried crimes against the state, a legacy of the period after the 1980 military coup.⁶⁴ Finally, the amendments narrowed the right of military courts to try civilians for criticising the military. The government is also planning to increase the parliamentary oversight of defence spending in 2006, and has taken some steps in involving itself in the preparation of the latest national security policy document. These developments do not signal a total retreat of the military from politics, even along with the by-law of 8 January 2005 that made the NSC’s operation non-secret. But the most

63 Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül used the term in a speech he made in New York. See ‘MGK Gölge Hükümeti’, *Milliyet*, 29 September 2004.

64 Established in 1982 and commencing operations in 1984, the state security courts have been civilianised since June 1999 after the European Court of Human Rights ruled in 1998 that its composition of one military judge with two civilians was against the European conventions. To prevent criticism of the trial of Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK leader, the military judge sitting on the bench was removed and replaced with a civilian one. The EU Commission’s *Regular Reports* have repeatedly specified that the powers and proceedings of these courts be brought more in line with EU standards. The first round of democratisation reforms passed by parliament on 6 February 2002 dealt with the issue only procedurally by reducing the custody period for crimes tried in the state security courts. The scope of its functions is transferred to the criminal courts that are being set up.

important platform through which the military's influence is exercised and reproduced has definitely been curtailed.

The military's partial retreat from the political arena is explained not only by the requirements of the EU membership, but also by the strategic environment that arose in the aftermath of 11 September and the 2003 Iraq war. In this environment, international sympathy and support for the moderate Islam-identified government of Turkey is not at all irreconcilable with the prevailing moral sensibility that characterises international politics. This new state of affairs resonates well with the long-held Turkish aspiration of being European in a region of 'backward' religious beliefs, poverty, underdevelopment and democratic shortfall. As the historian Kemal Karpat puts it, Turkey is probably 'the only nation to have turned modernity into [its] national religion'.⁶⁵ Thus the relationship is mutually advantageous, because Turkey is both useful to the West and has 'a vision of the future anchored in the West'.⁶⁶ As a result of the situation, the JDP government does not have to try hard to ingratiate itself with the West. The strategic change in the region has accomplished that task.

But what makes this argument complicated is that the Turkish military is not at all amenable to the idea of a secular regime in a culturally Muslim country providing 'a good example for other countries in the region'.⁶⁷ The Turkish regime has always taken an ambiguous position with regard to the country's identity and connections to the Islamic world. Indeed, the regime refuses to define Turkish identity in terms of religion or to countenance any public role for Islam. But its definition of a secular identity is also open to debate: those who view Turkey from a critical perspective doubt the country's secular credentials and claim that it has a laicist system of 'domination and control of religion by the state at nearly all levels'.⁶⁸

The factors that enhance Turkey's political value in the eyes of the West are in fact rejected by the military: a former deputy chief of general staff, General İlker Başbuğ, defends a causal link between secularism and democracy, and therefore assumes that since Turkey is secular, it is also democratic. In his mind, it is false to juxtapose Islam and secularism: 'It can be misleading to claim that countries with a predominantly Muslim population could adopt a

65 Kemal Karpat, 'Turkey's long journey to Europe', newsvote.bbc.co.uk/impapps/pagetools/the (4 January 2005), BBC News.

66 Ibid.

67 Commission of the European Communities, 'Commission Staff Working Document, Issues Arising from Turkey's Membership Perspective', Brussels, October 2004, p. 11.

68 Graham Fuller, 'Turkey's Strategic Model: Myths and Realities', *Washington Quarterly* 27, 3 (2004), p. 52.

democratic structure by following the Turkish model. Countries which have not experienced the process of secularisation, cannot achieve a democratic structure easily.⁶⁹ General Başbuğ also rejects the Islamic-democratic model on the grounds that the secular character of the Republic and a 'moderate' Islam are incompatible.⁷⁰

Since 2003, there has been genuine progress on the EU issue in tandem with resolute international support for the JDP. Upon visiting Turkey, EU president Romano Prodi praised the government's adoption of radical reforms and expressed his surprise at the decisiveness and rate of the reform process.⁷¹ Driven by the concern to protect its corporate and political interests in the long run, the TAF has retreated from the prioritisation of its security-first discourse. Cognisant that there is a clear linkage between Turkish EU membership and a solution to the Cyprus problem, hardliners within and outside the military accepted the UN secretary general Kofi Annan's peace plan as the basic point of reference even though they had previously been reluctant to endorse it. One such hardliner, General Hurşit Tolon, the commander of Aegean Army, expressed that view very clearly: 'Some say the military does not favour an agreement on Cyprus, but it does not reflect the truth . . . it is fashionable to spread the lie that the military does not want Turkish entry into the EU . . . This is a total lie.'⁷²

General Hilmi Özkök, the chief of general staff, reinforced this new positive approach to the EU in an interview he granted to a Greek journalist four months after Prodi's visit. In keeping with his comparatively more flexible and democratic image, he made a sincere admission of the grounds for the army's volte-face: '70 per cent of the people want the EU membership. Nobody can resist this kind of majority.'⁷³ Thus, while still reiterating the exceptional characteristics of Turkey to justify the internal security function for the military, Özkök revealed the military's flexibility in reconciling its guardian role with the requirements for entry into the EU: 'We are ready to compromise and undertake risks to harmonize with the EU values.'⁷⁴

On the issue of the Iraq war, the prevention of the emergence of a splinter Kurdish state in northern Iraq has been the predominant consideration shaping the Turkish government's policies. The Turkish parliament's decision

69 See www.turkishnewslines.com/.

70 'Türkiye'nin yapısı belli', *Milliyet*, 20 March 2004.

71 'AB'ye Çok Yakınsınız' *Milliyet*, 16 January 2004.

72 'Tolon: Çakıl taşı vermeyiz, nöbetteyiz', *Radikal*, 18 January 2004.

73 'Yeter ki AB'li olalım', *Radikal*, 19 October 2003.

74 *Ibid.*

on 1 March 2003 not to grant US troops access to Iraq via Turkish territory, surprising though it may have been against a backdrop of time-tested strategic and political ties between Washington and Ankara, also reflected the popular reluctance to play an instrumental role in waging war on a Muslim neighbour.

In sum, the combination of internal changes and global opportunities has reduced the choices available to the TAF. The military is caught between two alternatives: either accept a shift in power away from the military as part of the conditions for EU entry, or confront the government and a mostly pro-EU society. The latter path would put the military at risk of losing its credibility as the self-appointed representative of Turkey's intellectual and social elite, responsible for fulfilling Atatürk's dream of 'raising Turkey to the level of civilization' of the West. In order to preserve its power base and corporate interest, without which it cannot preserve its political pre-eminence, it has opted for the first choice.

But it should also be noted that while the era of military interventions is past, the TAF retains a significant degree of political leverage. It has strong civilian allies who protect the officers' vision of democracy and counter any 'internal threats' to the regime. Despite the progress made in aligning Turkey's laws with the EU requirements⁷⁵ and despite the fact that Ankara received the green light to start accession talks with the EU on 3 October 2005, the latest Annual Report of 2005 notes that 'since 2002, Turkey has made good progress in reforming CMRS . . . but the armed forces continue to exercise significant political influence . . . and Turkey should work towards greater accountability and transparency in the conduct of security affairs in line with member states' "best practices"⁷⁶.

Military, society and political class

Modalities of interaction with the society

Historically speaking, the officer corps has been dissociated from Turkish society to a much larger extent than other professional groups. The logic of the situation is that for a group of people to be held responsible for the well-being of the nation, they must be freed from 'ordinary' burdens of public life. In

⁷⁵ Through two major constitutional reforms made in 2001 and 2004 and eight legislative packages passed between February 2002 and July 2004 three areas of structural issues of reform as indicated by the EU, except the position of the chief of general staff (he is still responsible to the prime minister rather than the defence minister), have been tackled.

⁷⁶ European Commission, 'Turkey 2005 Progress Report', Brussels, 9 November 2005, p. 14.

other words, the conditions causing the semi-isolation of the Republican army from the mainstream of the population were produced by the vanguard role of the military and civilian bureaucracy. As a result of that role, the military identified itself completely with the state and the status quo.

Although Kemalism is perceived in a much less militant and less fetishist manner at the popular level, this position of social autonomy enables the military to sustain it in an undiluted form which becomes relevant for as long as the military bureaucracy retains its social and political power, indicating once more the fusion of ideology and power as motivations. A pattern of self-recruiting the ‘sons of military and civil-servants’⁷⁷ into the military also explains the perpetuation of the conditions that reproduce that power. There is a large dose of truth in the claim that Kemalism is a pervasive ideology in the army that is largely reproduced by its distance from the society, including its weak links with capital owners.⁷⁸

The defining organisational characteristics of the TAF are based on the fact that it is a conscript army. This feature is of immense importance in integrating military values firmly into the society. Compulsory military service is an instrument that makes clear to young men who are enlisted at the age of twenty that they do not just have rights but also ‘responsibilities and obligations’ to the state. The implications of a conscript army are also projected into Ankara’s thinking that security is tied to military strength, which, in turn, is to be gained by having a larger army.

As will be seen below, Turkey’s threat perceptions and security thinking have been minimally affected by changing military requirements in the world. Therefore, the dominant military model and trends at work in the world, namely, abolishing compulsory military service; encouraging professionalisation and a smaller and a more technical army; discouraging the army’s involvement in civic and political arenas; contribution to multinational power-generating schemes; and democratic control of the armed forces by civilians have limited – though growing – or no application in Turkish geography. It is no wonder then that, under these conditions, the political and social guardian role persists.

Moreover, there is no reliable research addressing the changes in the outlook and behaviour of the armed forces as a result of their focus on anti-terrorist missions and security-minded outlook in the 1990s and the resultant differences

77 James Brown, ‘The Military and Society: The Turkish Case’, *Middle Eastern Societies* 25, 3 (1989), p. 399.

78 Ahmet Kemal, ‘Military Rule and the Future of Democracy in Turkey’, *MERIP* 122 (March–April 1984), p. 13.

from and similarities with civilian society in terms of values and attitudes. Nor do we have healthy data about the impact of broader societal changes from which the military cannot remain immune. What we can project intuitively and relying on historical data, however, is that the TAF's anti-political thought and style draws strength from the ideological and policy failure of domestic politics. As the lack of a meaningful public accountability and failure of policies of distributional equality have led to the erosion of public confidence in the political system, the military has benefited from a pervasive anti-political discourse which it shares with much of the general public.

Furthermore, a comprehensive process of social control by the state through the 'making of mass meaning' via the education system and mass media have provided crucial means through which the official ideology is diffused through the capillaries of the society and turns into 'microphysics of power'.⁷⁹ Kemalist ideology's relationship of power with society is such that in socially defining and structuring individuals, it creates a form of control based on 'consent' which is a seemingly democratic feature. Kemalist ideology turns into the legitimate societal discourse through the manipulation of a public image which becomes effective in the end as the 'self-image' of a society which wants to identify itself as modern and progressive.⁸⁰ The societal modernisation project of the state, in other words, is accepted by the society as being in its 'self-interest'.

The classic portrayal of Turkish society in awe of its military bureaucracy may not be illusory, but the real challenge is to understand how such a stance came about. The effectiveness of the military lies not just in the control-oriented discourse of the state, of which the military forms the most important pillar. Rather, it is a function of controlling the self-image of the society through a de-centred and diffused popular discourse. The success of the military's Kemalist values in making inroads into society lies in enabling society to identify its self-image with a 'public' image which is set in a top-down fashion but is perceived as if it is a bottom-up process.

Societal context in Turkey was distinguished in the 1990s by high levels of political conflict brought about by the rise of identity politics. Global changes in the concept of security have been translated into the Turkish context in such

79 Dario Melossi, *The State of Social Control* (Cambridge: Polity Press: 1990), p. 172. For an analysis of power which shifts the emphasis from state power and subjection to where the power produces its effects and where it becomes capillary, see Michel Foucault, 'Power, sovereignty and discipline', in David Held et al. (eds.), *States and Societies* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1983).

80 Melossi, *The State of Social Control*, p. 172.

a way that internal political conflict and instability provoked by new global conditions have been reinterpreted as security threats. This development has meant that fundamental policy making is removed from the sphere of the elected representatives and entrusted to the security community, of which the military bureaucracy forms the key component.

Rapid economic and social change, in a context of stark inequality, weak democratic traditions and a propensity for violations of basic rights, soon took a toll on the Turkish military–society relationship, resulting in increasing corruption, especially of the security forces in anti-terrorist operations. The Susurluk scandal revealed the existence of a criminal triangle of politicians, mafia bosses and security forces who were engaged in the war against the PKK.⁸¹ As the public outcry created immense pressure for accountability, transparency and justice in the system, the security forces and the Refahiyol coalition government led by Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Çiller opposed a ‘clean hands’ operation to reform the system. Çiller gave unequivocal support to dubious state practices including illegal murders: ‘Those who shoot bullets or those who are the targets of bullets in the name of the state are both honorable. They all are heroes.’⁸² Even Turkey’s right-wing forces concurred with broader social pressure, demanding the termination of indiscriminate use of security forces, unchecked privileges and vested interests in intelligence and anti-terrorist operations.

The military and the political class: patterns of perceptions

From the perspective of elected representatives, perhaps the most serious factor capable of tilting the balance of the civil–military equation in favour of the latter is the perception of the civilian political class by the military: it is no secret that the Turkish army, like most of its counterparts elsewhere, perceives the civilian world as unstable, inept, careerist, populist, imprudent, corrupt and irresponsible. This anti-political cognitive map of the officer corps is incongruent with even the most flexible assumptions of representative democracy. The

⁸¹ This scandal followed a traffic accident in which Abdullah Çatlı, an ultranationalist involved in political killings in the 1970s and was on the run, a civilian security chief in Istanbul and a young woman taken for a joy ride were killed together. The only survivor was a tribal chief from the south-east who was also a DYP deputy and whose tribe was on the side of the state.

⁸² This was, however, hardly a surprising statement as it is now known that she and her then police chief, Mehmet Ağar, were involved in this triangle since 1995, when he agreed to arrange to hunt and eliminate Abdullah Öcalan, then leader of the PKK, so as to enable Çiller to capitalise on the event for the December 1995 elections.

military sees the political parties, most interest groups, political leaders and the civilian presidents – or at least did so until the election of the current president in 2000 – as disruptive and divisive forces. Army takeovers are justified on the basis of the deep void in political authority in conditions of breakdown of public order preceding the coups.

Turkey's political parties do bear a very heavy burden of responsibility for failing to carry out independent policies on major political issues, adapt to changing needs, implement reforms to reverse the disintegration of the political system and democratise the internal workings of their own party structures. Such changes would both help them win public support and overcome their lack of self-confidence with regard to the military. Eric Rouleau, in a sense, underscores the key importance of being able to puncture this vicious circle when he speaks of the 'good statecraft'⁸³ of the former prime minister Turgut Özal (1983–9), who managed to curtail the political role of the military hierarchy to some extent during his premiership.

However, the political class has at times displayed some initiative and a willingness to strengthen civilian institutions, reshape the political process and question who defines the security threats, sets acceptable risks and determines appropriate responses to them. For example, former Deputy Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz, the leader of the MP, a junior partner in the three-party coalition government between 1999 and 2002, suggested in the aftermath of the 28 February process that the generals should abandon the fight against reactionary Islam and focus their attention on external defence. More importantly, he made a speech in his party's convention on 4 August 2001 arguing that Turkish politics was afflicted by a 'national security syndrome', which, he claimed, only served to frustrate the reforms necessary to democratise and integrate the Turkish political system into the EU. The response of the military high command was vehement, suggesting that national security was an issue to be kept out of politics.⁸⁴

The weakness of the constitutionally elected authorities is not directly responsible for the strong political role of the generals. On the contrary, the historical position of the military, that is, its self-assigned *capacity* to guard the regime, has played a major role in detracting further from the ability and responsibility of civilian leaders to assume control over the political environment and to manage the key political problems effectively. The

83 Eric Rouleau, 'Turkey's Dream of Democracy', *Foreign Affairs* (November–December 2000), p. 110.

84 Ümit Cizre, 'Demythologizing the National Security Concept: The Case of Turkey', *Middle East Journal* 57, 2 (2003), p. 223.

most compelling explanation for civilian ‘weakness’ is that frequent military incursions into politics seriously weaken the foundations of democracy, cause a severe crisis of public confidence in the political class and exacerbate the already existing power asymmetry in civil–military relations and the overt political role of the military.

Reinventing security in the face of post-Cold War renaissance of militaries and changes in security

In many developing countries that, at one time or other, were under military rule, the recent ‘global wave of democratization has prompted important shifts in civil–military relations’⁸⁵ which have less to do with postmodern security concerns than with the end of the bipolar tension and the new movement towards decentralisation of state powers. This trend has caused hopes in the direction of a more democratic formulation of civil–military relations: it has ‘unleashed a tendency for civilian governments to try to assert greater influence over the officer corps and for militaries to try to defend their preexisting prerogatives’.⁸⁶ Contrary to this trend, however, the political power of the Turkish military has risen sharply in the last decade. The Kurdish issue and the growth of political Islam have enabled the military to reaffirm its central role at a time when faith in armies has given way to downsizing their structures and a reduction of military expenditure in the West.

The perception that Turkey occupies a unique strategic position and faces genuine security risks on her borders is a central factor in shaping the military’s rationale for security considerations with very little debate and civilian input. Turkey’s geo-strategic position is frequently emphasised by military and civilian leaders to show the country’s military and political value to the West and to justify a large military with a big budget. Many foreign observers agree that Turkey faces genuine security risks on her borders and its ‘comparative advantage lies in its ability to influence trans-regional risks and opportunities’.⁸⁷ Turkey’s leaders argue that the country has moved from being a secondary member of NATO to a country of primary importance (from a ‘flank country’ to a ‘front country’),⁸⁸ a view first expressed by US assistant secretary of state

85 Wendy Hunter, ‘Negotiating Civil–Military Relations in Post-Authoritarian Argentina and Chile’, *International Studies Quarterly* 42, 2 (1998), p. 295.

86 *Ibid.*

87 Ian O. Lesser, ‘In Search of a Post-Cold War Role’, *Private View* (Autumn 1997), p. 94.

88 *Ibid.*

Richard Holbrooke in March 1995.⁸⁹ The implications of this geo-strategy-based outlook for civilian participation in national security policy is rather bleak: in the words of one researcher, “Turkey’s national security conception is predetermined by its geopolitical position and domestic make-up and that such “givens” do not leave much room for discussion . . . the relative lack of debate on Turkey’s security conceptualization could partly be explained with reference to the assumption that Turkey’s geographical location determines its security policies.”⁹⁰

That being said, it is clear that a geo-strategically motivated threat perception is very real for the military. Some countries such as Syria, Iran, Iraq and Armenia, and, to a lesser extent, Russia, hold hostile or potentially hostile stances towards Turkey. The existence of a Kurdish autonomous entity in northern Iraq disturbs Turkey’s foreign and security policy makers intensely. To deal with these threats, the military leadership argues that the national security apparatus must be kept ready and capable.⁹¹ When these perceptions of internal and external threats are combined, it seems that, contrary to the global trend, the end of the Cold War has not led to a less security-based domestic agenda in Turkey. On the contrary, it has meant that security is still a ‘control’ problem rather than a democratic contract with the society built into the culture, environment and everyday routine.

New traumas, insecurities and crises intimately connected with the end of the Cold War reinforce the historical/geographical determinism built into the system for the guardian role of the TAF. Changing security concepts have not led to diminished prerogatives and have reinforced the self-appointed role of the armed forces. Jane Chanaa’s portrayal of some military power structures exploring new venues to maintain their political power ‘structurally, ideologically and materially’ in the new era is an excellent description of the Turkish military. Chanaa argues that the 1990s saw ‘security traditions reinventing themselves’⁹² in some developing nations. Emergence of internal security threats has been an effective instrument to enable many developing states, including Turkey, to broaden their security agenda.

89 Morton Abramowitz, ‘The complexities of American policymaking on Turkey’, in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey’s Transformation and American Policy* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 2000), p. 159.

90 Pinar Bilgin, ‘Rethinking Turkey’s Security Discourse: The Challenge of Globalization’, paper presented at the annual meeting of the APSA, Boston, MA, 29 August–1 September 2002, pp. 13–19.

91 Cizre, ‘Demythologizing the National Security Concept’, p. 216.

92 Jane Chanaa, *Security Sector Reform: Issues, Challenges and Prospects* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002, Adelphi Paper 344), p. 42.

Conclusion

Chanaa's argument that some post-Cold War militaries have been 'resourceful in their invention'⁹³ of new security priorities lends support to the notion that the Turkish military's power struggle with civilian authority, along with the TAF's genuine commitment to Kemalist ideology, has shaped the military's anti-political interventionism. The idea that 'security is not only to be given or taken; it is also out there to be made'⁹⁴ shows the apex of the military's construction of a power base from which it can redefine the standards and course of Kemalist order and progress. Since the end of the Cold War, hopes for a more democratic structure of civil–military relations have emerged. However, the conservative tone of international politics, the revival of Islamism and the escalation of the Kurdish conflict have provided the momentum for a redefinition of national interest, security and the expansion of the guardian role of the TAF.

The TAF's maintenance of a high degree of autonomy in political and institutional realms has generated a host of contradictions for Turkey's democracy. For one thing, it has weakened the bases of representative process. The overbearing weight of the military in the system has tended to inhibit the imagination of the political class, which is confronted with colossal challenges such as massive internal migration and urbanisation connected to the south-east question, yet does not have the political margin to encourage it to develop the necessary willingness, capacity and credibility to solve them.

This pessimistic assessment can be qualified by some positive developments. The EU accession process has generated an important undercurrent for the normalisation of the position of the military in the political system. Moreover, under the impetus of the process, increased governmental leverage over key national security and foreign policy issues such as the EU, Cyprus and Iraq has brought forth the need for the civilian elites to develop alternative choices, strategies and policies that are designed to show up the political character of the internal security problems and make them a matter of public debate. Combined with the international backing for the JDP on the basis that it serves as a 'Muslim democratic model' in the region, this new civilian initiative has undermined the military's ability to challenge a popularly backed government.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.