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## CIVIL-MILITARY CONFRONTATION IN TURKEY: THE 1973 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The military sincerely respects the political parties as nonceasing elements of our democratic life, and all our political parties comprehend the responsibility which the military carries in our country's life. The strength and vigor of our democracy arises from the existence of such a balance.

—ISMET İNÖNÜ, *February 28, 1973*

Much has been written recently about the severe domestic problems which Turkey has been experiencing since 1970.<sup>1</sup> Instability in the form of worker strikes, student demonstrations, parliamentary stalemate over reform measures, and above all, urban guerrilla terrorism prompted the armed forces to intervene in March 1971 and impose a nonpartisan coalition government in order to put an end to what they deemed "anarchy, fratricide and social and economic unrest." The following month, at the instigation of the armed forces, a state of emergency was declared and martial law was instituted in eleven of Turkey's sixty-seven provinces.<sup>2</sup> Thousands of sus-

Part of the research for this article was made possible by travel grants from the St. Louis Country Day School and from the American Research Institute in Turkey. I would like to thank Abraham Bodurgil of the Library of Congress for his special assistance, Altay Çataloğlu for his helpful comments, and especially Professors John H. Kautsky and Victor T. Le Vine of Washington University for their critical reading of an earlier draft.

<sup>1</sup> The following provide a balanced, analytical account of recent events in Turkey: Dwight J. Simpson, "Turkey: A Time of Troubles," *Current History* 62, 365 (Jan. 1972), 38-43, 50-52; Harry N. Howard, "Continuing Trouble in the Turkish Republic," *Current History*, 64, 377 (Jan. 1973), 26-29, 38-39; Feroz Ahmad, "The Turkish Guerrillas: Symptom of a Deeper Malaise," *New Middle East*, 55 (April 1973), 13-16; Sevinc Carlson, "Turkey's Fragile Democracy: The Danger That Lies Ahead," *New Middle East*, 44 (May 1972), 15-18; Denis Burnouf, "La situation en Turquie après les interventions du Haut-Commandement dans les affaires publiques," *Politique Étrangère*, 37, 1 (1972), 101-13. Of a more impressionistic, journalistic, or bland nature are the following: İsmet Giritli, "Coup by Memorandum: Events and Prospects in Turkey," *New Middle East*, 32 (May 1971), 40-42; Nicolas Martin, "La Turquie dans l'attente d'un coup d'état," *Jeune Afrique*, 560 (Sept. 26, 1971), 42-44; Nihat Erim, "The Turkish Experience in the Light of Recent Developments," *Middle East Journal*, 26, 3 (Summer 1972), 245-252; Charles Wakebridge, "The Problem Turkey Has Yet To Solve," *New Middle East*, 52-53 (Jan./Feb. 1973), 54-56.

<sup>2</sup> On April 27, 1971, martial law was declared in the eleven provinces of Adana, Ankara, Eskişehir, İstanbul, İzmir, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Zonguldak, Diyarbakır, Hatay, and Siirt. Except for the last three named, where Kurdish dissension was reported, these provinces contain Turkey's largest cities and thus its greatest university-student, urban-workèr, and urban-guerrilla populations.

pected “anarchists” were arrested and stood trial, with the result that an uneasy calm returned to the surface of Turkish affairs. Many civilian politicians in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (GNA) were restive under martial law, however, decrying their loss of independent action and demanding a loosening of the tight military control.

Such was the general setting when the election of Turkey’s sixth president took place in March and April, 1973.<sup>3</sup> Since the president of the Republic is elected for seven years by the GNA itself, many civilian politicians saw the election as an opportunity to rebel against martial-law conditions in particular and against military interference in Turkish politics in general. The 1973 presidential election was perhaps the most critical political event to occur in Turkey since the 1960 military coup. It was a test of the strength of Turkey’s civilian institutions and constitutional procedures as well as a test of the military’s patience with civilian politicians and compromise politics. The following is an analysis of that election and its importance in the ongoing civilian-military confrontation in Turkey. Before we turn to that, however, a rather lengthy caveat is required.

One must be wary of the “civilian-military duality myth,” that is, the assumption that there is always a clear empirical distinction between civilian and military authority or authorities. While the analytical distinction may be valid and have its heuristic merit, an empirical distinction may be hard to make, especially in those countries where there is a tradition of military “guardianship” or “directorship.” In many Middle Eastern countries military interference is not viewed askance nor is it clearly constitutionally proscribed. The Anglo-Saxon ideal that the armed forces should be nonpartisan or neutral in politics may simply not be appropriate in such contexts. Indeed, in many less-developed countries throughout the world, military officers are among the most highly educated and technologically skilled and thus are often tapped (or tap themselves) to assume high positions in government.

Hence, in those countries there is often no simple division between civilian and military personnel in terms of the interests they represent and the policies they pursue. The fact that a person wears a uniform does not indicate what policies he favors nor will he necessarily favor different policies when he takes off the uniform and becomes a civilian. Even to the extent that there is a peculiar military frame of reference or perception of issues, one cannot assume that that orientation is lost when the officer switches to a civilian role. How much does one’s behavior change in the context of a new role? Does the man shape the role more than the role shapes the man? These issues are probably unresolvable. One’s socioeconomic background and life experiences certainly influence one’s values, ideas, and behavior, but so do the aura of the office and the expectations of others concerning that role.

In Turkey, the interplay between the military and civilian spheres in matters of

<sup>3</sup> The first five presidents of modern republican Turkey were Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1923–1938), İsmet İnönü (1938–1950), Celâl Bayar (1950–1960), Cemal Gürsel (1961–1966), and Cevdet Sunay (1966–1973).

governance and in the overlap in personnel can make generalizations about "civil-military conflict" difficult to arrive at and to justify. Military figures such as Atatürk, İnönü and Gürsel consistently emphasized the need for strong civilian institutions. They were concerned as well about the military's competence in its own area of national defense, competence that they knew would be attenuated the more the armed forces engaged in politics. Since Atatürk's time dozens of generals have retired and then assumed positions of authority in the supposedly non-military arenas of politics and business. The Justice Party itself was founded in 1961 by a former chief of the General Staff, Ragıp Gümüşpala.

But to speak of a military-civilian confrontation in Turkey is not a useless enterprise, for there does exist in Turkey a tradition of the military's formal disengagement from political affairs, dating back to Mustafa Kemal's famous (unheeded) admonition to the Young Turk movement in 1909 and to his requirement after 1924 that army officers resign their commissions if they want to engage in politics. Although this tradition has been increasingly breached since 1960, the very fact of its existence justifies discussing Turkish politics in terms of a civil-military dichotomy. Moreover, the distinction is an acceptable device here because the 1973 presidential election was *perceived* by the leading politicians and the respected press as a civil-military confrontation.

#### THE BACKGROUND AND THE CONTESTANTS

Constitutionally the position of president in Turkey is more ceremonial than substantive. The president was meant to play the role of a nonpolitical chief of state rather than chief administrator or chief executive. Yet, since the 1960 coup and the subsequent politicization of the armed forces, the president has come to play an important extra-constitutional role as mediator between the armed forces and the political parties. Thus, he is an essential part of the balance which İnönü, himself a former general, president, prime minister, and party chairman, spoke of in the opening quotation. The outgoing president, former chief of the General Staff, Cevdet Sunay, had been elected in March 1966 following the lengthy illness of Cemal Gürsel, himself a former commander of the Turkish Land Forces. Because membership in the GNA is necessary for presidential eligibility, Sunay had resigned from the top military post and had been appointed by the acting president to fill a vacancy in the Senate. This whole recruitment procedure was to be questioned in the 1973 election.

The military's stake in the 1973 presidential election was considerable. Four of Turkey's first five presidents had been career military officers. Especially since the 1960 coup, the military "moderates" or "constitutionalists" had been in control of the presidency in the figures of Gürsel and Sunay. These top officers were committed to the Atatürk Revolution by democratic means. With the active support of the armed forces' top echelon, they had personally and paternalistically intervened

in civilian politics on many occasions in order to set the bounds within which they felt the Republic should progress. The military moderates successfully defended the various civilian governments in the 1960s against attempted coups and plots on the part of various "radical" military officers. The middle-ranking "radical" officers had little confidence in competitive party politics as the means toward economic development and social reform. They tended to believe that rapid development and reform are possible only under the strong leadership of the military. Fourteen such radicals were expelled from the ruling junta, the National Unity Committee, after the 1960 coup, which indicated the moderates' strong commitment to parliamentary procedures and civilian rule.

Another planned coup by junior officers may have been a central reason behind the famous "March 12 Memorandum" of 1971, a stern warning from the military chiefs to the GNA which threatened military intervention if a "strong and credible government" capable of passing reform measures could not deal with the severe domestic instability and "fratricidal strife." Observers speculated that the Memorandum was designed to outflank the coup planners by effecting the resignation of Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel and yet preserving parliamentary structures.<sup>4</sup>

The attitude of the armed forces toward the Justice Party (JP) was ambivalent. On the one hand, there was the military's patent antipathy toward the JP as the immediate successor to the Democrat Party which the army had ousted and outlawed in 1960. On the other hand, the officer corps was not itself united on matters of public policy, such as the pace and means of modernization. The support of the JP by retired officers clearly indicates this duality. Not all members of the officer corps are reform minded, nor are all members of the Justice Party unsympathetic to fundamental social change.

During the 1961-1965 coalition period, the JP had fought unsuccessfully for amnesty for former Democrats, the granting of which would have undermined the legitimacy of the 1960 coup. Winning clear majorities in the national elections of 1965 and 1969, the right-of-center JP, with its solid backing in the peasantry, felt no need to rapidly push the many reform measures that the military moderates considered top priorities. The armed forces' patience began to wear thin as the JP procrastinated over measures dealing with tax, education, land reform, electoral law reform, the exploitation of oil and mineral deposits, welfare legislation, and, after 1968, law-and-order measures. The military considered enactment of this legislation essential in order to fulfill the Atatürk legacy, justify the 1960 coup, and preserve a stable and attractive business and investment climate. Following parliamentary deadlock, urban guerrilla terrorism, and student and worker demonstra-

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Friendly, "Turkey's Lifesaving Legacy," *Washington Post*, March 13, 1971, p. A1. See also Ferdinand Hurni, "Democracy and the Turkish Military," *Swiss Review of World Affairs*, 21, 2 (May 1971), 14. Some support for Friendly's contention can be found in the fact that dozens of military officers after March 12, 1971, were relocated, retired, and even arrested and tried. See, for instance, Ahmad, "The Turkish Guerrillas."

tions, the military toppled the Demirel government with the March 12, 1971 "coup by communique," as mentioned above.

During the next two years a series of above-party or technocratic governments passed few reform statutes but were able, with stern military urging, to begin to contain extremist violence. This containment was accomplished by the harsh repression of all suspected "anarchists" by specially trained army antiguerrilla units and by the passage of constitutional amendments to curtail the "abuses of freedom" which the 1961 Constitution had liberally granted. The liberal guarantees of civil rights in that document were compared at one point (by former Foreign Minister Ihsan Sabri Çağlayangil) to a loose-fitting suit which it was hoped the people could grow into but which now evidently needed retailoring to fit more snugly.<sup>5</sup>

From 1965 to 1970 there was a broad consensus on both military and civilian sides regarding the role that each should play in Turkish politics. The ascendant military moderates, committed to development within a framework of multiparty politics, conceded the right of the majority JP to rule and were thus unwilling, except under extreme provocation, to stage another "veto" coup of the 1960 variety. The Justice Party, committed to serving its rural constituents in order to stay in power, recognized the special "influential" role of the military and was thus willing not to press too far such sensitive issues as amnesty for former Democrats and the restoration of their political rights. With the exit of the more reactionary Bilgiç-Bozbeyli wing of the JP in 1970 to form the "new" Democratic Party, the armed forces and JP became more like respected political adversaries than irreconcilable enemies. Yet the 1973 presidential election was to test the depth and viability of this accommodation.

To ensure their continued influence in policy making and policy direction, the military moderates pressed for the election of General Faruk Gürler, chief of the General Staff. As early as February 6, 1973, Commander of the Air Force General Muhsin Batur and Commander of the Naval Forces Admiral Kemal Kayacan had visited President Sunay to inform him of the armed forces' preference for General Gürler.<sup>6</sup> Gürler resigned as chief of the General Staff on March 6, 1973, retiring formally from military service at age sixty, and was then appointed to the Senate by President Sunay.<sup>7</sup> Gürler had been one of the main forces behind the March 12 Memorandum and as such was identified by many civilian politicians with military interventionism. His election to the presidency by the GNA could have been interpreted in many ways: as civilian acquiescence in the face of military pressure, as civilian acceptance of the custom and/or necessity for former military chiefs as presidents, or as a distinct personal triumph for Gürler. Gürler's rejection by the

<sup>5</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, Feb. 26, 1972, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Devir*, April 2, 1973, p. 12. *Devir* is a weekly news magazine first published in October 1972 in Izmir by Altamur Kılıç.

<sup>7</sup> With the (convenient) resignation of National Defense Minister Senator Mehmet Izmen, a senate vacancy opened up for Gürler's appointment by Sunay.

GNA, however, would have been tantamount to a rejection of the March 12 intervention and, indeed, of the whole rationale for continued military influence over civilian politics.

The prestige, power, and pride of the Grand National Assembly were also on the line. Since the return to civilian rule in 1961, the elected politicians had been subject to the dictates and subtle pressures of the military high command. Open threats or vague hints of military intervention (1961–1970) plus two years of martial law administration to deal with the widespread urban unrest (1971–1973) had compromised the independence and *raison d'être* of the GNA. Many deputies, especially those in the majority Justice Party, felt that it was time to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with military interference by uniting behind a civilian candidate for president.<sup>8</sup> With a general election scheduled for October 1973, Justice Party Chairman Demirel utilized the presidential election to strengthen his own political position and popularity by assuming a hard stance toward those military commanders who had ousted him in 1971. If Gürler were elected president, there was no guarantee that he would name Demirel to form a government even if the JP gained a majority in the October elections. Table 1 indicates each party's strength in the two houses of the GNA at the time of the March 1973 presidential election.

It is significant that dissatisfaction with military intervention in civilian affairs was also expressed by Bülent Ecevit, who became the chairman of the Republican People's Party (RPP) after the resignation of the octogenarian İsmet İnönü in May 1972. Personal and ideological ties have existed between the military and the RPP since Atatürk founded the party in 1923. After the 1961 election the National Unity Committee installed İnönü as premier although the RPP gained only 38 percent of the Assembly seats. But with the declaration of martial law in eleven provinces in April 1971, Ecevit became highly critical of the military's interference in politics and the clampdown on civil liberties. After the March 12 Memorandum, Ecevit had protested the military intervention, had refused to collaborate with the army-sponsored government of Nihat Erim, and had even temporarily resigned as secretary of his party.

Just before the balloting for president on March 13, 1973, Ecevit announced that the RPP—with its 115 members in both chambers—intended to boycott the election

<sup>8</sup> The effect of the spectacular Madanoğlu conspiracy trial on the thinking of deputies has not yet been determined. Retired General Cemal Madanoğlu, one of the top officers in the National Unity Committee that ruled Turkey for seventeen months after the 1960 coup, was accused of conspiracy with thirty others to overthrow the government. Madanoğlu himself was to become president of Turkey if the coup were successful. The trial began on February 7, 1973, several weeks before the presidential election. Full background coverage of the conspiracy was printed in a series of articles in *Milliyet*, beginning the next day and extending through February 18. One may speculate about how the revelations of the trial may have strengthened the beliefs of some parliamentary deputies that strong civilian control of the government was necessary and that the more the armed forces became involved in politics, the greater the likelihood of coups and countercoups.

TABLE I *Strength of Turkish political parties, by number of seats in the Grand National Assembly as of March 13, 1973*

Party or Group	National Assembly	Senate
Justice	227	90
Republican People's	96	19
Republican Reliance <sup>1</sup>	44	22
Democratic	41	7
Nation	4	—
Turkey Unity	2	—
Nationalist Action	1	—
Independents	21	9
Vacant seats	14	3
Life senators <sup>2</sup>	—	19
Quota senators <sup>3</sup>	—	15
Total	450	184

<sup>1</sup> The Republican Reliance Party (Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi) was formed only ten days before the presidential election. It is an amalgam of the former Republican Party, the National Reliance Party, and some independents from the RPP. All of these groups had split from the Republican People's Party over the years since 1967 owing to the RPP's alleged left-wing tendencies. The new RRP is centrist, Atatürkist, nationalistic and believes in a mixture of both private and public initiative in economic development. At its first general congress on March 4, 1973, the party elected Turhan Feyzioğlu, former leader of the National Reliance Party, as its chairman.

<sup>2</sup> The 1961 Constitution provides in Article 70 that those members of the National Unity Committee as of December 13, 1960 (i.e., after the expulsion of the "14 Radicals") plus former presidents of the Republic are "natural" or life members of the Senate. Senators with this status thus constitute a permanent "bloc" of former military officers in the Senate.

<sup>3</sup> Articles 70 and 72 of the 1961 Constitution provide that the president may appoint to the Senate fifteen people distinguished for their services in various fields, at least ten of whom must not be members of any political party. This is another avenue of possible military influence in politics.

SOURCE: *Milliyet*, March 13, 1973.

because of "the conditions under which the election is taking place."<sup>9</sup> The conditions were the denial of civil rights under the martial law administration, the censorship of newspapers, and the imposition of the Gürler candidacy on the parliament by the military. Ecevit contended that the selection of a president should be a civilian, not a military, decision. The military authorities, however, kept these statements off the radio and prohibited their publication in the next day's papers, in effect corroborating Ecevit's charges.

The civilian politicians presented two candidates to oppose Gürler for the presidency. The first and more important of the two was Tekin Arıburun, sixty-eight, president of the Senate since November 1970. Arıburun had been one of Turkey's first air force officers, had graduated from Istanbul University Law School, had

<sup>9</sup> Juan de Onis, "Vote on Turkish President in Parliament Inconclusive," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1973, p. 3.

seen duty in the United States, Germany, and France, and had been commander of the Air Force at the time of the 1960 coup. He was retired from the military for his outspoken views against the coup and was elected a JP senator from Istanbul in 1964. Senator Arıburun had also opposed the March 12 Memorandum in so far as it accused the GNA of incompetence, negligence, and contributing to domestic political turbulence. It is possible, then, that there was personal enmity between Arıburun and Gürler, since the latter had been one of the co-signers, if not one of the instigators, of the March 12 ultimatum.

The second candidate of the civilians was Ferruh Bozbeyli, forty six, a former president of the National Assembly, who headed the small Democratic Party, a nationalistic, Islamic fundamentalist (i.e., conservative) party. The DP was founded in February 1970 by dissident Justice Party members who used the JP refusal<sup>10</sup> to restore the constitutional rights of former President Bayar as the pretext for bolting the party. The choice of the party name by its founders was a deliberate attempt to recall the illegal Democrat Party of 1946–1960.

At the time, the election was perceived by the party leaders and the news media, both domestic and foreign, as a direct confrontation between the military and the civilian sectors of the nation's political elite. Starting weeks before the election, the military had begun to make its wishes known to party leaders. Whether by coincidence or contrivance, the case for military interventionism in Turkey appeared in two articles in the Turkish press, one three weeks before the presidential election and the other during the election impasse.<sup>11</sup> They were both written by Sezai Orkunt, a former admiral and at the time an RPP deputy in the National Assembly. The articles rationalized military interference in Turkish politics on the grounds that (1) it is the army's responsibility to act as guardian of the nation and protector of "weak institutions"; (2) interventionism is a positive historical fact in Turkey so that one can hardly conceive of the army outside of politics; and (3) military officers are trained to be selfless and above material considerations.

The Supreme Command Council (Yüksek Komuta Heyeti), an unofficial body composed of the senior generals and admirals first convened at the time of the March 12 intervention, next met with all party leaders except Demirel, who declined to attend "for personal reasons."<sup>12</sup> A formal announcement of armed forces' policy was then released to the press on February 21, 1973. It reviewed the recent

<sup>10</sup> This refusal signaled a reversal of JP policy during the coalition government period of 1961–1965 and thus represents an accommodation to the military's adamant posture against the restoration of rights to former Democrats. See C. H. Dodd, *Politics and Government in Turkey* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), chaps. 4–7.

<sup>11</sup> Sezai Orkunt, "Dünyada ve Türkiye'de asker-sivil ilişkileri," *Milliyet*, Feb. 16, 1973, and "Asker, siyaset ve çözülemeyen muamma," *Milliyet*, March 26, 1973. Orkunt was the National Assembly's leading resident military spokesman during the Third Assembly (1969–1973). His articles, periodically printed in *Milliyet*, include a spirited defense in that daily on April 21, 1971, of the military's intervention by memorandum on March 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Milliyet*, Feb. 22, 1973, p. 1.



domestic unrest and called for (1) an end to all the provocative and critical remarks directed at the armed forces and at the March 12 Memorandum; (2) the need to ensure continued tranquillity and stability; (3) the quick realization of needed reforms; and (4) the preparation of laws which would put democracy on a firm foundation and make an atmosphere of free and honest general elections in October possible. To the political parties these demands read almost like conditions that had to be fulfilled if another military intervention of some kind were to be avoided. To the military these demands were felt to be necessary to prevent a return to the anarchic conditions of 1968–1972.

Demirel's "personal reasons" for not attending the meeting with the Supreme Command Council probably included both pride and practicality: he could hardly allow himself to attend a meeting called by the very military officers responsible for his resignation following the March 12 Memorandum, and practical politics dictated that he not appear subservient to the military, particularly in the eyes of the electorate. His public statement was succinct: "The Justice Party is accountable only to the nation."<sup>13</sup>

At this point the inhibiting and intimidating effect of armed forces' policy became evident. One Justice Party senator from Istanbul, Rifat Öztürkçine, had intended to announce his candidacy for the presidency, but was prevailed upon at the last minute not to do so by party group leaders who feared that his candidacy might appear to fly in the face of the Supreme Command Council's announcement of February 21.<sup>14</sup> Öztürkçine said he was only temporarily delaying his announcement of candidacy, not foregoing it altogether. Since he had not discussed his candidacy with party Chairman Demirel, he said that only if Demirel asked him not to run would he back down. As it turned out, however, Öztürkçine's candidacy never surfaced again.

The National Unity Group in the Senate, comprised of most of the former National Unity Committee officers, issued a communique through its leader Fahri Özdilek which praised the armed forces for their dignified behavior and goodwill in the face of threats to the nation, and called on the president and all constitutional organs to cooperate so as to return to a normal situation as quickly as possible.<sup>15</sup> Under these circumstances, it was announced that President Sunay would meet with all party and group leaders to act as mediator, and to help minimize misunderstandings among the parties involved.

Beginning on February 28 and extending over a period of almost a week, Sunay, in his constitutional role as president and in his unofficial capacity as conveyor of the views of the military, consulted both singly and in groups with party leaders, military commanders, and government officials. His interest in his successor could not have been wholly nonpartisan. Sunay reportedly<sup>16</sup> expressed his displeasure to

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 23, 1973, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, March 3, 1973, pp. 1 and 9.

the party leaders on the state of the reforms required by the March 12 Memorandum and then requested their approval on and unqualified support for the candidacy of General Faruk Gürler, then chief of the General Staff. Sunay reportedly said, "I want to believe that the presidential candidate which I will bring in from outside of Parliament as a quota senator will without fail be chosen. If not, this action of mine has no meaning."<sup>17</sup> In a formal press release Sunay further announced his belief that his successor would be chosen by a "large majority" in the GNA. Gürler was duly installed in the Senate on March 7.

Upon Sunay's announcement of Gürler's candidacy, the leaders of both major parties protested. Justice Party leader Demirel reminded all that an *election*, not an appointment, of a president was forthcoming. The RPP's Ecevit warned in stronger terms that even if there was nothing strictly illegal about Sunay's appointment of Gürler to the Senate to make him eligible, the procedure leaves the impression of an "imposed candidature" and this in turn "risks causing irreparable damage to the Republic, democracy, the parliamentary system, and the Constitution."<sup>18</sup> Both party leaders said they had nothing personally against Gürler; it was simply a question of "electoral procedure." These statements were warnings, however, that the political parties would not sit back this time and allow the imposition of a candidate on the Parliament from the outside without prior consultation with and approval by the political parties. It was time, they felt, to stop making the Office of the Chief of the General Staff a stepping-stone to the Presidency.

#### THE BALLOTING AND DEADLOCK

The balloting for Turkey's sixth president began in the Grand National Assembly on March 13, fifteen days before the expiration of the incumbent's term as constitutionally provided. The armed forces continued to make their influence felt by taking several "precautionary" measures. Military leaves were canceled in Ankara. Troops and armored vehicles surrounded the Parliament where the two houses were meeting in joint session. Security forces were stationed at roadblocks around the capital to search incoming cars. Newspaper speculation about the military's intervention in politics was banned and in particular any articles which could "affect the will of Parliament." Finally, about sixty top-ranking military officers, including the chief of the General Staff and the commanders of the Army and Navy, sat together in the balcony of the GNA and followed the balloting.<sup>19</sup>

Article 95 of the 1961 Constitution provides that a two-thirds majority (at the time 423 of 634 members) is required to elect the president on the first or second ballots. Thereafter, a simple majority of all members of the bicameral legislature

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, March 7, 1973, pp. 1 and 9.

<sup>19</sup> For a good account of the tense atmosphere pervading Ankara on March 13 and the nervous excitement and electric mood of the voting deputies and senators, see *Hayat*, March 22, 1973, pp. 4-5.

TABLE 2 *Ballots cast in the Grand National Assembly for president, first through sixth rounds*

Candidate	Rounds					
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth
Gürler	175	176	186	200	149	165
Arıburun	282	284	285	276	293	292
Bozbeyli	45	47	47	48	48	48
Blank/invalid	15	12	9	11	8	13
Total Cast	517	519	527	535	498	518
Abstentions	100	98	90	82	119	99
RPP voters	22	20	28	35	4	23

SOURCE: *Cumhuriyet*, March 14, 1973; *Milliyet*, March 17, 1973.

meeting in joint session and voting by secret ballot is sufficient (318 votes). Table 2 shows the outcome during the crucial first six ballots.

An important consideration in the balloting was the RPP "boycott" of the election. At a party caucus before the balloting, the RPP voted 48 to 46 to abstain from voting in the election. The last line in the table shows that in five of the first six rounds, a sizeable minority ranging from 20 to 35 RPP members led by party Secretary General Kâmil Kırıkoğlu did *not* abstain. They argued on constitutional grounds that a presidential election requires all deputies to vote secretly according to their consciences and best judgment, not according to party dictates or strategy. With most of the RPP's 115 members abstaining on each round, however, it was difficult for any of the three candidates to get a majority of 318 votes, let alone the two-thirds majority required on the first two rounds. The fifth round of balloting saw both the fewest number of votes cast (498) and the low point reached by Gürler's candidacy during the voting (149). Both facts may be explained by the RPP's absence altogether from the joint session when the balloting resumed on Friday, March 16, as they were attending another party caucus and did not return until the ballots began to be separated and counted.

Gürler's vote during these early rounds most likely came from two sources: those members of the GNA, regardless of party, who believed that the former Chief of the General Staff was the most qualified candidate, and those members, not only from parties opposed to the JP but also from within the dissatisfied ranks of the JP, who saw a vote for Gürler as a vote *against* Demirel as majority party leader and potential prime minister. According to *Sketch*, a Middle East newsmagazine, the new Republican Reliance Party under Feyzioğlu voted for Gürler.<sup>20</sup> The RRP considered itself a swing party in a possible coalition government after the fall elections. Since there was little chance of his party's gaining a plurality in the election, the only way Feyzioğlu could become prime minister would be for him to be ap-

<sup>20</sup> *Sketch*, March 16, 1973, p. 11.

pointed by the president in a stalemated coalition situation. Hence the vote for Gürler.

The discipline of the Democratic Party remained tight throughout the first six rounds as almost all of its forty-eight members cast their ballots repeatedly for Bozbeyli. The Justice Party, with 317 seats, was unable to hold its members as firmly. The JP's candidate Arıburun received from 276 to 293 votes in all the rounds with some votes probably coming from non-JP members. Bozbeyli and his DP colleagues rebuffed repeated JP attempts to woo them temporarily back into the fold along with the forty-eight votes that would have meant victory for Arıburun. The RPP boycott was effective. The GNA's 634 seats were already reduced to 617 by 17 vacant seats. In Table 2 we see that during the first six rounds from 82 to 119 deputies and/or senators abstained. Of these, during any one round, from 80 to 111 were members of the RPP.

The top military commanders who watched from the balcony of the GNA were visibly disturbed at the unprecedented civilian challenge to their authority. Just before the fourth round, the generals left the building to meet at the office of the chief of the General Staff to discuss the alternatives and their next move. Prime Minister Ferit Melen (former minister of defense) joined them after casting his ballot in the fourth round. Many high-ranking admirals and generals were reported present,<sup>21</sup> including the commander of the Air Force, General Muhsin Batur, who along with Gürler had been an author of the March 12 Memorandum.

Turkey's previous five presidents had all been elected on the first ballot with little or no opposition. For the first time in a presidential election, the will of the military was being systematically challenged<sup>22</sup> and the will of the Parliament exerted. Confrontation had resulted in deadlock.

Foreign correspondents for French, German, and British newspapers speculated that the nature of the solution to the deadlock would determine the future of Turkish democracy.<sup>23</sup> If the military surmounted the impasse by dictating an extra-constitutional solution, Turkish parliamentary institutions would be revealed as a sham and perhaps irreparably damaged. On the other hand, if some legal means (a compromise candidate, a constitutional amendment, emergency legislation) could be found to break the deadlock, then the viability of Turkey's civilian institutions would be demonstrated anew and another hurdle crossed along that difficult path which Rustow calls "the habituation of democracy."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, March 14, 1973, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> The one possible exception to this generalization would be the short-lived candidacy of Istanbul University law professor, Ali Fuad Başgil, in 1961. Başgil had been prominently identified with the outlawed Democrats and was as a result persuaded by the military command to withdraw his candidacy. General Cemal Gürsel, the Chairman of the revolutionary junta, was forthwith elected Turkey's fourth President by the GNA.

<sup>23</sup> *Milliyet*, March 17, 1973, pp. 1 and 9.

<sup>24</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics*, 2, 3 (April 1970), 358 ff.

After the fourth round of balloting late on Tuesday the 13th, National Assembly President Sabit Osman Avcı found the means to allow party leaders, government officials, and military officers to confer for an extended period of time before reconvening for a fifth round of balloting. He announced that the balloting would be delayed until Friday afternoon (the 16th) because the Senate had already scheduled a meeting on Wednesday to discuss changes in the Constitution. Almost three days of intense negotiations and consultations ensued. Table 3 shows some of the interactions that took place among military officers, government officials, the president, party leaders, and candidates. During this initial three-day period of contacts, as well as in the weeks to follow before the impasse was resolved, every possible permutation of meetings among these groups appears to have been realized. Table 3 was culled from the daily newspapers at the time and, of course, underrepresents both the extent and total number of meetings held.

To be theoretically complete, the table could have been lengthened by reversing the order of the linkages and indicating with arrows who initiated the meetings. The table also does not take into consideration the extent of intragroup meetings, such as the many occasions when the top military command huddled over alternatives or when party leaders and groups caucused formally or chatted informally or when the Council of Ministers met to discuss the situation. Nor can it include at this point whatever secret meetings or telephone calls took place.

At one of the more important meetings on Wednesday night, March 14, Semih Sancar, newly appointed chief of the General Staff, conferred with party leaders. RPP Chairman Ecevit later described the atmosphere at the meeting as "completely democratic and nonthreatening."<sup>25</sup> But one newspaper reported two days after Ecevit's statement that Sancar, presumably with the concurrence of the top military commanders, had indeed been threatening.<sup>26</sup> Sancar reportedly proposed that if all efforts to elect Gürler failed or if the military and the major parties could not agree to support some new, nonparty candidate, then the parties must agree on extending President Sunay's term of office for at least two years. It was the political parties, especially the JP, Sancar reasoned, which were responsible for the deadlock and election crisis. Sancar thought that the Justice Party had deliberately flaunted the military by putting forth its candidate only one day before the election, while the military had carefully prepared for the election of Gürler. It was both frustrating and humiliating for Gürler to have resigned as chief of the General Staff and to have been appointed with fanfare to the Senate only to be rebuffed in the balloting. If the parties now refused to break the deadlock by extending Sunay's term, then, in Sancar's words, they would be held responsible for whatever situation arose, because "in every crisis as in this crisis, the armed forces have made the necessary warning in time."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Milliyet*, March 17, 1973, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, March 19, 1973, pp. 1 and 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9. There had been ample warning indeed before the March 12 Memorandum. In a New Year's Day speech (1971), General Memduh Tağmac, chief of the General Staff, had

TABLE 3 *Intergroup contacts, March 13-18, 1973*

Linkages	Examples and Dates
Government/military	Melen/Sancar et al. (3/13)
Government/party leaders	Avcı/Demirel (3/14); Ecevit/Avcı (3/15)
Government/candidates	Melen/Gürler (3/14)
Government/president	Melen/Sunay (3/17)
Military/party leaders	Sancar et al./Ecevit, Demirel et al. (3/14)
Military/president	Sancar et al./Sunay (3/15, 3/17)
Military/candidates <sup>a</sup>	
Party leaders/president	Demirel/Sunay's agent Bayramoğlu (3/14)
Party leaders/candidates	Ecevit/Arıburun (3/14), Demirel/Arıburun (3/16)
Candidate/president	Gürler/Sunay (3/18)

<sup>a</sup> I was unable to find public evidence that this linkage was established.

SOURCE: Turkey's major daily newspapers, March 14-19, 1973.

The extension of President Sunay's term, the "Sunay Formula" as it came to be called, had been discussed publicly as early as October 1972 as a means of postponing the presidential election until the lifting of martial law or until a new parliament could be elected. Now extension was being proposed to meet new conditions: to break an impasse. There is a Turkish military saying that "when the soldier who is to relieve the sentry doesn't come, the sentry stays on guard." This is doubly apt in that the Turkish armed forces consider themselves the sentry of the State and the guardians of Atatürkist ideals.

The fifth and sixth ballots on Friday witnessed a continuation of the impasse with Gürler's votes reaching a nadir of 149 on the fifth round while Arıburun's reached a peak of 293. Parliament then adjourned until Monday afternoon (the 19th) so that further bargaining among the principals could take place in hopes of finding some means of compromise. Over the weekend the Sunay Formula received increased attention as well as support from the two major parties. Ecevit announced that extending Sunay's term until the completion of national elections in mid-October would satisfy his party. Demirel was also in favor of the formula but wondered if the two-thirds vote needed in both houses to pass the necessary constitutional amendment could be obtained. The application of the Sunay Formula would have required a change in Article 95 of the Constitution, which states that the president may not succeed himself. Thus, with no compromise candidate acceptable to both major political parties as well as to the military command, the JP proposed, and the RPP announced it would support, a constitutional amendment extending President Sunay's term of office for two years until March 28, 1975.

The arithmetic of the situation was as follows. The JP and the RPP together had 323 deputies in the lower house, more than the two-thirds majority of 300 votes

spoken of the armed forces' responsibility to prevent internal chaos, whatever the source. See Simpson, "Turkey: A Time of Troubles."

needed for the amendment to pass (see table 1). In the Senate, however, a two-third majority meant 123 votes while the two parties controlled only 109. Demirel was convinced nonetheless that he could persuade some of the fifteen quota and independent senators to vote for the amendment. The DP, RRP, and NUC senators announced their opposition to the Sunay Formula.

On March 20 both Gürler and Arıburun withdrew their candidacies in anticipation of the amendment's easy passage through both houses.<sup>28</sup> On March 21 a special constitutional committee approved the proposed amendment and sent it to the National Assembly for debate. On the following evening, in a move that surprised most observers, the lower house rejected the amendment by one vote (299 in favor with 24 JP and RPP deputies abstaining).<sup>29</sup> Three days later the Senate rejected the amendment as well. It received 104 votes, 19 short of the 123 required. The parties were unable to prevent a slight but sufficient erosion of party discipline in both houses and were further unable to persuade enough non JP and non RPP senators in the upper house.

Apparently there were still some deputies and senators who voted independently, as had Kırıkoğlu in the initial rounds of presidential balloting, not according to outside dictation, either from the armed forces or from the party chairmen. One such man was Adil Turan, an RPP deputy from the town of Uşak who was the only RPP deputy to vote against the amendment. As such, he suffered much verbal abuse in the days that followed and was expelled from the party for three months for his crucial vote.<sup>30</sup> The smaller parties, such as the Democratic Party, hailed the vote as a victory for legality and parliamentary democracy. The Republican Reliance Party had argued all along that the Sunay Formula was unconstitutional and that it was the GNA's duty, no matter how long it took, to choose a *new* president.

And so the deadlock continued as neither normal parliamentary balloting nor constitutional amendment could produce a president. The initiative at this point seemed to lie with the military chiefs who, in retaliation for the rejection of their candidate, could force a solution if they desired. They met frequently among themselves and with civilian party leaders and decided that since all possible avenues had not yet been attempted (e.g., selecting a nonparliamentary neutral figure), they would hold other options temporarily in abeyance.

In the midst of this deadlock, the question of the extension of martial law arose. At the military command's urging (via the National Security Council) the GNA

<sup>28</sup> In an interview with Senator Arıburun on August 27, 1973, in the office of the president of the Senate, the former presidential candidate reminisced about the events of March-April 1973. Arıburun said that he had warned General Gürler (before the official announcement of Gürler's candidacy) that the GNA in its present mood (i.e., rebellious over martial law and armed forces memoranda which "interfere in the parliament's rightful business") would not elect Gürler. On March 20 they met again in that office and mutually agreed to simultaneously withdraw their candidacies and let the parties and the GNA decide anew.

<sup>29</sup> *Milliyet*, March 23, 1973, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, March 24, 1973, pp. 1 and 9, and *Cumhuriyet*, April 3, 1973, p. 1.

had been extending martial law on a bimonthly basis in eleven provinces since April 1971. As martial law dragged on after the death or capture of most of the "anarchists," the GNA became less willing to rubber-stamp the military command's request. At the November 1972 vote on the extension of martial law for two months, no member of the RPP was present. On January 25, 1973, the GNA approved its continuation in nine provinces, ordering it lifted in Sakarya and Zonguldak. The RPP voted for the first time against any continuation at all.<sup>31</sup> During the March 23 debate the GNA voted its extension for two more months in seven provinces, and lifted it in Eskişehir and Izmir. The extent to which the reductions represented a victory for the civilian deputies, a compromise with the military, or simply a reflection of need in each province is unclear. Still, the civilian deputies had begun to chafe at the military's restriction of normal political intercourse.

Interparty negotiations continued as a compromise candidate was sought. By March 25 the three major political parties (the JP, RPP, and RRP) had agreed on the choice of Muhittin Taylan, the president of the Constitutional Court, considered to be an independent thinker with no political connections. A pro-Taylan quota senator was reported willing to resign his seat so that President Sunay could appoint Taylan to the vacancy, making him eligible for the presidency.<sup>32</sup> Sunay, however, vetoed the idea by simply refusing to make the appointment. His publicly stated reason was that "this procedure would not be practical at this time." He said that he did not want to appear to be pushing someone through at the last minute.<sup>33</sup> It may be assumed that in reality neither Sunay nor the top military command was willing to accept a nonmilitary figure as head of state nor appear to have completely acceded to the major parties' wishes.

Whatever interparty unity had existed over the Taylan candidacy was shattered by Sunay's refusal to act on it. The RRP and the DP began to insist on a candidate from within the GNA. Ecevit and the RPP continued to insist on Taylan. Demirel of the JP, after a lengthy conference with several high-ranking officers on March 27, seemed indecisive regarding the nature or source of a possible neutral candidate. In addition, with the end of Sunay's term approaching on March 28, new uncertainties began to arise. Article 100 of the Constitution provides that in the absence of a president, an acting president in the person of the president of the Senate will assume the role temporarily. The president of the Senate, of course, was the recently withdrawn JP presidential candidate, Tekin Arıburun. Ironically, he now had the opportunity to resolve the deadlock more in keeping with JP (or more broadly, civilian) interests. Ecevit suggested that Arıburun, as acting president, could even appoint Taylan to the Senate.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Middle East Economic Digest*, 16, 5 (Feb. 4, 1972), 137.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 13 (March 30, 1973), 373.

<sup>33</sup> *Milliyet*, March 27, 1973, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> In my interview with Senator Arıburun, he said that he was opposed to both the Sunay Formula and the Taylan candidacy because acceptance of either compromise would have been



TABLE 4 *Ballots cast in the Grand National Assembly for president, seventh through fourteenth Rounds*

Candidate	Rounds						Thirteenth	Fourteenth
	Seventh	Eighth	Ninth	Tenth	Eleventh	Twelfth		
Bozbeyli	92	69	59	51	51	43	55	51
Gürler	11	20	51	57	81	69	64	52
İnönü	2	5	2	6	7	6	4	7
Arıburun	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
Minor candidates	4	4	7	15	22	8	9	9
Blank/invalid	33	22	33	28	17	14	15	17
Total cast	142	120	152	157	178	140	149	136

SOURCE: *Cumhuriyet*, April 1, 3, 5, and 7, 1973.

In the meantime balloting in the GNA continued on a pro forma basis. Between March 21 and April 4 eight further rounds, all inconclusive owing to the periodic absence or abstinence of the JP and the boycott of the RPP, were held. Table 4 shows how the voting progressed with Ferruh Bozbeyli of the DP the only remaining formally announced candidate for the presidency.

### *The Solution*

Demirel's commitment to a parliamentary solution not dictated by the military became evident again on April 2 when he suggested three "new" avenues of approach to solve the deadlock: to step up efforts to find a suitable person within the GNA; to move general elections up from October to June so that a new parliament would be able to select a president; or to amend the Constitution to require election of a president by direct universal suffrage.<sup>35</sup> The acceptance of any one of these proposals by the other political parties would have redounded in favor of the majority party, as Demirel well understood. When Ecevit objected to the last two proposals for political, constitutional, and practical reasons, the first alternative became the last possibility for interparty compromise.

Leaks from secret party caucuses on April 5 suggested that the field of possible candidates had been narrowed to four: National Assembly President and JP deputy Sabit Osman Avcı, JP senator from Nevşehir İbrahim Sevki Ataşagun, JP deputy from Eskişehir Orhan Oğuz, and leader of the quota senators Fahri Korutürk. Avcı appeared to be favored at first, but on the morning of April 6, a JP spokesman announced that the three major party leaders had agreed on the candidacy of Korutürk, a former navy chief (1957–1960), ambassador to Moscow and Madrid (1960–

tantamount to admitting that no qualified person existed in a joint assembly of 634 deputies and senators.

<sup>35</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, April 3, 1973, pp. 1 and 7.

1965), and quota senator since his appointment by Sunay in June 1968. Korutürk's candidacy was formally proposed in the GNA on that same afternoon by retired Admiral Fahri Çoker, legal advisor to the Office of the Presidency. Korutürk's nomination by Çoker implied President Sunay's involvement, if not consent, in the matter. According to the Turkish News Agency, Çoker had had separate talks with the leaders of the JP, RPP, and RRP at their residences the night before (April 5) in order to achieve a unity of opinion on Korutürk.<sup>36</sup> The following afternoon the balcony of the GNA was again filled with top-ranking officers from the three branches of the armed services, this time to watch Korutürk elected with 365 votes.<sup>37</sup>

Korutürk was known as an independent moderate who had avoided political affiliations. He was truly a compromise candidate with whom both the political parties and the armed forces could live. Unlike Gürler or Taylan, he had credentials in both military and civilian (diplomatic) pursuits. Even though Arıburun qualified under these latter conditions, he had been known as an opponent of the 1960 military coup, while Korutürk at least was not overtly unsympathetic to it. Korutürk had the aura and prestige of a former military chief, as well as the benefit of being the choice of the civilian political forces, necessary conditions if both sides were to save face in the struggle.

What can be said in conclusion about Turkey's 1973 presidential election? First, it was an example par excellence of the kind of civilian-military interaction and confrontation that has been increasingly evident in Turkey since 1960. Dating from that armed intervention, the Turkish military (i.e., the ascendant "moderate" officer corps) has set the boundaries within which the game of politics is played and has attempted through various legal and extralegal means to effect outcomes and decisions which it perceives as desirable. The military moderates are biased toward those groups or parties that represent to them continued social and economic reform, be they the urban intelligentsia, the RPP, or any of the "above-party" coalitions they have placed in power. What Rustow called the Turkish military's "one-shot theory of military intervention"<sup>38</sup> (which he based on both the 1908 and 1960 coups) has become institutionalized as an extensive and continuing influence in civilian politics. The 1973 election was the military's opportunity to ensure continuation of this role by backing Gürler's candidacy. It also was the politicians' opportunity to challenge the continuation of what they perceived to be unwarranted military interference in strictly legislative matters.

Second, the election was the longest and most crucial instance since 1960 in

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., April 7, 1973, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Korutürk was elected in the fifteenth round of balloting. The total of 557 votes cast was distributed as follows: Korutürk 365, Bozbeyli 51, Gürler 87, İnönü 3, Arıburun 17, minor candidates 4, and blank/invalid 30.

<sup>38</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Military: Turkey," in Robert E. Ward and Rustow, eds., *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 378.

which party leaders dared to openly challenge the will of the military command. Frustrated by the restraints and inequities of martial law and by party splits and defections, both Demirel and Ecevit saw the election as a multipurpose opportunity: (1) to vent their grievances to a national audience in a situation where, they correctly surmised, the military would not venture to overthrow the government; (2) to put the officer corps, with its informal but powerful watchdog groups such as the Supreme Command Council, on notice that parliamentary institutions in Turkey were viable, and that the president should be elected through normal legal channels, not selected or imposed from the outside; and (3) to put an end to the practice of a military president and an end to the practice of recruitment from the Office of the Chief of the General Staff. In short, civilian political leaders were ready to demand a civilian president who was to be chosen in a constitutional manner.

Finally, the importance of this confrontation was that neither side emerged as the clear-cut victor. The military did not get Gürlér or "ratification" of the chief-of-staff-to-president route. The civilians did not get Arıburun or Bozbeyli or a completely civilian president. Yet at the same time neither side was abjectly defeated or humiliated to the extent that communication was shut down and bargaining ruled out. In this sense the election was a victory for moderation and compromise in politics. Each side emerged with a better understanding of the other's "proper" role in Turkish politics and of the parameters of "fair play." Both sides, despite the rhetoric, remained committed to the parliamentary system.

Further evidence of this commitment surfaced three months after the election when a major reshuffle in high command and intelligence posts was announced.<sup>39</sup> At the instigation of the political leaders and of the chief of the general staff, General Semih Sancar, thirty-five generals were quietly "relocated" in an attempt to displace the "Gürlér activists." Included among those purged were General Turgut Sunalp, who was downgraded from deputy chief of staff to commandant of the War (Service) Academies; Lieutenant-General Nurettin Ersin, who was removed as under-secretary at MIT (the national intelligence organization) and posted to a provincial corps command; and Lieutenant-General Abdurahman Ergeç, another intelligence chief, also removed to a provincial post.

These men were generally considered activists or interventionists, but their effectiveness had been compromised by backing a losing candidate in the March-April election. Indeed, many of those "reappointed" were among those in the balcony who had watched the balloting on the first evening. Most of the thirty-five had risen to high posts since the March 12, 1971, intervention and were identified with Gürlér. The entrenchment of the moderates was complete with the retirement (on August 30, 1973) of the last of the cosigners of the March 12 Memorandum, Commander of the Air Force Muhsin Batur, and his replacement by the more moderate Emin Alpkaya.

<sup>39</sup> *The New York Times*, July 23, 1973; *The Guardian*, July 4, 1973; *Yankı* (a Turkish weekly news magazine), 121 (July 9-15, 1973), 14-16; and *Middle East Economic Digest*, 17, 28 (July 13, 1973), 810.

How close did the armed forces come to a direct intervention in order to impose Gürler on a reluctant parliament? The answer is probably not very close. First of all, the military moderates were not likely to overturn the legally constituted system for the sake of one individual. In 1960 the situation was different; the democratic system and the Atatürk legacy were perceived to be in danger. A restorative coup was instigated in a surgical fashion. In 1973 the democratic system was not perceived to be in danger of crumbling. The activities of militant radicals and “anarchists” had been severely curtailed and plans were being readied for the lifting of martial law. Indeed, by not forcibly intervening and by letting the political process work itself out, the military chiefs served to increase respect for themselves and to enhance the viability of the system. Insistence on Gürler would have posed a greater threat to the political system than the impasse itself.

A second reason why armed intervention was unlikely is that there is evidence that Gürler did not have the full backing of the top military command for his candidacy. He apparently did not even have the initial support of President Sunay in what was understood to be a personal campaign by Gürler to succeed to the presidency.<sup>40</sup> If true, this could be one reason why the military chiefs did not insist on Gürler’s election much beyond the initial rounds of balloting. With Gürler’s defeat, what little unity there was on this issue among the high command dissipated. The possibility of concerted action dwindled at that point.

To say all this, however, should not detract from the seriousness of the confrontation that did occur. The twenty-five-day impasse was potentially the most serious political crisis in Turkey since 1960. Nor does the “happy ending” in this case preclude future showdowns between the civilian and military forces. Still, they have become political opponents and rivals for influence, not mortal enemies. It is a measure of the distance that Turkey has come since 1960 that the situation was not perceived to be a “zero-sum” crisis and that the problem was solved by reason and bargaining rather than by the threat or use of force. The use of armed force in Turkey’s politics will continue to be a dormant possibility owing to those disaffected elements in the officer corps who, like Türkeş, Aydemir, and Madanoğlu before them, want a larger, more authoritarian role for the military and are willing to overturn the existing system to achieve it.

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<sup>40</sup> *Devir*, April 16, 1973, p. 15. Also in an unpublished interview with Ecevit on March 15, less than forty-eight hours after the balloting began, David Barchard, a special correspondent for *The Guardian*, reported speculation that the commanders had sent a message to Ecevit indicating that there would be no armed intervention and that they were prepared to drop their insistence on Gürler’s candidacy in return for an RPP pledge to support the extension of Sunay’s term. If this is true, and it is likely that Demirel as well would have known, then this helps explain how the two major party leaders could afford to assume such an uncompromising stance vis-à-vis the military during the deadlock. They knew the military was not solidly behind Gürler and that the commanders would not go so far as to intervene and force a solution.