



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN TURKEY AFTER 2016

by

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March 2019

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE March 2019	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN TURKEY AFTER 2016			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Muhammad Khurram Shahzad				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) This thesis analyzes the impact of post-2016 reforms in Turkish civil-military relations (CMR) on the Turkish military's operational effectiveness. The Turkish military was once a key player in the country's domestic politics, a role that endured through a number of military interventions. Since the election of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) in 2002, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been able to gradually reduce the military's involvement in politics through the introduction of various harmonization packages and constitutional amendments. After the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016, President Erdoğan has gathered great power in his hands. Reforms since then have not only limited the military's influence in politics but also diminished the armed forces' professionalism and effectiveness. This thesis explores the new institutional reforms that have affected the Turkish military and the degree to which presidential control has influenced the army's effectiveness and organization. The current relationship between civilian and military authorities has resulted in a total disregard for the country's military tradition, its meritocratic order, and its professional norms.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS civil-military relations, democratic civilian control and oversight, operational effectiveness of Turkish military, military prerogatives, Operation Euphrates Shield, Operation Olive Branch			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 105	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN TURKEY AFTER 2016

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the impact of post-2016 reforms in Turkish civil-military relations (CMR) on the Turkish military's operational effectiveness. The Turkish military was once a key player in the country's domestic politics, a role that endured through a number of military interventions. Since the election of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) in 2002, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been able to gradually reduce the military's involvement in politics through the introduction of various harmonization packages and constitutional amendments. After the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016, President Erdoğan has gathered great power in his hands. Reforms since then have not only limited the military's influence in politics but also diminished the armed forces' professionalism and effectiveness. This thesis explores the new institutional reforms that have affected the Turkish military and the degree to which presidential control has influenced the army's effectiveness and organization. The current relationship between civilian and military authorities has resulted in a total disregard for the country's military tradition, its meritocratic order, and its professional norms.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> (Justice and Development Party)
CHP	<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i> (Republican People's Party)
CMR	Civil-Military Relations
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
DCAF	Democratic Control of the Armed Forces
JGK	<i>Jandarma Genel Komutanlığı</i> (Gendarmerie General Command)
JIT	<i>Jandarma İstihbarat Teşkilatı</i> (Gendarmerie Intelligence Organization)
MGK	<i>Milli Güvenlik Kurulu</i> (National Security Council)
MIT	<i>Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı</i> (National Intelligence Organization)
MSU	<i>Millî Savunma Üniversitesi</i> (Turkish National Defense University)
NDP	National Democratic Party
NSPD	<i>Millî Güvenlik Siyaseti Belgesi</i> (National Security Policy Document)
OES	Operation Euphrates Shield
OOB	Operation Olive Branch
PKK	<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê</i> (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
PME	Professional Military Education
SGK	<i>Sahil Güvenlik Komutanlığı</i> (Coast Guard Command)
SSM	<i>Savunma Sanayii Müsteşarlığı</i> (Undersecretariat for Defense Industries)
TGS	Turkish General Staff
TSK	<i>Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri</i> (Turkish Armed Forces)
TSKGV	<i>Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerini Güçlendirme Vakfı</i> (Turkish Armed Forces Foundation)
YAŞ	<i>Yüksek Askerî Şûra</i> (Supreme Military Council)
YÖK	<i>Yükseköğretim Kurulu</i> (Council of Higher Education)
YPG	<i>Yekîneyên Parastina Gel</i> (People Protection Forces)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I bow my head with humility to Allah Almighty for blessing me with a conducive environment and ability to complete my thesis. I am grateful to the Pakistan Air Force and U.S. Department of Defense for providing me an opportunity to study at an elite institution like the Naval Postgraduate School. I express my deep gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Ryan Gingeras, for his guidance, valuable input, and encouragement. This thesis would not have been possible without the professional insight, untiring patience, valuable contributions, and continuous support of Dr. Christina Matei. I am also extremely thankful to all the faculty members of NSA and particularly Dr. Kate Egerton for her encouragement, patience, and dedication in making my thesis more expressive and meaningful.

I am also grateful to my parents, brothers, and sisters for their countless prayers, blessings, and continued support. I am thankful to my beloved wife, Shagufta, for her unconditional support, patience, love, and encouragement. I give special love to my son, Ali, and daughter, Ayesha, for their love and support while I worked on the project and spent many hours away from them.

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I. CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN TURKEY AFTER 2016

A. INTRODUCTION

Despite his military background, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Father of Turks), founder of the Republic of Turkey, strongly advocated the belief that the military must remain subordinated to civilian control and stay away from politics in the newly founded Turkish Republic.¹ In 1909, at the annual meeting of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in Salonika, he stressed that the party should not gather strength from the military, as it would not only result in weakening of both the CUP and military but also should never be acceptable to the nation. He further urged a resolve that an officer must resign from the army if he wanted to join the party, and law must be formulated to prohibit officers from having any political attachment.² Despite the vision given by Atatürk, the military has remained an important political institution during the course of Turkish history. Turkey has witnessed a number of interventions by the Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri* [TSK]) in 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997, 2007, and the latest one in 2016.³ Turkey remained under a militarily controlled regime in 1960–1962 and 1980–1983. Most of the time, however, the elites of the TSK have remained behind the scenes, governing the civilians in politics and even influencing the constitution. Thus, there have been effectively two states simultaneously governing in Turkey since 1980: one under the control of elected government and the other ruled by military law, violence, and unlawful disappearances.⁴

The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* [AKP]), led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, came into power after a sweeping victory in the elections of 2002. During the first term (2002–2006) of AKP, Turkey showed significant economic growth helping AKP to win consecutive parliamentary elections in 2007 and 2011 with

¹ Samuel E. Finer, “The Disposition to Intervene (I) Motive,” in *The Man on Horseback, The Role of Military in Politics* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 31.

² Finer.

³ Simon A. Waldman and Emere Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.

⁴ Waldman and Caliskan, 3.

overwhelming majorities. Over time, AKP undertook reforms that resulted in the gradual decline of the TSK as a political force and changed the public view of the military. When a military coup took place on the night of 15 July 2016, the people, as the custodians of democracy, came out on the streets to suppress it. The people of Turkey resisted the coup attempt and displayed their strong disapproval for any overthrow of the elected government by the TSK. A state of emergency was enforced by the Turkish government immediately after the failed coup—in President Erdoğan’s words, “until everything has settled down.”⁵

The last two years have been marked by swift and strong reforms targeting the TSK, resulting in a paradigm shift in the civil-military relations of Turkey through constitutional and institutional adjustments. The government has issued more than ten executive decrees involving the restructuring of state institutions and mass purges of alleged plotters of the coup.⁶ The offices of prime minister and Turkish General Staff (TGS) have been made almost ineffective and General Directorate of Security (National Police) and Gendarmerie have been empowered as potential checks on the TSK.⁷

B. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Waldman and Caliskan claim that the once-powerful military has been restricted to the barracks, and the military’s role as guardian of the secular state has come to an end.⁸ The strong purges and removal of thousands have adversely affected the effectiveness and autonomy of the TSK as an institution. Most importantly, the TSK has also lost favor in the court of public opinion. The current situation advances an important question of how the civil-military relationship between the AKP government and the Turkish armed forces has changed after July 2016.

This thesis aspires to examine how civil-military relations under the Erdoğan government have changed since July 2016 and why. More pointedly, it examines how

⁵ Metin Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” *Policy Notes 48, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (March 2018): 2.

⁶ Gurcan.

⁷ Gurcan.

⁸ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 1.

military professionalism and effectiveness have been influenced by Erdoğan's undemocratic policies and his politicization of the military since the attempted coup.

C. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The Turkish Armed Forces have always been praised as the nation's savior despite having influenced the political and daily life of the Turkish people through a number of interventions in politics.⁹ Historically, the Turkish military leadership always considered itself above the law; the night of 15 July 2016, however, witnessed the people of Turkey coming on to the streets to deliver a message at the cost of 240 lives and injuries to over 1,400 civilians.¹⁰ It is clear that they will not tolerate military rule in the country.

The coup attempt of 2016 also indicated poor civil-military relations (CMR) in Turkey. The government has since taken strong measures to exercise strict civilian control over the military. These measures include purges of the coup plotters and institutional changes in military structure through amendments to the constitution. These institutional changes, on one hand, have increased the democratic civilian control over the military. On the other hand, these developments have resulted in ambiguities not only in the hierarchy of the TSK but also in the role and tasks of the military. The current situation is very delicate as the TSK is simultaneously engaged in combating the Islamic State (ISIS) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), securing the borders, and managing the security of over three million Syrian refugees.¹¹

The Turkish military is still undergoing many reforms meant to subordinate it to civilian control. These reforms may not be effective unless the other two major stakeholders—government institutions and society—undergo the democratic reforms

⁹ Mehmet Ali Birand, *Shirts of Steel, An Anatomy of the Turkish Armed Forces* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd Publishers, 1991), xiii.

¹⁰ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 2.

¹¹ Metin Gurcan and Megan Gisclon, "From Autonomy to Full Fledged Civilian Control: The Changing Nature of Turkish Civil-Military Relations After July15," in *Istanbul Policy Center - Mercator Policy Brief* (August 2016), 9.

along with military.¹² Despite being in the government for more than fifteen years, the AKP leadership still believes in the presence of a deep state¹³ within Turkey and, therefore, struggles to keep the bureaucracy and national security establishment subordinate to their control to thwart this perceived threat.¹⁴

Achieving the civilian control over the military is not the only desirable end state as, due to withdrawal of military prerogatives,¹⁵ tension or conflict still exists between the military and civilians; therefore, politicians must allow some autonomy to the military.¹⁶ The military as an organization shall strive to maintain its autonomy through availing itself of those prerogatives, which may have been acquired over a period of time or inherited from the previous regime. My thesis assesses the level of democratic civilian control over the military in comparison to the erosion of the military prerogatives of TSK. The study also provides an opportunity to evaluate the democratic norms in vogue among the Turkish government institution and the society. The lesson learned from the study would give insight to students and policy makers regarding the evolution of civil-military relations in light of the failed coup attempt in Turkey.

¹² Narcis Serra, "What Is Military Reform?" in *the Military Transition: Democratic Reform of the Armed Forces* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40.

¹³ Gingeras uses the term "deep state" to describe hidden groups or forces—who may operate in collaboration with either the military, bureaucracy, or both—beyond the governance of the elected government and the constitution of the state. The elements of a deep state are considered a source of mass disorder, chaos in a country, and may get involved in the overthrow of the democratic government. Ryan Gingeras, "Deep State of Crisis: Re-Assessing Risks to the Turkish State," in *Bipartisan Policy Center* (March 2017), 2.

¹⁴ Ryan Gingeras, "Deep State of Crisis: Re-Assessing Risks to the Turkish State," 4.

¹⁵ Alfred C. Stepan defines "prerogatives" as those areas that the military assumes as an organizational right or privilege to exercise its institutional anatomy or control within the military domain, as well as within the overall affairs of the state and society. Stepan, in his research on military politics in Brazil and the Southern Cone of Latin America, has identified eleven military prerogatives, which shall be further enumerated in subsequent sections of the literature review. Alfred C. Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 93.

¹⁶ Serra, "What Is Military Reform?" 43–45.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

A strong belief in having a reliable military force was considered as a key to safety by many emperors and kings in the past. Ever since, the military problem was closely interlinked with state administration and politics.¹⁷ Scholars of civil-military relations have provided in-depth studies to address key areas of concern. These theories and concepts revolve around two basic ideas: having a strong professional military that is also subordinate to civilian control, and managing the sources of tension in civil-military relations by keeping the military away from politics. Bruneau emphasizes that having a “proper” balance between democratic civilian control and ensuring the effectiveness of the armed forces is essential for the achievement of democratic governance.¹⁸

1. Civilian Control and Military Professionalism

Huntington explains ways to achieve civilian control over the military. According to him, civilian control is “relative power of civilian and military,” which can be achieved through objective and subjective civilian control.¹⁹ The subjective civilian control is achieved through more influence of civilian governing bodies in military affairs through constitutional or social measures.²⁰ According to Huntington, having “subjective civilian control” may undermine the military’s autonomy; on the other hand, “objective civilian control” can preserve a military’s autonomy.²¹ Civilian control principally means that the military stays away from the political affairs of the state while maximizing its expertise in military affairs through having a professional officer corps.²² Huntington considers professional ethics in soldiers yields an organizational culture that keeps the soldier away

¹⁷ Gordon A. Craig, “The Army and the State (1640–1807),” in *The Politics of the Prussian Army (1640–1945)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 2.

¹⁸ Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson, “Foreword,” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), xi.

¹⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 80.

²⁰ Huntington, 81.

²¹ Huntington, 83.

²² Huntington, 84.

from politics and inculcates the respect for civilian authority and law.²³ He mentions that it is very difficult to achieve objective civilian control even in the modern Western societies, and military professionalism is important to the success of healthy civil-military relations.²⁴

According to Huntington, the professionalism of the military should be focused on the officer corps and keeping the military out of politics. The professionalism of the officer corps not only makes them loyal to the nation but also ensures that they undertake their responsibilities according to the wish and desire of the society. Huntington describes that professionalism includes “expertise, responsibility, and corporate loyalty” and is embedded in the collective narrative of military profession.²⁵ Bruneau mentions the agreement of William and Finer regarding Huntington’s emphasis on professionalism and civilian control.²⁶ Subsequently, Bruneau highlights three problems with Huntington’s work: tautological nature, selective data, and exclusive focus on civilian control.²⁷

Young defines military professionalism as developing a group of people in an organized fashion who consider war as their profession and remain committed to gain specialization in the art or science of war.²⁸ Like Huntington, he considers expertise, responsibility, and corporateness as the main ingredients of military professionalism; he puts additional stress on the importance of essential duties as a crucial constituent of professionalism, however.²⁹ Young agrees with Huntington on the concept of a civil society or democratic state being a client of a professional military but he advances the

²³ Huntington, 85.

²⁴ Huntington.

²⁵ Huntington, 8.

²⁶ Thomas C. Bruneau, “Impediments to Conceptualizing Civil-Military Relations,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristina Matei (New York: Routledge, 2013), 15.

²⁷ Bruneau, 15.

²⁸ Thomas-Durell Young, “Military Profession in a Democracy,” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 19.

²⁹ Young, 18–23.

need to have its manifestation by “swearing an oath of allegiance to the constitution or the basic institutions of these states.”³⁰ He further mentions an important aspect of a professional army is that it should have representation from all social, ethnic, and geographical elements of society as it will keep the military under social constraints to stay away from politics.³¹

Contrary to Huntington, Finer argues that it is not only the professionalism in a military that inhibits the desire to intervene but the acceptance of civil supremacy that keeps the military out of politics.³² According to Finer, professionalism in military leadership may lead them to interfere in politics as they may consider themselves as (1) subordinate to the state rather than the elected government, (2) expert on military issues involving decision-making related to capacity, budget, and equipment without the approval from the civilian government, and (3) frustrated because of exploitation of the military by civilian government.³³ Welch and Smith agree with Finer’s argument that civilian control will be guaranteed provided that the military (officer corps) has recognized the civilian authority as part of their professional ethos.³⁴

Finer, while highlighting the motive for national interest, argues that few militaries under the influence of a self-perceived notion for being the only guardian of the national interest take the political program of the state under their control.³⁵ Historically, military professionalism did not hold the officer corps away from initiating actions against the government; it did prevent them from staying in power for a prolonged period of time and caused them to return to their previous status after the establishment of a new regime under the civilian authority, however. The main motive of military leaders behind military intervention has been their assessment regarding the inability of civilian government to

³⁰ Young, 21.

³¹ Young, 28.

³² Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, 25.

³³ Finer, 24–27.

³⁴ Claude E. Welch and Arthur K. Smith, *Military Role and Rule: Perspective on Civil-Military Relations* (North Scituate, MA: Duxbury Press, 1974), 6.

³⁵ Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, 35.

guard the state interest. Finer explains the relationship between disposition of military and opportunities to intervene in politics. According to him, it is not the disposition of military but rather the opportunity provided by civilian results in military intervention and absence of opportunity regardless of disposition leads to “abortive putsches.”³⁶

On the same note, Craig, while highlighting the importance of professionalism in civil-military relations, mentions the argument of the German author Hohn that professional soldiers do not have the right to intervene in politics. According to him, even thinking of interfering in political matters that are outside the military domain is dangerous for him, because “any deliberating soldier is no longer a soldier but a mutineer.”³⁷

2. Old Theories of Civil-Military Relations

Feaver put forward the agency theory, in which he focuses on the concept of having strategic interactions between civilians and the military as principals and agents, respectively.³⁸ He further explains that it is the decision of civilians as principal regarding their ways and means to monitor the military as agent for assessing the degree of obedience by the military to the civilian control or to ensure that the military obeys the orders of civilians. In this connection, he introduces the idea of “working and shirking.”³⁹ Feaver considers working as the conduct of the agent (military) as desired by the principal (civilian) as in this case the civilians are fully aware of what the military is doing, whereas, shirking is contrary to working and is a desired conduct of the military by the civilians.⁴⁰ The end result of shirking is the likelihood of a military coup: whereas, the working results in an “ideal-type military” that is subordinated to civilian control in all respects.⁴¹

³⁶ Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, 83–84.

³⁷ Gordon A. Craig, “Reform and Reaction (1807–1840),” in *The Politics of the Prussian Army (1640–1945)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 80.

³⁸ Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2.

³⁹ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 3.

⁴⁰ Feaver, 60.

⁴¹ Feaver, 62.

Feaver maintains that working does not mean that the military accepts and follows all decisions of civilian government without any freedom of conveying any disagreement; similarly, if civilians consider to seek and follow the advice of the military it should not be taken as shirking; the role of military as an advisor does confuse the idea of shirking in the context of CMR, however.⁴² Therefore, the working and shirking may not be taken as winning or losing or a measure to assess the degree of civilian control over the military.⁴³

Feaver agrees with the concepts of Clausewitz and Huntington related to civilian monitoring of the military, that civilians formulate the policies and the military handles the operations.⁴⁴ He advances the need of having “theory of civilian motivation,” however, according to which the principal agents link their motivation to electoral results and probably do not pay much attention to civil-military relations.⁴⁵ He mentions that agency model highlights the noticeable trend of CMR in a country with respect to level of monitoring by civilian and working or shirking by the military in relation to other observable factors including but not limited to cost involved in monitoring and prospects of being penalized.⁴⁶

Janowitz highlights the military officer corps as a professional group and maintains that their concept of professionalism cannot be isolated from the political, economic, and social values of the society.⁴⁷ He links the civilian control of military through reducing the gap between military and society and having more interaction with the civil society. This enhanced interaction in daily economic and social domains narrows the skill differences between civilian and military and ultimately yields positive effect on the military’s views regarding contemporary politics and norms of the society.⁴⁸ He argues that the military is

⁴² Feaver, 62.

⁴³ Feaver, 64–65.

⁴⁴ Feaver, 99.

⁴⁵ Feaver, 100.

⁴⁶ Feaver, 112.

⁴⁷ Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), viii.

⁴⁸ Janowitz, 9–10.

influenced by changes in technological, social value, and political aspects of the society and therefore the military role does change according to the new set of socioeconomic and value systems of the society. The idea of Janowitz regarding “militarizing the society” through conscription, special training, and education for reserve officer corps has been incorporated as “citizen soldiers.”⁴⁹ He maintains that military officers develop professional ethics through incorporating citizen soldiers, who due to their participation in public life act as a “pressure group” (political pressure) and reduce the threat of military intervention in politics.⁵⁰

Bruneau and David Pion-Berlin argue that civilian politicians focus on managing the military through civilian control or “subduing the military rebellion” only and do not develop expertise in the area of defense due to lack of incentives and “[allow] the military itself to guide the policy separately from the actual decision of when to deploy.”⁵¹ Pion-Berlin notes that civilians need to focus on having civilian political control instead of just having the civilian control over military, which forces policy makers to develop understanding of defense-related issue, through establishing effective institution building and legislative oversight.⁵² Bruneau disagrees with Pion-Berlin and emphasizes that civilian policy makers need to “know what they do not know” regarding the military affairs, which should be sufficient to maintain the civilian control and oversight through assessing that the military is meeting all the roles and missions assigned by them.⁵³ He displays his skepticism regarding the CMR programs promoted by the USA and other donor countries that Berlin’s term of “management” of military through civilian control is regarded as sufficient.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Janowitz, 234.

⁵⁰ Janowitz, 347.

⁵¹ Thomas C. Bruneau, “Development of an Approach Through Debate,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristina Matei (New York: Routledge, 2013), 23.

⁵² David S. Pion-Berlin, “Political Management of Military in Latin America,” in *Military Review* (January–February 2005), 28.

⁵³ Bruneau, “Development of an Approach Through Debate,” 23.

⁵⁴ Bruneau, 25.

3. New Conceptualizations of CMR

Most scholars have approached the problem of civil-military relations with “two concerns: (1) The threat a large standing army pose to the democracy; and (2) the need to keep it subordinate to civilian control.”⁵⁵ Bruneau argues that CMR must not be restricted to civilian control, rather it must be viewed after evaluating the “operational effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources.”⁵⁶ Matei further advances these ideas and provides a new conceptualization of the civil-military relations including civilian control and contemporary security challenges. Her framework comprises a “trinity of control: (1) Democratic civilian control of the security forces; (2) the effectiveness of the security forces in fulfilling their assigned role; and (3) their efficiency, that is, fulfilling their assigned roles at a minimum cost.”⁵⁷

Matei further elaborates that security forces include more than the military; the police and intelligence services are also important members of the security apparatus.⁵⁸ She argues that civilian control is the main focus of the civil-military relations concept; due to change in the nature of the threat (external and internal), however, the functioning of all security elements including military forces, police, and intelligence agencies must include more than just control.⁵⁹ A civilian control is insignificant unless the stakeholders for achieving security can efficiently accomplish their respective roles and missions.⁶⁰ She further argued that national security is no more the responsibility of the military forces only; the other security infrastructure must be incorporated as an integrated part of national defense.⁶¹ Owing to the general intricacy of contemporary security scenario, “military forces (focus primarily on external threats), police forces (focus primarily on domestic

⁵⁵ Florina Cristiana Matei, “A New Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristina Matei (New York: Routledge, 2013), 28.

⁵⁶ Bruneau, “Development of an Approach Through Debate,” 23.

⁵⁷ Matei, “A New Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations,” 26.

⁵⁸ Matei, 35.

⁵⁹ Matei, 26.

⁶⁰ Matei.

⁶¹ Matei.

threats), and intelligence agencies (focus on both)” are obliged to supplement each other, as at times they may have to assume the complete role or assist each other in achieving specialized roles at both the domestic and the international level.⁶²

The evolution of security context due to the threat of terrorism necessitates the integration of all the security forces including military, police, and intelligence agencies as they may have interchangeable and overlapping roles. Therefore, politicians must make policies that encompass the overall effectiveness and efficiency of security forces through jointness besides subordinating them to civilian controls. Matei mentions that “exclusive focus on control” without due deliberations on achieving the effectiveness and efficiency of security forces indicates lack of clarity in establishing the healthy CMR and such scenario may result in jeopardizing the national security.⁶³ She mentions that in a democracy, effective security forces are an integral part of the policies for preserving the democratic values and national policies.⁶⁴

According to Matei, democratic control over the military is achieved through establishing institutional control mechanisms that can exercise legislative oversight and ensure effectiveness of security forces through inculcating the professional norms.⁶⁵ The organic law empowers the civilian institutions like the Ministry of Defense and National Security Council to maintain civilian control. These institutions can exercise their oversight on the military through various agencies within the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government and other through “independent media, NGOs, think tanks and other international organizations,” whereas, the legally approved policies by civilian government for recruitments, education, training, and promotion for military inculcate professionalism.⁶⁶ She agrees with the argument of Bruneau and Berlin regarding maintaining the “proper” balance between democratic civilian control and ensuring the

⁶² Matei.

⁶³ Matei, 28.

⁶⁴ Matei, 29.

⁶⁵ Matei, 30.

⁶⁶ Matei.

effectiveness of armed forces, and highlights that excessive oversight and direction can hamper the security services.⁶⁷

4. Defining Roles and Missions

Defining and allocating the role and mission to military forces by civilian politicians is also a significant aspect affecting the civil-military relations of a country. The military training and education are based on these roles and missions; therefore, it has a direct impact on the professionalism of the officer corps and assessing the effectiveness of the military in a democratic civilian control. Paul Shemella elaborates on the importance of defining the role and task of the military by both military and civilian leadership; these roles must be in support of national interest and must encompass the domestic and external challenges.⁶⁸

Shemella notes the two broader levels in the roles of the military: first is the macro-level role, which operates at the policy level regarding the utilization of military by the government, and second is the role at the micro level encompassing utilization of various national security organizations individually as well as in relation to each other.⁶⁹ According to Shemella, the macro-level roles of armed forces include “war fighting, defender, peacekeeper, fire fighters and police officers.”⁷⁰ He further explains that war fighting and defender are the traditional roles of the armed forces; peacekeeper, fire fighter and police force are non-traditional roles for the military.⁷¹ Shemella maintains that civil-military relations will be more problematic if civilian leaders do not understand the role of each security organization to achieve various levels of security including national, public, and citizen.⁷² Shemella and Joseph S. Nye agree in advocating the requirement of

⁶⁷ Matei, 34.

⁶⁸ Paul Shemella, “The Spectrum of Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces,” in *Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2006), 124.

⁶⁹ Shemella, 125.

⁷⁰ Shemella, 138.

⁷¹ Shemella.

⁷² Shemella, 139.

educating the civilian officials on defense-related issues and developing understanding related to requirement of funds and requisite support needed by security organizations to meet their role and task effectively.⁷³

In the same context, Matei argues that civilian control is fundamental in civil-military relations but it is immaterial unless the security apparatus can effectively accomplish their role and task.⁷⁴ Therefore, democratic civilian control means that role and missions must be defined and then all efforts must be made to ensure their accomplishment by security forces. Within this context, Matei introduces six roles for the security forces including military, police, and intelligence agencies: “(1) to fight and be prepared for external wars, (2) to fight and be prepared for internal wars or insurgencies, (3) fight global terrorism, (4) fight crime, (5) provide support for humanitarian assistance, and (6) prepare for and execute peace support operations.”⁷⁵ Few of these roles are traditional and specific to a security organization, but some roles are interchangeable and are non-traditional for military forces. These overlapping, interchangeable or non-traditional roles require more democratic civilian control and oversight.

5. Democratic Military Reform

Militaries over a period of time—regardless of the type of regime—prefer to maintain institutional liberties. These liberties or freedoms—inherited from previous regimes and if not checked by civilian authorities—may be self-perceived as institutional rights or prerogatives over a period of time. Stepan defines “institutional prerogatives” as those areas that the military as an institution considers as “acquired right or privilege” to exercise its institutional autonomy or control within institutions and outside the military domain, as well as within the overall affairs of state and society.⁷⁶

⁷³ Shemella, 139.

⁷⁴ Matei, “A New Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations,” 30.

⁷⁵ Matei, 35.

⁷⁶ Alfred C. Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 93.

The military prerogatives can be a useful tool to examine the military as an institution in the overall political scenario of a country. Stepan introduces a list of eleven de facto or de jure prerogatives:

(1) constitutionally sanctioned independent role of the military in political system, (2) the relationship of the military to the head of the executive, (3) the coordination of the defense sector, (4) the presence of the military in the cabinet, (5) the role in the legislature, (6) the holding of senior posts in the civil service in the defense sector, (7) the role of military in the intelligence services, (8) relationship with the police, (9) the system for promoting the military, (10) the role of the military in state enterprises, and (11) the role of military in judiciary.⁷⁷

Serra argues that militaries in a democracy should have no prerogatives; he notes, however, that most of the time militaries would resist the reduction in prerogatives or autonomy, which may elevate the military tension (which Serra calls “conflict”) with the civilian government.⁷⁸ Serra maintains that transition from an autonomous military (with a high number of prerogatives) to complete subordination to civilian control is very sensitive to conflict and therefore must be controlled with “management of the pace of change.”⁷⁹ Therefore, political government must put the necessary legal changes and political measures in place that can avoid abrupt withdrawal of power from military.⁸⁰ Figure 1 explains Serra’s argument regarding democratic military reforms and the potential levels of tension that exist between civilians and the military.

⁷⁷ Stepan, 98.

⁷⁸ Serra, “The Military Transition,” 49.

⁷⁹ Serra, 50.

⁸⁰ Serra.

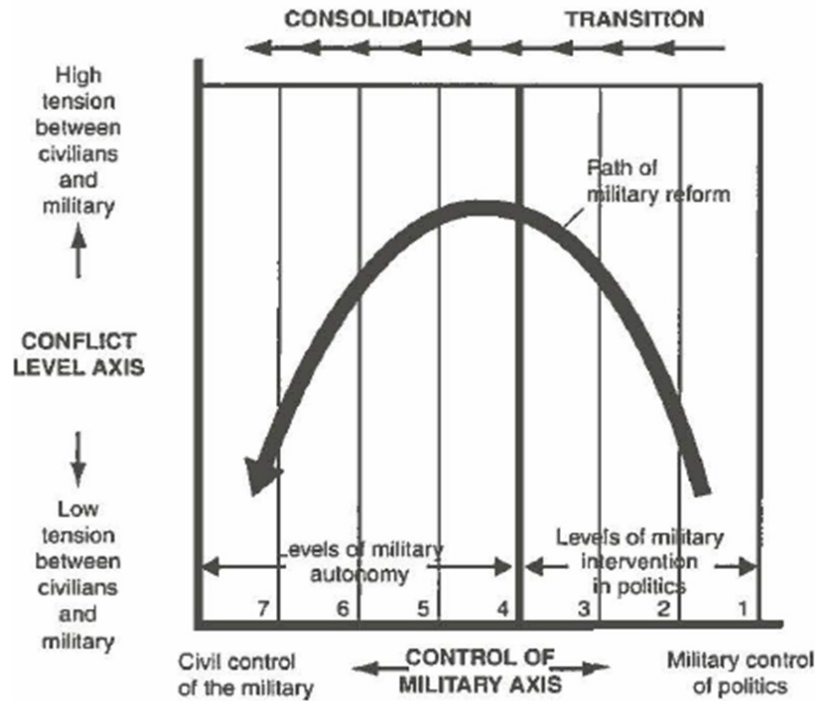


Figure 1. The Process of Democratic Military Reform: Two Dimensions⁸¹

In addition, when identifying avenues for democratic reform of the armed forces, Serra supports the idea of Charles C. Moskos regarding two models: armed forces as an institution or as an occupation. According to Moskos, “army as an institution gains legitimacy in terms of values and norms,” whereas, “army as an occupation gains legitimacy in terms of its ranking in the marketplace.”⁸² Serra further maintains that the “Institutional / Occupational Model (I/O)” may be viewed as tendencies and not as concepts with defined boundaries, as the shift of an army from institution to occupation indicates convergence toward society and vice versa.⁸³ Here he makes a strong argument that the institutional feelings in the military of being superior to society because they view themselves as better administrators than civilians in society lead to military involvement

⁸¹ Serra, 53.

⁸² Serra, 56.

⁸³ Serra, 56–57.

in politics.⁸⁴ Figure 2 explains Serra's integration of I/O theory in military reform. He argues that both axes, including control of military and professionalism, experience certain level of conflicts and tension in civil-military relations.

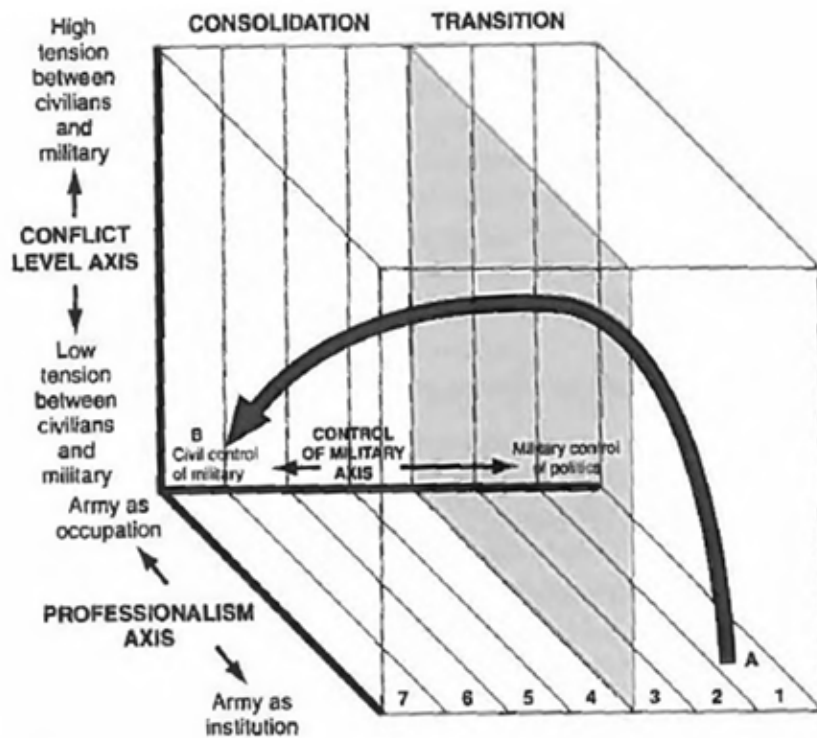


Figure 2. The Process of Democratic Military Reform: Three Dimensions⁸⁵

E. POTENTIAL EXPLANATION AND HYPOTHESIS

Civil-military relations in Turkey after 2016 have seen very hasty changes in terms of institutional and organizational changes. The TSK has lost its identity as a powerful institution. It has also lost a significant amount of public support. The new institutional setup has led to ambiguities in the role and task of the TSK and the TGS. My hypothesis is that the fast pace of changes in military reforms including institutional changes and strong

⁸⁴ Serra, 58.

⁸⁵ Serra, 62.

purges have abruptly diminished the prerogatives of the TSK as an autonomous institution. Furthermore, the abrupt decline in human resources may have adversely affected the effectiveness of the TSK. As a result, the TSK has lost its identity as an “institutional” armed force and may have become an “occupational” military due to the strict subordination to AKP. Turkey’s military may be subordinated to the civilian control, yet the tension between the TSK and the AKP government may still exist. It may be difficult for TSK to surrender the traditional autonomy to the civilian control. Serra argues that democratic civilian control, where the Executive defines military policy, does not mean that conflicts and tensions with the military do not exist and the military does attempt to gain autonomy and influence government policies.⁸⁶

My thesis advances Matei’s model of three pillars for evaluating democratic civil-military relations: “(1) democratic civilian control of the security forces; (2) the effectiveness of the security forces in fulfilling their assigned roles; and, (3) their efficiency, that is, fulfilling the assigned roles and mission at a minimum cost.”⁸⁷ This framework analyzes the extent to which democratic control and oversight is extended over the Turkish military and how this process may affect the military’s effectiveness and efficiency. Furthermore, to assess the civilian control of the military, the state of military prerogatives after 2016 are assessed with the help of Alfred Stepan’s model.⁸⁸ The state of prerogatives are viewed as per Serra’s three-dimensional cube for democratic military reforms, which explains the current situation of democratic control of the military and professionalism (institution/occupation theory) and existing level of tension (if any) in civil-military relations.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Serra, 45.

⁸⁷ Matei, “A New Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations,” 26.

⁸⁸ Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*, 93.

⁸⁹ Serra, “The Military Transition,” 62

Operations Euphrates Shield⁹⁰ and Olive Branch⁹¹ have been undertaken while the TSK underwent reforms and mass purges to maintain a strict civilian control.⁹² Therefore, an analysis of these operations is utilized as examples to evaluate, how the post-2016 changes in CMR have affected the effectiveness of the Turkish armed forces.

F. RESEARCH DESIGN

The thesis focuses on the shift in civil-military relations in Turkey post 2016. It is a single case study for Turkey, viewed in perspective of the explanation and theories argued by various scholars. To compare the shift in CMR post 2016, a brief background of CMR in Turkey after the end of the Ottoman Sultanate is discussed; the emphasis has been laid on the democratic civilian control in CMR of Turkey since the AKP came into government, however. The autonomy and prerogative of TSK have remained the central focus of the study with the underlying cause of the TSK involvement in politics.

The available resources including books and peer-reviewed articles have been utilized for the research. The observations made by various NGOs, international organizations, and other open sources were also utilized for ascertaining the change in civil-military relations after 2016 with respect to control, oversight, effectiveness, and efficiency of TSK.

For analyzing the CMR in Turkey according to Matei's model, the overview of institutional control mechanism including setup of the Ministry of Defense, National Security Council, and the Turkish General Staff assisted in categorizing the level of control. The policies for recruitment, professional military education (PME), training, and criteria

⁹⁰ The operation "Euphrates Shield" (August 2016–March 2017) was conducted by the Turkish armed forces against the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 12–13.

⁹¹ Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch on 20 January 2018 to suppress the militia belonging to the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in Afrin city located in the northern part of Syria. The Turks view YPG as an extension of a banned terrorist organization known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). "Syria War: Turkey Suffers Deadliest Day in Afrin Offensive," *BBC News*, 4 February 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42934041>.

⁹² Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 12.

for promotion in the TSK were also focused on for assessing the professional norms of the TSK. The privileges and rights of the TSK as per the constitution of the Turkish Republic were researched for assessing the level of prerogatives for the TSK according to Stepan's framework.

Turkey's cooperation with Russia in defense equipment has raised concern in Washington and as a result, the future delivery of fifth-generation F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft has been stopped.⁹³ The study of various aspects including the inability of AKP government to provide the TSK with latest equipment, professional military education and training to officer corps, and the TSK's performance in Syrian war were helpful to draw valid observations regarding impact of post-2016 changes on the effectiveness of TSK.

G. THESIS OVERVIEW AND DRAFT CHAPTER OUT LINE

This thesis consists of four chapters. The brief outline and contents of each chapter are as follows.

Chapter I provides the introduction to the research question, significance, potential explanation, hypothesis, research design, and literature review

Chapter II develops the understanding of CMR in Turkey with focus on the era after the birth of the Republic of Turkey. This brief background assisted in comparing the changing CMR after the AKP came into government.

Chapter III answers the research question and tests the hypotheses advanced in Chapter 1. It evaluates the CMR in Turkey post-2016 with the help of the trinity of control (democratic control and effectiveness) model of Matei. Stepan's model was utilized to assess the prerogative of TSK. Serra's three-dimensional democratic military reforms model was also utilized to evaluate the level of military professionalism, civilian control, and level of tension between TSK and government.

⁹³ Valerie Insinna, "Turkey Gets First F-35, But Faces Halt on Future Deliveries If Congress Gets Its Way," *NATO Priorities*, 21 June 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/nato-priorities/2018/06/21/turkey-gets-first-f-35-as-congress-put-pressure-on-pentagon-to-stop-future-deliveries/>.

Chapter IV provides analysis of TSK's performance in the Syrian war to draw valid observations regarding the impact of post-2016 changes on the effectiveness of TSK, which—in conjunction with evaluation done in Chapter III—helps to forward some findings and recommendations.

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II. HISTORY OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN TURKEY

The Turkish military has a long history of being a dominant institution in the political affairs of the country. It was the Turkish military that created the Ottoman Empire through invasion and managed the administration of the empire along military lines.⁹⁴ Ottoman society divided into two distinguished classes: one was the elite class comprising government officials and, most importantly, the military, the other class was the subject or the common people, who never had any part to play in government except to pay taxes.⁹⁵ Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) was also a military officer who emerged as a hero during the Turkish War of Liberation and created the modern Turkish Republic in 1923.⁹⁶ The Turkish military considered itself as the founder of the Turkish Republic and has always placed itself as an institution above society⁹⁷ by assuming the self-appointed role of guardian of Atatürk's principles,⁹⁸ particularly nationalism and secularism.⁹⁹ This chapter highlights the development of the Turkish civil-military relations since 1923 and particularly after the AKP came into government in 2001.

A. ERA BETWEEN 1922 AND 1950

From January until July 1922, Mustafa Kemal retained the chief of the general staff (CGS) to serve concurrently as prime minister, which proved the presence of an intertwined

⁹⁴ Gareth Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances: The Turkish Military and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10.

⁹⁵ Nilüfer Narli, "Civil-Military Relations in Turkey," in *Turkish Studies*, 1, no. 1 (Spring 2000) (doi.org/10.1080/14683840008721223), 107–108.

⁹⁶ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 10.

⁹⁷ Feroz Ahmed, "Turkey, A Military Society," in *The Making of Modern Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3.

⁹⁸ Atatürk principles or Kemalist principles include nationalism, populism, reformism, republicanism, secularism, and statism. Müge Aknur, "Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey," in *L'Europe en Formation* 1 (2013): 33, <https://doi.org/10.3917/eufor.367.0031>.

⁹⁹ Aknur, "Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey," 33.

civil-military relations.¹⁰⁰ After independence in 1923, however, the new regulations of the Assembly were approved, which resulted in repositioning the CGS under the president from the cabinet, and enforced that an officer must resign from military office if he desired to become a parliamentarian.¹⁰¹ As a result, three serving generals were left in the Assembly including President Atatürk, Prime Minister Inonu, and Minister of Defense Kazim Ozalp, and they also retired from their military offices by 1927.¹⁰² Twenty percent of the parliamentarians and more than one fourth of ministers were retired generals,¹⁰³ however, and the country was actually ruled by “former soldiers in civilian clothes.”¹⁰⁴ Between 1923 and 1945, the army remained completely isolated from the politics and military personnel were not even allowed to vote.¹⁰⁵ Marshal Fevzi Çakmak—the CGS from 1925 to 1944—also played an instrumental role in effectively isolating the army from politics and ensuring allegiance to Atatürk and a one-party state controlled by the ruling Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* [CHP]).¹⁰⁶

B. ERA BETWEEN 1960 AND 1970

In 1950, the rise of the newly established Democrat Party (DP)—which represented the middle class, religious conservatives, and the rural population—brought unrest in civil-military relations.¹⁰⁷ The populist policies of DP’s leader Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and his growing emphasis on religious sentiment led to discontent in the military.¹⁰⁸ The military was of the view that the government was not following the Kemalist principles and, as a result, on 27 May 1960 junior officers got frustrated and decided to topple the

¹⁰⁰ George S. Harris, “The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics,” *Middle East Journal*, 19, no. 1, Part I (Winter, 1965), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4323815>, 55.

¹⁰¹ Harris, 57.

¹⁰² Harris, 59.

¹⁰³ Aknur, “Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” 34.

¹⁰⁴ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 10.

¹⁰⁵ Ahmed, “Turkey: A Military Society,” 9.

¹⁰⁶ William Hale, *Turkish Politics and The Military* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 195.

¹⁰⁷ Aknur, “Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” 34.

¹⁰⁸ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 17.

DP's government with an aim to preserve secularism in society.¹⁰⁹ The military became the major political player, ruling the country for 17 months, while the leaders of the ruling DP were arrested and the party itself was banned.¹¹⁰ The coup revealed important lessons for both military and politicians. The generals recognized the importance of establishing a hierarchical control of the armed forces to avoid such interventions from junior ranks, and politicians realized that they needed to integrate the military's high command into ruling circles to maintain the status quo.¹¹¹ The coup of 1960 led to fragmentation of the Turkish military's officer corps into different factions, and these groups planned failed coup attempts in February 1962 and May 1963.¹¹² The two officers who were most actively involved in the putsch were executed and 1400 cadets—from military academies—were also expelled on alleged participation in the coup attempt.¹¹³

Another important outcome of the coup was the drafting of a new 1961 constitution under the influence of the military, and the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu* [MGK]) was created under Article 111 of the new constitution.¹¹⁴ The TSK was able to strongly voice their opinion related to national security through the MGK.¹¹⁵ The CGS become directly answerable to the prime minister and was graded as superior to the Minister of Defense.¹¹⁶ General Cemal Gürsel became the fourth president of the Republic of Turkey, which further increased the military hold on politics.¹¹⁷ The National Intelligence Organization (*Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı* [MIT]) was reorganized and tasked to share information with the military intelligence agency to keep track of junior officers who

¹⁰⁹ Ahmed, "Turkey, a Military Society," 11.

¹¹⁰ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 17.

¹¹¹ Ahmed, "Turkey: A Military Society," 11.

¹¹² Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 35.

¹¹³ Jenkins, 36.

¹¹⁴ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 18.

¹¹⁵ Ümit Cizre Sakallioğlu, "The Anatomy of the Turkish Military's Political Autonomy," *Comparative Politics*, 29, no. 2 (January 1997): 158, <https://doi.org/10.2307/422077>.

¹¹⁶ Sakallioğlu, 159.

¹¹⁷ Sakallioğlu, 161.

might plan coups in the future.¹¹⁸ The political involvement of the TSK was further strengthened by the 1961 “Turkish Armed Forces Internal Service Law No. 211,” which explicitly empowered the TSK with the obligation of guarding the “Kemalist principles of territorial integrity, secularism, and republicanism” in the Turkish regime.¹¹⁹ Similarly, Article 35 further specifies the role of the Turkish military in politics and stated that “the duty of the Turkish Armed Forces is to protect and preserve the Turkish homeland, and Turkish Republic as defined in the constitution.”¹²⁰

C. THE ERA BETWEEN 1971 AND 1980

The newly established Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi* [AP]) got a majority in the elections of 1965 and 1969 under the leadership of Süleyman Gündoğdu Demirel.¹²¹ During the era of AP government, Turkey experienced polarization due to the emergence of extreme right- and left-wing groups, discontent in the civilian population, domestic disorder, and strained civil-military relations.¹²² The military considered the government responsible for the turmoil and as a result, TGS issued a memorandum on 12 March 1971 demanding formation of a new government to restore domestic order.¹²³ The main focus of the memorandum was to take measures against threats to national unity and security, and to further enhance the autonomy of the military.¹²⁴ As in 1960, during the 1971 coup the military did face some challenges in controlling the “hierarchical command mechanism” in the officer corps.¹²⁵ Three generals along with eight colonels were dismissed from the

¹¹⁸ Ahmed, “Turkey: A Military Society,” 12.

¹¹⁹ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 18.

¹²⁰ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 45.

¹²¹ Aknur, “Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” 35.

¹²² Aknur.

¹²³ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 37.

¹²⁴ George S. Harris, “Military Coups and Turkish Democracy, 1960–1980,” *Turkish Studies*, 12, no. 2 (2011): 206, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2011.573181>.

¹²⁵ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 37.

armed forces and another eight TSK officers were arrested for involvement in anti-state conspiracies and efforts to sabotage the military.¹²⁶

The coup of 1971 resulted in some amendments to the constitution, strengthened the status of MGK by including armed forces “commanders” rather than “representatives” in the council, and granted additional powers to MGK to make recommendations to the government on matters like Islam, ethnic secessionism, and perceived threat from communist activists.¹²⁷ These amendments also empowered the Supreme Military Administration Council to expand the influence of the General Staff in government affairs.¹²⁸ The military budget and expenditures were not scrutinized by the Turkish Court of Accounts¹²⁹ and civilian oversight mechanisms remained ineffective.¹³⁰ The technocrat government—formed in 1971 under the control of military—failed to control rising economic problems and political extremism in the country.¹³¹ In 1973, the end of military rule created several short-lived, unstable, and polarized governments leading to chaos in the education sector, bureaucracy, and law enforcement apparatus.¹³² The other major problems of the era were the reappearance of the Kurdish nationalist movement, emergence of political Islam, and demonstration by the Islamist National Salvation Party for introducing Islamic sharia law.¹³³

¹²⁶ Jenkins.

¹²⁷ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 18.

¹²⁸ Mehtap Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State: State Consolidation, Civil-Military Relations and Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 123.

¹²⁹ The Court of Accounts was established during the Ottoman era; it was made part of the 1924 constitution, however, after making required necessary restructuring in line with other continental European countries. It was renamed Sayıştay (Turkish Court of Accounts - TCA) under the provision of law no. 823 dated 1967. As per law no. 6085 dated 2010, TCA was empowered to conduct audit of all activities including expenditures and debts benefiting from the public funds in all departments. *Turkish Court of Accounts*. <https://www.sayistay.gov.tr/en/>.

¹³⁰ Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State*, 124.

¹³¹ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 37.

¹³² Aknur, “Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” 36.

¹³³ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 38.

D. THE ERA BETWEEN 1980 AND 2000

Owing to the inability of the government to overcome these political, economic, and social challenges, the military assumed control of the country on 12 September 1980 and was applauded by the Turkish people as a relief from political and domestic unrest.¹³⁴ The coup of 1980 was well organized, planned, and executed with clear objectives without any factionalism within army.¹³⁵ The military administration assumed the complete executive control of the state by designating the chief of staff General Kenan Evren as chief of state and head of the National Security Council, and by appointing the chief of the navy Admiral Bülend Ulusu as prime minister.¹³⁶

During the subsequent three years, the military focused on restructuring the political setup through enacting several hundred undemocratic laws and ultimately replaced the liberal 1960 constitution with the conservative 1982 constitution.¹³⁷ The restructuring of the political system had three objectives: first was to change the legal structure of the government, second was to exclude the old political players in the new legal framework, and third was to ensure that the military attained enough power to observe and influence the new government.¹³⁸ The new constitution imposed restrictions on political liberties, ended the bicameral system and abolished the Senate created in 1960.¹³⁹ The new laws and appointment of General Evren as seventh president of the Republic for the next seven years was approved by the public through referendum.¹⁴⁰ The new constitution also empowered the president to appoint the CGS and to declare martial law.¹⁴¹ This unique power of the president further increased the military influence in

¹³⁴ Jenkins.

¹³⁵ Jenkins.

¹³⁶ Harris, "Military Coups and Turkish Democracy, 1960–1980," 209.

¹³⁷ Aknur, "Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey," 36.

¹³⁸ John H. McFadden, "Civil-Military Relations in the Third Turkish Republic," in *Middle East Journal*, Vol.39, no. 1 (Winter 1985), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4326974>, 70.

¹³⁹ Harris, "Military Coups and Turkish Democracy, 1960–1980," 209.

¹⁴⁰ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 39.

¹⁴¹ Harris, "Military Coups and Turkish Democracy, 1960–1980," 210.

politics as six presidents in the Republic of Turkey between 1923 and 1989 were former military generals except for president Celal Bayer.¹⁴²

The powers of MGK were further expanded through the constitutional amendments of 1982, which were drafted under military supervision. According to Article 118 of the 1982 constitution, the number of high-ranking military officials in MGK was increased to six as compared to five civilian representatives and augmented the dominance of the military in any decision made by MGK.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the new constitution made it compulsory for the cabinet to implement the decision by MGK on priority; moreover, a new system of state security courts was established and the presence of one military prosecutor out of the three jury members was made compulsory in National Security Courts.¹⁴⁴ The new constitution empowered the chief of staff and MGK to nominate the candidate for Higher Education Council (HEC) and hence the military was able to ensure that the educational curriculum of Turkey was aligned with Kemalist ideology.¹⁴⁵ The chief of staff's weekly meetings with the president and prime minister, and close ties with other bureaucratic institutions, further increased the military influence in government decisions and policies.¹⁴⁶ The military elites used the MGK to interfere in government policies regarding school curriculum, television broadcasts along with ability to shut down television, denying penal immunities to parliamentary representatives of the Kurdish-oriented Democracy Party, manipulating the bureaucratic appointments in the southeast region, and influencing the laws particularly related to terrorism.¹⁴⁷

After three years of junta rule, the military received the first rejection by the public when Turgut Özal of the Motherland Party (MP) achieved a significant victory during the

¹⁴² Aknur, "Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey," 40.

¹⁴³ Ergun Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 112.

¹⁴⁴ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 18.

¹⁴⁵ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 44.

¹⁴⁶ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 18.

¹⁴⁷ Waldman and Caliskan, 19.

elections of 1983 instead of the military-supported National Democratic Party (NDP).¹⁴⁸ The military, however, remained a key political actor due to various factors including the presidency of Evren, very strong MGK, and high prerogatives granted to TSK as per the 1982 constitution.¹⁴⁹ The military received a second rebuff in the late 1980s, as during the referendum in 1987 Turks voted to terminate the ban on the politicians of the pre-1980 era; Turgut Özal, despite his civilian background, became the president in 1989; and Süleyman Demirel was elected again as prime minister in 1991.¹⁵⁰

The military achieved unprecedented prerogatives—influential MGK, presence of retired general in the post of president—in political affairs after the 1982 coup; it appeared that the military remained away from active intervention in politics during the era between the late 1980s through the early 1990s, however.¹⁵¹ The Özal administration took many steps to challenge the military dominance in political affairs by ignoring many decisions made by the military during the junta period and intervening in the promotions of military officers, especially the appointment of TGS in 1987. Özal was not only able to veto the decision of General Necdet Üruğ (CGS) and General Necdet Öztörün (commander of the Turkish army) for the appointment of the next CGS, he also succeeded in appointing his own nominee—General Necip Torumtay—as the next CGS.¹⁵² In November 1989, the Presidential Council—a source of military dominance in politics because of the power to veto the laws passed by parliament—was also terminated.¹⁵³ Due to such events, it appeared that the military has recognized the civilian supremacy and its dominance in politics has deceased.¹⁵⁴ This assumption proved to be wrong, when the TSK opposed the government's decisions related to involvement in Operation Desert Storm, and the

¹⁴⁸ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 39.

¹⁴⁹ Aknur, "Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey," 40.

¹⁵⁰ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 39.

¹⁵¹ Jenkins, 39.

¹⁵² Jenkins, 27.

¹⁵³ Hale, *Turkish Politics and The Military*, 290.

¹⁵⁴ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 39.

resignation of the Chief of Staff General Torumtay due to his refusal to permit cross-border operations in northern Iraq.¹⁵⁵

The problems associated with escalation of insurgencies by the Kurdish Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* [PKK]) and rise of political Islam in both the political and social life of Turkey brought the TSK back into the forefront of Turkish politics.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, due to the fight with the PKK, the military continued to enjoy a significant degree of prerogatives during the government of PM Tansu Çiller (1993–1996).¹⁵⁷ The rise of the pro-Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* [RP]) during the general elections of 1995 was viewed by the military as a challenge to Kemalist ideology.¹⁵⁸ The various events including the official visits of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to radical Islamic countries like Libya and Iran, increasing influence of Islamist supporters in the economic sector and bureaucracy, re-implementing the system of “Imam Hatip Okullari (Prayer Leaders and Preachers Schools),” and anti-secular demonstrations in Sincan (Anatolia), were the sources of concern for the military.¹⁵⁹ The powerful MGK released a communique in 1997 containing 20 agenda points related to policy decisions regarding RP's anti-Kemalist policies.¹⁶⁰ Initially, these agenda points were resisted by PM Erbakan, but, later on, he could not afford the public pressure and opposition of TSK.¹⁶¹ The situation ultimately led to the resignation of PM Erbakan after just 11 months in office and brought an end to the Welfare Party.¹⁶² The soft coup of 1997 was aimed to curb the

¹⁵⁵ Jenkins, 39–40.

¹⁵⁶ Jenkins.

¹⁵⁷ Aknur, “Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” 40.

¹⁵⁸ Aknur.

¹⁵⁹ Aknur.

¹⁶⁰ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 19.

¹⁶¹ Waldman and Caliskan, 20.

¹⁶² On 30 January 1997, the military suppressed a pro-Sharia and anti-Israeli demonstration in Sincan in central Anatolia. The Iranian ambassador also participated in the gathering as guest speaker. Waldman and Caliskan, 20.

“creeping Islamification of Turkey,” halt Erbakan’s policies affecting Turkish relations with western allies, and keep the politics under the control of military.¹⁶³

E. THE ERA BETWEEN 2001 AND 2016

The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* [AKP])—an extension of the Welfare Party—was established by the former Istanbul mayor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 14 August 2001.¹⁶⁴ The party gained popularity within a year and won the general elections of 2002 with an overwhelming majority.¹⁶⁵ The political dominance of the AKP kept increasing in coming years, and most importantly, its leadership was able to maintain a balance between civilian control and military dominance without any serious conflict with the military.¹⁶⁶ There were some minor issues, however, that the military considered as a threat to Kemalist principles; therefore, TSK opposed the AKP’s anti-secular policies.¹⁶⁷ During 2000–2007, the AKP government was able to gradually reduce the military’s prerogatives through introduction of various harmonization packages and constitutional amendments.¹⁶⁸

Beside the rise of the AKP as a dominant political entity, the Turkish accession process to the European Union played a pivotal role in bringing the dramatic changes in civil-military relations and reducing the military’s role in politics during this time period.¹⁶⁹ Although the partnership between Turkey and the European Economic Community was established in 1963, the EU officially granted candidate status to Turkey during the EU Helsinki Summit in 1999, which bound Turkey to adopt “Democratic control of the armed forces (DCAF)” in order to meet the requirements of the Copenhagen

¹⁶³ Waldman and Caliskan, 20.

¹⁶⁴ Waldman and Caliskan, 21.

¹⁶⁵ Waldman and Caliskan.

¹⁶⁶ Waldman and Caliskan.

¹⁶⁷ Aknur, “Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” 38.

¹⁶⁸ Aknur.

¹⁶⁹ Acar Kutay, “Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey,” in *CMI Working Paper*, no. 11, December 2016, <https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/6028-civilian-and-military-relations-in-turkey.pdf>, 13.

criteria.¹⁷⁰ The EU highlighted four major concerns related to civil-military relations in Turkey: (1) the status of the CGS; (2) the role and task of the National Security Council; (3) the setup of the State Security Courts; and (4) the law and order situation in southeastern Turkey.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the TSK involvement in northern Iraq without the approval of the government was also a source of serious concern for the EU.¹⁷² The efforts of the AKP for keeping the military under democratic controls were acknowledged by the EU commission report of 2004 and 2005 that CMR in Turkey were brought closer to as being practiced in EU member states.¹⁷³ Likewise, the commission report also highlighted the improvement of the parliamentary control over military spending through the law on public financial management and control (PFMC).¹⁷⁴

The first step toward reforms pertaining to bringing the military under civilian democratic oversight and control was to restructure the MGK to reduce its influence in politics through necessary amendments in the 1982 constitution.¹⁷⁵ The new reforms led to increased representation of civilians in MGK, limiting its role to advisory as part of the constitutional amendments, and termination of the executive powers of MGK in politics.¹⁷⁶ According to the new appointment procedure, a civilian could serve as the council's secretary-general instead of a senior military officer, and the prime minister was empowered to appoint a new secretary-general of MGK instead of the CGS.¹⁷⁷ The budget of MGK was reduced by 60%¹⁷⁸ and the defense budget was placed under civilian control along with empowering the Turkish Court of Accounts to exercise oversight on the military

¹⁷⁰ Kutay, "Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey," 13.

¹⁷¹ Kutay, 15.

¹⁷² Kutay, 14.

¹⁷³ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 24.

¹⁷⁴ Waldman and Caliskan, 24.

¹⁷⁵ Waldman and Caliskan, 22.

¹⁷⁶ Kutay, "Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey," 14.

¹⁷⁷ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 23.

¹⁷⁸ Kutay, "Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey," 14.

budget.¹⁷⁹ Later in 2012, a parliamentary approval was made mandatory for publication of the Turkish Court of Accounts external audit report related to military institutions.¹⁸⁰ The deputy prime minister was empowered to coordinate and monitor all decisions made by MGK, the four subdivisions of MGK were abolished, and extra staff of the secretary were displaced to other departments.¹⁸¹ The contract renewals of around 20 out of 53 retired military officers working for MGK were declined, the “secret regulation of the General Secretariat of the MGK” was dismissed, and the activities of MGK were made available to the public.¹⁸² The control of MGK over various state institutions like the Radio and Television Supreme Council (*Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu- RTÜK*) and Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu [YÖK]*) was lost.¹⁸³ The role of civilian members in MGK was changed from a simple reader to active participant in preparation of the National Security Policy Document (*Milli Güvenlik Siyaseti Belgesi*), commonly referred to as the “Red Book.”¹⁸⁴ The seating arrangement in MGK was changed so that civilian and military members sit together according to the state protocol.¹⁸⁵

The CGS, Hilmi Özkök (2002–2006), shared a common belief with government for secular beliefs and the professional attribute of the military for non-intervention in politics; therefore, he supported and assisted in achieving the civilian control over the military.¹⁸⁶ He was a staunch supporter of Turkey’s EU processes and believed that the officer corps must avoid rigidity in Kemalist ideology and should broaden their vision.¹⁸⁷ His skepticism of past military interventions, respect for democratic solution of issues, and

¹⁷⁹ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 23.

¹⁸⁰ Aknur, “Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” 42.

¹⁸¹ Kutay, “Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey,” 15.

¹⁸² Biriz Berksoy, “Military, Police and Intelligence in Turkey: Recent Transformations and Needs for Reform,” in *Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) Democratization Program Policy Report Series: Security Sector 4*, Istanbul: TSEV, 8.

¹⁸³ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 23.

¹⁸⁴ Zeki Sarigil, “The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?” in *Armed Forces & Society* 40, no. 1 (2014): doi:10.1177/0095327X12442309, 177.

¹⁸⁵ Sarigil, “The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?” 180.

¹⁸⁶ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 25.

¹⁸⁷ Waldman and Caliskan.

support of the UN's plan for the future of Cyprus (1999–2004) created discontent in both senior and lower ranks of the military. As a result, a group of senior military officers forced Özkök to resign.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, the possibility of non-acceptance of civilian supremacy by the military cannot be overruled during AKP's government. General Yaşar Büyükanıt—a staunch secularist with a conventional TSK mentality, unlike his predecessor—took over the office of CGS after the retirement of General Özkök in 2006.¹⁸⁹ Meanwhile, the presidential tenure of Ahmet Necdet Sezer—respected by the military due to his strong secular ideology—came to an end in 2007.¹⁹⁰ The series of rallies in many cities attracting millions of demonstrators for upholding the secular principles of the Republic, on the one hand, pleased the restless TSK and, on the other hand, put pressure on government to nominate a president with secular ideology.¹⁹¹ The initial nomination of PM Erdoğan, and subsequent proposal for appointing Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül as the new president, was considered a threat to secularism by the military.¹⁹² The situation resulted in publishing of an e-memorandum on the TGS's website, which backfired and indicated the diminishing control of the military in politics.¹⁹³

The AKP government also started to exercise control by rejecting the military's recommendations related to the appointment of four-star general Hasan Iğsız as the new army commander and promotions of other senior military officers due to their alleged involvement in conspiracies against the AKP government.¹⁹⁴ Chief of Staff General Işık Koşaner (2010–2011) tried to convince the president and PM, but he received an unprecedented pushback by the government on these issues, and eventually the TGS along with other commanders of all three services had to resign.¹⁹⁵ The creation of a “Conquest

¹⁸⁸ Waldman and Caliskan, 25–27.

¹⁸⁹ Waldman and Caliskan, 28.

¹⁹⁰ Waldman and Caliskan.

¹⁹¹ Waldman and Caliskan, 29.

¹⁹² Waldman and Caliskan.

¹⁹³ Waldman and Caliskan, 31.

¹⁹⁴ Sarigil, “The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?” 177.

¹⁹⁵ Sarigil, “The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?” 177.

Unit” (ceremonial military entourage at the presidential palace) along with an Ottoman band by President Erdoğan was another important indication of the army’s subordination to civilian leadership.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, the hosting of Turkey’s Victory Day celebrations by President Abdullah Gül instead of the chief of staff was also another emblematic step toward elimination of TSK’s supremacy in politics.¹⁹⁷

Besides institutional and organizational changes, the AKP government brought an unprecedented shift in civil-military relations in Turkey through legal changes. The military judges were replaced with civilian judges in the State Security Courts before the trials of Abdullah Öcalan (arrested PKK leader) in 1999.¹⁹⁸ His death sentence was converted to life imprisonment; additionally, the emergency rule was also terminated in the southeastern Kurdish region.¹⁹⁹ The newly amended Military Criminal Code prohibited military courts from exercising jurisdiction over the civilians except for the combined crimes committed by both military personnel and civilians; additionally, the civilian courts were also empowered to try the cases of military personnel.²⁰⁰ Many active-duty and retired military officers including generals were tried in civilian courts due to their involvement in coup attempts against the AKP government.²⁰¹ The trials of former CGS General İlker Başbuğ (2008–2010) in 2012, and the leaders of the 1980 coup, are the most remarkable examples of the supremacy of civilian courts and elimination of the untouchable status of TSK.²⁰² The exceptional prerogative that enabled the armed forces to launch internal operations without prior approval of the government through Protocol

¹⁹⁶ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 38.

¹⁹⁷ Sarigil, “The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?” 180.

¹⁹⁸ Kutay, “Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey,” 14.

¹⁹⁹ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 22.

²⁰⁰ Waldman and Caliskan, 23.

²⁰¹ Sarigil, “The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?” 177.

²⁰² Sarigil.

on Security, and Public Order, and Assistance Units (EMASYA)²⁰³ was also abrogated with the consent of the CGS.²⁰⁴ These amendments in laws indicated the military acceptance of gradual curbing of military dominance in political and legal affairs and have changed the nature of civil-military relations in Turkey.²⁰⁵

Another significant factor leading to the major development in civil-military relations in Turkey was the exposure of various conspiracies that unveiled intentions of TSK to topple the AKP's government. These conspiracies included Operation Sledgehammer (*Balyoz Harekâtı*)²⁰⁶ in 2003 and the Ergenekon case in 2007.²⁰⁷ The involvement of military officers in these clandestine activities, use of violence as a tool to achieve their political gains, and subsequent court verdicts related to sentencing of military officers indicated that military dominance in politics has come to an end.²⁰⁸ Besides weakening the TSK's hegemony in politics, these investigations and allegations had adversely affected the TSK's reputation and public support as well.²⁰⁹ Nonetheless, these investigations also received criticism—by both public and military—for having tempered evidences with a political motive to settle the old scores instead of upholding the rule of law.²¹⁰ During September 2013 through January 2014, the government and its supporters encouraged speculations that these investigations were manufactured and manipulated by

²⁰³ EMASYA was a secret protocol that resulted in expending the influence of Turkish military in general, and Gendarmerie General Command (JGK) in particular. According to the protocol, JGK could monopolize social surveillance, subordinate the institution of military intelligence, and assume the jurisdiction of the police force. Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State*, 157.

²⁰⁴ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 23.

²⁰⁵ Kutay, "Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey," 16.

²⁰⁶ A newspaper (*Daily Taraf*) published the details of an army plan—Operation Sledgehammer (Balyoz case)—to destabilize the AKP's government through terrorist acts including bombing of mosques and initiating war with Greece. Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 36.

²⁰⁷ Ergenekon was a secret organization aimed to overthrow the AKP's government. The organization involved a network of secularistic and ultranationalist Turkish civilians including journalists, academicians, and businessmen, along with several retired and active duty Turkish military personnel. Kutay, "Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey," 16.

²⁰⁸ Kutay, 16–17.

²⁰⁹ Aknur, "Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey," 45.

²¹⁰ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 37.

members of the Gülen movement in the police and military.²¹¹ The Erdoğan administration viewed Gülenists as a major threat instead of the Turkish military, and therefore started to make efforts to seek reconciliation with the army. These efforts included expression of pro-military sentiments by AKP government officials and Erdoğan also criticized members of the judiciary for punishing military personnel.²¹² Subsequently, both the government and the military jointly appealed to the judiciary to retry the cases, and, as a result, all detainees of the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases were released as per the verdict of the Constitutional Courts.²¹³ In February 2015, the chief of staff General Necdet Özel's decision to evacuate Turkish troops guarding the tomb of Suleyman Shah inside Syria not only received a lot of criticism from opposition parties but also gave rise to various speculations like suspected collaboration of Turkey with Syrian Kurds and possibly with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).²¹⁴ Nonetheless, Erdoğan not only fully defended the politically weak army but also congratulated General Necdet Özel on the conduct of a successful operation.²¹⁵ Therefore, it can be summarized that there were two major reasons for reconciliation between the Turkish army and AKP government: the fight against Gülenists and the rising insurgency of the PKK.²¹⁶

F. THE ERA POST JULY 2016

On 15 July 2016, a small faction within the Turkish military staged a coup to overthrow the government by capturing critical key points in the cities of Ankara and

²¹¹ Gülen movement is a religious and social movement led by self-exiled preacher Fethullah Gülen. The Gülen movement and the AKP government benefited each other until a sharp split took place between two groups in 2013. Since 2013, the AKP has considered the Gülen movement as an internal challenge to its rule. The AKP government considered Fethullah Gülen and his followers as main plotters behind the Ergenekon case and revealing a large-scale corruption scandal involving sons of two ministers of AKP, which led to the resignation of some cabinet ministers. Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 37, 62–65.

²¹² Waldman and Caliskan, 38–39.

²¹³ Kutay, "Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey," 17.

²¹⁴ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 39.

²¹⁵ Waldman and Caliskan, 40.

²¹⁶ Waldman and Caliskan.

Istanbul.²¹⁷ The commanders of armed forces including CGS Hulusi Akar were detained by the conspirators; President Erdoğan managed to evade arrest and other leading politicians including PM Binali Yıldırım remained untouched.²¹⁸ The coup attempt faced an unprecedented strong resistance by the Turkish people and as a result over 200 civilians lost their lives and more than one thousand were injured while defending the civilian regime.²¹⁹ All political elites of AKP and opposition party immediately denounced the putsch and accused the Gülenist faction within the military as the main conspirators of the attempted coup.²²⁰ Apparently, the AKP considered that current constitutional and legislative reforms are sufficient and the era of military tutelage in politics has ended; as Erdoğan claimed, there is no conflict between the secular military and elected pro-Islamic government.²²¹ The putsch not only exposed the factions within the Turkish Armed Forces, however, but also demonstrated that complete civilian control had not been achieved, and there was a need to institute further measures to improve the CMR in Turkey.

The National Security Council enforced a state of emergency that facilitated government to alter laws and issue executive decrees without seeking approval from the parliament.²²² As an interim measure, the government issued more than ten decrees aimed at (1) reorganizing the TSK, (2) mass purge against Gülenists in military and bureaucracy, (3) establishing of executive presidency, and (4) dominating presidential control over CMR.²²³ The government undertook mass purges resulting in the arrest of around 7,000 officers and dismissal of 6,511 military personnel including all ranks starting from senior military commanders, middle-ranking officers, non-commissioned officers, sergeants, and

²¹⁷ Waldman and Caliskan.

²¹⁸ Waldman and Caliskan, 42.

²¹⁹ Yaprak Gürsoy, "The Failed Military Intervention in Turkey on 15 July 2016," in *Between Military Rule and Democracy: Regime Consolidation in Greece, Turkey, and Beyond* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 196.

²²⁰ Gürsoy, "The Failed Military Intervention in Turkey on 15 July 2016," 196–197.

²²¹ Waldman and Caliskan, "The New Turkey and Its Discontents," 39.

²²² Gürsoy, "The Failed Military Intervention in Turkey on 15 July 2016," 199.

²²³ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 2.

cadets from all three services.²²⁴ Besides commanding elites from all three services, the most effected group from the officer corps included combat and helicopter pilots from the Turkish Air Force, which resulted in the cockpit-to-pilot ratio dropping to 1:0.8 in September 2017 from 1:2 before July 2016.²²⁵ The situation has long-lasting impacts on combat effectiveness of the Turkish Air Force and heavier workload on remaining pilots because of their commitments in the fight against the PKK as well as the People Protection Forces (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel* [YPG]) in Syria.²²⁶

The Supreme Military Council (*Yüksek Askerî Şûra* [YAŞ]) was restructured with more civilians including top ministers and removal of a number of military personnel.²²⁷ In order to signal the civilian supremacy, the annual meeting of YAŞ was re-scheduled earlier than the planned date, the agenda of the meeting focused on decisions related to the fate of conspirators instead of traditional agenda of promotion and retirement, and the venue for the meeting was also changed to the residence of the prime minister (Çankaya Mansion) from the headquarters of the general staff.²²⁸

The executive decrees brought major institutional changes in command and control of TGS and TSK. The new reforms excluded the office of prime minister and TGS from the traditional military chain of command and enabled the president to exercise direct control on TSK through the heavily empowered Defense Ministry.²²⁹ The Turkish Army, Air Force, and Navy were placed under the control of the Defense Ministry and the status of TGS as the top commander was abolished and was restricted to a coordinator role

²²⁴ Murat Yeşiltaş and Murat Aslan, “The Road to July 15 in the Turkish Armed Forces and Combat Effectiveness in Its Aftermath,” in *The Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, Turkey*; July 2017, No: 37, 15.
https://setav.org/en/assets/uploads/2017/07/Analysis_37.pdf.

²²⁵ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 4.

²²⁶ Gurcan.

²²⁷ Gurcan and Gisclon, “From Autonomy to Full Fledged Civilian Control,” 3.

²²⁸ Gurcan and Gisclon.

²²⁹ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 2–3.

only.²³⁰ This arrangement created confusion because of having two chiefs or “double-headed” leadership for the Turkish armed services.²³¹ The Defense Ministry was also empowered to select and appoint civilian staff in the ministry rather than the military personnel provided by TSK.²³² According to decree No 696, the Undersecretariat for Defense Industries (*Savunma Sanayii Müsteşarlığı* [SSM])—defense procurement department—was transferred under the direct control of MoD.²³³ As a result, the president was able to exercise direct control over military procurement and associated funds through the MoD.

Other reforms that have significantly enhanced the power of the Defense Ministry included (1) to be the final deciding authority for the promotions of officer corps starting from lieutenant rank, (2) to revise the curriculum of the professional military education (PME) at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, (3) establishing and supervision of a new National Defense University (NDU) after the closure of all military education institutes, and (4) to manage force generation, operational planning, military intelligence, and logistics.²³⁴ The military judicial system was also placed under the supervision of the Defense Ministry and now all the decisions of military judges and personnel matters are routed to the MoD for approval as a competent authority.²³⁵

TGS was rendered almost ineffective as the Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Commands were placed under the full operational and functional control of the Ministry of Interior.²³⁶ The Interior Ministry’s plan to equip Gendarmerie and police with the latest helicopters, armed drones, and air-defense capabilities indicated a probable effort to reduce the usefulness of TSK and create an atmosphere of internal rivalry between security

²³⁰ Gurcan,” 4.

²³¹ Yeşiltaş and Aslan, “The Road to July 15 in the Turkish Armed Forces and Combat Effectiveness in Its Aftermath,” 15.

²³² Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 4.

²³³ Gurcan, 12.

²³⁴ Gurcan, 3–5.

²³⁵ Gurcan and Gisclon, “From Autonomy to Full Fledged Civilian Control,” 3.

²³⁶ Gurcan and Gisclon.

forces.²³⁷ The military hospitals have been placed under the Ministry of Health, whereas, shipyard, factories, and other industrial setups that were under the control of the TSK have been attached to the MoD, leading to completely abolishing the military's privileged system.²³⁸

Overall, these institutional changes aimed to enhance the civilian control in all military domains, eliminate the Kemalist ideology from the military education system, and enable the president to dictate TGS according to his own political advantages; therefore, they will have long-lasting impacts on the effectiveness of the Turkish military in the future. The launch of Operation Euphrates in August 2016 without any pushback from the military was the first sign of presidential supremacy over TGS.²³⁹ The operation ended up in military shambles as Erdoğan appointed Lieutenant General Zekai Aksakalli as commander of the operation without considering his credentials and expertise.²⁴⁰ The appointment of General Hulusi Akar as the country's new defense minister²⁴¹ also indicates that Erdoğan has again brought a military officer in the cabinet, which has probably been the basic reason for poor civilian control of the military in Turkish history.

G. ANALYSIS

The Turkish history of CMR reveals a strong hold of the military in politics; the military enjoyed complete autonomy under the umbrella of the self-articulated constitution. Unlike many other countries, the Turkish military never established military regime through military intervention but still managed to maintain dominance in Turkish politics. It was the government of Turgut Özal that made some efforts to subordinate TSK to civilian control by making amendments in the 1982 constitution and with Özal appointing his own

²³⁷ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 3.

²³⁸ Gurcan and Gislou, "From Autonomy to Full Fledged Civilian Control," 3.

²³⁹ Gareth Jenkins, "Erdoğan's General: From Military Tutelage to a Politicized Military," in *Middle East Institute*, 12 October 2018, 2, <http://www.mei.edu/publications/erdogans-generals-military-tutelage-politicized-military>.

²⁴⁰ Jenkins.

²⁴¹ Jenkins, 1.

candidate as chief of staff. Nonetheless, the actual decline in TSK's political dominance started in the era 2002–2016. The major motive toward democratic civilian control for both AKP and TSK was the accession to EU; conspiracies like Balyoz and Ergenekon also contributed significantly in shaping Turkish CMR, however. The failed coup attempt has resulted in major unprecedented shift in Turkish CMR. The outcome of post-coup reforms is an influential executive presidency, an empowered MoD headed by a military officer, a totally ineffective TGS, and a military losing its traditions, ideology, values, and esprit de corps.

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III. THEORETICAL ASSESSMENT OF TURKISH CMR

The purpose of this chapter is to study the various measures implemented by the AKP government to achieve civilian control of the military along with the degree of prerogatives held by the Turkish military to maintain its institutional autonomy. The chapter uses the theoretical frameworks advanced by Matei, Stepan, and Serra.

A. TURKEY'S ACHIEVEMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTROL AND EFFECTIVENESS: MATEI'S FRAMEWORK

After the failed coup in 2016, the civil-military relations in Turkey have undergone a different trajectory, heavily dominated by strong civilian—yet not democratic—control over the armed forces. Essentially, what Erdoğan has sought to obtain after the attempted coup in 2016 has been a submissive and factionalized military, under his direct supervision, while limited in effectiveness. Table 1 summarizes the status of civil-military relations in Turkey prior to and after the 2016 attempted coup. I granted values ranging from low to high, based on the assessment of to what degree the Turkish civil-military relations fulfill the requirements for control and effectiveness according to Matei's framework.

Table 1. Assessment of Turkish CMR According to Matei's Framework²⁴²

Era	Requirements for control			Requirements for effectiveness		
	<i>Institutional Control</i>	<i>Oversight</i>	<i>Professional Norms</i>	<i>Plans</i>	<i>Structures (interagency coordination)</i>	<i>Resources</i>
Pre-2016	Low	Low	High	Low	High	High
Post-2016	Low	Low	Low-medium	Low	Low	Low

²⁴² Adapted from Matei, "A New Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations," 31–33.

a. Un-Democratic Civilian Control (High)

Before 2016, the TSK maintained dominance in political affairs of the country. Therefore, Turkey scored low in all requirements for control except professional norms, where it scored high. Indeed, civilian governments were often limited in exercising control over civil and military affairs. After 2000, Turkish CMR began to transition toward democratic civilian control, primarily due to the country's attempts at seeking membership in the EU. These reforms were intended to make institutional changes in the Turkish general staff and the National Security Council (MGK), reduce the influence of the military in the judicial system, and remove military presence from non-military institutions. The Turkish general staff was initially subordinated to the Defense Ministry, indicating civilian supremacy. Due to the fact, however, that most staff at the MoD were military personnel—who were already subordinated to TGS—the desirable effective democratic civilian control could not be achieved.²⁴³ In addition, the civilian staff at MoD did not have adequate knowledge on defense-related issues and were incapable to maintain the civilian control in the execution of defense policies.²⁴⁴

Subsequent to the failed coup attempt in 2016, any previous sign of democratic civilian control of the Turkish military has faded; what the Erdoğan administration has succeeded to achieve, in return, has been complete personal control of the armed forces. For this reason, post-attempted coup Turkey scores low in the democratic civilian control of the military requirement, per Matei's framework. To begin with, Turkey scores low in Institutional Control Mechanisms. The Turkish government made some significant changes in the institutional structure of the Turkish Armed Forces—as shown in Figure 3—to achieve the desired civilian control.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State*, 179.

²⁴⁴ Söyler.

²⁴⁵ In the current organizational chart of TSK (Figure 1), the dotted lines indicate the previous institutional hierarchy and the solid lines depict the current TAF's institutional transformation.

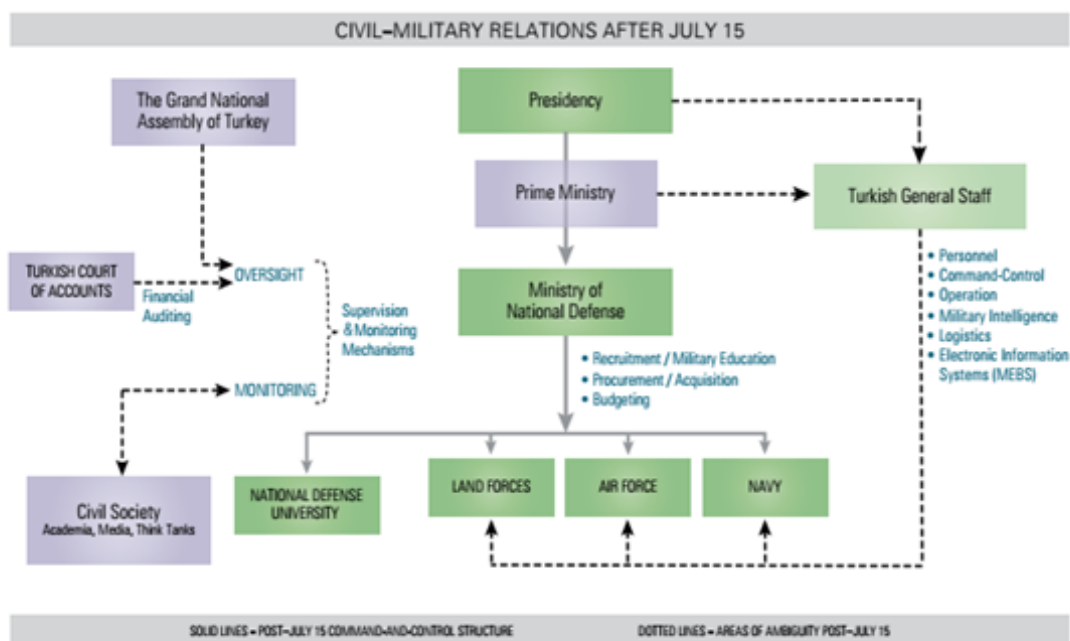


Figure 3. Current State of TAF's Institutional Transformation²⁴⁶

The basic theme plan of the new institutional layout for TSK focuses primarily on establishing a very persuasive presidential control over every department of the defense setup even at the cost of having an ineffective military. The putsch in 2016 has been beneficial for the AKP—particularly for Erdoğan—to bring the dream of formalizing the “executive presidency” into reality within a short period of time.²⁴⁷ The hasty decisions by Erdoğan after July 2016 were viewed as undemocratic with serious unforeseen repercussions for Turkey in the coming years.²⁴⁸ Many Western observers were of the opinion that the coup on July 2016 was forged and staged by Erdoğan to suppress his enemies and institute a presidential system.²⁴⁹ The mass purges of the Gülenist faction

²⁴⁶ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 10.

²⁴⁷ Gurcan, 2.

²⁴⁸ Gürsoy, “The Failed Military Intervention in Turkey on 15 July 2016,” 199.

²⁴⁹ M. Hakan Yavuz and Rasim Koç, “The Turkish Coup Attempt: The Gülen Movement vs. the State,” in *Middle East Policy*, Volume 23, Issue 4: 15 December 2016: doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12239, 9.

within the military, bureaucracy, and other government institutions appeared to be the only focus by the government after July 2016, rather than strengthening democratic institutions. The situation is not new as the officer corps of TSK had experienced similar purges in 2007. During that period, the civilian court detained hundreds of military personnel including former CGS Mehmet İlker Başbuğ for alleged involvement in the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases.²⁵⁰ It was speculated that these cases were based on forged evidences, and the charges against the military officers were dropped; nevertheless, the TSK lost respect in the eyes of the public despite discharge of military officers as per the verdict of the Constitutional Courts.²⁵¹

The reorganization of the Ministry of National Defense and placing the Gendarmerie General Command (*Jandarma Genel Komutanlığı* [JGK]) and Coast Guard command (*Sahil Güvenlik Komutanlığı* [SGK]) under the Interior Ministry are considered as major steps to enhance alleged democratic civilian control over TSK, as civilian oversight of law enforcement activities was curtailed in the old setup, where JGK and SGK were tied to TSK.²⁵² These reforms may have led to restricting the TSK's role to manage external threats only, as in the earlier setup, the TSK was involved in internal security operations as well. The new change, however, indicates the end of the traditional shared identity of the Turkish military, Gendarmerie, and Coast Guard, which was based on staunch secularist and nationalist ideology.²⁵³

By and large, Erdoğan has been successful in establishing the executive presidency by winning Turkey's presidential election on 24 June 2018 and will keep holding the position of president until 2023 in the Republic of Turkey.²⁵⁴ Furthermore, Erdoğan's

²⁵⁰ Sarigil, "The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?," 177.

²⁵¹ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 38–39.

²⁵² Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State*, 182.

²⁵³ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 2.

²⁵⁴ Burak Ege Bekdil, "Erdogan Appoints Active Duty Military Commander as Turkey's Defense Minister," *Defense News*, 09 July 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2018/07/09/erdogan-appoints-active-duty-military-commander-as-turkeys-defense-minister/>.

decision to appoint an active-duty military officer—the former Chief of Staff General Hulusi Akar—as defense minister on 09 July 2018²⁵⁵ will further strengthen his already-established presidential control over the Turkish military until 2023. It is a unique decision as until now, no civilian government in Turkey has appointed an active-duty military commander as defense minister;²⁵⁶ therefore, it is considered as undemocratic control of the military, which may either increase TSK’s influence in politics or increase politicization of the military.

(1) Oversight (Low)

Traditionally in Turkey, the military expenditure and budget has never been presented in parliament for approval or for discussion, and similarly, the military budget has never been under criticism by the media or public. The oversight mechanism of the Turkish Court of Accounts to conduct audits of military accounts for subsequent approval by parliament was not very effective due to limited or incomplete data provided by the military institutions and inability of audit courts to question the effectiveness of military financial policies.²⁵⁷ The modernization programs of the military related to arms procurement and audit of organizations like the Turkish Armed Forces Foundation (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerini Güçlendirme Vakfı* [TSKGV]) was not subjected to parliamentary oversight.²⁵⁸ It is important to note that the ineffective oversight mechanism through these reforms is credited to the government’s reluctance rather than any disagreement by the military.²⁵⁹

In the oversight category, Turkey also scores low, post-attempted coup. The oversight and accountability mechanism for the defense budget of TSK has remained poor,

²⁵⁵ Jenkin, “Erdogan’s General,” 2.

²⁵⁶ Bekdil, “Erdogan Appoints Active Duty Military Commander as Turkey’s Defense Minister,” 1.

²⁵⁷ Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State*, 180.

²⁵⁸ Söyler, 181.

²⁵⁹ Söyler.

as it has never been exposed to parliament or media for debate or criticism.²⁶⁰ The roles of Grand National Assembly, Turkish Court of Accounts, and civil society—including media, think tanks, and academia—have not been focused and, therefore, democratic oversight to assess the effectiveness of TSK is still deficient.²⁶¹ In December 2017, the Undersecretariat for Defense Industries (SSM)—which was under the control of the MoD after the coup—has been placed under the direct control of Erdoğan as per the new law passed by the president.²⁶² Similarly, the influence of Erdoğan has been extended over other important defense industrial institutions through a new law that has authorized him to act as chairman of the Turkish Armed Forces Foundation (TSKGV) and chair meetings of the Defense Industry Executive Committee (SSIK) instead of the prime minister.²⁶³ These laws not only have resulted in concentrating all decision-making power related to defense procurement and industry into the single hand of President Erdoğan, but also have limited the expert inputs of the weakened military and the bureaucratic experts related to procurement and modernization programs for Turkish defense.²⁶⁴ One can argue that, as all the arms production, procurement, and defense industry is under the direct control of Erdoğan, their budgets will not be subjected to any oversight mechanism.

(2) Professional Norms (Low–Medium)

The professional norms in TSK have remained high before July 2016. The Turkish military was able to maintain its institutional autonomy by formulating the policies related to recruitment, professional military education, promotion, and appointments. The promotions in TSK were based on merit, training evaluations, and expertise related to

²⁶⁰ Sakallioğlu, “The Anatomy of the Turkish Military’s Political Autonomy,” 160.

²⁶¹ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 2.

²⁶² Burak Ege Bekdil, “Turkey’s Erdogan Decrees Sweeping Defense Procurement Takeover,” *Defense News*, 27 December 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/industry/2017/12/27/turkeys-erdogan-decrees-sweeping-defense-procurement-takeover/>.

²⁶³ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 12.

²⁶⁴ Bekdil, “Turkey’s Erdogan Decrees Sweeping Defense Procurement Takeover,” 2.

military affairs and were decided by the senior military personnel; the recommendations for promotions were rubber-stamped by the civilian government, however.²⁶⁵ The AKP government started to interfere in the military's promotion decisions in a gradual manner and was able to bring the promotions of senior military personnel under civilian control by 2010.²⁶⁶ The professional military education was conducted at military high schools, war academies, and prestigious military institutes from other countries under the complete supervision of the Turkish military.²⁶⁷

Post-2016, the professional norms in the TSK are considered medium, as most of the procedures are either still under implementation phase or insufficient data is available to assess their impact on the professionalism of TSK. The educational reforms after July 2016 have resulted in closure of all of the military's educational institutions and establishing a Turkish National Defense University (*Milli Savunma Üniversitesi* [MSU]) under the supervision of the Defense Ministry.²⁶⁸ The new curriculum designed by the Ministry of National Education has affected the incorporation of Kemalist ideology as the identity of the Turkish military and is likely to inculcate the future generations of TSK officers with Erdoğan's conservative ideology.²⁶⁹ Loyalty to the Turkish constitution appears to be the basic pre-requisite for induction in TSK; nonetheless, the recruitment procedure has been made more stringent by subjecting candidates to additional scrutiny by military intelligence for any affiliation with the Gülenist movement.²⁷⁰ This policy has resulted in the rise of intrusion by other religious groups in TSK,²⁷¹ which is contradicting its basic identity of being secular. Similarly, Erdoğan's personal involvement in promotion of junior officers will result in poor command and control by the military's commanders,

²⁶⁵ Sarigil, "The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?" 177.

²⁶⁶ Sarigil.

²⁶⁷ Narli, "Civil-Military Relations in Turkey," 118.

²⁶⁸ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 5.

²⁶⁹ Jenkins, "Erdogan's General," 3.

²⁷⁰ Yeşiltaş and Aslan, "The Road to July 15 In the Turkish Armed Forces and Combat Effectiveness in Its Aftermath," 16.

²⁷¹ Yeşiltaş and Aslan.

and the future outlook of the Turkish officer corps is likely to be more politically oriented rather than based on merit or competence.²⁷²

b. Effectiveness (Low–Medium):

Before 2016, the score for TSK as an effective force was considered high, whereas post-2016 reforms have gradually reduced the effectiveness toward low to medium according to Matei’s framework. The detailed assessment of other requirements for effectiveness of TSK is discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

(1) Plans (Low)

The plans for the Turkish military are elaborated in the National Security Policy Document (*Milli Güvenlik Siyaseti Belgesi*), referred to as “the Red Book.”²⁷³ Prior to the coup, the document used to be prepared—under the supervision of MGK—by the Turkish General Staff, and was never subjected to parliamentary or government approval or scrutiny.²⁷⁴ The post-coup reforms and executive presidency by Erdoğan have restricted the participation of parliament and other stakeholders in formulating the plans for TSK; therefore, while Turkey still has a strategy for the military, it scores low with regard to the requirement of plans toward effectiveness, due to the lack of civil-military input to these documents.

(2) Institutions (Low)

The Turkish General Staff was established by the 1961 constitution and was responsible for recruitment, logistics, arms production and procurement, logistics, inter-services coordination, and policies related to all branches of TSK.²⁷⁵ Prior to 2016, the office of TGS was effective in extending its influence to all services of the Turkish armed

²⁷² Jenkins, “Erdoğan’s General,” 3.

²⁷³ Sarigil, “The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?” 177.

²⁷⁴ Sarigil.

²⁷⁵ Berksoy, “Military, Police and Intelligence in Turkey,” 12.

forces and civilian bureaucracy;²⁷⁶ therefore, the Turkey score remained high for interagency coordination. The post-2016 reforms have taken away all the authorities—recruitment, education, and promotion—from the TGS by restructuring the complete command and structure of TSK.²⁷⁷ The ineffective TGS has led to poor interagency coordination, which was one of the root causes of the ineffective conduct of Operation Euphrates Shield.²⁷⁸

(3) Resources (Low)

Prior to July 2016, TSK scored high in resources, as it had an adequate number of personnel and equipment. A year prior to the coup, the estimated strength of the Turkish military was 639,551 personnel including military, civilians, and paramilitary forces.²⁷⁹ Nonetheless, post 2016, with regard to resources, Turkey scores medium-low, as the number of personnel in all three services including the Turkish Special Forces, Turkish Navy's underwater assault unit, and TAF's combat and search and rescue pilots has been reduced drastically.²⁸⁰ As of September 2017, the total number of personnel serving in TSK was reduced to 351,000 personnel, and personnel deficiency will hamper the combat efficiency of TSK to address the challenges of envisaged conventional and non-conventional security threats to Turkey.²⁸¹ Presently, the TSK comprises around 54% of conscripts and 46% of professional military personnel.²⁸² According to the new recruitment system—yet to be implemented fully—the conscription or military draft

²⁷⁶ Sakallıoğlu, “The Anatomy of the Turkish Military’s Political Autonomy,” 159.

²⁷⁷ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 11.

²⁷⁸ Gurcan, 14.

²⁷⁹ Greg Allwood, “The Turkish Military: In Numbers,” in *TRI-SERVICE*, 19 July 2016, <https://www.forces.net/news/tri-service/turkish-military-numbers>.

²⁸⁰ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 6.

²⁸¹ Yeşiltaş and Aslan, “The Road to July 15 In the Turkish Armed Forces and Combat Effectiveness in Its Aftermath,” 15–17.

²⁸² Yeşiltaş and Aslan, 15.

system for TSK is being replaced with all-volunteer system²⁸³ and is expected to yield positive impact on the effectiveness of TSK in coming years. As a result of mass purges and abrupt reduction in the number of military personnel, the opportunist or pragmatist ideology is getting popular in the officer corps, especially in senior ranks, which can lead to ineffective armed forces as such officers prefer short-term individual interests over the long-term strategic interests of their service.²⁸⁴ The excessive decrease in strength of these personnel is actually the loss of capability and effectiveness of TSK and requires substantial time to correct.

The weakening value of the Turkish lira is a big impediment for meeting the Turkish defense expenses. The MoD has allocated USD 13 billion as defense budget for 2018,²⁸⁵ which amounts to 1.65% of the GDP of Turkey for 2018 as compared to 1.46% of GDP in FY 2017.²⁸⁶ It is expected that Turkish defense budget will increase to USD 15.2 billion in 2023.²⁸⁷ The SSM—operating under the direct control of President Erdoğan—has been allocated a budget of USD 11 billion in 2018,²⁸⁸ indicating that Turkey is making all-out efforts to modernize TSK and attain self-sufficiency through investing in Turkish defense production capability. In order to meet the future challenges, Turkey is pursuing a modernization plan for TSK that includes replacement of the F-16C/D with more sophisticated and advanced Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II multirole fighter aircraft, procurement of additional AEW&C and C4ISR aircraft, and advanced air defense

²⁸³ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 10.

²⁸⁴ Metin Gurcan and Megan Gisclon, “What Is the Turkish Military’s Strategic Identity after July 15?” in *Istanbul Policy Center - Mercator Policy Brief* (September 2016), 2.

²⁸⁵ Fenella McGerty, “Turkey’s Defence Budget: The Fallout from High Inflation and a Weak Lira, in *Jane’s by IHS Markit*, 10 April 2018, <https://ihsmarkit.com/research-analysis/turkeys-defence-budget.html>.

²⁸⁶ “Considerable Increase in Turkey’s 2018 Budget for Defence,” in *Defence Turkey Magazine*, 12, no. 79 (2017), <http://www.defenceturkey.com/en/content/considerable-increase-in-turkey-s-2018-budget-for-defense-2897#.Wxq289JKhdg>.

²⁸⁷ “Report: Turkish Defence Spending to Reach \$15.8bn by 2023,” *Army Technology* 16 March 2018, <https://www.army-technology.com/news/report-turkish-defence-spending-reach-15-8bn-2023/>.

²⁸⁸ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 12.

assets.²⁸⁹ The SSM has been successful in reducing the effect of the weakening lira on domestic defense spending by establishing strong capabilities to produce advanced and sophisticated systems for all three services, and it is expected that Turkey is likely to achieve its goal of self-sufficiency of domestic defense capabilities by 2023.²⁹⁰

B. THE MILITARY'S PREROGATIVE IN TURKEY: STEPAN'S FRAMEWORK

Looking at the history of Turkish CMR, it can be argued that prior to the 2016 coup TSK had been enjoying a constitutionally granted, high degree of prerogatives due to non-existent civilian control. The AKP government was able to reduce the TSK's prerogatives due to external influence of the EU, loss of public support for TSK due to investigations like Ergenekon and Sledgehammer, and rising influence of AKP in politics. The AKP was able to consolidate civilian control to an extent that no military coup was envisaged in Turkey.²⁹¹ Nonetheless, a faction within the Turkish military attempted a coup in July 2016, which led to drastic reforms aimed at weakening the military's role in Turkey's politics. The impact of these reforms on TSK's prerogatives according to Stepan's categories is depicted in Table 2 and shall be analyzed in subsequent paragraphs. The "High" assessment of a prerogative includes the constitutionally granted autonomy or mandatory role of the military, but it is also enhanced through military rule or interference in politics; the "Medium" prerogative indicates civilian control as characterized in law; and the "Low" prerogative is when military autonomy is prevented or eroded through overpowering civilian control.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ McGerty, "Turkey's Defence Budget: The Fallout from High Inflation and a Weak Lira."

²⁹⁰ McGerty.

²⁹¹ Thomas C. Bruneau, "Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries: The Cases of Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey," *Journal of Defense Resources Management*, 4, no. 2, 2013, 9: <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/37500>.

²⁹² Bruneau, 8.

Table 2. Scoring the TSK's Prerogatives Since 2016²⁹³

Prerogative	Score
Constitutionally sanctioned independent role of the military in the political system	Low
Relationship of the military to the head of the executive	Low
Coordination of the defense sector within the executive	Low
Active-duty military participation in the cabinet	Medium
Role of the military in the legislature	Low
Role of the military in the intelligence services	Low
Relationship with the police	Low
Role in military promotions	Low
Role of the military in state enterprises	Low
Role in the legal system	Low

a. Constitutionally Sanctioned Independent Role of the Military in the Political System (Low)

The Turkish constitution of 1982—drafted under the supervision of TSK—is founded on three irrevocable articles that define the characteristics of the Turkish republic in accordance with the concepts of the Kemalist principle; therefore, it “may not be amended, nor shall their amendment be proposed.”²⁹⁴ According to the constitution, it is the duty of the “Turkish armed forces to intervene when [deemed] necessary to protect these Irrevocable Provisions.”²⁹⁵ The prerogative is “low” as the progressive constitutional amendments made by AKP since 2001 and especially after July 2016 have curtailed the military involvement in the political system of the country²⁹⁶ and ended the military’s influence in various other state institutions like radio and the Television Supreme Council (*Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu* [RTÜK]) and Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu* [YÖK]).²⁹⁷

²⁹³ Adapted from Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*, 93.

²⁹⁴ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 43.

²⁹⁵ Bruneau, “Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries,” 10.

²⁹⁶ Bruneau.

²⁹⁷ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 23.

b. The Relationship of the Military to the Head of the Executive (Low)

According to Article 117 of the 1982 constitution, “the Chief of the General Staff is to be appointed by the president of the republic ... and responsible to the Prime Minister.”²⁹⁸ The other important provisions of the article make the president—as commander-in-chief of the armed forces—an inseparable member of the Turkish parliament and TGS—on behalf of the president—shall exercise the authorities of commander-in-chief during wartime.²⁹⁹ Therefore, before 2002, this prerogative for TSK has remained “High” due to factors including: (1) most presidents in the Republic of Turkey were former military generals,³⁰⁰ and therefore, the military was able to enjoy good relations with the chief executive; and (2) the prime minister’s office was unable to exercise control and oversight and remained under the influence of the military due to the threat of a coup.³⁰¹

The prerogative became “moderate” as AKP begun to assert civilian control over TSK through reforms and purges following the investigations of the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer cases.³⁰² The post-July 2016 period has seen further erosion of the prerogative toward “Low” as the executive Decrees No 668 & 669 brought major institutional changes in command and control of the Turkish military and ensured civilian supremacy.³⁰³ The undemocratic policies and decisions of President Erdoğan have converted the self-governing TGS into an “instrument of his personal power.”³⁰⁴

²⁹⁸ Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 44.

²⁹⁹ Bruneau, “Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries,” 11.

³⁰⁰ Aknur, “Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” 40.

³⁰¹ Bruneau, “Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries,” 11.

³⁰² Bruneau.

³⁰³ Yeşiltaş and Aslan, “The Road to July 15 in the Turkish Armed Forces and Combat Effectiveness in Its Aftermath,” 15–17.

³⁰⁴ Jenkins, “Erdogan’s General,” 2.

c. *The Coordination of the Defense Sector within the Executive (Low)*

One important outcome of the coup of 1960 was the creation of the National Security Council (MGK),³⁰⁵ and in subsequent years, the council became very influential in Turkish politics and other government institutions. Article 118 of the 1982 constitution empowered MGK with the responsibility of preparing the National Security Policy Document (NSPD).³⁰⁶ The National Security Council Act of 1983 and more TAF representatives in MGK resulted in the drafting of the NSPD—without any input from the civilian members of the council—focused on the interests and concerns of the Turkish military.³⁰⁷

The first step of the AKP government toward reforms to bring the military under civilian democratic oversight and control was to restructure the MGK to reduce its influence in politics and other institutions through necessary amendments to the 1982 constitution.³⁰⁸ The prerogative is “low” as the traditional imbalance due to more seats of TSK has ended, and the civilian members of MGK are now actively involved in drafting the NSPD, commonly referred to as the “Red Book.”³⁰⁹

d. *The Presence of the Military in the Cabinet (Medium)*

Traditionally, the TSK has been participating actively in the executive level of the Turkish government.³¹⁰ The prerogative can be considered low as this practice has come to an end since the AKP government came to power. Nonetheless, the decision of President Erdoğan to appoint an active-duty military commander as defense minister on 09 July 2018³¹¹ has made the analysis of the prerogative as “medium.” It is considered that General

³⁰⁵ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 18.

³⁰⁶ Bruneau, “Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries,” 12.

³⁰⁷ Bruneau.

³⁰⁸ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 22.

³⁰⁹ Sarigil, “The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?” 177.

³¹⁰ Bruneau, “Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries,” 13.

³¹¹ Jenkins, “Erdogan’s General,” 2.

Akar's presence in the cabinet as defense minister may not be able to revive the institutional autonomy of TGS due to overwhelming executive control of President Erdoğan over TSK.

e. The Role in the Legislature (Low)

According to the Articles 161 and 162 of the 1982 constitution, the preparation of budget was in the domain of the Legislature, but the TSK had maintained a de facto control of military's budget.³¹² The prerogative remained high during the era of AKP as government had also shown reluctance to improve civilian oversight over the military's budget.³¹³ The post-July 2016 reforms have placed the approval of military and other defense-related budgets under the direct control of president through the Ministry of National Defense, however.³¹⁴ The president exercises full control over budget allocation, procurement, and the creation and signing of all deals relating to military, police, and defense production.³¹⁵

f. The Role of the Military in the Intelligence Services (Low)

The National Intelligence Organization (*Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı* [MIT]) has been operating under the jurisdiction of the government, and always remained independent of the TSK's influence despite having employed former military personnel.³¹⁶ Since 1992, the Turkish government has appointed only civilians as leaders of the MIT, and therefore the MIT has assisted in the rise of civilian supremacy in the AKP government by exposing the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer cases.³¹⁷ The other influential intelligence institution, the Gendarmerie Intelligence Organization (*Jandarma İstihbarat Teşkilatı* [JIT]), was formally established in 2005 under the jurisdiction of JGK.³¹⁸ The JIT's formalization and

³¹² Bruneau, "Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries," 14.

³¹³ Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State*, 181.

³¹⁴ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 10.

³¹⁵ Gurcan, 12.

³¹⁶ Bruneau, "Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries," 15.

³¹⁷ Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State*, 182.

³¹⁸ Söyler.

enhanced cooperation with MIT under AKP rule did increase TSK's influence in intelligence;³¹⁹ the changes to the Gendarmerie command structure from TSK to the Ministry of the Interior has eliminated the TSK's already feeble role in Turkish intelligence, however.

g. Relationship with Police (Low)

The TSK has remained involved in domestic security of the country—through the policing role of the JGK—according to the provision provided by the Turkish Armed Forces Internal Law (1961), the 1982 Constitution, and the National Security Council Law (1983).³²⁰ During peacetime, the JGK was controlled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs; the JGK has been operating without any effective civilian control and oversight, however, primarily due to the fact that TSK maintained the functional control—including promotions, training, and budget allocation—of JGK as an integral part of military forces.³²¹ Decree No 668 (27 July 2016) authorized the Ministry of the Interior to exercise complete control and oversight over JGK through handling budget allocation, promotions, and procurements.³²² Allocation of a separate budget amounting to USD 3.0 billion for the Gendarmerie in 2018 by the Turkish government,³²³ and a procurement plan for advanced helicopters, air-defense capability, and drones for JGK,³²⁴ have completely abolished the TSK's involvement in domestic security.

³¹⁹ Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State*, 182.

³²⁰ Bruneau, "Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries," 16.

³²¹ Bruneau.

³²² Yeşiltaş and Aslan, "The Road to July 15 in the Turkish Armed Forces and Combat Effectiveness in Its Aftermath," 14.

³²³ "Turkey: Defense Technology and Equipment," in *Turkey Country Commercial Guide*, *export.gov*, 30 July 2018, <https://www.export.gov/apex/article2?id=Turkey-Defense-Technology-and-Equipment>.

³²⁴ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 3.

h. The System for Promoting the Military (Low)

Traditionally, the promotion and retirement plan for senior military officers was finalized in an annual meeting of the Supreme Military Council (YAŞ) and later put up to MoD for approval. The restructuring of YAŞ, including more civilian members and change of traditional venue for the annual meeting from the general staff's headquarters to the residence of the prime minister, signaled the civilian supremacy.³²⁵ Moreover, the promotion criteria for the complete officer corps was revised and MoD was declared as final approving authority for promotion of all officers.³²⁶ Presently, after Erdoğan declared his executive presidency, the promotion of junior officers is the prerogative of President Erdoğan rather than the military commanders, and allegiance to the president has become the criterion for promotion in the military rather than competence and merit.³²⁷

i. The Role of the Military in State Enterprises (Low)

Until 2016, TSK has been operating various extra-governmental economic companies under the umbrella of the Turkish Armed Forces Foundation (TSKGV) to expand military resources and economic gains.³²⁸ Like TSK, the companies tied to TJSGV were never subjected to parliamentary control and oversight.³²⁹ The current reforms have eliminated the TSK's control over these organizations and have empowered the president as final authority for budget allocation, procurement, and signing of any deals for the companies.³³⁰

³²⁵ Gurcan and Gisclon, "From Autonomy to Full Fledged Civilian Control," 3.

³²⁶ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 5.

³²⁷ Jenkins, "Erdoğan's General," 2.

³²⁸ Bruneau, "Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries," 17.

³²⁹ Söyler, *The Turkish Deep State*, 181.

³³⁰ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 12.

j. The Role of the Military in the Judiciary (Low)

The role of TSK in the judiciary was reduced with the replacement of military judges with civilian counterparts in the State Security Courts in 1999³³¹ and subsequently with the elimination of the provision for military courts from the constitution.³³² The TSK resisted the civilian supremacy in the legal system but other reforms suggested by the EU further eroded the military prerogative in the legal system of the country.³³³ The post-July 2016 reforms have further strengthened civilian control over the military courts and have an aim to completely eliminate the military justice system from the Turkish judiciary.³³⁴

According to Stepan's prerogative model, the overall score of CMR in Turkey is now low, after it had been assessed as moderate to high by Bruneau et al. in 2013.³³⁵ The analysis of TSK's prerogative reveals two important observations: (1) the aim for reduction in prerogative appears to punish the Turkish military rather than to strengthen the democratic institutions and (2) all the power is concentrated in a single authority. Apparently, the low-prerogative situation looks good because having more civilian control over the military results in less probability of military intervention in politics; this may lead to discontent in the military, however, particularly the TSK, which had enjoyed a high degree of prerogatives in past. According to Bruneau and Tollefson, the military views these prerogatives as their institutional right to exercise governance over their internal affairs.³³⁶ The Turkish CMR does not indicate a balanced framework that grants civilian supremacy as well as effective autonomy to TSK for maintaining its institutional identity. The abrupt reduction in TSK's ability to control its internal affairs—training and promotion policies—may develop elements to fight against the external civilian control and result in undesirable political instability in Turkey.

³³¹ Kutay, "Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey," 14.

³³² Bruneau, "Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries," 18.

³³³ Bruneau.

³³⁴ Gurcan and Gisclon, "From Autonomy to Full Fledged Civilian Control," 3.

³³⁵ Bruneau, "Civil-Military Relations in Muslim Countries," 19.

³³⁶ Thomas C. Bruneau and Scott D. Tollefson, "Civil-Military Relations in Brazil: A Reassessment," in *Journal of Defense Resources Management*, 4, no. 2, 2013: 119.

C. THE DEMOCRATIC MILITARY REFORMS: SERRA'S THREE-DIMENSIONAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of post-2016 reforms in Turkish CMR according to Serra's three-dimensional model reveals a declining trend in professionalism of TSK, divergence from its institutional values, and extensive undemocratic civilian control over the military. Traditionally, the TSK had maintained its institutional identity in terms of its traditions, norms, values, and Kemalist principles and is depicted as X3 on the horizontal axis for professionalism. Since 2000, the AKP government undertook various unprecedented legal reforms to bring TSK under civilian control without altering its institutional identity.³³⁷ The post-2016 purges have transformed the TSK's institutional identity,³³⁸ however, as the AKP government has altered the Kemalist ideology of TSK through changing military educational curriculum.³³⁹ The officers having strong beliefs for modernizing the TSK as per NATO standards were expelled due to purges after the failed coup attempt, which has adversely affected the TSK's institutional identity.³⁴⁰ The other factor that has pushed TSK's professionalism toward an occupational army is the new officer promotion and appointment policy, where the allegiance to the president has become the criterion for promotion in the military rather than professional competence and merit.³⁴¹ The situation has resulted in institutional rivalries and frictions within the Turkish military, similar friction and rivalry was visible between two very senior officers—General Aksakalli and General Metin—during Operation Euphrates Shield.³⁴²

The shift in the balance toward an occupational military has not only changed the identity of TSK but also has politicized the military into various factions including pragmatists or opportunists who are only concerned about their careers and

³³⁷ Sarigil, "The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?" 176.

³³⁸ Gurcan and Gisclon, "What Is the Turkish Military's Strategic Identity after July 15?" 1.

³³⁹ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 5.

³⁴⁰ Gurcan and Gisclon, "What Is the Turkish Military's Strategic Identity after July 15?" 1.

³⁴¹ Jenkins, "Erdogan's General," 2.

³⁴² Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 9–13.

transformationalists who are unhappy with the current reforms in TSK and are staunch supporters of Kemalist ideology.³⁴³ Mostly, senior officers have strong anti-NATO and anti-American sentiments and want to completely isolate TSK from the military system being followed in the Western countries.³⁴⁴ There is a large group of officers in junior and senior ranks of the TAF who are uncomfortable with the existing reforms and can form an anti-Erdoğan block within the officer corps; there is a rising trend in the officer corps of TSK, however, to align themselves with officers—outside their command—in favor of the status quo and pro-Erdoğan sentiments.³⁴⁵ Overall, the TSK is divided into “left-leaning traditionalists” (anti-Erdoğan) officers and “less-capable conservative” officers with Islamist leaning (pro-Erdoğan).³⁴⁶ The factionalism within TSK is a source of conflict within the Erdoğan administration, as all the coups in modern Turkish history—except 1980—were initiated by a discontented group of officers. Figure 4 shows Serra’s three-dimensional model explaining the as it relates to partial military reforms in Turkey.

³⁴³ Gurcan and Gisclon, “What Is the Turkish Military’s Strategic Identity after July 15?” 2–3.

³⁴⁴ Gurcan and Gisclon, 4.

³⁴⁵ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 9.

³⁴⁶ Gurcan.

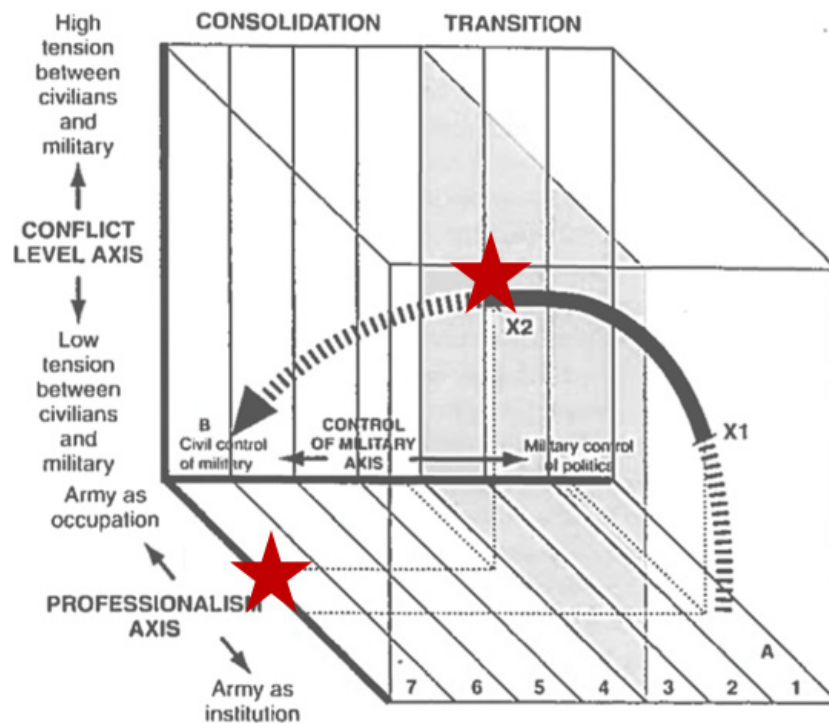


Figure 4. Serra's Three-Dimensional Model:
An Example of Partial Military Reforms³⁴⁷

Once we move along the control of military axis, it appears that, during the government of AKP, and particularly after the failed coup attempt in July 2016, the relative power of the elected civilian government in politics has increased, and civilian institutes are able to exercise an unprecedented greater degree of subjective control over the Turkish military rather than objective civilian control. Huntington argues that “objective civilian control” brings professional competence and minimizes military involvement in politics through establishing democratic control over the military without undermining the military’s autonomy.³⁴⁸ On the contrary, violation of the military’s traditions, professionalism, merit, promoting partisan interests in military, and ambiguous directives or guidance to the military by the civilian government leads to “subjective civilian

³⁴⁷ Adapted from Serra, “What Is Military Reform?” 64.

³⁴⁸ Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 80.

control.”³⁴⁹ According to Huntington, “the essence of objective civilian control is the recognition of autonomous military professionalism; the essence of subjective civilian control is denial of an independent military sphere.”³⁵⁰ The current civil-military relations in Turkey are a classical example of “subjective civilian control” due to total disregard of and disrespect for the military’s tradition, merit, professional norms, establishing a “one-man show,” and displaying lack of trust between civilian leadership and military. The subjective civilian control undermines the military professionalism and ultimately hinders achievement of national interest and security.³⁵¹

The analysis of democratic reform for TSK through Serra’s framework reveals that the government has focused only on subordinating the military under undemocratic civilian control without evaluating the prospects of continuity and possible resistance by TSK. The AKP government has also intervened in the Kemalist ideology of TSK by changing the education curriculum in all military institutes and abruptly eliminated the prerogative of military commanders to make decisions within military institutional affairs. It is difficult to measure the exact level of civilian control and military autonomy; nonetheless, the point “X2” explains the current situation of the Turkish CMR. The military has started to follow a path toward civilian control and left the traditions of being an institutional army; the existence of a certain level of conflict between the military and civilian government, however, cannot be overruled due to the changes in TSK’s ideology and heavily influential presidential power in overall control of military. The other factor that has determined the situation in Turkey at point “X2” is the undemocratic norms being instituted by AKP in government institutions, military, and society, which have stopped the process of democratic consolidation in Turkey. According to Serra’s framework, the major issues with post-2016 reforms include: (1) all efforts are made on the control of military axis; (2) reforms have intruded on the Kemalist ideology of TSK, which may become a potential

³⁴⁹ Huntington, 81.

³⁵⁰ Huntington, 83.

³⁵¹ Sarigil, “The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?” 185.

source of conflict in the future; and (3) the appointment of active-duty military officers in the cabinet exhibits poor prospects for the continuity of reforms.

D. ANALYSIS

Overall, the AKP government has taken various undemocratic steps including: (1) the referendum in 2017, which was conducted under a state of emergency; (2) general elections that were conducted earlier in June 2018 instead of the planned date in November, 2018 and incidents of violence and intimidation by law enforcement agencies that were also reported on the day of election; (3) most leaders of opposition parties were arrested for alleged ties with PKK; and (4) media coverage was restricted to pro-AKP reporting only.³⁵² As a result of these elections, President Erdoğan has gathered all the power in his hand with an authority to bypass essential checks and balances vital for democratic norms in the country.³⁵³ Indeed, the Freedom House score for Turkey in 2018 is “32/100 (0=Least Free, 100=Most Free),” as Turkish society is experiencing severe abuses of civil liberties, disregard of political rights, absence of freedom of expression, and high levels of corruption.³⁵⁴ It can be argued that TSK is being subjected to civilian yet non-democratic control while the government, along with society, is moving away from democratic norms, and therefore democratic progress in Turkey is almost negligible.

Consequently, the current shift in Turkish CMR has diminished the TSK’s role in politics and apparently the desired level of civilian control has been achieved. The AKP government has only focused on mass purges of military personnel, abrupt withdrawal of TSK’s institutional autonomy, and establishing subjective control through executive presidency instead of strengthening the democratic institutions for maintaining a balance between control and effectiveness. This subjective control has resulted in disrespect of

³⁵² Arlene Getz, “Commentary Five Questions: Turkey is No Longer a Democracy,” *Reuters*, 25 June 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-getz-turkey-commentary/commentary-five-questions-turkey-is-no-longer-a-democracy-idUSKBN1JL2SN>.

³⁵³ David Brennan, “Is Turkey Still a Democracy? Erdogan Assumes Sweeping New Powers After Election Win,” *Newsweek*, 25 June 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/turkey-still-democracy-erdogan-assumes-sweeping-new-powers-election-win-993218>.

³⁵⁴ Turkey Profile: Freedom in the World 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/turkey>.

TSK's traditions, disregard of military hierarchical command and control, and, above all, affected the Kemalist ideology. On one hand, the subjective control may give false feeling of accomplishment to the civilian government, but, on the other hand, it damages the professionalism of the military and does not favor the protection of national interest.³⁵⁵ Historically, all coups in the Republic of Turkey—except the coup of 1980—were attempted by a discontented faction within the Turkish military, and the current split of TSK within two distinct factions may result in another coup attempt in coming years. The Turkish government must undertake democratic reforms for both the military and society, and most importantly, the civilian authorities empowered to exercise democratic civilian control over military must also be subjected to democratic processes.³⁵⁶ The government needs to institute processes that ensure a balance between civilian control and effectiveness of the Turkish armed forces.

³⁵⁵ Sarigil, "The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?" 185.

³⁵⁶ Serra, "What Is Military Reform?" 23.

IV. THE IMPACT OF POST-2016 CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS ON TSK'S OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The post-2016 shift in Turkish CMR has resulted in ambiguous management of Turkey's national security apparatus due to the unclear role of the TGS in areas like strategic planning, personnel management (including recruitment), professional military education, and promotion. These developments have had deleterious effects on the military effectiveness in fulfilling their roles and missions of fighting war and terrorism due to lack of interagency coordination and insufficient resources.³⁵⁷ In addition, the lack of unambiguous political directives, inefficient assimilation of civil-military reforms, and very low level of cooperation between all three services due to a power struggle among military elites have not only led to increased muddles in handling of military affairs but also may have adversely affected the operational effectiveness of TAF in combating terrorism.³⁵⁸ The purpose of this chapter is to study the impact of post-2016 transformation in Turkish CMR on TAF's operational effectiveness by assessing two major operations conducted by TAF: Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) in 2016 and Operation Olive Branch (OOB) in 2018.

A. OPERATION EUPHRATES SHIELD

In June 2015, Erdoğan had a plan to launch a military offensive in Syria, which was rejected by TGS; the situation changed after the failed coup attempt, however.³⁵⁹ Finally, on 24 August 2016—just thirty days after instituting new reforms in Turkish CMR and mass purges against the coup plotters—the Turkish military launched Operation Euphrates Shield (*Fırat Kalkanı Operasyonu*) in response to the number of attacks by the Islamic

³⁵⁷ The discussion in Chapter III under Matei's framework may be referred to in this regard, where plan and resources were analyzed as low. Matei notes that the requirement for effectiveness in fulfilling the roles and missions of fighting war and terrorism need a high level of plan, structure (interagency coordination), and resources. Matei, "A New Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations," 33.

³⁵⁸ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 12.

³⁵⁹ Jenkins, "Erdoğan's General," 2.

State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), Kurdistan Worker's Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* – PKK), and Democratic Union Party (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat* – PYD) in various parts of Turkey.³⁶⁰ The OES continued for almost seven months and concluded on 31 March 2017.³⁶¹ On 30 November 2016—almost three months after the launch of OES—the National Security Council (NSC) stated that the OES was initiated to maintain border security and confront terrorist activities by ISIS along with its affiliates according to Article 51 of the UN Charter.³⁶² The OES—besides being an offensive military campaign against ISIS and PKK—was also a political operation against non-state actors who aggravated the situation of “being opponents and allies.”³⁶³ Initially, the OES was planned to secure the Turkish border; it gradually expanded southwards beyond its initial objective, however, until the capture of al-Bab located north of Syrian-government-controlled Aleppo.³⁶⁴

OES was successful on the tactical level and brought improvement in TAF's capability to fight unconventional warfare in an urban scenario; the campaign lacked good management and coordination at the diplomatic-political level, however.³⁶⁵ The first sign of poor CMR under the new setup was the appointment of Lieutenant General Zekai Aksakalli—who gained popularity in pro-AKP media after 15 July 2016—as commander of OES by Erdoğan without considering his suitability for the task.³⁶⁶ This resulted in a military shambles as General Aksakalli had little experience in employing armor and artillery; therefore, he designed, planned, and executed the OES as a special forces operation.³⁶⁷ The TAF did achieve its tactical goal during the initial part of the campaign

³⁶⁰ Ayşe Sözen Usluer, “The July 15 Failed Coup Attempt and Its Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Bilgi* 79 (2016): 39.

³⁶¹ Murat Yeşiltaş, Merve Seren, and Necdet Özçelik, “*Operation Euphrates Shield: Implementation and Lessons Learned*,” Ankara: SETA (2017), 12.

³⁶² Can Kasapoğlu and Sinan Ülgen, “*Operation Euphrates Shield and the al-Bab Campaign: A Strategic Assessment*,” Ankara: EDAM (2017), 2.

³⁶³ Yeşiltaş, Seren, and Özçelik. “*Operation Euphrates Shield: Implementation and Lessons Learned*,” 10.

³⁶⁴ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 12.

³⁶⁵ Gurcan.

³⁶⁶ Jenkins, “Erdoğan's General,” 2.

³⁶⁷ Jenkins.

including capture of Jarbulus; TAF suffered more casualties once the OES reached the al-Bab stage, however, due to its being an ISIS stronghold to the west of the Euphrates River.³⁶⁸ General Aksakalli and his team—comprised mainly of special forces planning staff—at the Turkish operation center in Kilis failed to plan and did not cater to the expected possession and employment of improvised explosive devices (IED) and antitank guided missiles by ISIS.³⁶⁹ The poor assessment of the adversary’s capabilities due to lack of appropriate expertise of the planner of the OES resulted in a higher casualty rate of Turkish soldiers.

The situation warranted TAF to alter its force-generation strategy with a combination of forces having expertise in conventional and unconventional warfare including armor, artillery, and special forces that have some experience of counter-terrorism operations against the PKK.³⁷⁰ The support from the Free Syrian Army (FSA) was also reduced as many groups of the FSA deserted due to internal disputes and poor discipline. As a result, all battalions of the 2nd Armored Brigade – Istanbul and the 20th Armored Brigade, equipped with Leopard 2A4 tanks, M60T tanks, and T-122 Sakarya multiple launch rocket system (MLRS), under the command of General İsmail Metin Temel, were deployed by TAF.³⁷¹ The conventional capabilities, due to the high maneuverability of the Leopard A24 tanks and high firepower of the T-122 Sakarya MLRS, resulted in capture of the village of Dabiq in ten minutes, which was a significant contribution to the taking of al-Bab.³⁷² General Aksakalli purportedly viewed the increased power of General Metin as a threat to his stature in Ankara, which may have led to friction between the two generals and greater mismanagement of the planning and conduct of

³⁶⁸ Kasapoğlu and Ülgen, “*Operation Euphrates Shield and the al-Bab Campaign: A Strategic Assessment*,” 3.

³⁶⁹ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 13.

³⁷⁰ Kasapoğlu and Ülgen, “*Operation Euphrates Shield and the al-Bab Campaign: A Strategic Assessment*,” 3.

³⁷¹ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 13.

³⁷² Yeşiltaş, Seren, and Özçelik. “*Operation Euphrates Shield: Implementation and Lessons Learned*,” 28.

OES.³⁷³ During this time, the situation became complicated as the air support from the anti-ISIS coalition forces almost ended and indicated the diplomatic-political failure of Ankara for convincing the U.S. and Russia to provide air support during the southward campaign beyond Dabiq.³⁷⁴

During the phase planned for capturing al-Bab, General Aksakalli and his team in the Kilis operation center did not make the correct assessment of the situation and failed to make effective plans to counter the tactics of ISIS, including “suicide-vehicle-born IEDs (SVBIEDs),” subterranean or tunnel warfare, and anti-tank missile systems.³⁷⁵ Overall, the al-Bab phase of OES was initiated with poor planning, insufficient number of specialized units and fire support, poor integration of “intelligence-surveillance-target acquisition-reconnaissance (ISTAR) capabilities,” and almost no air support.³⁷⁶ The deficiency of men and equipment along with absence of tactical coordination and support was a source of frustration for FSA groups that restricted them from playing a decisive role in the campaign.

During OES, 69 Turkish soldiers were killed and 220 were injured, mostly due to VBIED attacks and roadside IEDs, whereas 400 FSA soldiers were killed and around 1,000 were injured.³⁷⁷ In addition to human losses, TAF also suffered severe material damage, including the loss of eleven tanks, six armored vehicles, and twelve Turkish ACV-15 armored personnel carrier vehicles.³⁷⁸ One could argue that these losses could have been reduced through better planning, training, and employment of personnel with expertise to cater for IBEDs, VBIEDs, ATMs, and subterranean warfare in an urban scenario. The failure to provide air support and the unavailability of medical air evacuation during OES

³⁷³ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 14.

³⁷⁴ Yeşiltaş, Seren, and Özçelik. “*Operation Euphrates Shield: Implementation and Lessons Learned*,” 28.

³⁷⁵ Gurcan, “Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising,” 13.

³⁷⁶ Gurcan.

³⁷⁷ Gurcan, 14.

³⁷⁸ Gurcan.

adversely affected the morale of Turkish soldiers.³⁷⁹ The OES did achieve its tactical objectives, but it suffered due to unforeseen prolonged engagement, absence of clear political direction, and failure of political-diplomatic efforts by Ankara to get required support from coalition partners.

B. OPERATION OLIVE BRANCH

On 20 January 2018, the Turkish military launched an offensive campaign—Operation Olive Branch (*Zeytin Dalı Harekâtı*)—in northwestern Syria to repel the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and People’s Protection Unit (YPG).³⁸⁰ General İsmail Metin Temel, as commander of OOB, ensured that planning was approached differently in light of the lessons learned from OES. Airpower was consequently utilized as a first option to soften the adversary’s capability and to ensure maximum protection of Turkish troops. In OES, only 93 targets were engaged by the Turkish Air Force, whereas 261 targets were destroyed through air support during OOB.³⁸¹

On the first day of OOB, the Turkish Air Force conducted the highest-intensity operation in the Turkish cross-border campaign since 2016 and engaged 108 targets with 72 combat aircraft; a total of 186 sorties were flown in ten days to neutralize 261 targets.³⁸² In order to achieve this high tempo operation, the Turkish Air Force utilized almost one-fourth of its entire fleet of combat aircraft, for which all air assets from various bases in Diyarbakir, Incirlik, Eskisehir, Merzifon, Konya, and Balikesir participated in the operation.³⁸³ One could argue that the proclaimed higher sortie rate by TAF seems trivial in comparison to the average rate of 352 combat sorties per day—destroying an average of 205 targets per day—maintained by the Israeli Air Force (IAF) engagement with the Lebanese Hezbollah in 2006.³⁸⁴ The most important factor affecting the high-tempo

³⁷⁹ Gurcan, 15.

³⁸⁰ Can Kasapoğlu and Sinan Ülgen, “*Operation Olive Branch: A Political-Military Assessment*,” Ankara: EDAM (2018/2), 3.

³⁸¹ Kasapoğlu and Ülgen, “*Operation Olive Branch: A Political-Military Assessment*,” 5.

³⁸² Kasapoğlu and Ülgen, 4.

³⁸³ Kasapoğlu and Ülgen, 6.

³⁸⁴ Kasapoğlu and Ülgen, 4.

operation was the availability of both air and ground crew. The post-2016 mass purges depleted around 280 air force combat crew including both fighter and assault helicopter pilots, which reduced the cockpit-to-pilot ratio (CPR) from 1:2 to 1:0.8.³⁸⁵ Owing to the smaller number of pilots and skilled ground crew, the Turkish Air Force could not play an effective role as per its capabilities before July 2016; therefore, after almost one month of military actions, the Turkish military could not manage to take control of any large populated area in Afrin.³⁸⁶ Due to the Turkish military's previous successful experience of utilizing attack helicopters in counter-terrorism operations against the PKK during the 1990s, the Turkish military also employed attack helicopters for close air support operations (CAS) in OOB without assessing the adversary's latest capabilities. As a result, one Turkish AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopter was shot down by a Soviet-made SA-18 MANPADS.³⁸⁷ The TGS claim of effective airpower employment against the adversary's subterranean warfare capabilities in OOB may be valid in comparison with OES;³⁸⁸ in the absence of all available facts due to little independent reporting, however, one can argue that the air power proved more effective in OOB but experienced serious problems as a result of the decreased capacity of the TAF after July 2016.

The Turkish military has been focusing on improving its capabilities to combat terrorism in urban scenarios, and the units deployed for OOB had combat experience of OES and also were given intensive urban warfare training units.³⁸⁹ Nonetheless, the high risk of inherent civilian casualties was not considered before the operation in Afrin city. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the assault on Afrin city resulted in the unlawful deaths of around 200 civilians including dozens of children and nearly 574

³⁸⁵ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 4.

³⁸⁶ "Turkey Stuck in Afrin: Casualties Grow, Olive Branch Campaign Runs Sluggish," in *EurAsia Daily*, 16 February 2018. <https://easaily.com/en/news/2018/02/16/turkey-stuck-in-afrin-casualties-grow-olive-branch-campaign-runs-sluggish>.

³⁸⁷ Kasapoğlu and Ülgen, "Operation Olive Branch: A Political-Military Assessment," 7.

³⁸⁸ Kasapoğlu and Ülgen, 5.

³⁸⁹ Kasapoğlu and Ülgen, 7.

civilian wounded, some of whom have permanent disabilities.³⁹⁰ The main reasons for these civilian casualties and injuries may include (1) heavy bombardment through air strike and artillery fire without being conscious of the collateral damage and (2) unsatisfactory training imparted to military units to conduct counter-terrorism operations in urban centers.

The OOB's political objectives include (1) to address the increased domestic pressure in response to the U.S. support to the PYD, (2) to be acknowledged as a strong and dominant actor of the Syrian problem, and (3) to deter the U.S. and NATO allies from discontinuing support to PYD.³⁹¹ Ankara has displayed almost similar political-diplomatic failures in both operations in Syria that resulted in sluggish operations; as a result, Turkey was unable to achieve its political aims. Erdoğan desires to expand the operation to Manbij and beyond, but the White House had already conveyed its concern regarding the Afrin operation and urged Turkey "to deescalate, limit its military actions and avoid civilian casualties," warning any further expansion of OOB would raise the possibilities of direct confrontation with U.S. forces.³⁹² After the capture of al-Bab during OES, Turkey faced similar opposition from both Russia and the U.S. to check its ambition of expanding operations toward Manbij.³⁹³ During OES, the Turkish military not only received intelligence and air support from U.S. forces, but was also supported by the Russian Air Force; Ankara has remained unsuccessful in receiving any support from Russia or the U.S. for Operation Olive Branch, however. Similarly, OOB received criticism from European countries. Germany suspended the ongoing upgrades of armor protection for the Leopard 2 tanks, a move that has directly affected the safety and effectiveness of Turkish troops.³⁹⁴

³⁹⁰ "Civilian Death Toll in Afrin Nears 200: Local Officials," in *Rudaw*, 27 February 2018. <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/270220183>.

³⁹¹ Kasapoğlu and Ülgen, "Operation Olive Branch: A Political-Military Assessment," 14.

³⁹² Bulent Aliriza, "Understanding Turkey's Afrin Operation," in *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, Washington, DC (25 January 2018), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/understanding-turkeys-afrin-operation>.

³⁹³ Francesco D'Alema, "The Evolution of Turkey's Syria Policy," Working Papers, IAI 17/28 October 2017, 14.

³⁹⁴ Paul Iddon, "Turkey's Olive Branch May Prove Disastrously Different Than Euphrates Shield," in *Rudaw*, 06 February 2018, <http://www.rudaw.net/english/analysis/05022018>.

Such political-diplomatic failures may hinder Turkish military effectiveness in any similar operations in the future.

Operations Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch demonstrated key deficiencies that stem from the post-July 15 purge. Many facts affecting the effectiveness of TSK are still unknown or unclear, however, due to the lack of independent press coverage and detailed assessments. The analysis of TSK's operation during 2015 in Diyarbakir, Cizre, Silopi, and Nusaybin reveals human rights violations and abuses.³⁹⁵ The operation continued for 21 months including a 134-day curfew, and as a result, 2,748 died, 0.4 million civilians were temporarily displaced, and 0.1 million lost their homes.³⁹⁶ The prolonged operation and high death toll suggests that the TSK had serious logistical problems and/or tactical deficiencies in taking on the PKK in 2015. Therefore, one can argue that it is possible that the TSK has always had capacity/capability problems but now there is the likelihood that the problems are worse.

³⁹⁵ International Crisis Group, “*Managing Turkey’s PKK Conflict: The Case of Nusaybin*,” Europe Report N° 243, 2 May 2017, 1, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/243-managing-turkeys-pkk-conflict-case-nusaybin>.

³⁹⁶ Nigar Göksel, and Berkay Mandıracı. “New Turkey–PKK Peace Talks: An Inevitability Postponed,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2016), 60.

V. CONCLUSION

The Turkish CMR presents a unique case study. The Turkish military historically was never subordinate to civilian control and oversight. Rather the TSK emerged as a strong player in the country's politics after the creation of the Republic of Turkey. The Turkish military considered itself as integral to the founding of the Turkish Republic and has always placed itself as an institution above society by assuming the self-appointed role of guardian of Atatürk's principles, particularly nationalism and secularism.³⁹⁷ The Turkish military not only kept an eye on the Turkish political process but also remained actively involved in politics through a number of military interventions. The coup of 1960 resulted in drafting a new 1961 constitution under the influence of the military, and the National Security Council (MGK) was created under Article 111 of the new constitution that strengthened and legitimized the TSK's role in politics.³⁹⁸

The coup of 1971 resulted in some amendments to the constitution and further strengthened the status of MGK by including armed forces "commanders" rather than "representatives" in the council; it granted additional powers to MGK to make recommendations to the government on non-military matters like Islam, ethnic secessionism, and the perceived threat of communist activists.³⁹⁹ The coup of 1980 resulted in restructuring of the political system by altering the legal structure of the government, excluding the old political players in the new legal framework, and ensuring that the military attained enough power to observe and influence the new government.⁴⁰⁰ The amended constitution imposed restrictions on political liberties, ended the bicameral system, and abolished the Senate created in 1960.⁴⁰¹ The chief of staff and MGK were empowered to nominate the candidate for Higher Education Council (HEC) and hence the

³⁹⁷ Aknur, "Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey," 33.

³⁹⁸ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 18.

³⁹⁹ Waldman and Caliskan.

⁴⁰⁰ John H. McFadden, "Civil-Military Relations in the Third Turkish Republic," in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 39, No.1 (Winter 1985), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4326974>, 70.

⁴⁰¹ Harris, "Military Coups and Turkish Democracy, 1960–1980," 209.

military was able to ensure that the educational curriculum of Turkey was aligned with Kemalist ideology.⁴⁰² The military achieved unprecedented prerogatives in political affairs after the 1982 coup; nonetheless, TSK remained away from active intervention in politics during the era between the late 1980s and the early 1990s.⁴⁰³

The escalation of insurgencies by the PKK and rise of political Islam both in the political and social life of Turkey brought the TSK back into the forefront of Turkish politics.⁴⁰⁴ Therefore, due to the fight with the PKK, the military continued to enjoy a significant degree of prerogatives during the government of PM Tansu Çiller (1993–1996).⁴⁰⁵ In 2002, the AKP emerged as a strong party in Turkish politics and, most importantly, its leadership was able to maintain a balance between civilian control and military dominance without any serious conflict with the military.⁴⁰⁶ During 2000–2007, the AKP government was able to gradually reduce the military’s prerogatives through introduction of various harmonization packages and constitutional amendments.⁴⁰⁷ Besides the rise of the AKP as a dominant political entity, the Turkish accession process to the European Union played a pivotal role in bringing the dramatic changes in civil-military relations and reducing the military’s role in politics during this time period.⁴⁰⁸ The first step toward reforms to bring the military under civilian democratic oversight and control was to restructure the MGK to reduce its influence in politics through necessary amendments in the 1982 constitution.⁴⁰⁹ Other significant factors leading to the major development in civil-military relations in Turkey included changes in the military legal system and unveiling of various investigations like the Sledgehammer case in 2003 and Ergenekon case in 2007.

⁴⁰² Jenkins, *Context and Circumstances*, 44.

⁴⁰³ Jenkins, 39.

⁴⁰⁴ Jenkins, 39–40.

⁴⁰⁵ Aknur, “Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” 40.

⁴⁰⁶ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and Its Discontents*, 21.

⁴⁰⁷ Aknur, “Towards More Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Turkey,” 38.

⁴⁰⁸ Kutay, “Civilian and Military Relations in Turkey: A Historical Survey,” 13.

⁴⁰⁹ Waldman and Caliskan, *The New Turkey and its Discontents*, 22.

The failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016 has led to unprecedented shift in Turkish CMR. The government issued more than ten decrees aimed at (1) reorganizing the TSK, (2) purging Gülenists in military and bureaucracy, (3) establishing an executive presidency, and (4) establishing dominant presidential control over CMR.⁴¹⁰ The executive decrees brought major institutional changes in command and control of TGS and TSK. The new reforms excluded the office of prime minister and TGS from the traditional military chain of command and enabled the president to exercise direct control on TSK through the heavily empowered Defense Ministry.⁴¹¹ The Turkish Army, Air Force, and Navy were placed under the direct control of the Defense Ministry and the status of TGS as the top commander was abolished; TGS was restricted to a coordinator role only.⁴¹² The Defense Ministry was empowered as final authority for deciding promotion, PME, and other military affairs including procurements, operations, intelligence, the judicial system, and logistics.⁴¹³

The basic theme plan of the new institutional layout for TSK focuses primarily on establishing a very persuasive presidential control over every department of the defense setup, even at the cost of having an ineffective military. Erdoğan has been successful in establishing the executive presidency by winning Turkey's presidential election on 24 June 2018 and will keep holding the position of president until 2023 in the Republic of Turkey.⁴¹⁴ Furthermore, Erdoğan's decision to appoint an active-duty military officer—the former Chief of Staff General Hulusi Akar—as defense minister on 09 July 2018⁴¹⁵ and General Yaşar Güler as TGS will further strengthen his already-established presidential control over the Turkish military at least until 2023. Erdoğan's personal involvement in

⁴¹⁰ Gurcan, "Tentative Transition, Civil Military Relations in Turkey Since July 15 Uprising," 2.

⁴¹¹ Gurcan, 2–3.

⁴¹² Gurcan, 4.

⁴¹³ Gurcan, 3–5.

⁴¹⁴ Burak Ege Bekdil, "Erdoğan Appoints Active Duty Military Commander as Turkey's Defense Minister," in *Defense News*, 09 July 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2018/07/09/erdogan-appoints-active-duty-military-commander-as-turkeys-defense-minister/>.

⁴¹⁵ Jenkins, "Erdoğan's General," 2.

promotion of junior officers will result in poor command and control by the military's commanders, and the future status of the Turkish officer corps is likely to be more politically oriented rather than based on merit or competence.⁴¹⁶ As a result of mass purges and abrupt reduction in the number of military personnel, the opportunist or pragmatist ideology is becoming popular in the officer corps, especially in the senior ranks, which can lead to ineffective armed forces as such officers prefer short-term individual interests over the long-term strategic interests of the service.⁴¹⁷ The abrupt reduction in TSK's ability to control its internal affairs—training and promotion policies—may develop elements to fight against the external civilian control that can result in undesirable political instability in Turkey.

The current civil-military relations in Turkey are a classic example of “subjective civilian control” due to total disregard of and disrespect for the military's traditions, merit, and professional norms, establishing a one-man show and displaying a lack of trust between civilian leadership and the military. Furthermore, the Turkish CMR does not indicate a balanced framework that grants civilian supremacy as well as effective autonomy to TSK for maintaining its institutional identity and operational effectiveness. The analysis of democratic reform for TSK reveals that the government has focused only on subordinating the military to civilian control without evaluating the prospects of continuity and possible resistance by TSK. The AKP government has also intruded on the Kemalist ideology of TSK by changing the education curriculum in all military institutes and eliminating the prerogative of military commanders to make decisions within military institutional affairs. The analysis of Operations Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch reveals some positive tactical outcomes, but the display of unplanned sluggish operations and avoidable casualties of Turkish soldiers and innocent civilians indicates a lack of professionalism and effectiveness in TSK due to undemocratic civil-military relations in Turkey.

⁴¹⁶ Jenkins, 3.

⁴¹⁷ Gurcan and Gisclon, “What Is the Turkish Military's Strategic Identity after July 15?” 2.

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