

Turkey's 'Fractured Military' in Historical Perspective and Recommendations for a Military Reform Agenda

September 2016 | **ÖMER ASLAN**





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Layout: Jawad Abazeed
Printed in Turkey

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Executive Summary

The AK Party government's reaction to the failed July 15th coup attempt has been swift. Within a month, the government declared martial law for a three-month period, issued four decrees with the force of law, closed down all military high schools, dismissed all cadets in military schools and academies, and established a 'National Defense University' to replace them. Other changes gave the Presidency more power over the Turkish General Staff, while the army, air, and naval commands were removed from the General Staff's mandate. They will instead be put under the purview of the National Defense Ministry in both peacetime and war. The Chief of General Staff no longer has to have previously commanded a full branch of the military (air, navy, or land); any four-star general or admiral can now be appointed to the position. The Gendarmerie Command and Coast Guard have now come fully under the authority of the Interior Ministry. Proposed changes also promise a strengthened and civilianized Defense Ministry along the lines of the Pentagon. The National Defense Ministry now have civilian undersecretaries, who are decorated with military ranks for the first time.

Some observers, however, have called into question the 'unity' and 'fighting capability' of the Turkish military after the coup attempt, asking if it can still be an effective partner in the coalition fighting ISIL as well as other hostile forces at home and abroad. This paper will employ a historical perspective not only to address these claims but also make more informed recommendations on the military reforms currently on the AK Party government's agenda. This study first reveals that since Atatürk's death the Turkish military has almost always been a 'fractured' military, which means that the government has an historic opportunity now to tackle the debilitating divide. The government's intention of restructuring the national defense establishment will mark the second time this has been done since the American Military Aid Mission to Turkey shaped its modern form seventy years ago in 1949.

A particular objective of the proposed military reform is to coup-proof the political system. For this purpose, the government should work on two dimensions every successful coup attempt has to be built upon: disposition and ability. Apparently, the government needs to take such measures that the military should ideally not be disposed to intervene in politics in the first place, but even if and when the military is, it should not find the opportunity to carry out one successfully. In the planning stages, the government must pay attention to the counter-narrative being developed in opposition to these reforms by certain retired generals and politicians. The logical implication of this budding counter-claim that "the July 15th coup attempt cannot be attributed to the military" is that it is unfair for the government to reform and restructure the military.

To reduce the risks on the road ahead, the government should broaden the coalition behind

these military reforms and guard their delicate non-partisan status. It should engage the armed forces to convince them that the proposed reforms will strengthen the armed forces militarily (the chain of command will not be damaged; the military might and effectiveness of the military will be augmented; these reforms are needed; merit will be the determining principle in appointments and promotions). All parties concerned should be aware that the need for reform had previously been discussed in military circles as well. Although the content and method of reform remains contentious among generals, who probably would have preferred to keep reform a strictly military affair with little or no involvement of civilians, there is nonetheless a consensus that the military needs reform to fight enemies better in the 21st century.

As the dominant narrative as to why the coup occurred is being challenged in an attempt to question the content of the military reform begun by the government, it is important to know that the idea that military promotions and appointments were strictly based on 'merit' and not loyalty in the past is a myth. Turkish military history has been awash with officers who left the military with the bitter feeling that they were not treated on merit by their own peers and fellow military officials. **However, these personal complaints did not turn into common grievances against those at the upper echelons of the military largely because it was the military—still a legal and legitimate authority in officers' eyes—and not politicians who sealed their fate.** This means that military officers are more likely to accept 'unfair' military assignments, delays in promotions or forced retirement by the military itself than by 'elected civilians'.

The government should not have blind faith in the power of new reforms such as making the General Staff responsible to the Defense Ministry or any other civilian body. Indeed, at the time of the 1960 coup, the General Staff was under the authority of Defense Ministry

The government should not have blind faith in the power of new reforms such as making the General Staff responsible to the Defense Ministry or any other civilian body. Indeed, at the time of the 1960 coup, the General Staff was under the authority of Defense Ministry. This did nothing to stop those behind the coup. Over time, the coup plotters had found ways to circumvent obstacles created by the Defense Ministry's control over the General Staff.

The precedent of the May 27, 1960 coup, which occurred despite a democratic hierarchical relationship between the Defense Ministry and the General Staff shows that if these inter-institutional relationships are left as a simple technical and legal change without substance, this may not prevent coups in the future. In other words, if the hierarchical relationship between force commands and the Defense Ministry as well as the General Staff and Presidency (if that occurs) are formatted as vertical relationships based on subjective trust and ties, this may not hinder various types of military intervention and insubordination either.

If these inter-institutional relationships are left as a simple technical and legal change without substance, this may not prevent coups in the future

A preventative measure against future coup plots will be the relocation of the General Staff Headquarters as well as garrisons and barracks from major cities such as Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. This is another important but also a belated step. Officials concerned about this move should be



reminded that when there was an internal attempt to restructure the Military Academy in the first half of the 1960s, Behruz Çinici, the architect of Middle East Technical University, was invited to give his advice. The top item on his list was that 'the Military Academy must relocate out of town in order to satisfy your future needs.'

Those concerned about bringing the military under civilian control must keep in mind that many former military generals—who retired either under normal circumstances or due to the Balyoz and Ergenekon investigations—are very proud of the Gezi protests and the “youth activism” they saw there

These military reforms must be part of a new 'White Paper' providing updated answers to the following questions: what kind of threats is Turkey facing in its neighborhood at the moment? How powerful are these threats and what sort of weapons, tactics and strategies do they have at their disposal? Can these threats be prioritized and categorized? How are threats evolving around the globe in general? What does that mean for Turkey? And what sort of military force does Turkey need to counter these threats?

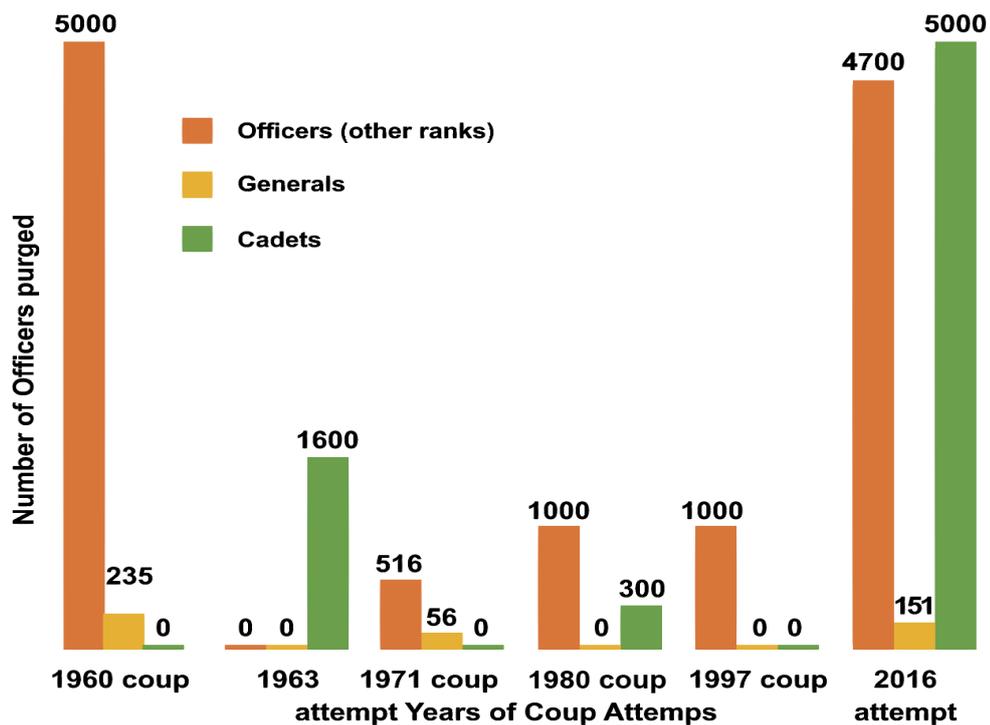
Ulvi Saran, the Former Undersecretary of Public Order and Security, has mentioned in an op-ed that establishing paramilitary groups as a counterforce to the military may also help prevent coups d'état. Indeed, this is a coup-proofing tactic many Middle Eastern and authoritarian regimes such as Russia have practiced. However, there are two reasons that strongly count against this move: First, in places where there is a national army that has a strong institutional consciousness and ethos, parallel military structures responsible to the president are detested by militaries. National armies hate rival military institutions. Secondly, at a time where there is a fixation in certain circles about alleged shift to authoritarianism in Turkey, such a move may exacerbate this perception about Turkey.

The final word of caution pertains to the fragility of the road ahead. If we remember the fact that coup attempts feed off of instability, chaos, and disorder, a traumatized, imbalanced and politicized military in the wake of a coup attempt may find it very difficult to stay out of politics in the case of Gezi-like disorder. Those concerned about bringing the military under civilian control must keep in mind that many former military generals—who retired either under normal circumstances or due to the Balyoz and Ergenekon investigations—are very proud of the Gezi protests and the “youth activism” they saw there.



Turkey's 'Fractured Military' in Historical Perspective and Recommendations for a Military Reform Agenda

The failed July 15 classical coup attempt has thrust the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) into the limelight. According to most recent figures available, more than 7,000 officers of different ranks are currently under arrest while about 4,800 officers have been dismissed from the armed forces.¹ As these numbers nearly parallel 235 generals and 5,000 officers purged from the armed forces with the financial help of the U.S. after the 1960 coup d'état, it also marks a significant proportion of generals and admirals in the Turkish military.² The chart below shows the number of officers and cadets purged from the military after each coup attempt since 1960³:



The government's reaction to the failed coup attempt has, as expected, been sharp. For instance, rather than applying a moratorium on cadet admittance in military schools for a year or two and dismissing those students currently in their final year, as was done after the 1963 failed coup attempt, which relied heavily on their support, the government issued two decrees under martial law, declared on July 20 for a three-month period, to close down all military high schools, dismiss all cadets in military schools and Military Academies, and establish a 'National Defense University', which will open in October.

But now the AK Party government has an historic opportunity to undertake a very onerous task of tackling the debilitating divide and place civil-military relations on a healthy footing.

Under the new changes brought about by these decrees, the army, air, and naval commands were placed under the Defense Ministry. If some changes can be made to the Constitution the Turkish General Staff will be made responsible directly to the President's Office. As these changes denote a structural transformation for the TAF, some observers have called into question the 'unity' and



'fighting capability' of the Turkish military after the coup attempt, claiming that it cannot be easily repaired and asking if it can still be an effective partner of the coalition fighting ISIL⁴ as well as other hostile forces at home. This paper will employ a historical perspective to not only address these claims but also make more informed recommendations on the suggested military reform and warn about possible troubles on the road to reform. I argue that since Atatürk's death the Turkish military has almost always been a 'fractured' military but now the AK Party government has an historic opportunity to undertake a very onerous task of tackling the debilitating divide and place civil-military relations on a healthy footing.

Initial Fissures

In retrospect, it was the founder of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who, as a figure who towered over the politics of the era, kept the military together and forestalled dissent within the armed forces. When Atatürk brought the army under 'civilian control', he did not do so for the sake of 'democratic civil-military relations', which did not even exist as a normative concept yet, but because he wanted a subordinate military, which happened to be the only political actor that could challenge his rule and undermine his state and nation-building project. When Atatürk died and the President's seat became contested, İsmet İnönü is said by some to have only been able to take the position rather than Marshall Fevzi Çakmak, who had then been the army chief for 23 years, due to being supported by the commanders of the 1st and 3rd armies.⁵ And this overwhelming support for İnönü within the army was what led Marshall Fevzi Çakmak to eventually endorse him. İnönü's strongman rule, however, was not left unchallenged by the new generation of 'nationalist' officers, including Colonel Alpaslan Türkeş, over the course of the 1940s.

Several sources write that a coup plot against İnönü's rule was underway inside the military in the early 1940s, though it did not succeed.⁶ Unrest within the military continued and came to a tipping point when the Republican People's Party (RPP) rigged the first multi-party elections in 1946 against the center-right Democratic Party (DP) a new glimmer of hope for many disgruntled officers. Several high-ranking officers promised the DP leaders that they would topple İnönü if he rigged the next elections. Many officers in the military, who themselves were not legally allowed to vote, actively supported the DP in the 1950 elections.⁷ After the DP won a landslide victory and formed a government, as early as 1952-53 the DP itself began to become divisive issue among officers. Several Kemalist mid-ranking officers joined NATO forces in the Korean War in the 1950s and thus witnessed how modern armies fought. After hundreds of Turkish military officers received training in the U.S. or else were trained by American officers in Turkey in the most modern techniques and weaponry, they became disillusioned with how the military was run, seeing it as having become decrepit. The chief causes of their resentment were threefold: a perception of regression from Atatürkist ideals, and most importantly secularism, under DP rule;⁸ senior generals' submissive attitude toward the DP and Americans;⁹ and a perception of senior generals as 'deadwood' obstructing upward mobility and modernization within the armed forces.

The military junta overthrew the DP on May 27th 1960 in a classical coup attempt in violation of the chain of command. However, the coup created more problems than it solved. Although reprimanded after the 1960 coup because he failed to foresee it, Fletcher Warren, the American Ambassador to Ankara, was frighteningly correct in his prophesy about the repercussions of the first coup d'état in the Turkish Republic. Warren prophesied a day after the May 27th coup that

"By its coup yesterday, the Turkish military had broken with that tradition [of remaining apolitical]. It had opened Pandora's box... I felt this morning that neither the military nor the people of Turkey had any conception of the long-range importance of what had been done yesterday morning... I felt in future, the military would find it exceedingly difficult not to become involved in any divisive political controversy that might involve the Turkish people. This idea worried me more than the coup itself."¹⁰



The coup not only “broke the moral barrier against praetorianism”¹¹ but also divided the military on two levels with the fissure on the second level being more permanent than the first. At first, the military junta, named the ‘National Unity Committee’ (NUC) and comprised of 38 members, was divided within itself over the objectives and duration of the military government. While most members of the junta were ready to hand over the government to İnönü after a brief period of military rule, others thought that the transition to democracy in 1946 had been too premature, not allowing time for the consolidation of Kemalism or for it to penetrate the masses. 14 members of the NUC, those from the second group, were exiled a few months after the coup. Tensions inside the army peaked after 235 generals and 5,000 officers were purged from the military, with a former member of the NUC calling the act a ‘massacre’.¹² The second and more permanent level of division generated by the coup on May 27 resulted from the perception that a large group of officers retained a few years after the 1960 coup that post-coup developments had represented a betrayal of their dreams and what they expected from the coup. Soon after the coup, a counter-junta emerged within the armed forces calling itself ‘The Union of the Turkish Armed Forces’ and which actively worked to put pressure on and radicalize the NUC.

These divisions resulted in two counter-coup attempts on February 22, 1962 and May 21, 1963. Although Colonel Aydemir’s coup attempt failed on February 22, the Military Academy remained very politicized. Highly concerned about the cadets, the commanders at the academy tried to ‘keep students, guns, and ammunition separate’.¹³ However, their de-politicization attempts failed when the cadets took part in Aydemir’s second attempt to dismiss the government on May 21 the next year! After that failed as well, two putschist generals (Colonel Talat Aydemir and Fethi Gürcan) were hanged, about one hundred cadets at the Military Academy were arrested, and 1459 cadets were sacked from the Military Academy.¹⁴ No officer graduated from the Military Academy for the next two years, which caused a shortage of land officers for the next two years. The rumors of coup plots never stopped. The threat of another coup was felt so acutely that President Cevdet Sunay had to say that “coups, revolutions and resistance movements are not toys for entertainment. Armed Forces cannot be the instruments of such dangerous acts.”¹⁵ However, it would be a mistake to assume that these intra-military divisions were insulated from developments within wider society.

These convulsions within the armed forces cannot be understood from the emergence of the radical left in Turkey after the 1960 coup. The Turkish Labor Party, a socialist political party, was founded in 1961 and attempted to penetrate the military and prod its officers into political activism for a future military intervention. Concurrently, a groundswell of discontent grew after secret US-Turkey bilateral agreements from the 1950s were exposed. A series of events—the U-2 spy plane incident, the Cuban missile crisis, and finally the Johnson letter in 1964—aggravated resentments against the U.S. and fed leftist and anti-imperialist sentiment. The number and ranks of officers and civilians who believed that the 1960 coup, which had claimed to represent a return to the golden days of ‘pure’ Kemalism, had failed to restore the Kemalist revolution, increased significantly. The fact that considerable number of officers in the Air Force had copies of Doğan Avcioğlu’s book, *Türkiye’nin Düzeni* [Order in Turkey], is testimony to the then prevalence of nationalist-leftist feeling in the military. According to Avcioğlu, “this was the first time the book and the gun had come this close to one another.”¹⁶ The tide of socialist/communist influence in Turkey worried the Americans so much that an American cultural attaché attempted to neutralize the impact of Doğan Avcioğlu’s book, *Türkiye’nin Düzeni*, which was seen as a Marxist exposition on the Turkish economic order, by funding the publication of books countering it from a free-enterprise capitalist perspective.¹⁷ The threat from socialist infiltration into the military looked so threatening to the General Staff that it



distributed a booklet entitled 'Methods of Fighting Communism' to all barracks in 1966.¹⁸ Several mid- as well as high-ranking generals continued to express discontent over how the country was run while at the same time discussing among themselves how to pave the way for change.¹⁹

By 1968, many mid-to-senior-ranking generals shared the anti-imperialist sentiment in the streets. As one author wrote recently, "opposition to the [U.S.] Sixth Fleet visits had spread from youth activists to the upper echelons of the Turkish Navy."²⁰ Chief of General Staff Memduh Tağmaç felt the need to address 300 officers on March 3 1971,²¹ both threatening and assuring them in a last-minute attempt to insist that senior generals were doing everything necessary within the bounds of the constitution and democratic regime and therefore, that junior officers should remain calm and stay away from politics.²² What was worse was that the commanding generals were divided among themselves about how to best counter the threat from the left.²³ Senior commanders were reportedly of the same opinion that the armed forces remained at the center of politics following the May 27 coup and that it teemed with coup zealots and adventurers.²⁴

This unstable process ended in the March 12, 1971 military memorandum issued to Demirel's Justice Party (JP) government. With this ultimatum given to the government, the General Staff preempted a radical leftist-coup in the making. Before it made this move on March 12, the General Staff dismissed 56 generals and 516 colonels from the military.²⁵ Cadets at all Military Academies were so politicized and divided leftist feeling was so pervasive in military schools that the General Staff saw leftist infiltration as a real threat to the entire military as an institution.²⁶ The Air Force Commander, Muhsin Batur, who was among the plotters against the JP government at first, but then took part in the attempt to preempt the leftist coup, classified the entire officer corps into four categories: "commanding Generals, meaning General Batur and others; radical-leftist leaning officers; those in favor of the status-quo, and bystanders who were not involved in any of this."²⁷

The military did not find internal peace after the 1971 military intervention. Internal unrest continued over the next few years with the trial of the March 9 coup plotters after the March 12 memorandum, some of whom had been involved in the 1960 coup d'état as well. Several issues continued to inflame anti-imperialist sentiment, however: American pressure on the post-coup Erim government, which situated itself at the center of the political spectrum, to stop poppy cultivation in certain cities in Anatolia, combined with the American arms embargo after the Turkish military operation in Cyprus in 1974. These sanctions on Turkey were perceived as a NATO and US betrayal of Turkey and led many to give even more credit to those who questioned Turkey's NATO membership. We should keep in mind that May 27 coup was declared as an official national holiday under the name of "Freedom and Constitution Day". The May 27 revolution still reverberated so strongly among left-oriented military and civilian circles as a yardstick that Chief of General Staff Semih Sancar promised in 1974 to protect its ideals and outcomes.²⁸ General Sancar harkened back to 12 March 1971 too in a speech, describing it as "a hideous effort by the ignorant to break the army's unity through ideological deviations."²⁹ Divisions between the left and right were still rampant in the officers' mess in some military schools between 1975 and 1979.³⁰

A Coup that Disguised Dissent and Sowed More Divisions

The 1980 coup d'état temporarily capped all ideological divisions within the armed forces. The decision to intervene was taken by the General Staff and implemented unanimously. 300 cadets who entered the Military Academies in 1978 and were suspected of leftist indoctrination—and accused of being communists—were summarily dismissed in the aftermath of the coup.³¹ While the armed forces initially remained quiet after the coup, some developments, such as the deliberate regime support for the rise of Islam against the left; the sudden acceptance by the military government of the Rogers Plan, which allowed Greece to return to NATO after seven years; and Özal's rise as a conservative-Muslim leader altered perceptions of the 1980 coup in a



negative direction.³² Even members of the 1960 junta castigated the 1980 coup (as well as 12 March 1971) as deliberate efforts to dismantle the progressive and revolutionary achievements of May 27th.³³ Staff Colonel Suphi Karaman, a member of the 1960 junta, saw a “shining example of the 1960 coup among the ruins of 1980 coup”. He thought that 1980 coup demolished everything that the 1960 coup movement had achieved.³⁴

Although the 1980 coup d'état crushed the left (as well as nationalists on the right), the anti-imperialist wave did not die down. According to some accounts, it lived on and even morphed into a more coherent form with the end of the Cold War. A cozy relationship had been forged between the George Bush Sr. administration and President Özal, especially during the 1st Gulf War. That war resulted in the resignation of Chief of General Staff Necip Torumtay (1987-1990), who felt sidelined by Özal and was not even consulted in some of the military decision-making. This, combined with a growing perception that the West had given Turkey the cold shoulder, kept feeding the anti-American sentiment and dream of a ‘fully-independent’ [tam bağımsız] Turkey. A group of young officers, mostly in the navy, emerged inside the military under the name of Kuvay-ı Miliyeciler (National Forces). These neo-nationalists had three main characteristics in common: they were skeptical of NATO, they revisited the historiography over Turkey's participation in the Western bloc by denying that the Soviets had requested Turkish land and rights over the Bosphorus before Turkey joined NATO in 1952; they were not pro-Russia but not blindly Western either, and finally, they were secularists, skeptical of Islamism of any kind (moderate or radical).

New Era, Old Divisions

The threats from the PKK and rise of Islamism were barely able to mask deep divisions between the lower echelons and senior generals. In the February 28 coup process, the military as a whole was caught in a dilemma between the inescapably Muslim-majority character of the nation and the senior generals' actions, not only against the Refah-Yol government (a coalition of Erbakan's Welfare Party and the True Path Party) but also the people (through acting as a lobbying group on behalf of a headscarf ban in universities, mass purges of 'Islamists' from the military and immense pressure inside the army).³⁵ In other words, order was kept, the chain of command strictly followed, and firm military discipline remained, allowing the armed forces to remain undivided at the top despite deep cracks growing between the lower and higher ranks.³⁶ Chief of General Staff Hilmi Özkök (2002-2006) is reported to have said to a friend of his that he agreed that “the February 28th process is risking a permanent division between the nation and army. However, nothing can be done at the moment [early 2000] because there is a sharp polarization [inside and outside the military]”.³⁷

The fissures within the military only deepened in the later decade, especially after General Hilmi Özkök assumed the post of Chief of General Staff. Outgoing Chief of Staff, Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, had attempted to block Özkök becoming the new chief of staff because he perceived Özkök as “not interventionist enough”. When Kıvrıkoğlu realized that he would be unable to do so, as a last resort he surrounded Özkök with more hawkish Aytaç Yalman and Yaşar Büyükanıt.³⁸ While General Özkök avoided overtly intervening in politics, other generals (both those on active duty and retired) pressed for a lot more intervention.³⁹ When General Özkök passed the baton to General Büyükanıt in 2006 and the latter immediately warned that “the military will not allow the government to undermine secularism”, Kıvrıkoğlu said that “At last our silence has been broken.”⁴⁰ Several generals working under Özkök also thought that Özkök's ‘soft’ attitude showed in his approach to the U.S. as well. When American forces captured Turkish Special Forces in northern Iraq and covered their heads with black hoods, creating an immediate sensation among the Turkish people, the Turkish General



Staff chose not to issue a response, infuriating some officers.⁴¹ Observers also talked about another dividing line inside the general staff in terms of Turkey's global alliances, with some generals favoring a pro-Eurasian posture, while others remained Atlanticist.⁴²

Any coup-proofing tactic must therefore address both these prerequisites. Obviously, the government needs to take such measures that those within the military should ideally not be disposed to intervene in the first place, but even if it is, they should not find the opportunity to carry out a successful intervention

Needless to say, the Balyoz (Sledgehammer), Ergenekon and Askeri Casusluk (Military Espionage) investigations severely tested the unity and interventionist reflexes of the military. The ensuing degree of politicization inside the military and existing divisions can be easily gleaned from the number of memoirs published by generals, most of whom were made to retire over the course of these political trials.⁴³ Interestingly, the number of military memoirs has peaked twice in the recent history of the modern Turkish Republic: first, in the decade after the 1960 coup and now since about 2010. It should also be noted that retired generals are predominantly scornful of the top generals—from General İlker Başbuğ to Necdet Özel and Hulusi Akar with the sole exception of Işık Koşaner, who chose to resign from the military after the Supreme Military Council decisions in 2010—for selling their military brethren out and not defending them enough against 'asymmetrical' attacks.⁴⁴ Necdet Özel, the former Chief of General Staff (2011,-2015), said recently that he inherited an army going through a trauma in 2011.⁴⁵

This tour d'horizon of divisions within the Turkish armed forces shows that 'fractures' within the Turkish military are nothing new. It should also be clear from this brief history that an equally historic but risky opportunity has fallen on the government to reform the armed forces. The remainder of this study assesses what the government has proposed so far, warns about pitfalls on the road, and makes recommendations on how to proceed with reduced risk levels.

Recommendations

A coup d'état, like many other crucial actions, requires two prerequisites to be in place: first, the disposition develops towards an intervention in politics and an attempt to overthrow the existing government. In other words, the coup plotters must have the will/disposition to intervene, which is not a given by any means. Will, however, is not enough; there must also be the ability/opportunity to carry out a coup d'état.⁴⁶ Several factors, from popular support, external support, circumstances propitious for a coup, the ability to mobilize troops, 'convincing' the rest of officer corps, and providing sufficient coordination make up the opportunity phase. The Gülenist clique within the officer corps had as strong a will as those behind previous coup attempts on July 15, but they lacked the opportunity to carry it out successfully due to several important factors discussed in another Al Sharq Forum research paper.⁴⁷ Any coup-proofing tactic must therefore address both these prerequisites. Obviously, the government needs to take such measures that those within the military should ideally not be disposed to intervene in the first place, but even if it is, they should not find the opportunity to carry out a successful intervention.

Disposition

When we say that Turkish military's disposition to intervene needs to change, we are talking about an interventionist organizational culture, the roots of which go back eighty years (longer if one goes beyond the era of the modern republic). That is, the Turkish military has long been a 'political army'⁴⁸ with a distinct ideology, Kemalism, accepted as its *raison d'être*. The Turkish military makes sense of its political role, perceives



politicians, politics, the people, and its domestic and regional environment through the lens of its founding ideology and the role that ideology is thought to bestow on the army.

It is with regard to this interventionist institutional culture that the generals have traditionally considered themselves 'above politics' as the overseers and guardians of politics, with politicians beneath them

The idea that the Turkish military was the first modernized institution in the late Ottoman era and it has the duty to modernize the rest (through military conscription, building of schools, roads etc.) is seared into the military psyche and ethos. It is with regard to this interventionist institutional culture that the generals have traditionally considered themselves 'above politics' as the overseers and guardians of politics, with politicians beneath them. This makes it hard-to-impossible to change its disposition overnight. As Aqil Shah pointed out, "... the military's nondemocratic tendencies can survive severe external shocks, such as humiliation and defeat in war."⁴⁹ Likewise, it would be a grave mischaracterization to claim, for instance, that the Balyoz, Ergenekon and Military Espionage trials reversed the military's interventionist organizational culture. To the opposite, "rather than help bring political actors together, the alleged coups actually intensified polarization in Turkey."⁵⁰ This is all the more true in view of the widespread feeling that these coup probes were based on faked evidence.

Turkey's military cannot be depoliticized by providing them with more modernized weapons or other material benefits.

When the Turkish military's inclination to intervene is discussed, it is correct to point out that the TAF has had institutional autonomy and wants to protect its corporate interests. Yet, Turkey's military cannot be depoliticized by providing them with more modernized weapons or other material benefits. Armies do not turn professional with more arms and funds. As Huntington pointed out, "simple changes in military technique, such as developments in weapons technology or the increased importance of economics in military affairs, do not alter the character of the military ethic any more than the discovery of penicillin altered medical ethics."⁵¹ We must remember that the DP government's promises to increase military pay and other benefits shortly before the 1960 coup had no impact on coup plots.⁵² Instead, the transformation of the Turkish military's organizational culture requires an uninterrupted progressive democratic process.

The army's disposition towards intervention becomes a 'tradition' that is carefully nurtured, maintained, and transmitted via both military education and training in military schools and the lived experience of coups.⁵³ This is why the government now wants to take a very belated step to overhaul the military education system in its entirety, including the curriculum.⁵⁴ Strikingly, a study conducted of a sample of recent military academy graduates in as late as 2010 found no change in the Turkish military's old security understanding and suspicion among the cadets towards the civilian realm.⁵⁵ The current 'plan' proposed by the AK Party government, however, is not the first time a civilian government has attempted to restructure military education system. As Çelikoğlu, a key member of the 1960 junta, explains:

"Two military secondary schools and three high schools [Kuleli, Maltepe and Işıklar] were established after the declaration of the republic. They lasted until 1950. When the Democrat Party won elections

in 1950, they had other ideas about the military system and made some changes in these military schools. The government thought that these military high schools, which provided cadets for the Military Academy, were not necessary and, instead, that it would be a better idea to accept students from other civilian high schools to the Military Academy. To this end, the military high schools were closed down. . . In the meantime, the Democrat Party tried to change the hierarchical structure in the military for their own political purposes... Nobody can claim to be an officer or commander without graduating from the Military Academy. . . In the past those who was unable to finish the Military Academy or military servants and artisans who were accepted from the outside based on particular needs and wore officer uniforms used to wear white stars and could not be promoted above the rank of lieutenant colonel. However, the Democrat Party paid privileged attention to this group instead of real officers, because it saw the latter as pro-İnönü. It bestowed on them new rights that others did not have. It titled them as 'noncommissioned officers'. . . It allowed high school graduates who did not complete the Military Academy to reach the rank of colonel and tarnished the old reputation of the graduates of the Military Academy."⁵⁶

It was not only the Democrat Party that wanted to re-structure the military education system. On a different level, members of armed forces saw the need to revise the education given in the Turkish Military Academies in the early 1960s. Those who did brought in documents belonging to military academies in the West, including the United States Military Academy, known as West Point, to discuss as possible guides.⁵⁷ However, this attempt too came to naught, as military politicking undermined the entire endeavor. These historical precedents do not mean to say that the AK Party government's proposals for military reform will necessarily face the same failures. After all, historical analogies cannot provide absolute guidance. A lot of factors including the actors and context have changed since the 1950s. However, it is a reminder that the Turkish military as a conservative institution will likely look askance at steps taken by the civilian government and the level and results of its resentment will have to be carefully tracked over the years. Bureaucratic neglect and politicking too continue to be factors that can impede the process.

Instead, the transformation of the Turkish military's organizational culture requires an uninterrupted progressive democratic process.

While planning a restructuring of the military in 1962, one general advised that an important question must be pondered before starting to plan the future shape of military academy: 'What kind of a commander did they want to see in 30-40 years?'⁵⁸ The same question must be answered by the government today. Acknowledging the fact that the answer may change from officers of the navy to land and air force, what sort of officers does Turkey want in the year 2050? Given fast-changing military technology and the evolving nature of threats, what kind of army officers does Turkey think will be able to overcome these threats and direct the military in view of developments in weapons technology? What do we then think we need to teach these future officers in military schools in order to reach these goals? Which subjects, with which methods?

Will 'non-military' subjects such as economics, sociology, law, political science, and foreign policy be taught at military academies? Should 'coups d'état' be discussed in the classroom in terms of their detrimental effects? Can former democratic-minded generals be invited for lectures and seminars to inspire the cadets as well as explain that coups cannot be seen as solutions to domestic problems? It is crucial to ponder the first question above because 'military tutelage' in Turkey has revealed itself in senior generals' public comments on several non-military issues based on the wrong premise that they were educated enough on these subjects.⁵⁹ In a striking example, in a discussion in late January 1971 among senior generals about how to address and prevent another junior officers' coup, which was around the corner, the Chief of General Staff, Memduh Tağmaç (1969-

1972), criticized the Commander of the Air Forces, Muhsin Batur (1969-1973), who wanted the economy to be run on the basis of a '70% public and 30% private sector', by saying that "we do not understand economics. We know that it is broken but we do not how to fix it." His comment encountered resistance even from the Commander of the Naval Forces, Admiral Celal Eyiceoğlu (1968-1972), who said that "we have been educated enough already to know about economics too".⁶⁰

In order to challenge such an unfounded conviction among military officers, it may be important to teach cadets how members of former juntas have reviewed their own actions after many years have passed since their interventions. For instance, Çelikoğlu, who played a key role in the success of the May 27 coup, ruefully regretted his faith in the military's ability to solve Turkey's problems through an intervention:

*"Military Academies can be likened to a symposium where officers discuss issues of domestic politics en masse. University professors lecture on subjects such as law and economics. We deduced from these lectures that government was not doing well on the economy and will stumble at some point. Cadets in Military Academies, who were selected from a pool of twenty thousand candidates, used to think that they were likely to assume duties in public administration and seek solutions to various problems. But many of us now know that it is easy to find solutions to problems in such communities with half-baked knowledge. In that environment, we used to think that we knew what needed to be done to solve different problems."*⁶¹

This link between military education and political armies in coup-prone places from Pakistan and Egypt to Turkey, Algeria, and Thailand is all too familiar. For instance, a Rtd. Pakistani Admiral told the author once that "NDU [National Defense University of Pakistan] does not just teach military tactics and strategies; there they discuss civilian bureaucracy, the police, economy and social aspects, and education. These are thoroughly studied subjects, which means that when you are major general or brigadier general in Pakistan, you are almost half a politician."⁶² This underlines the significance of subjects thought at military academies to ensure civilian control of the military.

The government must pay attention to the gradually emerging counter-narrative currently developing against military reform and signs of splits from the 'democratic civilian bloc' that many claimed have emerged from the failed coup attempt

In sum, it may be useful to teach 'democratic civil-military relations' to cadets in military schools but what that requires and how it should be taught may also be controversial. This makes it very important to decide who will teach these issues and how. In any case, however, cadets must be taught, among other things, that "national security does have economic, social, educational, and environmental dimensions", but insist that this doesn't necessarily mean the problems in those areas are the responsibility of the military to correct. Stylistically designating efforts to solve national ills as "wars" doesn't convert them into something appropriate for the employment of military forces."⁶³

The Emergence of a Counter-Narrative

The government must pay attention to the gradually emerging counter-narrative currently developing against military reform and signs of splits from the 'democratic civilian bloc' that many claimed have emerged from the failed coup attempt. Former chiefs of staff and other retired generals have recently claimed that "the July 15 coup attempt cannot be considered a coup attempt" and that 'it



was an attempt more against the military itself than the government.' The logical implication of this is that if July 15 was not a coup that originated in the military, but was caused by civilian governments' mistakes, then it is unfair for the government to reform and restructure the military. In this narrative, why and how four past coups and several other failed coup attempts occurred is comfortably forgotten, as if they never happened, and Turkey's experience with coups is limited to the failed July 15.⁶⁴

To minimize the risks, the government should broaden the coalition behind this reform and maintain its currently non-partisan status

Regardless, we must keep in mind that post-coup period is a time when the military is particularly vulnerable to politicization, especially if the army thinks the military-as-institution had nothing to do with the coup attempt. It would be a grave mistake to think of the 'military' as a passive, all-acquiescent actor in this process. It is naïve to think that military officers from all ranks will close their ears and eyes to these comments coming from 'righteous' generals victimized during the Balyoz, Ergenekon and Military Espionage investigations. The government must remember it as a possibility that the "July 15 coup attempt is the Gülenist officers' blowing off of steam built up in the armed forces over the years."⁶⁵

It should be made known that the need for reform was being discussed in military circles as well. Although the content and methods of reform remained contentious, there seems to have been some sort of consensus among some senior generals (both retired and active) that the military needed reform in order to fight better in the 21st century

It would have been excellent if we had a chance to do an academic survey of feelings in the armed forces, as General Ochoa did in Venezuela after failed coup attempt in 1992.⁶⁶ Though we lack the ability, we still know that military officers too read newspapers, watch TV, talk to trusted peers, and form opinions of their own. Therefore, the government must take this incipient counter-narrative seriously and proceed with caution not haste; otherwise, it could lead to more grievances within the military and hamper the reform process. To minimize the risks, the government should broaden the coalition behind this reform and maintain its currently non-partisan status. It should engage the armed forces and take them as an active audience to convince them that reforms will strengthen the army (the chain of command will remain intact; military power will be augmented; and the principle of merit will be used in appointments and promotions). It should be made known that the need for reform was being discussed in military circles as well. Although the content and methods of reform remained contentious, there seems to have been some sort of consensus among some senior generals (both retired and active) that the military needed reform in order to fight better in the 21st century.⁶⁷ What is important here is that while this is done, military reform should not be sacrificed to any particular political agendas, including the neo-nationalists who are influential within the military. Military reform should not be a stepping stone for the political empowerment of one faction inside the military at the expense of others.

Ability

The coup plotters consider two different fronts in determining whether they have the 'ability' to pull off a coup: the domestic (whether they can 'convince' the army as a whole during the coup; whether there may be internal resistance from the people, and whether they can rule after the coup or if their actions risk sending the country into oblivion); and external support. The government must consider the same fronts in trying to make it impossible for armed forces to carry out a coup with success.

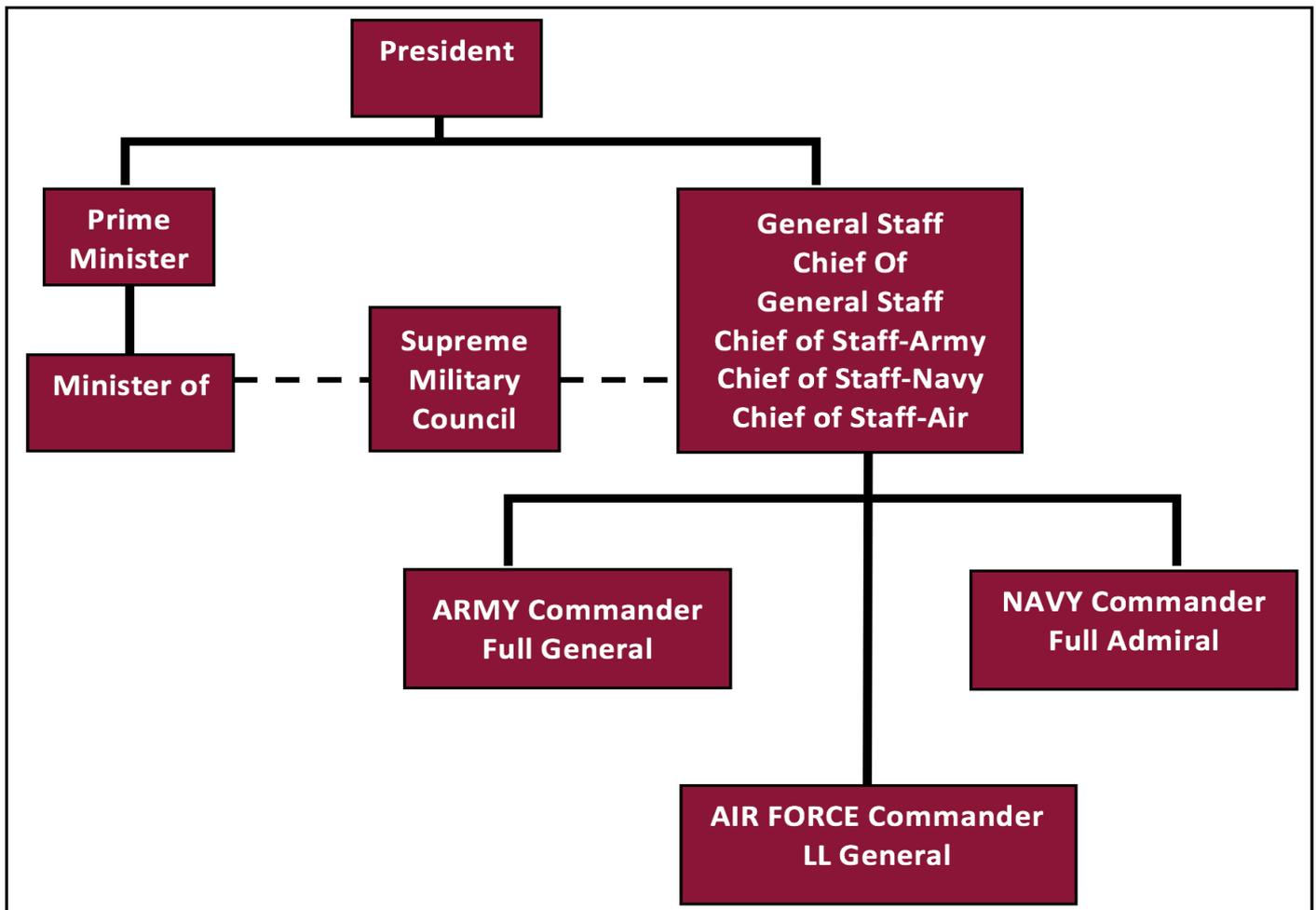


To start with, when AK Party governments carried out significant reforms in civil-military relations in their 1st and 2nd terms, their reform program had an external anchor provided by its quest for European Union membership and U.S. support. However, the post-failed July 15 coup reactions in Europe and the U.S. indicate that neither the EU nor the U.S. are interested in any such role for Turkey any longer. The EU, beset by its internal problems, seems neither willing nor able to become a pillar for democratization beyond its now-challenged borders. The U.S. no longer appears committed to democracy in Turkey either. The extent of criticism of the AK Party government after the failed coup attempt and the absolute failure in the U.S. to understand the magnitude of the threat posed by it has been bewildering.⁶⁸ It appears that the government will be on its own together with whatever domestic coalition it can muster when it seeks to reform the military and resist coup attempts in the near future.

The government has undertaken a more monumental change on the internal front that may make it harder for the military to stage a classical coup d'état: restructuring the Turkish military defense establishment after 70 years. The simple figure below shows the Turkish defense establishment in 1947:

FIGURE I:⁶⁹

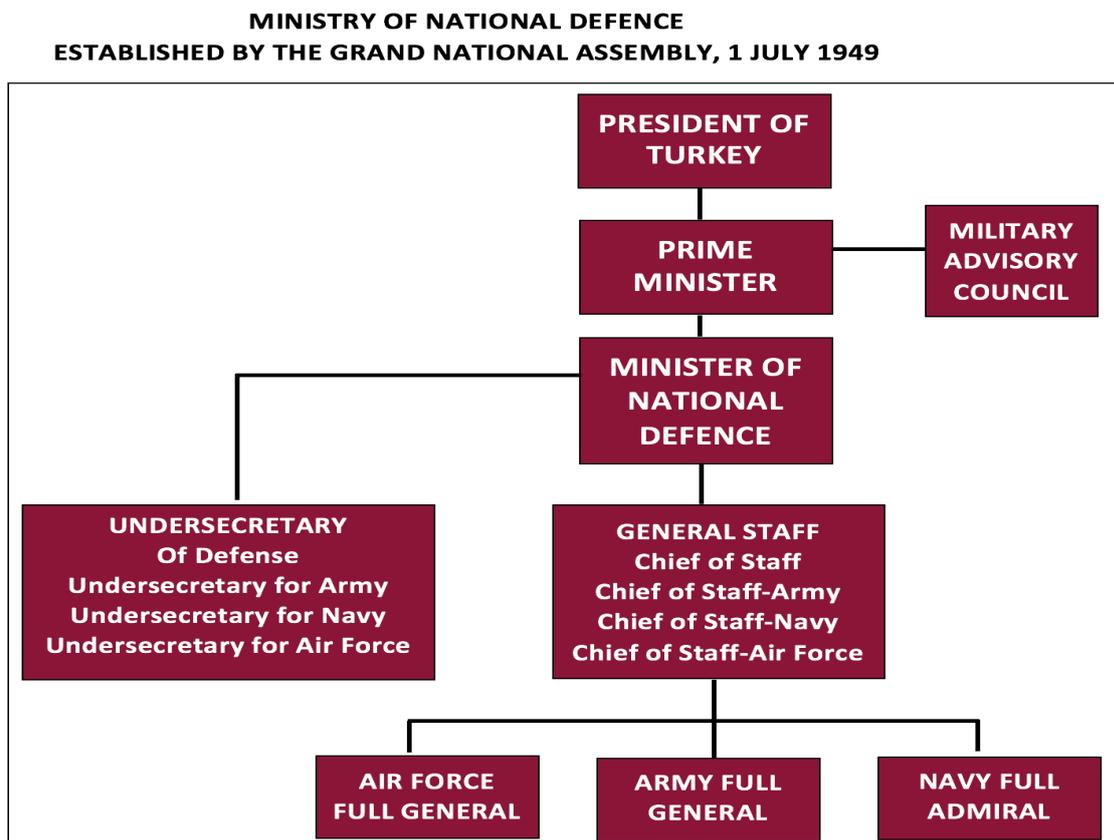
TURKISH MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND GENERAL STAFF, 1947



When AK Party governments carried out significant reforms in civil-military relations in their 1st and 2nd terms, their reform program had an external anchor provided by its quest for European Union membership and U.S. support. However, the post-failed July 15 coup reactions in Europe and the U.S. indicate that neither the EU nor the U.S. are interested in any such role for Turkey any longer.

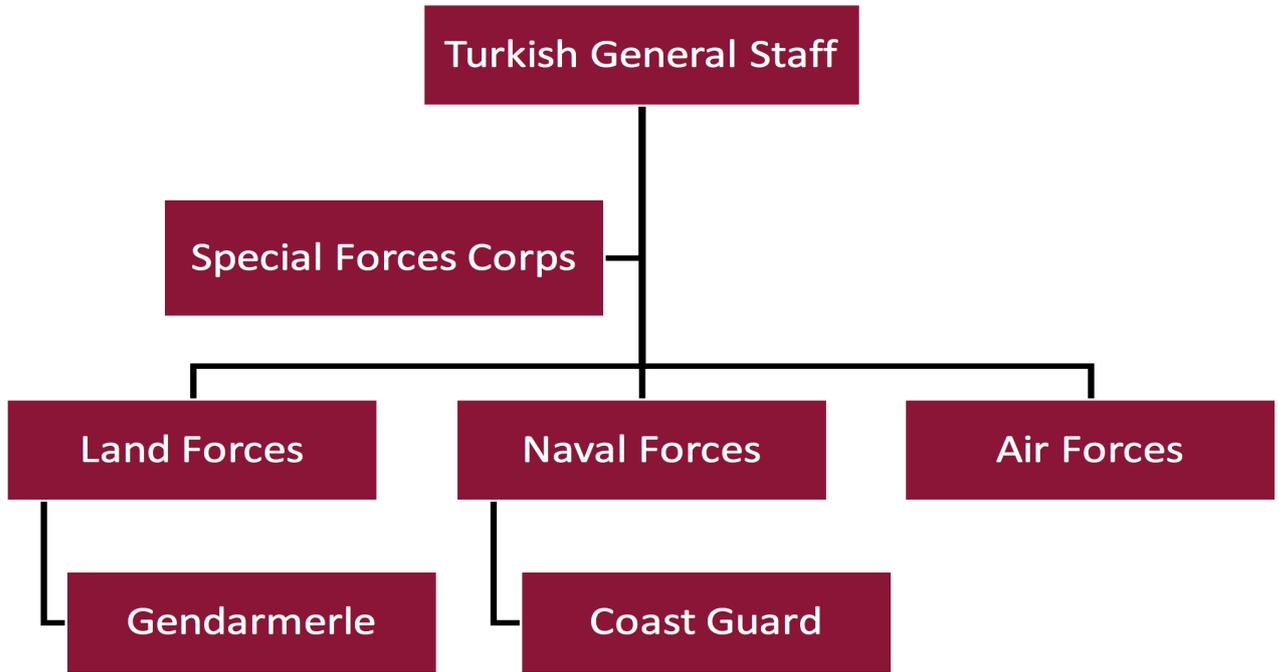
With the start of the Marshall Plan and the corollary involvement of Turkish Military Aid Mission in the Turkish Armed Forces from 1947 onwards, the structure of Turkey's national defense establishment as depicted above changed. The Turkish General Staff requested advice from the US Air Force Group (TUSAFG) in Turkey on restructuring its defense establishment. The TUSAFG wrote to Washington about this rather unusual request and asked it to capture this great chance so that the U.S. could leave a lasting influence on the Turkish defense establishment over the coming decades. With the JAMMAT's [Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey] advice and JAMMAT Chief General McBride's approval, the Turkish Chief of General Staff no longer had a cabinet rank and was now placed under the Defense Minister. The Turkish Air Force General no longer ranked below the Land Forces. However, the Chief of General Staff was still left superior to force commanders (land, navy, and air) because the American Aid group thought that "the Turks of 1949 had not achieved a full understanding of combined arms operations. Without a super-chief with authority to compel action, reasoned McBride, important decisions requiring quick action in war time might become mired in unsolvable inter-service squabbling. McBride's plan unified logistics and operations by combining the operational power of the TGS with the pecuniary power of the old Ministry of Defense."⁷⁰ The figure below shows the format of Turkish defense establishment in 1949 after American touch:

FIGURE II:⁷¹



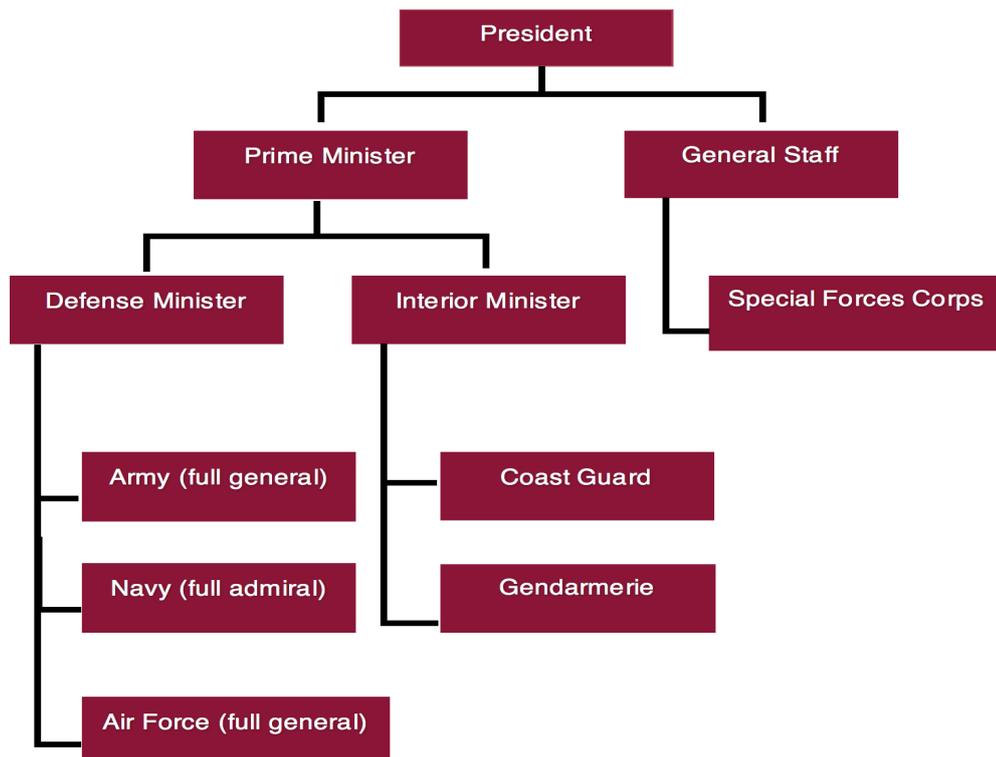
With incremental changes in the coming decades, the Turkish General Staff acquired the following structure, available from NATO Shape Headquarters:

FIGURE III :



Finally, below is an amalgam structure of the defense establishment as proposed by the AK Party government through decrees issued under martial law and as articulated by the government and President Erdoğan:

FIGURE IV: AK Party Proposal for Military Restructuring of the Defense Establishment



The first thing to notice about this American-inspired model is that it will require a Defense Ministry with strong expertise and authority to monitor, manage, and give direction to the army commands. Indeed, new details recently emerged that show that the AK Party government wants to increase the proportion of civilians in the Defense Ministry. The Defense Minister will have a civilian undersecretary for the first time.⁷² However, to recall the Pentagon model, which seems to have given inspiration to the AK Party government, the last four American Secretaries of Defense had either served within the American security bureaucracy for their entire professional careers (such as Robert Gates, who served four different American Administrations in the highest positions and capacity) or must come from within the Pentagon to learn its inner workings better than many others (such as incumbent Defense Secretary Ashton Carter). In Turkey, however, the Defense Ministry has traditionally been treated as one of the most low-key ministries because military affairs were largely left to the army. This is why when the issue of placing the General Staff under the Ministry of Defense came up in the context of EU reforms, some generals did not just ridicule the idea out of their ingrained undemocratic military ethos but also because some thought the Defense Ministry was sorely underequipped to fulfill the task without compromising from military effectiveness.⁷³

We should still keep in mind that when the 1960 coup occurred, the General Staff was under the authority of Defense Ministry

Yet, we should still keep in mind that when the 1960 coup occurred, the General Staff was under the authority of Defense Ministry. This did not stop the coup makers. On the contrary, low to mid-ranking officers opposed placing the General Staff under the Defense Ministry. Many officers who joined in different juntas detested the servile attitudes of Chiefs of General Staff, in particular Rüştü Erdelhun (1958-1960).⁷⁴ Besides, the junta reached all the way up to Staff Lieutenant Colonel Adnan Çelikoğlu, the personal aide-de-camp to Defense Minister Ethem Menderes,⁷⁵ to both keep the junta secret and facilitate key appointment to install the coup network in key positions. Indeed, when one of the juntas was exposed in 1958, most critical members escaped arrest solely thanks to Çelikoğlu's tip-off on the phone. It was also thanks to Çelikoğlu that the junta were able to get its members appointed to critical positions in Ankara, to develop the plot securely and then carry out a successful coup d'état.⁷⁶ This precedent tells us that if bringing force commanders under the Defense Minister's responsibility is left as a simple technical-legal change without substance, this may not prevent coups in the future. If the hierarchical relationship between force commands and the Defense Ministry as well as the General Staff and Presidency (if that occurs) are formatted as a vertical relationship based on subjective trust and ties, this may not hinder coup plots either.

If bringing force commanders under the Defense Minister's responsibility is left as a simple technical-legal change without substance, this may not prevent coups in the future

A third measure to prevent any coup plot being successfully carried out is the relocation of General Staff Headquarters as well as garrisons and barracks from major cities such as Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. This is another important but also a belated step. Officials concerned about this move should be reminded that when there was an internal attempt to restructure the Military Academy in the first half of the 1960s, Behruz Çinici, the architect of Middle East Technical University, was invited to give his advice. The top item on his list was that 'the Military Academy must relocate out of town in order to satisfy your future needs.'⁷⁷ Again learning from the past, about a month before the May 27 coup, massive student protests erupted in Istanbul and later



spread to Ankara. The Menderes government announced emergency measures to quell protests and the army came into the cities to help the police. When Staff Major Orhan Erkanlı wanted to take advantage of the riots as "favorable circumstances" for attempting the coup in Istanbul his friends in the junta stopped him saying "What about Ankara? A coup without taking control of central government in Ankara would never succeed." When Erkanlı replied that 'then they could establish a rival government in Istanbul' his friends chided him, saying that "a bloodbath would follow in this scenario and homeland would be divided".⁷⁸ Though the relocation of the garrisons might be done rather quickly,⁷⁹ the rest of the plans in place are likely only to be finalized within the next three years at the earliest.

These military reforms must also be synchronized with Turkey's attempts to develop its national defense industry and specific projects such as the Turkish national warship program (MILGEM), armed drones, and fighter helicopters

Now that the government has given signals that a change in Turkey's defense concept will also follow,⁸⁰ these military reforms must be part of a new 'White Paper' providing updated answers to the following questions: what kind of threats is Turkey facing in its neighborhood at the moment? How powerful are these threats and what sort of weapons, tactics and strategies do they have at their disposal? Can these threats be prioritized and categorized? How are threats evolving around the globe in general? What does that mean for Turkey? And what sort of military force does Turkey need to counter these threats? None of the responses to any of these questions can be given independently from a critical reading of developments in the Middle East and beyond and Turkey's foreign policy for the last decade. The government must glean life lessons from the Arab Spring, the power of other local, regional, and international actors, and how poorly Turkish security actors fared in this process. Another factor that must guide the reform process must be how the Turkish military's weaknesses were exposed in different ways during different stages of the war in Syria. Besides, these military reforms must also be synchronized with Turkey's attempts to develop its national defense industry and specific projects such as the Turkish national warship program (MILGEM), armed drones, and fighter helicopters. The military needs to be so reformed that its future shape must harmonize with and sustain Turkey's strategic decisions to open military bases in Qatar and Somalia.

Ulvi Saran, the Former Undersecretary of Public Order and Security, has mentioned in an op-ed that establishing paramilitary groups as a counterforce to the military may also help prevent coups d'état.⁸¹ Indeed, this is a coup-proofing tactic that many Middle Eastern and authoritarian regimes such as Russia⁸² have practiced. Coup-proofing tactics include the following measures:

"Coup-proofing includes the establishment of loyalties between officers and incumbents through ethnic, religious, and personal bonds; the recruitment of military personnel from among privileged minorities and mercenary soldiers; the counterbalancing of divided security apparatuses; the frequent rotation of officers to avoid the emergence of alternative power centers; and buying off the officer corps through economic privileges and opportunities for self-enrichment. The crafting of alliances with international powers, including the stationing of foreign troops, also helps to avoid coups since plotters would have to assume that status quo oriented foreign powers would stand by their allies"⁸³

An example of the latter—the stationing of foreign troops and the assistance of foreign agencies—might be Pakistani assistance in young King Hussein's war against the Palestinian Fedayeen and the CIA's help in repelling a coup attempt by Jordanian military officers.⁸⁴ The stationing of Pakistani military officers on Saudi Arabian soil has coup-proofing aspect as well. However, it must be noted that with such coup-proofing tactics both coups and fighting ability disappeared. In other words, loyalty may come at the expense of strength, as Arab armies have proven again and again. More serious advice against establishing paramilitary forces in Turkey, however, would be two-pronged:

First, in places where there is a national army that has a strong institutional consciousness and ethos, parallel military structures responsible to the president are detested by militaries. National armies loathe rival military institutions. For instance, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto established alternative intelligence and security agencies to consolidate his rule against challenges by the Pakistani armed forces. He created the Federal Security Force (FSF), a paramilitary organization he hoped would be loyal to him alone, and a Federal Investigative Agency that would report directly to Bhutto.⁸⁵ However, when General Zia dismissed Bhutto, one of the first institutions from the Bhutto era the army destroyed was the FSF.⁸⁶ It is not hard to predict that such a paramilitary force—apart from the established police and gendarmerie—solely responsible to the presidency or civilian government, will be an object of resentment for the Turkish armed forces.⁸⁷ Secondly, at a time when there is fixation in certain circles about an alleged shift to authoritarianism in Turkey, such a move may start new accusations against President Erdoğan of “creating a private army” and therefore exacerbate this perception about Turkey.

Further Risks

The government has now also changed the composition of the Supreme Military Council. The number of civilian members of the Council have been increased in order to give more say to civilians in military promotions. While the Interior Ministry now has the power to appoint gendarmerie personnel, similar power will be granted to the Defense Ministry for the rest of the military. This too is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, although the issue of promotions looks like an internal military affair, and therefore not to be interfered with by civilian governments as an established norm of civil-military relations, it may be a survival issue for civilian governments in countries with politicized armies such as Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey and Egypt. This is because a political military is very likely to use promotions and retirements as a primary means of maintaining its interventionist posture and culture and its status as a 'political army'. On other hand, instances from Thailand to Venezuela and Pakistan to Turkey show unambiguously that ideological militaries often resist moves that they perceive as political interference.⁸⁸

The narrative that promotions and appointments in the military were strictly based on 'merit' and not loyalty is a near-mythical story deliberately advanced by the military

The narrative that promotions and appointments in the military were strictly based on 'merit' and not loyalty is a near-mythical story deliberately advanced by the military.⁸⁹ The fact that the armed forces have until now been a closed entity little understood by outside elements (media, politicians, and the people) has allowed it to carefully guard and maintain this narrative. However, mainly due to polarization inside the military and unprecedented developments over the last decade, we are at a better position to question this myth. Military officers and generals often complained about unjust treatment over their promotions and retirements in the past. Many officers left the military with the bitter feeling that they were not treated according to merit. They also engaged in the pettiest squabbles among themselves to get promoted—not so different, however, to those seen in civilian life every day.⁹⁰



However, these personal complaints did not turn into common grievances stirring further unrest inside the army largely because their fate was sealed by the military, a legal and legitimate authority in their eyes. Unfortunately, military officers will likely accept 'unfair' military assignments, delays in promotions or forced retirements when these appear to be decided by the military itself, but they are less likely to accept decisions perceived unfair that come from elected civilians.⁹¹ It is also not hard to predict that even though the military may tactically not voice its reservations or outright opposition to these move, their grievances may slowly build up. Besides, appointment issues can be an extra burden on the government as well.

Military officers and generals often complained about unjust treatment over their promotions and retirements in the past

A final word of caution pertains to the fragility of the road ahead. If we remember the fact that coup attempts feed off of instability, chaos, and disorder, a traumatized, imbalanced and politicized military after the coup attempt may find it very difficult to stay out of politics in the case of Gezi-like disorder. Those concerned about bringing the military under civilian control must keep in mind that many military generals who retired either under normal circumstances or due to the Balyoz and Ergenekon probes were very proud of the Gezi protests and what they saw as 'youth activism' there. As one former four-star general told this author, "while they [the military] tried to force Atatürkism into young brains and complained about their failure, it suddenly dawned on them that the youth had actually understood and internalized Atatürkism in its own way and willingly, as the Gezi Parkı protests vividly showed".⁹² This statement implies that it may not be a good idea to rehash the Gezi Park plans in this environment.

Seeking to create an environment of instability in order to exploit it, the PKK has now threatened to spread its terrorist acts to metropolitan areas throughout Turkey.⁹³ The resumption of Turkey's protracted fight against PKK terror after several years of the 'peace process' has already put unimaginable (and unspoken) amounts of stress on security actors. The fight against the PKK will continue to keep Turkey in a dilemma: both intensifying the fight and sitting back at the negotiation table carry large risks.

Conclusion

Turkey is at a historic crossroads with an unrivalled opportunity to reform its military and heal its historically fragmented military. To capitalize on this rare strategic position, the government must work diligently and systematically regardless of how unwieldy the national political agenda may look at the moment. The government must also come up with a military reform that is coherent with its other strategic defense plans and objectives.

The democratic bloc or consensus among political parties that seems to have emerged from the coup attempt have proved more fragile than several observers thought. The Republican People's Party, which had denounced the coup attempt from the start and attended the 'Democracy and Martyrs Rally' in Istanbul, now accuse the government of exploiting their post-coup support and betraying their trust by taking undemocratic steps against the judiciary and undermining secularism.⁹⁴ The government should correct this perception and cultivate this bloc to strengthen

the push behind military reform and preserve its non-partisan status in the national interest. The government must also understand that technical-legal changes carried out to place civil-military relations on a democratic footing too require a change of mentality before they can be instituted. Neither changing laws and regulations nor placing the general staff under the Defense Ministry may provide complete solutions. The fact that the May 27 coup d'état was carried out while the general staff was accountable to the Defense Ministry and the July 15 coup attempt was carried out despite changes to Article 35th of the Internal Services Code of the Army, which had been interpreted by the military as the legal basis of its interventions in the past, provide good examples.

The least well-understood dimension of military reform at present is the likely broken link between the lower echelons of the military who may still be reeling from the failed coup attempt and the swift changes and purges that followed it and the higher ranks, who were taken hostage by their officer corps. Hence, military reform necessitates a lot of work to be done by the military inside the military. The General Staff Headquarters must reestablish its credibility and trust in the eyes of the officer corps. This failed coup attempt also revealed gaps within the military hierarchy and the fact that senior generals do not have firm control over or connections to the lower ranks. These gaps need to be filled as well. However, their task is increasingly made difficult by the subjective ties the government has sought to establish to feel secure. Ironically, the most serious trap the government may fall into during this process is to bring the military under civilian control through subjective, personal ties based on sheer charisma, ideology, family, etc. in lieu of institutionalized democratic control.

Many risks surround Turkey's reforms of the national defense establishment in the mid- to long-term. As elsewhere, an appalling lack of civilian defense experts may be a major impediment.⁹⁵ The fact that National Defense Ministry has just opened an official twitter account in August 2016 is a vivid proof of how late it has been to step into this territory.⁹⁶ Outside civilian assistance from Turkey's think-tank world may not easily come either, because it suffers from the same problem. It should be clarified, however, that by risks we do not mean another classical coup d'état attempt. While another hard coup attempt cannot be entirely ruled out, we must remember that there are myriad ways for a military to intervene and, when it cannot intervene, to undermine a disliked government's policies. That being said, the hardest objective for the government must be to rejuvenate the Turkish military as one that has not only internalized the ethic of civilian supremacy but also can fight effectively. When it comes to achieving the first, the most guaranteed instrument is deepening Turkish democracy.

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Turkey's 'Fractured Military' in Historical Perspective and Recommendations for a Military Reform Agenda

The failed July 15 classical coup attempt has thrust the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) into the limelight. According to most recent figures available, more than 7,000 officers of different ranks are currently under arrest while about 4,800 officers have been dismissed from the armed forces. As these numbers nearly parallel 235 generals and 5,000 officers purged from the armed forces with the financial help of the U.S. after the 1960 coup d'état, it also marks a significant proportion of generals and admirals in the Turkish military...



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