

Political Development in Turkey: The Case Study of the Role of Army in Turkey's politics

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to consider the political development in Turkey and particularly looks into the role of army in Turkey's politics. "What is the role of Turkey's politics and specially Army in the politics of these two countries?" is our question in the study. To answer this question our hypothesis is "historically and because of the political structure of Turkey, Turkey's Army has significant and fundamental influences in the politics of this country. Separated from this issue and generally, Turkey's Army has great influences on Turkey's politics in illegally and informal ways especially in political affairs. In this regard, we discussed about the theoretical framework of the research in part one. Then in part two, we consider the role of army on politics in the Middle East, after that, in part three the role of army in Turkish politics would be notified and finally we will draw a conclusion to this study.

KEYWORDS: Politics, Army, Foreign Policy, Turkey, National Security

1. INTRODUCTION

Army intervention in politics is not limited to the Middle East or third world countries but history shows us that even contemporary developed countries passed this era [army intervention]. This matter is also right about the United States. For example, from 44 US presidents, twelfths of them were Army's Generals, i.e. eight were republican and three were members of domestic party, but just George Washington who was no party membership elected as the president. Army intervention has different aspects especially in Executive Power. To define the sort of army intervention in politics, we should consider two points: direct and indirect [having the right of veto] army intervention in politics.

Direct intervention is when the holder of the Executive Power to be a member of a military organization. In some cases, these people retired themselves and sometimes this retirement is just in all but name. Corporate involvement is more prevalent and in this kind of involvement the person who is in charge of the Executive Power conducts as the Defense Minister too. The First Person of the country and the Defense Minister may be the members of a military organization. Individual military involvement is sometimes when the holder of the Executive Power acts not only as the President to control government cabinet and its daily affairs, but also monitoring the armed forces. In some governmental systems the holder of the Executive Power and commander in chief of the armed forces [or Defense Minister] are different persons; however, they are from one family, tribe, or sect (like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates).

Military intervention in the cabinet or executive council in a manner that the benefits of the military is when some of them to be the member of the cabinet yet the first person of government may be to be a non-military one [Turkey, 1980s] (1). Generally from the middle of the 1960s, we have seen an increasing rate of militia forces in third world countries; to determine the level of militants' effects in politics, we should evaluate the size of militia forces and the structure of these military organizations along with their responsibilities. The main reasons of increasing militia forces in developing countries are (1) fast population growth, (2) urbanization growth which increased the needs to maintenance of security in urban districts and to encounter with delinquencies and non-political crimes, (3) considering the importance of public participation in military activities and police forces specially to control riots and city disorders (2).

"What is the role of Turkey's Army in the politics of these two countries?" is our main question in the present study. The hypothesis expressed to answer this question is "historically and because of the political structure of this country, Turkey's Army has significant roles in foreign policy." Apart from this issue, generally Turkey's Army has great effects on Turkey's politics by illegal and unofficially ways especially in the foreign policy affairs.

Part One: Theoretical Framework

Before considering the main issue of this research, we shall take a glance to the most important theories in this field. One of the most dominant theories in comparative studies and military sociology was stated by Jenowitz. He says armed-forces' involvement is a sign of political instability and also is a cause of it. Jenowitz claims the more military involvement, the more political instability (3). Political elites as professional peoples and technical affairs experts, believes as much as governments are going to be more complicated and the more forming of institutions to general mobilization and public involvement in politics, the possibility of military intervention in politics will be lesser (4). The theory of "professional army" has brought up by researchers like Huntington (1957) and Perl Moter (1977) and it speaks

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about reducing military intervention in politics because of arising required institutions (such as political parties and legislative assembly) that is made by political systems to direct involvement of people which is restricting the autonomy of the Executive Power. Thus in high level of political development institutionalization and extension of civil society will cause to decrease military intervention. But if this doesn't happen and the military intervene in politics continues; in spite of coming to exist more political parties and other civil society institutions, we could expect the more instability in politics rather than before. Huntington claims "if army professionalism" evolve and if the officers to be faithful to their missions as the professional people, the military intervention in politics then would not scary (5).

Jenowitz disapprove this hypothesis which there is a direct relationship between the level of military professionalism and the possibility of "appropriate" political intervention. He argues that professionalism of the military would cause to "inappropriate" intervention of them in politics because the commanding officers always protect and sustain their positions and interests. Lontal clears that in the lowest level of the military institutionalization, the officers participate in politics with obscure and ambiguous (often personal) ways. In middle level of political institutionalization emphasize is on "to be professional" because the officers would have more tendency to involve in politics and try to have more active roles in it. At the highest level of military institutionalization, the military would have more obvious involvement in politics; thus they may have more autonomy and even more superiority over civilians. If political institutionalization overtakes from development and involvement of parties and civil organizations, it is possible that the military takes a fundamental political role and even by launching a coup replace the civil government.

Stephan warns about "modern professionalism" of some military that defend "status quo" and act as "police and the administration." Faracau said that the modern professionalism would cause to come into existence of "national security doctrine" that will suppress the all opponents by the slogan of combating disagreement and communism in Latin America. Researchers like Colier (1948) emphasized on the importance of regime type measurement as an effective variable on the relation between military intervention in politics and instability. The variable of "regime type" determine by studying the nature of created political organizations in each country. In civil political regimes military intervention in politics is less so political scrappy would lesser (6). These kinds of theories have been criticized severely by some of the researchers. Evans (1987) and Bolen (1983) are some of those researchers who suggest that the nature of economic and political structures would study with the political and economical development of countries to define the correct relationship between political and economic development and the role of the military. They argue we cannot always expect to reach the level of economic development, the more political development to be existed or creating a modern army may not cause to decrease the military intervention. Periphery countries (in the third world) directed to the imbalanced and dependent development model and almost this country have centralized and unpopular political systems. The third factor that should consider is the same development (dependent, independent, balanced, imbalanced). Some experts believe sine qua non to strengthen the threaten bass of infant democracies is democratic supervision of civilian over the military (7). Numerous theories with different variables about political intervention of the army have been tested. Some of the most important are

The more level of lower renovation, modernity, and social mobilization, the lower level of military intervention. With a high possibility, the military cannot rule in modern societies, therefore their intervention in such societies would be less and will limit to "veto coup" in maximum level which in this manner the military will intervene in politics just for a defined time till a civilian group would replace another group.

Whatever the lesser public spending over total national income to be, the possibility of military intervention in politics will be less.

Whatever the percentage of the workforce to be more at service of military forces, the level of their intervention in politics will be more (8).

Military power that is measured by the ratio of military cooperation can be effectless or have very low influence over the possibility of military political intervention. Moreover, the existence of disagreement in the stage of turn traditionalism to modernism or from authoritarian to democracy would cause to the more intervention of military forces in politics. Some of analysts illustrated a wrong tie between development and military intervention; they claimed the more developed a country to be, the less military intervention. Horowitz closed to the reality and says that development, at least in the basic stages won't cause to decrease the military intervention. Other theorists predict that modernity and revival basically caused to the more intervention of military forces in politics. Some factors such as rapid urbanization, war, revolution, and having a record of martial law would increase the possibility of improper military intervention in politics. On the contrary, the formation of a powerful political party system, advanced political culture, and extending democracy are among those factors that will help to decrease the political intervention of the military forces (9).

There is not unanimity about how to measure the level of "militarize", therefore various criteria have been used by the researchers. According to Seward studies the classification criteria for the kind of military regime are

- 1- Important political leadership positions would give to military officers (such as Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Libya); even in some cases the first person of the country puts on military uniform (like Pakistan).
- 2- The existence of martial law in the country
- 3- The illegal power of military courts vs. civil courts.
- 4- Nonexistence or insufficient monitoring of civilian over military forces.

5- Military occupation of a country by foreign forces (like Afghanistan and Iraq) [10].

Generally, determining factors to the level of militarism in a country are

Internal Factors: that includes inequitable class structure, unfairly ethnical/tribal structure, institutionalized military industries, army self-importance, supreme importance of “national security”, clichés and foreign prejudice, premise of insecurity against foreign threats and dangers.

External Factors: that includes imperialism structure (direct and indirect intervention), international weapon market, ideological ties among countries, and treaty politics.

By these criteria the Middle East is among those regions that directed to the side of militarism. The role of foreign powers in formation and reinforcing of political armies and militarized societies of the Middle East is undeniable (11).

Part Two: Army And Politics in the Middle East

We see military intervention in almost countries of the Middle East. In some of these countries like the other administrative jobs, working in semi-professional forces is a tool to political foster and reward for supporters of political regimes. Political loyalty instead of military forces' ability is the bias to give promotion and assign of duties. Important positions in armed-forces would give to those people who have family, tribal, sectarian and geographical relations with political leaders.

Many years have been passed after military coups that were happened in Arab countries of the Middle East. Military leaders of Egypt (1952), Syria (1970), and Iraq (1968), Libya (1969) seized power by military coup. In a period of 21 years (1949-1970) eight coups were taken place in Syria, and during ten years in Iraq (1958-1968), three ones happened (12). The role of army in these countries remained as it should be important and faithful. Retired military officers manage most of those governments because these leaders have learned how to maintain the armed forces under their domination. Robin believes that creating limitation to military activities in somewhat caused to decrease the quality of their efficiency and performance. Among the Arab countries, the leaders of Egypt, Libya, and Syria took the power because they were military. However, Hosni Mubarak and Muammar Gaddafi has not been an active member of the army. In Sudan and Yemen military coup was created. Military coups have taken place within the years of 1958, 1969, 1985, 1989 in Sudan. The current leader of Sudan, Umar Al Bashir, yet introduces himself and his government as “Islamic”. In all countries the army should act and active as the supporter of the people who is in charge of power, but in some cases the military forces practically challenge the authority of their own country leader. If military forces have more power rather than civilian organizations or if they were supported by foreign governments, they can do an improper intervention in politics. In some Middle East countries the loyalty of the army is to the regime rather than to the nation or democratic administration. In almost cases the ordinary army has no tendency to intervene in interior engagements and figured their main duty as to encounter against foreign enemies. Therefore the military forces delegated their interior monitoring duty to the militia or various security forces that were created to encounter with internal threats (13).

Generally it should say that in the Middle East the military came into power directly or have basic roles in policy-making. The Middle East regimes to maintain their power that are under pressure severely from their own people and also external variables in the age of globalization would need more help of their forces day after day to settlement of threats. By granting more concessions to the military forces, the government of this region trying to work up their more support and influence in politics. The author of the present study believes this issue would cause insecurity in the Middle East. Considering this and according to our theoretical framework we will study the role of Turkey's army in the foreign policy of this country.

Part Three: The Role of Turkey's Army in Foreign Policy of Turkey

After the formation of modern Turkey (in 1923), its army has been having considerable role in politics; because the founding father of modern Turkey basically was a military character. Mustafa Kemal or “Ata Turk” was a military person who well-known a European-sick person, by his diplomatically tries to change and transfer the system of Turkey to republican and established the republic rules. Party, Constitution, Parliament, Nationalism, Turkish National Identification are some those his special and important actions that he did. Without doubt, we can say Mustafa Kemal finished successfully this phase of transferring. Because of saving Turkey from its previous disorganized situation, Ata Turk is one of those charismatic ones in the world. About this, Bill Clinton in his message due to the beginning of the year 2000 or new millennium said “there is no doubt that the only statesman of this millennium was Mustafa Kemal; because he was not the leader of one year but the leader of one age.” However, it should say Ata Turk was a military officer and in his founding republic system the military forces earned significant rules unintentionally and known as the protectors of the Turkish Laic regime.

Traditionally Turkish armed forces have strong political influences in the periods of Turkey republic. From the time of Turkey independence in 1923, among ten elected Presidents, just four of them, i.e. Celal Bayer, Turgut Uzal, Suleiman Demirel, and Ahmet Necdet Sazak were civilian. Turkish armed forces that were won their final battle in the process of independence war in 1922 have maintained their traditional great dominance in political issues. Though the army is not satisfied even with performing the political issues, they always intervene in crisis times. For the first time on 27th May 1960 when the then Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, stepped down from Democratic Party, the armed forces

intervened in political affairs. Afterwards two failed coups that have done on February 1962 and on may 1963 by “TalhatAkDemir”; but subsequently after these goings-on he was hanged (14).

* Turkish Military Structure

A) Joint Staff of the Army:

According to the constitution the president of Turkey is Commander in Chief of the Armed-Forces. Chief of the Joint Staff is the Commander of the Armed Forces at the time of war and exercise some duties from the side of the President. The Cabinet appoints Chief of the Joint Staff afterwards the President would endorse him. Chief of the Joint Staff is directly responsible to the Prime Minister about his actions and duties. Principals, priorities, main and major schedules of the Staff, information, performance of the organizations, training of the scholars and monitoring the performance manner of the Armed-forces logistical services toward preparing them to war and in other times are some of the chief of the Joint Staff duties. He also supervises the performance of Land-forces, air forces, Navy, and the Gendarmerie in Turkey (15).

B) Minister of Defense:

The performance of Secretary of Defense is different with Command Post of Joint forces. Secretary of Defense have political role and appoint by the Prime Minister. Almost members of the Ministry of Defense headquarters are Military persons in charge and Undersecretary of Defense are a General too (16).

C) Armed-Forces Structure:

According to the constitution, the president is the Commander in Chief of the armed-forces. Chief of the Joint Staff of the army and Secretary of Defense chose by the Prime Minister and after endorsement of the President they will engage in their work. Commander in Chief of Joint Staff is monitoring over the actions of all parts, armed-forces, and military organizations of the country.

Total amount of armed-forces: 645,000 (including 550,000 reserved people)

Militia forces: 120,000 people who are the gendarmerie personnel include three Brigades

Land Forces: 450,000 people

Air Forces: 58,000 people

Navy: 52,300 people (17)

Turkey's army is always having a close relationship with politics. Six of seven first presidents of Turkey were of retired army officers during the years of 1923 through 1989. The only exception was Celal Bayer who was the president during the period of 1950-60 that went off due to a military coup. From the first years of 1920s the military have been great roles in the formation of modern Turkey. Indeed, the background of political power of the military returned to the Ottomans' period at that time the armed forces were the main actors to save the power. In the beginning twenty-seven years of Turkey Republic's creation the military intervention in politics were at a high level, though this was done in informal ways. After the coup of 1960 the armed forces of Turkey have been done more significant roles in the political affairs of the country. In the last four decades of twentieth century, the military forces intervene in politics four times (two times directly in 1960 and 1980; and two times indirectly on 1971 and 1997) by the aim of changing the government.

Turkish military leaders by creating of “National Security Council”¹ (MGK- Milli Guvenlik Kurulu) in 1961 legalize their intervention in government and its policy-making. Actually, this council is a consultative institution which includes the military and civilian officials that call a meeting by the chairman of the President. Before amending the constitution on October 2001, it was ordered the majority of its members had to be civilian. The formal function of this council is to put their points of views and expressing their expert opinions about the formulation and enforcement of the National Security Council is more important and more significant rather than it was said in the constitution. Although civilians are also a part of this council; however, the military members use this institution as a tool to affect on public policy-makings in various aspects. Security-General of this council have no vote and is a military person. The role of this council is more than its legal powers that was defined explicitly as “consultants”. There are no cases that the members of the cabinet or parliament don't consider or act obviously to the opinions of the National Security Council Secretariat about the foreign policies. The members of this council are responsible to compile then approving a National Security document which is a top-secret document to determine the priorities in identifying threatens to National Security and regulate the principals of policies to encountering them. The document of 1977 emphasized on relationship with Greece, Syria, EU, and Turkish republics of the former Soviet Union (8).

Using investigation center of army General Headquarters that was established in 1983- which its scope of authorities extended by General CevikBir- Turkey military forces scrutinize carefully the internal and foreign issues. Moreover, the military forces to do that get help from 43 working groups that were created inside the army. The first group was created in 1981 and since 1996 the more groups were vastly created. Seven groups are related to the security issues of Greece. In common, each working group was formed about the issues of a certain and important country (such as England, America, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Armenia) or regions (like Balkan, Turkish countries, EU) or sensitive issues of national security (like water resources, tourism, radical movements) and offer expert opinions based on their scientific practical studies (19). A group of “west-focused working group” has been created by the General Headquarters that its

duty is to investigate the anti-secular actions. In comparison with the separatists Kurds and radical Islamists groups, the intervention in policy-making from the side of them is more obvious than the military groups.

In comparison with the military forces, the separatist Kurds and radical Islamists were obviously intervene more in policy-makings and foreign policy on 1980s. In some cases, the party Leaders and high-ranking political persons invite for its meeting. At the end of 1990s, the military forces have considerable roles in formulating Turkey foreign policy. For example, it was military leaders who tried to establish a strategic relation between Turkey and Israel and finally a secret training treaty have signed between the two countries in February 1996. Another example was in the fall of 1998, when military leaders created inevitably situations for Syria to deport Abdullah Ocalan (20).

Generally it should say that Turkey's Army has always significant and important role in foreign policy of this country. Although the party of Justice and Development is in power till now, but we see the involvement, influence, and even threaten of Turkey's Army in its political affairs. After coming into power of this party, the military leaders threatened they won't tolerate any changes in Laic system of the country. Turkey's Army takes into accounts itself as the proponent of democracy and defender of Ata Turk's heritage. Laics believe that Turkey's Army is not a dictator power, but is a democratic one which serves themselves for national benefits of Turkey. The military forces say they are the benefactor of democracy, thus they always have significant roles in changing the foundation of Executive Power in Turkey (21). Turkey's Army is the most powerful political authority in the country. Civilians monitoring over the military forces is less. But we should know, although the military influence is so high at crisis times and special issues; however, they have not full dominance over all political affairs. The military leaders play their role as it calls "military disagreement", i.e. a process that military institutions intentionally back away from playing direct roles in political affairs and not involve in civilian government, civilian monitoring over the armed forces, re-professionalism of military forces, and finally caused government to be a civilian one. Though the military forces passed the most stages of this process, behind the scenes they are ready yet to play their defined role as the guardians of national interests (22).

Another matter that made the military presence acceptable in politics of Turkey is to be modernized of the Army. To respond security needs of today, military modernization caused to maximize the military presence and their involvement in politics. "Military Modernization" takes into account as the main pillar of foreign policy of Turkey. First, military modernization is a policy-making target by itself, a notion that supports the new claim of Turkey about leading the region (of Middle-East); second, modernization should cause to develop the classical orientation of Turkey to the side of West by increasing its participation in NATO operations that hopes to strengthen its relationship with the west. Finally, Turkish government understands that in the process of military modernization, important defensive treaties could cause to navigate the foreign policy (23).

Generally and from the perspective of the author, below cases would cause to the influence of the army in the foreign policy of Turkey:

*** Internal Grounds:**

- 1) Historical-political backgrounds and historical role of the Army in Turkey
- 2) Political and legal independence of the Army and an important role that the constitution gives to the Army, Joint Staff, and National Security Council
- 3) National Security Council
- 4) Increasing the authorities of the President that the army has great affects about it
- 5) Defensive Organization
- 6) Military Budget: contrary to the other democratic countries, defensive and army budget of Turkey is not analyzed with parliamentary procedure and even is not come under criticisms in the press and media
- 7) Weapon production and modernize the army
- 8) Kurds issue
- 9) Protection of Ata Turk's heritage

*** External Grounds:** tense relationships with neighbors:

- 1) Cold war necessities
- 2) Cyprus issue, Aegean Sea, Religious Minorities
- 3) Water quarrels and Kurds issue along with Syria and Iran

Thus it should say the army is a main variable towards the orientation of Turkey foreign policy. An important point here is that army's participation in political games is acceptable. Legally and practically, the army is an important factor. Contrary to the most Third World countries that the role of an army is to protect the dictatorship government against peoples' expectations, in Turkey the army takes into account itself as the protector of democracy and Turkish republic government. Indeed, the army is the protector of a government that considers merely "National Turkish peoples' interests". However, the army involvement in politics is against democracy doctrine, but we should bear in mind there is a great difference between the interventions of Turkey's Army in politics in comparison with Third World countries.

The Army has a considerable and powerful stand in government and in Turkish society. Turkish people believe the army is the protector of political system, so the existence of government and its system is highly related and dependable to the power of the Army. The coups of 1960, 1971, and 1980 were directed by the Army. A semi-coup has taken place against Arbakan (the then Prime Minister and Refah Party Leader) on 1997. According to the statistics, since 1922 that is the year of Turkish republic foundation till 1987, the army has the role of governmental and influential presence about 25

years, 9 months, and 18 days in the scene of ruling (24). The Army has a significant effect over the internal policies of Turkey, and in the formation and execution scope of foreign democracy has a strategic role. In the new constitution and by establishing the National Security Council as an advisory panel to the council of ministers about the related issues of national security, the military forces institutionalized their influence and authority in the process of political and economical decisions (25). In the mind of Turkish people there is a presumption yet that whenever the army wishes they could launch a coup and in anytime that the military and Kamalists be in the face of danger, they will plotting a coup (26). Till now and by claiming to follow its duty to keep order of Laic system which is mentioned in Turkish constitution, the army attempted to coup and seize the power during the years of 1960-61, 1971-73, 1980-83 (27).

Finally it should mention that Turkey's Army is a fundamental variable in the foreign policy of this country. As it said, Turkey's Army has special committees itself to decision-making or taking political lines about the foreign policy. However, an important point about this country is that the modern Turkey is much more different from the time of cold war. By coming into power of Justice and Development party the military is diverging little by little from the stage of politics nowadays. Although this matter requires more time, but further goes to a place that the military lose their power to coup attempts. On one side, the first generation of Turkish military leaders is going to be retired (those who have high sensibility to the heritage of Ata Turk and take into accounts themselves as the guardians of the Turkish Laic system); and on the other side, the Justice and Development Party headed by Erdogan is trying to put the military aside of power with the help of the Turkish private sector. This party is considerably support by the people, so politicians like Erdogan, and Abdullah Gull have got this picture very well.

Another important point is that the elites of Justice and Development Party are trying to become a member of the European Union, as soon as possible, because:

Firstly, they will conciliate the military who criticizes this party; Secondly, this will help the economic growth of Turkey and enforcement of private Sector which in turn would cause the more confidence of people to this party and strengthening of its public support. Thirdly, since one of the conditions for Turkey to be a fellowship of the EU is decreasing the role of the military in politics, Erdogan and Abdullah Gull use this matter to put them aside from the realm of politics by amending the constitution.

Thus we could say Modern Turkey is going to a stage that the military and the Army would act more professional in their scope. Since insecure internal and external environment of Turkey provides an excuse for the military to involve in politics, but nowadays Turkish politicians try to solve the issue of Kurds by the slogan of Human Right in internal borders and in their foreign –regional policy is trying to solve their problems with Syria, Armenia, Iran, and Iraq with the motto of “having no-problems with neighbors”. Because by doing this, they achieve stability and calmness that will cause to decrease the role of the military in the realm of politics. Finally it should say that waning of the military in Turkey and decreasing their role in politics is possible in the long-term and it would materialize in a gradual process. This process has been starts obviously.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we tried to define the role of army in Turkey foreign policy. Since republic formation, the army has fundamental roles in this country in a manner that even constitution gave authorities to them for involve in politics. But we conclude that a process has been started in Turkey that will help gradually to decrease the role of Military in internal and external policies. This process will be more obvious in the coming years. A group has come into power in Turkey and there are some groups in Turkish society that challenge the intervention of Army in politics. Now there is a struggle between civilians and the military over the realm of politics which is going to change in favor of civilians. Turkey has adopted economic strategies in the realm of foreign policy so has not security perspective to international issues. Issues that had been security ones (the issue of Kurds in internal and in North of Iraq, Armenia, Syria, and Iran) are going to settle through peaceful means. By heading tactful politicians such as Erdogan, Turkey watches the world from the windows of economics to international issues; even the north of Iraq that at a time was at the target of Turkish invasions, now the most economical investments in this region has been made by Turkish companies.

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