



Martial Law as a Pulling Mechanism and Civil Military Relations in Turkey

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

There is a consensus in research on civil-military relations (CMR) that militaries actively “push” to involve themselves in politics to increase their authority, even in the face of opposition from civilian authorities. However, political authorities may, also, “pull” the military into politics. The paper examines the period of martial law declared in Turkey in 1974, which continued under three successive governments, and a second period of martial law declared in 1978, as mechanisms of pulling led by civilian authorities. Based on parliamentary debates and official documents, this paper argues that civilian decisions for the use of the military in the context of martial law merged with the functional dimension of the role conception of the Turkish military (that is, roughly, the consensus regarding the institution’s purpose) and paved the way toward military domination of decision-making, triggering the pushing mechanism and the military’s active participation in politics.

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Many civil-military relations (CMR) scholars argue that, under democratic rule, “civilians’ decisions must dominate if, when, where, and how the military may be used for external defense, internal security, public policy or leadership selection” (Trinkunas, 2005, pp. 5–8). Accordingly, civilian authorities must conduct the decision-making process to assure civilian control of the military and establish healthy CMR (Feaver, 1996; Pion-Berlin & Arceneaux, 2000).¹ Thus civilian-led decisions are something of the gold standard in ensuring healthy CMR. Recently, however, Harig and Ruffa (2022) have claimed that the civilian-led decision-making process does not automatically produce healthy CMR. They construct a theoretical approach according to which military authorities are frequently assigned tasks that exceed their traditional roles – an extension of military roles by civilian authorities called a “pulling” mechanism. In some instances, militaries do not want to accept these calls for increased involvement in the state’s affairs and may resist or refuse to perform tasks requested; in other instances, they may actively demonstrate an intention to be involved in order to increase their bargaining powers.

Aligning itself with this kind of research, this study criticizes the argument that civilian-led decision-making processes generate healthy CMR. The paper explores what happens when civilians insist on deploying military forces in the face of social and political crises they cannot address. In terms of their impact on CMR, is there any difference between military involvement in short-term operations such as disaster recovery and long-term public security missions such as martial law? This paper aims to discuss these questions by analyzing the Turkish case.²

This article adds to the existing literature in three ways. First, the paper aims to contribute to the extant literature with the analysis of martial law as a mechanism of pulling. If we put aside some exceptions (Demirel, 2005),³ the literature has so far mostly neglected the Turkish civilian authorities’ tendency to shift responsibility to the military, mainly in the face of uprisings. The declaration of martial law, repeated on several occasions in the history of the Turkish Republic, demonstrates civilian reliance on military authority to put things in order. This tradition started in 1925 to cope with an anti-regime uprising and continued into 1960, just before the direct military intervention of the Turkish Armed Forces (Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri, or TSK).⁴ This paper focuses on the 1974 period of martial law declared by the government headed by Bülent Ecevit (26 January–17 November 1974) within the context of the Cyprus Operation of 1974. Although this military operation ended within weeks, martial law regime continued for some time under successive governments. Under Sadi İrmak’s non-partisan administration (17 November, 1974–31 March, 1975), martial law continued even though the government failed to receive a vote of confidence from the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM – Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi). In the second half of the 1970s, coalition partners of the so-called Nationalist Front Governments (Milliyetçi Cephe Hükümetleri, or MC) vigorously defended the extension of the ongoing martial law regime declared in 1974.

Second, this paper claims that it is worth analyzing the purposes behind decision-makers’ choices to pull the military into politics. Relying on Harig and Ruffa’s theoretical framework, it establishes a distinction between *operational* and *political* pulling. Through the analysis of the Turkish case, the paper investigates whether certain military operations such as public order maintenance serve to transform the pulling mechanism into one of pushing. The latter describes the situation

1 Similar arguments have also been made by CMR scholars writing on Turkey (Turan & Gürsoy 2014, pp. 132–140).

2 The Turkish military (Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri, or TSK) declared itself the guardian of the Turkish state from its inception, being the primary agent in founding the Turkish Republic in 1923. The military became a primary political actor through an institutional mechanism called the National Security Council (Millî Güvenlik Kurulu, or MGK), established in the aftermath of the 1960 military intervention. Moreover, the military has since organized and performed military interventions several times, both direct and indirect. The vast and detailed literature on civil-military relations emphasizes the Turkish military’s repeated intentions to increase its political power through the MGK and multiple military coups (see Kars Kaynar, 2018).

3 In many authoritarian regimes, political leaders rely on the military. Put differently, the existence of a close relationship between military and civilian authorities appears a significant factor in the establishment of an authoritarian regime; for a detailed analysis, see Escribe-Folch, Böhmelt & Pilster (2020). In this respect, under autocratic regimes, the military becomes a political actor at the service of the autocrat. The military fights against internal threats to secure the place of the autocrat. For a detailed discussion on the topic see Kars Kaynar (2020, p. 77).

4 At this time, Democrat Party (DP) in the face of increasing political opposition and street demonstrations invited the military to meet the challenge of these uprisings and declared martial law.

in which the military “pushes its way into politics” (Bove et al., 2020, p. 272). Notably, in the 1970s, civilian authorities aimed to use the military to strengthen – or at the very least to conserve – their power by countering any increase in social and political protests. In this way, political authorities assured the military’s involvement in long-term public security missions. Through their participation in such missions, the Turkish military improved its political capacities by becoming a significant actor in mediation and conflict resolution. At the last stage, it began to be involved in the regulation of the daily lives of citizens and to act as a political decision-maker.

Third, the paper explores the significance of the TSK’s role conception – that is, the consensus view of the institution’s purpose (Harig & Ruffa 2022, p. 85; Vennesson et al., 2009, p. 630) – to better understand the transition from pulling to pushing. The paper aims to focus on practical or functional dimensions of the TSK’s role conception and to analyze how the TSK strengthened its role conception as a public security provider in the course of succeeding martial law regimes. As Villa and Passos (2022) demonstrate, some external missions executed by the Brazilian military in the role of public security-provider in conflict-torn countries contributed to legitimizing its intervention into Brazilian domestic politics. Similarly, in the Turkish case, the narrative of the military’s effectiveness in assuring public order and its experience on the ground justified the expansion of the military’s role in public security.

I examine parliamentary deliberations of the Turkish Grand National Assembly between 1974 and 1980 to demonstrate how politicians reached a consensus for the declaration of martial law and triggered the mechanism of pulling in the 1970s (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1974a, 1974b, 1975a, 1975b, 1975c, 1978). All these parliamentary documents are open to the public. I also rely on the analysis of official declarations of successive states of martial law (Üskül, 2016) and memoirs of retired military commander (Bölüçiray, 1989) to demonstrate how martial law was executed on the ground. The analysis of instances of martial law illustrates how the practical dimension of the TSK’s role conception was strengthened and how the transition from pulling to pushing occurred. This material was used to highlight the various kinds of roles the military was assigned during this period.

The archive of martial law declarations is neither transparent nor open to public scrutiny, and this study works against this limitation; the statements can only be traced through contemporary daily newspaper articles. Üskül’s *Bildirileriyle 1974–1980 Dönemi* (2016) presents a rich secondary resource that includes declarations of martial law with close and detailed analyses of daily newspapers of the period.

In the following sections, I provide a general conceptual and methodological background on concepts such as the mechanisms of operational and political pulling and pushing. After establishing these, I discuss the Turkish case by focusing on parliamentary deliberations in the 1970s to demonstrate how politicians pull the military. The third section explores how the state of martial law transformed, over a long period, into a pushing mechanism under the initiative of the Turkish military. In this section, the focus is on the practical (functional) dimension of the TSK’s role conception. The article’s conclusion discusses the findings and their implications for future research in CMR.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: OPERATIONAL OR POLITICAL PULLING AND PUSHING

The CMR literature focuses predominantly on the relationship between political and military authorities and establishes a clear-cut separation between civil and military spheres. Huntington (1957) stresses the significance of the military’s professionalism and its impartial civilian control. To assure objective civilian control, he suggested, there should be a clearly defined division of labor between military and civilian authorities. Pion-Berlin and Arceneaux (2000, p. 416) claim that “there is, in short, a trade off – civilians grant officers autonomy when they demonstrate professional aptitude and in return officers respect the politician’s authority.”

Criticizing this, Harig and Ruffa (2022, p. 87) contend that while the literature has equated the military’s subordination to civilian authority with healthy CMR, civilian authorities may in some instances utilize the military for their own interests. Such instances demonstrate that, notwithstanding the civilian or military status of decision-makers, it is worth analyzing purposes behind the choice of decision-makers to pull the military into politics.

As these scholars demonstrate, the analysis should concentrate on the purposes and the kinds of operations in which military forces deployed. To further discuss different types of military operations and their impact on CMR, Harig and Ruffa (2022, pp. 88–89) distinguish between political pulling and operational pulling, each reflecting distinct types of intents for extending the military's sphere of operation. In the political pulling, the military may support the executive and act, for example, to encounter increasing protests and demonstrations. Subsequently, the military becomes either more or less involved in partisan politics. In the latter case, when there is an operational pulling move, the military is asked to perform missions outside its usual operational spectrum, without getting directly involved in politics.⁵

Pushing is a second mechanism through which the military exceeds its usual operational spectrum. The term describes the situation in which the military “pushes its way into politics” (Bove et al., 2020, p. 272). As Harig & Ruffa (2022) suggest, once the pulling mechanism is triggered, then it becomes easier for the military to execute the pushing mechanism and to find its way into politics. This is especially the case for political pulling. Once the military gets the initiative and acts in place of civilian authorities to counter opposing movements, it becomes politicized. This is a further step in the politicization of the military in the direction of making the military a decision-maker.

The transition from pulling to pushing can best be understood by integrating the concept of role conception – a shared view of the military's main purpose – into the analysis (Harig & Ruffa 2022, p. 85). As such, the military must be conceived of as an agent making sense of its lived experience (Harig, Jenne, Ruffa, 2022, p. 9). Role conception may have a symbolic meaning, relying on the description of military forces as guardians of the regime. It may also have a practical or functional dimension, referring to the active participation of military forces in law-enforcement missions from a historical perspective. This understanding of role conception depends heavily on the military's experience on the ground. This paper contends that the practical dimension of role conception is vital to understanding the transition from pulling to pushing.

The transition from pulling to pushing becomes easier when civilians trigger the mechanism of political pulling and the military defines its role as a long-term public security provider. When the military becomes habituated to acting like a law enforcement agency and holds the necessary experience, the pulling mechanism easily transforms into a pushing mechanism, making the military a de facto decision-maker. The inefficiency of other security actors such as the police also contributes to the consolidation of the military's role as a public security provider.

The following section starts with the historical analysis of states of martial law in Turkey to substantiate the Turkish military's experience in executing public order missions; its role conception has a strong functional dimension. Subsequently, the separate subtitle in the same section explores parliamentary discussions on the declaration of martial law to explore how civilian authorities internalized the military's role conception and pulled the military into domestic politics. The last part of this section explains how the mechanism of pulling changed character under successive governments. Under the Ecevit administration, the mechanism of pulling mostly had an operational nature whereas under the MC government this mechanism took on a political nature. The last section focuses on the experience the military gained on the ground through the execution of periods of martial law and explores how military forces improved the practical dimension of their role conception. As the analysis demonstrates, martial law as a political pulling mechanism strengthened the military's role conception as a public security provider, triggering the transition from pulling to pushing.

CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES: PULLING THE MILITARY INTO POLITICS

BACKGROUND FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF MARTIAL LAW IN THE 1970S

Martial law was declared in the Republic of Turkey for the first time on February 24, 1925 in response to the Sheikh Said Rebellion – an uprising led by the Kurdish nationalist Sheikh Said. On January 1, 1931, the single-party regime then in place declared another period of martial law in response to a chain of anti-regime events known as the Menemen Incident. Another

⁵ This classification suggested by Harig and Ruffa is similar to Golby's (2021, p. 150) distinction between civilian activation and military activism. According to Golby, in some instances, civilian leaders can use all or part of the military for their own political purposes. Civilian activation is defined as “attempts by civilian leaders to co-opt the military for personal, partisan, or electoral gain.”

state of martial law in four Turkish cities was declared during the Second World War, lasting between October 20, 1940 and December 23, 1947. The Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti, or DP), which ruled the country between 1950 and 1960 as a single party, declared martial law twice. In 1955, when the police proved incapable of coping with protests, DP politicians called out the military to intervene⁶ before declaring martial law on September 7 (TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, 1955, p. 668). Once martial law was established, the party used it primarily to suppress the opposition Republican People's Party (RPP). Another period of martial law was declared in the wake of the events of April 28–29 when the DP made an aggressive response to increasing anti-government protests (Şen, 2016). This decision paved the way towards the 1960 coup d'état. The military justified the coup as necessary to establish law and order inside national borders at a time when civilian authorities were considered incapable of coping with repeated street demonstrations. As stated by Lombardi (1997, p. 204), in the Turkish case, “the trigger for the coup [of 1960] appears to have been the 1 May decision (by the DP in power) to use the armed forces in an effort to regain control of the situation.”

On June 15, 1970, the Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları (Revolutionary Workers' Syndicats, or DİSK) organized a demonstration of thousands of workers in Istanbul. Unable to suppress the violent strikes, described as the biggest set of demonstrations in the history of the working class movement in Turkey, the leader of the Justice Party (JP), Süleyman Demirel, initiated the mechanism of pulling and ordered the military to quell the demonstrations.⁷ The decision for the declaration of martial law was contested by some segments of the military. According to some senior officers, the use of the military to support an unpopular government was a mistake (Lombardi, 1997, p. 205). For others, this was a window of opportunity for the military and the declaration of martial law had the potential to increase its bargaining power in relation to civilian authorities. Very soon after, senior military authorities such as Muhsin Batur would submit a memorandum to demand more power and autonomy for the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, or MGK; see Kars Kaynar, 2018). Finally, on 12 March, 1971, the TSK intervened in politics once more, forcing the Demirel administration to resign.

The historical analysis demonstrates that the TSK has taken on public order missions several times since the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Throughout this process, the Turkish military proved its capacity to end instability and establish public order. When politicians faced political instability or any threat to their regime, there was little hesitation in calling out the military. Before the 1970s, the functional dimension of the TSK's role conception had already begun to be strengthened. Despite the diversification of political parties in the 1970s, their capacity to maintain public order remained limited when they came to power. Under these circumstances, parliamentary requests for the use of the military started to build on each other, ignoring all ideological differences. The TSK, in turn, aware of its aptitude for the establishment of domestic security, asked for more political power.

In the immediate aftermath of the military intervention, a law was enacted on September 20, 1971 to regulate the scope of martial law in practice. According to the enacted legislation, the conditions for the declaration of martial law were extended and the military enlarged its authority to act, benefiting from increased autonomy:⁸

The emergence of open indications for widespread violent actions was added to the list of reasons that justified the proclamation of martial law. The authority that would determine these open-ended justifications for martial law would be the Council of Ministries itself. In addition, a new Martial Law Act number 1402 was adopted on a later date. This act declared that in the regions of martial law, duties and authorities of law enforcement officers would be granted to martial law commanders, and that martial law commanders could restrict the use of some rights and liberties, or completely suspend them.” (Urhan & Çelik, 2010)

The significant point about Law No. 1402 is that, although the decision to declare martial law still belonged to civilian authorities, the conditions were extended under the initiative of

6 For a detailed analysis of the events of 6–7 September, see Güven, 2012.

7 According to Turkish constitutional legislation, the decision to declare martial law belonged to parliament.

8 For the amended Law No. 124, see the 1961 Turkish Constitution: <https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/tr/mevzuat/onceki-anayasalar/1961-anayasasi/>.

military authorities through the constitutional amendments realized after the 1971 military intervention (Çelik, 2008, p. 163). Moreover, on each occasion, the declaration of martial law was also discussed in the MGK meetings. As the official declarations available to the public demonstrate, during the official debates in the MGK, all protests and street demonstrations were described as movements contrary to the survival of the regime and the state. As a response, the MGK advised the declaration of martial law or the prolongment of the existing state of martial law (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1975b, p. 174). During these discussions, military authorities underlined the fact that the police force, on its own, was not capable of suppressing street demonstrations or the general context of conflict in the country (Evren, 1990, pp. 197–198). As the MGK has long been defined as the primary instrument of the regime of military tutelage in Turkey, discussions on the extension of martial law prove that the military aimed to push its way into politics and that civilian authorities did not display any real opposition.

DEFENDING AND EXTENDING THE MARTIAL LAW IN 1974

During the Cyprus Peace Operation of 1974 (20 July–18 August), Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit defended a limited state of martial law as a provisional precaution within the context of a potential clash between Greece and Turkey (Üskül, 1997, p. 226). When the Cyprus Operation ended, the Ecevit government decreased the number of cities under martial law from 14 to 4. The state of martial law, however, remained in force. During parliamentary discussions, National Defence Minister Hasan Esat Işık stressed the need for the extension of the regime of martial law due to external threats. He added later that no internal conflict required the extension of martial law inside state borders (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1974a, p. 11). During the same parliamentary discussion, İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil of the Justice Party stated that, notwithstanding the end of the Cyprus conflict, they would vote to extend martial law. An MP of the opposing Democratic Party held that, given its limited application, Turkish citizens did not feel the effects of martial law; given the risk of external conflict, they would vote in favor. In a similar vein, an MP of the coalition partner the National Salvation Party (NSP), Hasan Aksay, reaffirmed that ordinary citizens did not feel like they were living under martial law, which was a success for the governing coalition (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1974a, p. 16).

Thus, at the end of 1974, almost all political parties agreed to extend the period of martial law. Once politicians reached a consensus in parliament on the relevant issue, succeeding governments took the opportunity to repurpose the ongoing martial law according to their political interests, triggering the mechanism of political pulling. The military, in turn, extended its experience in public order missions and strengthened the practical dimension of its role conception as a public security provider.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE 1974 MARTIAL LAW UNDER SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS

The 1974 martial law regime continued under the following administration of Sadi Irmak. Although Irmak's government lost a vote of confidence, it remained in power until the foundation of an MC government on 31 March. During parliamentary discussions on the extension of the martial law regime, National Defence Minister İlhami Sancar, citing military and political reasons requiring the extension of martial law, stated that there were legal and illegal organizations threatening peace and order in the country (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1974b, p. 43). He warned the TBMM against the threat of increasing street demonstrations and defended the extension of martial law as a preventive measure. In other words, starting with the Irmak administration, the ground on which martial law was defended changed; now, the rationale was that domestic threats required it. This transformation triggered the mechanism of political pulling.

Sadi Irmak emphasized that martial law commanders would utilize all power and authority they were given according to the appropriate legislation (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1974b, pp. 44–54). An MP of the opposition National Salvation Party, İ. Fehmi Cumalıoğlu, defended the extension of martial law, citing increasing student movements as a threat to peace and security in the country (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1975a, p. 70). Accordingly, martial law commanders directed the orientation of the regime of martial law towards internal order; it began to be used as a mechanism to cope with street demonstrations when an “unreliable” civilian government was in power.

One of the perceived primary duties of the succeeding MC Government (March 31, 1975–June 21, 1977) was to prolong the same regime of martial law for another month, until May 5, 1975. The new government proposed the declaration of yet another period of martial law on 27 March, 1975 in the regions of Hakkâri, Mardin, Siirt, and Diyarbakır, a proposal legitimized on the grounds of increasing tension and the threat of war in the Middle East. The extension was further defended on the ground that ethnic and communist dissident movements were rising in this region. The TBMM, however, refused to implement it. With his coalition partner the Nationalist Action Party, Süleyman Demirel (previously forced to resign as prime minister after the 1971 indirect military intervention), was the main political figure defending both the continuation of martial law and the military's active participation in countering terrorism in the country. These civilian authorities aimed to re-establish an extended version of a martial law regime in the face of opposition such as street demonstrations and the labor movement (Üskül, 2016, p. 3). Demirel underlined many times that he insisted on the declaration of martial law to counter anarchy (TBMM Meclis Araştırma Komisyonu Raporu, 2012, p. 779). Thus, under the MC government, martial law became a mechanism of political pulling.

The decision for the declaration of martial law was discussed many times in the TBMM between 1975 and 1979. The most serious debates unfolded on April 30, 1975 when the TBMM was obliged to reach a conclusion on whether or not it was necessary to extend the duration of the ongoing period of martial law. During these debates, the position of the Demirel administration was defended by the Interior Minister Oğuzhan Asiltürk. Many opposition parties critically pointed out that the minister was defending the martial law regime despite a previously accepted political tradition that the act of declaration should be the duty of the prime minister or the minister of foreign affairs. For example, under the Ecevit administration in 1974, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Turan Güneş defended the extension of martial law for another month, emphasizing that it was directly linked to Turkey's outcomes in external security (Üskül, 2016, p. 5). Later, during parliamentary discussions, the RPP parliamentarian Necdet Uğur warned that the declaration of martial law must not be defended by the Minister of the Interior (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1975b, p. 180).

In his speech to the TBMM on July 2, 1975, the Interior Minister Asiltürk stated that as there was a threat of war, and that it was necessary to keep the country safe, law and order must be assured inside national borders (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1975b, p. 173). After citing the crisis in Cyprus as the primary reason behind the decision for the continuation of martial law, Asiltürk mentioned "other internal events and problems" and emphasized their potential to do harm to the regime. He later cited the existence of protests and the increasing number of demonstrations as reasons explaining why martial law must be extended to guarantee the security of the regime (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1975c, p. 244). Moreover, Talat Oğuz of the other coalition partner, the Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi (Republican Reliance Party, or CGP) asserted the issue of internal security in a clearer way, equating burgeoning social movements with the danger of a communist revolution unfolding; this he saw as a possibility posing a signal danger to the state (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1975b, p. 180). Another MP, Şevket Kazan, argued that the real intention of student movements was not to fix the problems they encountered in their universities – they were movements threatening the very survival of the state. He concluded that if a movement rose against the Turkish state, then civilian and security institutions and elites must come together to suppress it (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1975b, p. 189). Thus, under the MC government, the mechanism of political pulling became clearly visible, requiring the military's direct involvement in political processes. The parliamentary consensus signifies politicians' acceptance of their inability to achieve public order in the country, legitimizing the military's role in public security. When civilian support achieved consensus and the military gained sufficient experience in public security, succeeding governments did not hesitate to use the military against movements opposing their regime, consolidating the mechanism of political pulling.

Despite wide support from politicians, there were nevertheless reactions against the extension of martial law. The Democratic Party MP Turgut Cebe criticized the Justice Party, stating that the government did not hold "political power" per se as it used martial law as a bulwark to internal and external threats (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1975c, p. 245). Significantly, the Ecevit government was against the continuation of martial law in the second part of the 1970s. Ecevit stated many times that his government considered the regime an extraordinary measure to

assure law and order within national territory during the Cyprus Intervention, when there was a real threat. Echoing Ecevit in a parliamentary speech, the RPP MP Necdet Uğur declared his opposition to the impulse to extend martial law in the face of internal threats (Üskül 2016, p. 236). Another MP, Hasan Esat Işık, stated that the imposition of martial law under the Ecevit government was exclusively a response to external threats. While these were statements pointing out that martial law had become politicized in the hands of succeeding governments, the parliamentary opposition did not evince any reaction to the use of the military in public security, however, instead reaffirming the role of the military in the establishment of order.

While many different governments came to power in subsequent years, the debates on whether or not a state of martial law should be declared did not stop. When in 1978 Maraş Incidents happened under RPP rule, Demirel declared that his party would be voting “yes” to martial law. They would do this, he soon added, as they trusted the military more than they trusted the government in power. Here, it can be argued that civilian authorities verified once again the military’s role conception as the guardian of the state in the face of social unrest (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1978, p. 47). Since then, an agreement emerged among civilian actors according to which martial law was the primary instrument in the fight against terrorism (Beyribey 2022). This agreement strengthened the symbolic and practical dimension of the TSK’s role conception.

Ecevit, in an interview with the journalist Fikret Bila, declared the events of Kahramanmaraş to have been purposefully organized as to leave him no choice but to declare a state of martial law (Üskül, 2016, p. 54). Ecevit, who in 1974 had been defending a limited martial law (operational pulling), thought himself obliged to declare another period with an extended sphere of influence (political pulling). He was aware that the changing nature of pulling, when merged with the functional dimension of the TSK’s role conception, would pave the way towards the emergence of the mechanism of pushing – and a potential coup d’état in the long run.

THE PRACTICAL DIMENSION OF THE TSK’S ROLE CONCEPTION: FROM POLITICAL PULLING TO PUSHING

Besides civilians’ positive approach to the declaration of martial law, its implementation under successive governments is also worth analyzing to demonstrate how the military increased its authority and power on the ground. With the experience it gained during martial law, the military found the opportunity to improve its political skills and to push its way into politics. Declarations of martial law were the main instruments of the military’s political articulation. They afforded the military the capacity to resolve political disputes and to regulate social relations and the everyday practices of citizens.

As the number and nature of declarations demonstrates, the Ecevit administration was careful to prevent the martial law regime from affecting the daily lives of Turkish society in significant ways. In July 1974, declarations made by the martial law commander Suat Aktolga were limited, concerning Adana, Hatay, and İçel. With these declarations, Aktolga informed citizens about the donation campaign for the military, then fighting in Cyprus (Üskül, 2016, p. 24) In a similar vein, in his official declaration No. 1, the martial law commander of İzmir, Necmettin Sönmez, explained how local populations should behave in the case of an air strike (Üskül, 2016, pp. 50–51). Thus, under the Ecevit administration, and during its initial phase, martial law appeared mostly as an example of operational pulling. While the military was pulled by civilian authorities, its involvement in politics remained, for the most part, limited.

On September 18, Prime Minister Ecevit resigned, ending the RPP-NSP coalition government. Between November 17, 1974 and March 31, 1975, the Irmak administration governed the country despite lacking a vote of confidence. During this period, martial law commanders began to release more detailed declarations and became increasingly involved in the daily lives of Turkish citizens. Declaration No. 22, released in November 1974, made the organization of protests and activities of associations subject to the permission of the martial law commander. Meanwhile, the martial law commander of Ankara, Arif Koçak, prohibited the publication of the journal *Aydınlık*; an assigned military prosecutor later initiated an interrogation concerning it. Martial Law Commander Koçak further declared that some students were to be expelled from Ankara and transferred to another city as they disturbed peace and order (Üskül, 2016, p. 35).

When the First MC government came to power on March 31, 1975, the political pulling mechanism became more evident, with a significant extension of the military's operational autonomy. Thus, military commanders were more confident when implementing their duty and enjoyed a wider area of authority to intervene. Under the MC government, in one of his final declarations, Martial Law Commander Koçak declared that military authorities were aware of increasing criticism of their decisions. He soon added that they would use their authority in the context of Law No. 1402, regardless of the core reason for the declaration of the current state of martial law. During this period, martial law commanders also started to act as mediators in discussions between workers and employers. The negotiations were later settled collectively in the Istanbul Central Command (Istanbul Merkez Komutanlığı). Subsequently, some pulling mechanisms were triggered under the Demirel administration with the prohibition of the opposing party leader Ecevit's speech during a meeting by martial law commanders (Üskül, 2016, p. 10). Thus, under the Demirel administration, martial law commanders enjoyed wide-ranging influence in almost every area of daily life and uncontested autonomy in the security realm.

Moreover, the complete absence of civilian oversight institutions appeared problematic in its own right, mainly under the Demirel administration. Demirel criticized the establishment of an intermediary institution, assuming that it would harm the autonomy of the military in the field. In 1978, he declared it was important to "let the commanders handle the martial law" – an attempt to secure the autonomy of the military on the ground and to secure its loyalty to his administration, but politicizing the military in a significant way (Cizre 1993, p. 151).

In August 1975, martial law came to an end. It took three years for the Ecevit administration, responding to violent clashes in Maraş, to declare another spell of martial law in 13 cities. This time, the main reason behind the decision for the declaration of martial law on December 25, 1978 was purely related to domestic politics and the internal situation of the country – the institution of martial law, that is, was another example of political pulling. With the declaration of martial law in 1978, military authorities who had already begun to increase their maneuver at the end of 1974 found the opportunity to become real decision-makers on the ground. This was when the practical dimension of the TSK's role conception merged with the mechanism of political pulling to trigger the mechanism of pushing. As the theoretical section sought to demonstrate, when the positive attitude of civilian authorities to the declaration of martial law merged with the changing nature of military missions under martial law, the pushing mechanism was activated. The military did not hesitate to act in the role of decision-maker, assuming the status on behalf of political authorities. With the increasing action the military conducted on the ground, there were clashes regarding the decision-making process and the implementation of martial law. During the discussions in 1978, the Ecevit administration aimed at extending the state of martial law to include central cities where violent nationalist groups were intensely active. The Chief of General Staff Evren rejected this suggestion, principally citing the military's incapacity, and further defending the extension of martial law to eastern cities such as Diyarbakır, where leftist and ethnic dissident groups were increasingly active. The military appeared in the role of decision-maker, capable of rejecting civilian decisions and suggesting the implementation of contrary ones (Üskül, 2016, p. 55). In 1979, the Chief of General Staff Evren declared that martial law commanders would not be subordinate to the Martial Law Coordination Command, rejecting any submission to civilian authorities (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014, p. 293). In the aftermath of the 1980 coup d'état, he did not hesitate in declaring martial law in 67 cities.

Under the martial law of 1978, numerous curfews, permissible only if there were a state of martial law according to the Turkish legislation, were declared. According to declaration No. 2, curfew would be adopted between 18.00 and 05.00 in Kahramanmaraş. During the implementation of this period of martial law, military authorities were also granted the permission to use weapons according to the TSK Internal Service Law No. 87 and Law No. 1281 (Üskül 2016, p. 67).

The martial law commander of Adana, Nevzat Bölügiray, claimed in his memoirs that he appointed the commander of the gendarmerie to replace Adana's assassinated police chief Cevat Yurdakul. Although this assignment was temporarily realized, the Ministry of the Interior, according to Bölügiray, did not appoint a new civilian police chief for a long time; the head of the gendarmerie continued to serve as the chief of police under the direct control of the martial law commanders. In other words, civilian decision-makers were either late to respond to fundamental security issues or they seemed to leave the responsibility to the military (Bölügiray, 1989, p. 125).

Furthermore, under martial law, the military is charged with the control and observation of prisons. Bölügiray, in his memoirs, stated that he compared civilian and military prisons and concluded that prisons under military control were better than their civilian counterparts (Bölügiray, 1989, p. 75). This simple statement demonstrates how martial law strengthened the role conception of the military and made politicians believe that everything under military control was better than when it was fully under civilian control. The military were thus persuaded to believe they should push to put things in order.

On occasion, the accumulation of discourses affirming positive images of military control led to radical decisions. For example, in Adana under the martial law regime, the declaration of martial law No. 26 ruled that military personnel were authorized to kill any person who did not respect his orders. Criticized by some of his own personnel on stating that this declaration was actually contrary to current legislation, Bölügiray gave a noteworthy response: after the 1980 coup d'état, he argued, illegal declarations of this kind had become a legal norm per se (Bölügiray, 1989, p. 160).

Under martial law, military commanders were granted control of intelligence gathering, considering themselves to be acting in the name of the police; thus a Special Team was created in 1979. Bölügiray stated that the Chief of General Staff and the subsequent leader of the 1980 coup d'état Kenan Evren visited him several times to ask whether any resistance would occur in the region should a coup be declared by the military (Bölügiray 1989, pp. 577–579).

Another significant outcome of these periods of martial law was the establishment of military-led martial law tribunals. According to Law No. 1402, military authorities began to judge civilians. For example, martial law commanders of Ankara, Çankara, and Kastamonu prepared indictments of both Idealist right-wing organizations and socialist/communist parties (T. C. Çankırı-Kastamonu İlleri Sıkıyönetim Komutalığı Askeri Savcılığı 1981). In 1979, some police officers were detained by martial law commanders and judged by military prosecutors. Moreover, participants in many violent events in the 1970s – among them those of Malatya and Kahramanmaraş – were to be judged by martial law tribunals (TBMM Meclis Araştırma Komisyonu Raporu, 2012, pp. 753–757).

Finally, but no less significantly, it must be noted that the well-known Flag Operation, a step prior to direct military intervention on behalf of the TSK, was prepared by the Second Chief of General Staff and first presented during a meeting of martial law commanders. Martial law commanders and force commanders discussed this plan to decide on the details of the upcoming military coup in 1980 (TBMM Meclis Araştırma Komisyonu Raporu, 2012, pp. 753–757).

As all these examples demonstrate, many practices and procedures under a state of martial law enlarge the authority and autonomy of the military on the ground. The military, after being repeatedly pulled into the realm of politics, discovered itself free to use its extensive domain of influence to trigger the mechanism of pushing. This was demonstrated in 1980 – a year the military decided to intervene in politics on its own initiative alone.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that the practical (functional) dimension of the Turkish military's role conception in the 1970s facilitated the transition from pulling to pushing into the realm of politics. Civilian authorities' reproduction of this functional dimension through their continuing support for deploying military forces in domestic security makes the transition from pulling to pushing smoother. Thus, the relationship between pulling and pushing mechanisms relies heavily on the military's role conception. Long-term public order missions, such as those of martial law regimes, particularly, both afford the ability for political articulation and facilitate the military's involvement in politics. In other words, civilian political leaders may become central agents in constructing a future military tutelage regime. In the case of Turkey in the 1970s, with the experience the TSK gained in public security missions, military authorities became convinced that they may play a role in the provision of public security while the politicians saw them as skilled problem-solvers. When civilians pulled the Turkish military for long-term public security missions and the military's role conception was strengthened by ongoing military-led public security operations, with the experience they gained and the trust they obtained from political authorities, they acted as decision-makers, mobilizing the mechanism of pushing. The

military then enjoyed a wide range of influence in almost every sphere of society. All these developments strengthened the military's position in the security sector and enabled it to push for more political power, its direct intervention in 1980 being the final stage.

Future research may widen the theoretical debate on the practical (functional) dimension of role conception and demonstrate how the experience of military forces in the domain of public security strengthens their role conception as security providers, enabling them to take on more responsibility and prompting an initiative to act as decision-makers in domestic politics. Comparative studies on the topic would afford a better understanding of the common impacts of these long-term public order missions on the military's role conception. In this regard, those Latin American countries where the military is experienced in long-term public security missions may be added to the example of Turkey to serve as case studies for future research. Comparative research would better explain the impact of long-term public order missions on the military's role conception and the transition from pulling to pushing.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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