

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Competing Roles of the Police and the Army? A Historical Analysis of the Turkish Case

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This paper explores how the Turkish case speaks to the contemporary discussions regarding the relations between the police and the military. These discussions have been at the forefront of newly emerging literature which has fundamentally focused on explaining the evolution of the police-military relations in a Western context, seen from a global perspective. This paper, on the other hand, suggests that besides global trends, internal power struggles among security institutions should also be taken into consideration. Turkey provides a unique case for such research as it has experienced a long period of military involvement in domestic issues; yet, this military tutelage is effectively challenged by the civilianization process currently conducted by the political power. This paper investigates the political evolution of these two institutions during the period from 1980 up until now. The conclusion, it claims, is that there are *competing* rather than *blurring* boundaries between these two institutions.

**Keywords:** Army; police; police-military relations; security; Turkey

## Introduction

A regular army and a police force are essential elements of a state's coercive apparatus. These two institutions have been constructed theoretically and practically as the primary institutional means of coercion (Jauregui, 2010: 1; Lutterbeck, 2013: 10). In theory, there exists a territorial and functional distinction between the police and the military.<sup>1</sup> The police enforce law within the borders of the state, whereas the military protects the society against external threats. The logic behind the methods utilized by the two institutions is also different. Traditionally, the army is interested in warfare while the police are invested with public order. Additionally, the former focuses on international warfare and the latter on the national rule of law. This territorial and logical separation appears as a distinctive feature of the modern state (Brodeur, 2005: 41–48).

In recent years, we have witnessed an increasing attention in the contemporary literature to the redefinition of police and military roles in a changing security environment (Weiss, 2011; Lutterbeck, 2005; Eriksson & Rhinard, 2009; Pion-Berlin & Carreras, 2017). According to this new literature, a constant shift in global security concerns has made the internal and external security distinction obsolete. For example, according to Kaldor (1999), war should be redefined, or a clear distinction should be established between new and old wars. In a similar sense, Lutterbeck (2005) states that we are witnessing the convergence of internal and external security in Europe. Due to the emergence of new security challenges, he argues that you can talk about the *militarization* of policing and *policization* of soldiering in the Western political context. However, it should be immediately noted that the blurring boundaries between the police and the army are not at all a new research subject in social sciences. Thus, a pioneer study by Janowitz (1960) has explored the *constabularization* of the military through the examination of policing missions that the British Army conducted in its former colonies. Hooker and Richard (2003) have argued that the military has always been involved in domestic issues. In the same vein, Jauregui (2010: 8) claims that despite the existence of an idealized

<sup>1</sup> Brodeur (2005: 51) indicates that in the 19th century, when the police had recently been created in order to replace the army in domestic issues, the difference between the police and the army was clear. Later, this clear separation has vanished.

distinction between the police and the army, their roles have always been blurred. Also, the existence of gendarmeries and their intermediary status consisting of both military and police functions proves that there has never been a clear distinction between the police and the military.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, according to some recent studies, the changing roles of the police and the army constitute a recent phenomenon, explained mainly by the necessity to change the security agenda (Edmunds 2006). Based on the arguments in these studies, with the end of the Cold War a new era has started during which the division between internal and external security has become blurred (Lutterbeck 2005) due to new types of risks and challenges such as migration, organized crime, terrorism etc. Accordingly, *transnationalization of security* (Bigo 2005) or the rise of *transboundary security issues* (Eriksson & Rhinard 2009: 245) have become much more pronounced in recent years. Furthermore, the growth of gendarmeries appears to be a response to the new security challenges entailing both police and military type of reactions (Lutterbeck, 2013).<sup>3</sup>

Despite the abundant accumulation of knowledge on the global trend of blurring boundaries, country specific and comparative historical analysis, respectively, are scarce,<sup>4</sup> with Kraska's study (2001) on the militarization of policing in the US being an exception. Moreover, Pion-Berlin (2017) has explored the changing role of the military in Latin America.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Hill's study (2000) on the police-military interface in developing countries (Indonesia, Tunisia etc.) is inspiring to rethink these two institutions in a non-Western context and in a comparative way. According to Hills (2000), liberal democratic versions of police-military distinction should be reconsidered in developing countries where the police and army distinction seems to be an impossible goal to achieve due to the existence of weak institutional structure.

Obviously, the political issues states are confronting today have become much more complex and have both internal and external dimensions. Apart from such global trends concerning the changing security environment, the political landscape of each country also matters when considering the police-military interface. This paper sets forth that the traditional distinction between the police and the military is rapidly blurring due to the changing security environment. However, there exists a neglected dimension of this global trend: the socio-political context of some developing countries – especially the ones whose political history is full of military interventions and where the army appears as a political actor – furthers the primacy of power struggles at the national level at the expense of global trends. In this respect, this paper explores the police-military relations in the Turkish case in order to understand whether it is possible to talk about a potential *blurring* of police and military functions due to globally changing security trends or rather *competing* military-police roles as a reflection of power struggles.

Turkey provides a unique case for research as it has experienced a long period of military involvement in domestic issues, yet, this military tutelage is effectively challenged by the civilianization process what has conducted by the political power since the 2000s. Appearing as an autonomous political actor and acting as the founder and guardian of the regime, the Turkish military has been involved several times in domestic issues. As the founders of the Turkish Republic were predominantly soldiers (Rustow, 1959), they have taken upon themselves the mission to protect the newly established democracy at all costs. Consequently, the military relied on military interventions to safeguard the regime. It has intervened directly and indirectly in politics four times: in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997 (Bardaçlı, 2013). Direct military interventions resulted in a military rule whereas indirect military interventions ended up with the resignation of the government in power. Recently, a coup attempt took place in 2016.<sup>6</sup> Besides these military interventions, Turkey was ruled for decades by military authorities under martial law (Üskül, 2016b). Consequently, the army appeared as a hegemonic actor in the security sector and did not hesitate to intervene in public order-related issues on behalf of the police. Under these circumstances, there has never been a clear-cut distinction between the police and the army. On the contrary, up until the last decade, the ever-lasting problem of rivalry among Turkish security institutions has generally resulted in the army taking over police functions. Yet, things started to change with the beginning of the 1980s. Since then, the police have started looking more like an

<sup>2</sup> For a further discussion of gendarmerie in Turkey, see Sariibrahimoğlu (2005).

<sup>3</sup> Finally, some recent studies on the subject defend that despite the transnationalization of security issues, a prevailing separation between internal and external domains of security exists (Weiss & Dalferth, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> In the U.S., empirical research on the changing roles of the police and military is abundant. Andreas and Price's (2001) study on the transformation of the American state from a war-fighting into a crime-fighting one is an example of such empirical studies.

<sup>5</sup> Her study indicates that the military forces get involved in anti-drug operations. While military involvement in police patrols is considered ineffective, it has gained significant success in anti-drug operations against cartel leaders.

<sup>6</sup> On July 15, 2016, a coup attempt was launched by a section of the military against the JDP. Erdoğan asked from the Turkish people to offer resistance, and the Turkish people took to the streets to fight against the instigators of the coup attempt. This was the bloodiest coup attempt in the history of the Republic, leaving almost 250 dead and many more injured.

army. I will call this period “resemblance”. The 1990s were a transition period. In the 2000s, with the transformation of civil-military relations, a more powerful and autonomous police organization has entered into power struggles with the army. Now, there appears to be a “rivalry” within the security sector in Turkey due to the transformation of civil-military relations since the 2000s.

In short, this paper examines the political evolution of these two institutions historically, from the 1980s up until today. I argue that as a result of the power struggles, *competing*, rather than *blurring*, boundaries exist between the police and the army. This paper has two main goals: First, it shows how power struggles between the army, the police and the political power are taking place at the heart of the competing boundaries between these institutions. Here, the paper puts special emphasis on internal factors. Second, it demonstrates that, contrary to global trends, a new trend emerges in Turkey as the complexities of Turkish civil-military relations evolve at the expense of the Turkish military.

## Methodology

Turkey has been selected as the field of study for two fundamental reasons: First, in Turkey, there has never been a clear-cut distinction between these two institutions. Second, Turkey has experienced a long period of military involvement in politics; yet, this military tutelage is effectively challenged by the transformation of civil-military relations among security institutions in the country. This transformation has created a political opportunity for other institutions – the police – to gain power and has enabled them to participate in power struggles within the security sector.

The article is based on two types of sources: In the first place, semi-structured interviews were conducted with police and military officers in order to understand their perception of civil-military relations in Turkey. Second, secondary sources were analyzed. These sources consisted of newspapers, memoirs, and previous research on the subject. Particularly, memoirs written by retired police and military officers were explored to observe the relationship between police and military personnel on the ground. Moreover, legal and constitutional arrangements since 1980 were examined so that the changes in the balance of power between these two institutions could be observed.

A significant limitation regarding the sources for this article is that no access was allowed to official documents of the Interior Ministry and the General Directorate of Security. An individual application for this kind of permission was rejected on the part of the Directorate.

## The Military Supremacy: the 1960s and 1970s

To be able to talk about a paradigmatic shift with the emergence of a new global security environment, we need to accept *a priori* the existence of a clear-cut distinction between security institutions on national levels. Here, it would be essential to refer to the literature on civil-military relations.<sup>7</sup> The European paradigm of civil-military relations is mainly framed upon the complete separation of the military from the civilian authorities (Born et al., 2006). Here, the police as a coercive institution belong to the civilian sphere. However, the existing country-based analysis shows varying paradigms in different countries. This is especially the case in the non-Western context.

Hills (2000) demonstrates the complexities of the relationship between the police and the military in some third world countries. As she (2000: 1) indicates, the relationship between the police and the military is oversimplified due to the ignorance of social scientists of the environment in which these institutions are embedded. In a similar vein, the police, as an institution, seem to be neglected by social scientists studying civil-military relations in Turkey.<sup>8</sup>

First, it should be noted that there has never been a clear separation between the police and the army in Turkish political history. As Harris (2004) puts it, whereas the division between the police and the military is limited in the Western world, it has almost never been regulated in third world/developing countries. In the Turkish example, military interventions and martial law practices have prevented the autonomization of the police from the military (Dikici, 2013). It is fair to argue that the military sought to acquire all necessary means to dominate the security sector in general. It managed to do so with the help of a concept introduced in the aftermath of the 1960 coup d'état. Following the military intervention, a new constitution was written

<sup>7</sup> Although the subject of civil-military relations in Turkey has received considerable attention in the literature (Aknur, 2013; Jenkins, 2007; Karabelias, 2008; Sarıgil, 2011; Gürsoy, 2013), there has been no theoretical or empirical studies on the relationship between the police and the army.

<sup>8</sup> There are some exceptions: (Jenkins, 2001, Ergut, 2012). Also, Nevzat Bölügiray, a retired soldier, in his memoirs (1980) explains the relationship between the army and the police under the martial law on the ground.

in 1961, and the concept of “national security” entered into the Turkish political system (Bayramoğlu, 2002: 37). Prior to the 1960s, there had been the concept of “natural defense”, which had been focusing on the fight against external enemies. The concept of “national security” replaced the concept of “natural defense” and blurred the division between external and internal enemies. Now, there were solely “enemies of the state”. It means that the army, as the guardian of the state, could fight against enemies inside and outside the borders.

Moreover, the crucial point about this transformation from natural defense to national security is that the latter has no clear-cut definition.<sup>9</sup> A broad and imprecise definition can be found in Article 3(a) of the By-Law of the Secretariat General of National Security Council. Here, the concept was defined as follows (Urhan & Çelik, 2010):

Being able to resist all external or internal attacks, defeatist attempts, natural disasters and conflagrations. National security means to protect and maintain the state authority and using all national strength, efforts and activities for being victorious in a war.

In summary, the imprecise and all-encompassing definition of the concept blurred the distinction between internal and external domains of security. As a consequence, the military enlarged its authority at the expense of the police organization.

The overwhelming influence of the national security concept and its extreme use by the military to reaffirm its dominance became possible with the creation of a new institution: the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, henceforth NSC) to whom the capacities of executing national security policies was allocated, thanks to the 1961 Constitution. Since then, the NSC has been considered as the main mechanism of the military tutelage over civilian politics.<sup>10</sup> It has also been a mechanism which attributes the supremacy to military actors in the security sector. Through the mechanism of the NSC, the military had the opportunity to introduce its considerable impact on a wide variety of political issues such as education, secularism, and internal security in general. The uniqueness of the NSC in Turkey comes from the fact that it had both a semi-military characteristic and a place in the executive branch (Kars-Kaynar, 2018a: 452). In other words, its composition had a military character, and the Council appeared as an executive decision-maker.

Furthermore, martial law practices<sup>11</sup> have consolidated military supremacy over the police and on the ground. Every country accepts that if some political and social conditions necessitate it, the military can intervene in internal security issues. Nevertheless, in Turkey, the military involvement in internal security issues is more than an exception. From the foundation of the Republic on October 29, 1923, to the suppression of martial law practices on July 19, 1987, Turkey was governed by martial law for 25 years, 9 months, and 18 days (Üskül, 2016b: 44).

According to the Martial Law Act (Law No. 1402 of 13 May 1971), garrison commanders were appointed as martial law commanders. During martial law, these commanders were bestowed with extra-ordinary power and were capable of governing many issues, from daily life to security issues. Here, the police acted in collaboration with the army and under its command to secure internal order (Üskül, 2014: 5). These practices constituted a dichotomy between the capable-neutral army and the incapable-politicized police. For example, in his memoirs, Nevzat Bölügiray, a retired martial law commander, explained that there had been many problems on the ground concerning the division of labor and the clash of responsibilities between the police and the military. The police, in its turn, seemed to be discontent under the martial law. In the 1970s, there were some police demonstrations during which slogans such as “say no to martial law” were heard (Bölügiray, 1989: 70–98). In 1987, the state of emergency rule replaced martial law (Bezci & Öztan, 2016). Yet, the military authorities continued to dominate the security sector through the NSC, and the military managed to construct supremacy over the police.

Martial law practices were prevalent during the 1970s. In Turkey, the 1970s were a period of social conflict and extreme politicization of masses.<sup>12</sup> Turkish society in this decade was essentially polarized along the

<sup>9</sup> Following the 1980 military intervention, the definition of the concept has become much more blurred. The 1983 “Law of the National Security Council and Secretariat General of the National Security Council” redefined the concept of national security as “the protection and maintenance of the constitutional order, national presence, integrity, all political, social, cultural and economic interests in international field as well as against any kind of internal and external threats to the State”.

<sup>10</sup> For a critical evaluation on the actual situation of the institution, see Kars Kaynar (2017).

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed observation of martial law practices in Turkey, see Zafer Üskül (2014, 2016a, 2016b).

<sup>12</sup> For example, on June 15–16, 1970, the working class in Turkey organized a strike against a draft law which would put limits on the activities of the Confederation of Revolutionary Labor Unions (Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, DİSK). During these demonstrations, more than one hundred thousand workers took to the streets in İstanbul. The police were considered as incapable of establishing public order. The suppression of these protests resembles the intervention of military forces. Following the violent

lines of left-wing and right-wing politics. The important thing is that this polarization was transformed into demonstrations, and eventually violent clashes between right-wing and left-wing movements. As a reflection of the over-all politicization of Turkish society, the decade on the eve of the 1980 coup d'état in Turkey also witnessed the politicization of the police organization. As a consequence of the rights attributed to civil servants by the 1961 Constitution, police officers had the opportunity to create independent police associations. First, a left-wing police association was created (Police Association, Pol-Der). Later, in opposition to Pol-Der, a right-wing police association (Police Unity, Pol-Bir) came into being. This political division of the police organization eventually led to the emergence of political conflict within the police organization (Gürel, 2004; Öner, 2003). The civil war-like situation and the politicization of the police organization, both displayed the limits of police competence in relation to the military. Under these circumstances, martial law practices became a usual way of governing, resulting in the subordination of the police to the military. The military did not hesitate to assume police duties and responsibilities whenever it preferred to do so. With the help of two mechanisms (military interventions and martial law practices) and one concept (national security) the Turkish military sought to take supremacy over the police organization and become the main distributor of power within the security sector during the 1970s.

### The Resemblance: the 1980s

As explained above, martial law practices were the main mechanisms through which the military excluded civilian authorities from decision-making processes on security issues. Martial law practices, subordinating the police to the army, act as the main means of national security-centered policies (Çelik & Urhan, 2010: 113). The "self-authorized" military undertook police tasks and replaced the police under its command. Throughout the 1970s, the Turkish police organization was considered, both by public and military authorities, as incapable of restoring internal order. This process ended with the military intervention of 1980. However, the military did not aspire to institute a military regime; rather it encouraged a return to electoral democracy. That is why the first mission of the military government after the coup was to professionalize the police organization in a militarized way (Kandil, 2016: 206).

Militarization of the police organization was carried out by the Turkish state which no longer wished to use its army in the context of public disorder. According to Kandil (2016), police reform began in the 1980s and upon the initiative of the army. There were three developments stimulating this reform process. First, the military was deployed in the streets to confront mass protests. Second, starting in 1984, the war against the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) occupied most of the army's time, leaving little time for other security issues. Third, the war in the south-eastern parts of the country pushed a large Kurdish population to big cities, resulting in the emergence of new security problems. In this sense, a further militarization of the police was intended to stop an increasing military interest in public security.

It is not a coincidence that academic studies on the police organization in Turkey have mainly focused on the period following the 1980 military coup (Berksoy, 2007a, 2007b; Haspolat, 2010; Gönen, 2016). This was a time of huge transformation in the police organization. In the beginning of the 1980s, the army had decided to expand the Turkish security sector. Consequently, reforms and reorganizations aimed at legally and structurally strengthening the police have been carried out single-handedly by military authorities (Kandil, 2016: 206; Cizre, 2007: 8).

The police reform might prioritize either its structural or behavioral components (Kaspersen et al., 2004). The priority of the former is realized by recruiting and training police officers and, for instance, by donating materials. The latter is prioritized by performing activities which aim to convey democratic standards and human rights. The reform of the Turkish police organization after 1980 demonstrated the former component. Within the context of these reforms, first, the budget of the institution was increased for a ten-year period. In addition, police powers were extended and police personnel were increased in number and provided with new arms and vehicles (Cerrah, 2006: 82). Accordingly, military-style equipment became available to police officers. Second, the organization of the police was restructured. A series of arrangements were realized in order to create two new branches within the police organization: *Special Operations Police Team* and *Rapid Force* squads. While the former was created in 1983 with the aim of combatting terrorist organizations, especially the PKK, the latter replaced the *Society Police* which was considered to be inefficient, over-crowded, and contaminated by the politicization of the 1970s (Atak, 2017: 698).

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suppression by the military, the government declared martial law. Since then, the military declared the political authority incapable of restoring order without military support. All these developments paved the way for the military intervention of 1971 (Akşin, 2007; Hale, 1994; Ateşoğulları, 2003).



These reforms led to the implementation of military principles in the performance of police duties. Accordingly, the capacity of the police forces was augmented. This process was accompanied by an increase in the use of military tactics and equipment by the police organization. New bodies specialized in militaristic forms of operation within the police organization have emerged as well. In this sense, the reforms were realized with the help of the military; the police were strengthened with high technology militaristic weapons and strictly disciplined with respect to a hierarchical order in a militaristic sense<sup>13</sup> (Berksoy, 2007a: 112).

Despite the militarization and the empowerment of the police organization during this period, the PKK terrorism initiated by Kurdish insurgencies in 1984, continued to enable the military to dominate the security sector. “The emergency rule” replaced “martial law” in 1987 (Üskül, 2016b). Yet, this change did not curtail the military’s power. Instead, the military created a system that allowed them to be involved in domestic politics without the necessity of direct military rule (Bezci & Öztan, 2016: 166). Through the institutional mechanism of the NSC, the Turkish General Staff held the primary authority to decide upon the declaration of the state of emergency rule (Jenkins, 2007: 345). Additionally, the emergency rule enabled the use of extensive coercion by the military without any restriction of the rule of law. In sum, the military appeared as a dominant actor within the security sector throughout the 1980s. The police, with their increasing, but still limited resources and legal restrictions dictated by the rule of law, continued to be an aide to the army.

### The Transition Period: the 1990s

The 1990s was a transition period. On one side, we witnessed the autonomization of the police organization within the security sector and from the military. For example, in the 1990s, the Turkish police participated in demonstrations against judicial reforms.<sup>14</sup> They pronounced slogans such as “damn human rights” (Bora, 1994). Moreover, the militarization of the police organization continued throughout the 1990s. The militarization process was accelerated with the adoption of the first anti-terror law (Terörle Mücadele Kanunu) in 1991. After the adoption of this law, restrictions on individual liberties and a state of emergency policing were established (Gönen et al., 2013: 7). At the same time, the military reacted and reassured its political supremacy by extensive involvement in the war against terrorism on the one hand, and an indirect military intervention on the other hand.

In order to clearly observe the overwhelming military involvement in the fight against the PKK, one should look at the continuous and extensive violence in clashes between the Turkish state and Kurdish insurgents in the 1990s. In the face of the increasing violence, the TGS reformed its strategy in line with the concept of low-integrity warfare. It preferred to do so in order to concentrate on its security task inside the borders. Also, the Special Warfare Department was converted into the Special Forces Command in the Turkish military (Bezci & Öztan, 2016). Hence, thanks to its war against terrorism, the military succeeded in keeping its political supremacy, legitimacy, and autonomy at the highest level. For example, until 1990, only the Special Forces units of the police, along with the military, were engaged in the fight against the PKK, and these paramilitary officers of the police were placed under the command of the military. The autonomy attributed to the army within the context of the anti-terror operations was so massive that the Turkish military launched “Operation Poised Hammer” against the PKK in Iraq, in May 1997, without waiting for the permission of the civil government (Kandil, 2016: 188). In the 1990s, the fight against the PKK created the problem of “clash of responsibilities” (yetki karmaşası) among security institutions (Bora, 1994). This was a reflection of the rivalry between the police and the army; both were in the search for more responsibility, and eventually more power.

On the political scene, the government of Necmettin Erbakan was considered as incapable of coping with terrorism as it was also accused of the rise of political Islam (Uluçakar & Çağlar, 2017: 48). However, this time, the military preferred to give an ultimatum to the Islamist government of Necmettin Erbakan.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the military intervention was carried out without overt force. The February 28 Coup has been called “the postmodern coup” as the military cadres did not side with direct violence, and they relied heavily on the support of various civilian actors – media, business men, and university professors (Aslan, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> For example, Korkut Eken, retired lieutenant colonel of the Turkish Armed Forces, has been appointed to be in charge of the activities such as the re-equipment and training of the Special Operations Team.

<sup>14</sup> In this period, the EU accession process played an important role in reforms aimed at changing the criminal justice procedure. Important steps were taken in order to improve the protection of individual rights of people suspected and accused in CMUK (Gönen et al., 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Necmettin Erbakan was the leader of the National Outlook Movement (Milli Görüş) and the founder of the National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi) which is considered as the first Islamic political party in Turkish politics after the establishment of the Republic (Yang & Guo, 2015). This party was succeeded by the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi) in 1972. Finally, the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) under the leadership of Erbakan and the True Path Party formed a coalition, and Erbakan became the prime minister of Turkey in 1996. He was ousted from power following the 1997 post-modern coup. His party was accused of attempting to Islamicize the country and was banned from politics. Most of JDP’s founding leaders come from Erbakan’s National Outlook Movement (Yavuz, 2006).

The most significant characteristic of the 1997 military coup is that it cut down the so-called empowerment of the police organization. This intervention reaffirmed the primary role of the army as the leader in the Turkish security sector. Following the intervention, a new unit called the *Western Study Group* with police and intelligence functions within the TGS was created. Later, Special Operation Police Units were abolished.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the EMASYA (Security and Public Order Cooperation) Protocol was signed between the TGS and the Ministry of Interior on July 7, 1997. According to this Protocol, the collaboration between the military and police organizations was deemed necessary during any urban mass demonstrations (Atak, 2017: 700; Güneş, 2009: 204). The same protocol established the placement of all security forces under military command. Consequently, throughout the 1990s, the military continued to dominate the security sector in general, whereas the police started to reaffirm itself as an efficient actor.

### The Rivalry: the 2000s

Beginning in the 2000s, Turkey has undergone a transformation to end the military tutelage regime. Many scholars studying the civil-military relations in Turkey agree that the country has encountered a paradigmatic shift in the balance of power between civil and military institutions (Aydınlı, 2009; Bardakçı, 2013; Gürsoy, 2013; Aknur, 2013, Waldman & Çalışkan, 2017). Within this context, the military started to lose power and autonomy. It was a time of desecuritization and democratization (Bardakçı, 2013: 412). The civilianization process was accelerated as a result of both external and internal factors. On the external level, in 1999, Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate for full membership to the EU.<sup>17</sup> The EU insists that national armies should be politically weakened in relation to internal affairs. Since then, major reforms impelled by the EU requirements took place (Sarıgil, 2011: 271). On the internal level, in November 2002, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, henceforth JDP) obtained the majority<sup>18</sup> in Parliament and started a civilianization process intended to abolish the political supremacy of the army. From that time on, the Turkish military has witnessed its power eroding day by day. Within this context, many institutional and legal reforms were implemented to redesign the position of the Turkish military in the political scene.

The reform of the NSC appears as the linchpin of the transformation of civil-military relations as it was the primary mechanism through which the military had the opportunity to get involved in domestic politics. Under the reforms dictated by the seventh harmonization package in July 2003, the composition of the NSC was redesigned. As a consequence, the number of military members within the Council declined (Bardakçı, 2013: 412). Additionally, due to an amendment of Constitutional Article 118, the role of the NSC was limited to solely giving recommendations. As a result, the influence of the NSC on politics was severely diminished.<sup>19</sup> Later, by amendment of Article 160 in 2004, several major developments were implemented regarding the legislative control of the military budget (Güler & Bölücek, 2016). These reforms have placed considerable limitations on the financial autonomy of the military.

Besides these institutional arrangements, several legal cases were initiated in 2007 to fight the illegal “Ergenekon Gang” composed of some military commanders. Legal authorities charged several high-ranking military officers for organizing a series of actions which would enable and legitimize a military coup. Later, many other cases<sup>20</sup> were initiated against military commanders.

These legal cases led to a loss of prestige and popularity in the Turkish military (Haugom, 2019). Later, the FETÖ (Fethullah Terrorist Organization)<sup>21</sup> involvement in these cases was also revealed. Finally, most of the verdicts were revoked. Nevertheless, a considerable decrease in public trust in the military is used

<sup>16</sup> These units have drawn attention because of their success against the PKK.

<sup>17</sup> Demilitarization of gendarmerie forces and their establishment as a civilian police force were also accelerated by Turkey's EU accession process (Lutterbeck, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> The JDP gained 34.3 percent of the vote and an absolute majority in the Parliament in 2002.

<sup>19</sup> The decisions of the NSC cover various issues such as the curriculum in schools, television broadcasts, and foreign policy priorities (Toktaş & Kurt, 2010: 391).

<sup>20</sup> The Ergenekon Case (2007), the “Information Support Activity Action Plan” Case (2008), the Ayışığı/Sankız/Yakamoz/Eldiven/Kafes Cases incorporated with Ergenekon (2009), the “Action Plan for the Fight against Fundamentalism” Case (2009), the Sledgehammer Case (2010), the “Internet Sites for Propaganda” Case (2011), the Military Espionage Case and the February 28 Postmodern Coup Case (2013). (Cilliler, 2016: 509).

<sup>21</sup> The Gülenist Movement is a transnational Islamic/religious movement under the leadership of Turkish preacher Fethullah Gülen. The leader of the movement is regarded by his followers as a spiritual leader. The movement was running some 2000 schools across 160 countries (Taş 2018: 396). Gülen encouraged his followers to pursue careers in civilian (police and judiciary) and military bureaucracy. In 2013, pro-Gülen prosecutors launched corruption charges against Erdoğan. Later, Gülen was accused of being the mastermind behind the Ergenekon trials to weaken the position of secularists within the military and to replace them with his own followers. Finally, the 2016 coup attempt was blamed on this movement. Today, it is designated as an armed terrorist organization under the name of “Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ)”.

as a justification for the reduction of its role as the guardian of the regime and protector of the republic (Bardakçı, 2013: 412).

Two ex-commanders of the military and symbolic names from the 1980 military coup – Kenan Evren and Tahsin Şahinkaya – received a life sentence. Later, five generals involved in the 1997 postmodern coup – Çevik Bir, İsmail H. Karadağ, Hikmet Köksal, Fevzi Türkeri, Çetin Doğan – received a life sentence as well (Kandil, 2016: 210). These coup leaders were subsequently pardoned due to old age and health problems, but it demonstrated how members of the Turkish military, previously immune to all kinds of control, had become touchable.

It seems obvious that the military lost power and prestige throughout this period. Yet, recent studies on this subject have neglected an important aspect of the paradigmatic shift of the civil-military relations. Where did it go, the power of the military? Was it only the civilian government who won the lottery? Who is the greatest beneficiary of the reorganized power relations? Might there possibly be a highly ignored actor obtaining some, if not all, parts of the power given up by the military? Some mechanisms which had previously been used by the army to accumulate power have now made it possible for the government to attribute some of military powers to the police.<sup>22</sup>

First, an important consequence of the civilianization process conducted by the civilian government in power is that the army, previously immune to control and autonomous in every aspect, has now become subject to police investigations. These investigations “revealed the depth of the hitherto conflict between the military and the police” (Kandil, 2016: 208). For example, some plots against the JDP government allegedly planned by some groups in the military were mainly uncovered by these police operations. Later, the investigations were declared as one of the first activities of the terrorist organization called FETÖ to impede Yaşar Büyükanıt from becoming the chief of general staff in the Turkish Armed Forces. Turkish people followed the interrogation of high-ranking military commanders by police officers on TV. More recently, following the failed coup of July 15, 2016, the police organization has staged a large-scale “anti-FETÖ” operation in the Turkish military (Atilla, 2017).

Second, in Turkey, the militarization of politics has been replaced by the policization/*securitization of politics*. The authority of the police was expanded day-by-day under the JDP’s rule. First, the JDP government amended the Anti-Terror Law (2006) and the Law on the Powers and Duties of the Police (2007). These amendments significantly extended the authority of the police. Later, the declaration of the Domestic Security Package<sup>23</sup> (2015) further extended the police’s powers and assured its impunity (Kars-Kaynar, 2018b: 96).

Third, as a consequence of the new constitutional and legal arrangements concerning the impact of NSC decisions, the TGS is no longer the sole authority in deciding when to implement a state of emergency. Within the same context, the emergency rule in the eastern part of the country was ended by the civilian government in power. In 2002, the emergency rule in Diyarbakır and Şırnak had been abolished (Üskül, 2016b). The arrest of PKK’s leader, Öcalan, in 1999 – and the decreasing violence that followed – contributed to the transformation of security conditions in these regions (Jacoby, 2005: 652). With the end of emergency rule practices, the ordinary rule of law has been reestablished. Under these circumstances, the security of these cities has been reattributed to the police organization. The police have been broken free from the military domination within these regions.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the war against the PKK has been an arena for power struggles among security actors. The success in the fight against the separatist group has for a long time served as a legitimate reason for the involvement of the Turkish military in domestic security and politics. Originally, the fight against the PKK fell under the responsibility of the police organization. In other words, it was a policing problem (Jenkins, 2001). However, throughout the Turkish political history, it has been the Turkish military which assumed the leading role in the fight against terror as capable of implementing national security policies via NSC. With the help of the all-encompassing definition of the concept of national security, the Turkish military has created a friend and foe distinction (Bezci & Öztan, 2016). In this context, the Kurdish

<sup>22</sup> The intention to give primacy to the police organization in order to establish a counterweight to the army is not a new phenomenon. Several past governments in the history of Turkish politics have tried this strategy. For example, Turgut Özal, the political leader of the Motherland Party (ANAP), intended to create the police as a counterweight not only to terrorism, but also to the army. For a historical and critical analysis of this strategy, see (Bora, 1994, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> The so-called “Domestic/Internal Security Package” was adopted after the demonstrations initiated by the Kurdish population against assaults by the ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL known as ISID in Turkey). These protests resulted in violent demonstrations and ended up with 50 deaths.



insurgents were recognized as the primary enemy of the Turkish state. The Turkish military, as the guardian of the regime, declared itself the essential fighter against the PKK.

As an extension of the civilianization process in the 2000s, the police organization has become much more involved in the war against terror. This change can be explained by three major developments: First, the government aims at impeding the army from using the war against terror to gain any political advantages for increasing its authority and autonomy. As it is well-known, the war conducted since 1984 against the PKK has given the Turkish military both authority and legitimacy. In 2007 and 2008, after the death of dozens of Turkish soldiers by PKK militants, the effectiveness of the military in its fight against the PKK was questioned, both by the public and by the media, for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic (Bardakçı, 2013; Aydınli, 2009). This development to the detriment of the army was definitely important within the context of civil-military relations. However, the most neglected aspect of this paradigmatic shift is that the police organization has taken over the power the military formerly held. With the removal of the military from its central position in dealing with the PKK, the police have found a convenient conjuncture for expanding its autonomy and authority. For example, in 2010, the EMASYA Protocol which had previously charged the army with public security missions and placed the police under the military command was abolished (Alabarda, 2016; Bardakçı, 2013). Second, the state of emergency, which had afforded the army the opportunity to implement its politico-military policies (Bezci & Öztan, 2016: 173), was abolished in 2002. Third, in 2015, the PKK changed its strategy,<sup>24</sup> moving its struggle against the Turkish state from rural areas to urban ones (Gürcan, 2016: 48). This tactical change has provided the police with a convenient context to take much more responsibility in counter-terrorist operations.

Finally, the impact of recent developments following the July 15 failed coup of 2016 on police-military relations should be mentioned. As the war against the PKK intensified in rural regions of the country throughout the 1990s, the gendarmerie had been the primary security actor in charge of the fight against the PKK. Notably, the gendarmerie's Special Public Security Commands were the most effective and influential actors vis-a-vis the PKK (Bezci & Öztan, 2016: 174). Before the coup attempt in 2016, the gendarmerie was placed under the control of the TGS. Following the coup attempt, the gendarmerie has been placed under the control of the Ministry of Interior (Gürcan & Gisclon, 2017: 76). The separation of the gendarmerie and the Coast Guard from the TGS (Alabarda, 2016: 14) and its subordination to the Ministry of Interior is one of the largest institutional transformations which put considerable restraints on the military capacity.

Additionally, the closure of military schools and hospitals limited the impact of the military on civil society. For example, the National Defense University was established to replace military academies, and military hospitals were placed under the governance of the Ministry of Health. Later, the TGS was placed under the Ministry of National Defense. Also, the Board of Security and Foreign Policy was constituted so that civilians could take the initiative in security and foreign policy decisions. Finally, a state of emergency was declared after the coup attempt in July 2016 and lasted until July 2018. This practice has shown the limits of desecuritization. All of these recent developments will have a considerable impact on the police-military relations in the long run. For now, suffice it to say that in Turkey, civilian political control of the armed forces seems to be appearing under a robust presidential system (Haugom, 2016). The police, in its turn, was at the forefront of criticism – and loss of prestige – because of its links to the FETÖ. Just before the coup attempt, the police academy was closed down as a consequence of the war between the government and the FETÖ. In the aftermath of the coup attempt, several members of the General Directorate of Security were arrested and suspended from their duties because of their links to this organization. Later, tens of thousands of police officers were purged over the failed coup (“Turkey purges” 2016). Consequently, it seems as if the relationship between the police and the military continues to be redesigned by internal factors specific to Turkey, rather than by global security trends.

## Concluding Remarks

This paper indicates that the nature of the police-military relations in Turkey for the most part has been affected and shaped by the Turkish political and historical experience. Internal, rather than external global factors are much more important for the role distribution among Turkish security institutions. Historically, the blurring of military-police roles has always been seen in Turkish politics. In practice, there has never been a clear-cut distinction between police and military roles.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed examination of the tactical change adopted by the PKK, see Gürcan (2016).

In Turkey, with the help of several military interventions, the army has sought to assume all responsibilities related to the all-encompassing concept of national security. Things started to change in the 1980s. Following the military coup, the police organization was professionalized and empowered upon the initiative of the military. The 1990s was a transition period. These circumstances, redesigned after the 2000s with the shifting paradigm in favor of civilianization, have created a political opportunity that enables security institutions to participate effectively in power struggles. It seems safe to say that a new balance of power and a redistribution of cards are seen among the security actors. As a result, a rivalry among security institutions has become apparent. This struggle has evolved at the expense of the military and in favor of the police. This means that a new trend is emerging in Turkey, contrary to its Western counterparts where the army takes precedence over police organizations under the conditions dictated by the changing global security environment.

This overlapping authority of the police and the army has made the security sector a battlefield, and under these redefined circumstances, we have witnessed an increasing authority for the police and a decreasing role for the army.

In spite of the supreme influence of internal factors on police-military roles, one should nevertheless not make any rash and absolute conclusion that the global security environment has not had any influence on the Turkish example. It should be noted that besides the conditions specific to the Turkish experience, the power struggles between security institutions in Turkey have also been affected by the changing security environment. For example, the rise of terrorist attacks initiated by ISIS has contributed to the increasing influence and capacity of the police organization due to the fact that these terrorist attacks were oriented towards people in big cities and mainly city centers. It is my hope that this article will stimulate future research on this subject.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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