
The Military and Democracy in the Third Turkish Republic

METİN HEPER AND AYLİN GÜNEY

From the inception of the Ottoman Empire (1299) to the present, the military in Turkey has often played a significant role in the polity. The Ottoman state was born as a “warrior state.”¹ In the early centuries of the Ottoman rule, many military officers rose to the top positions of the state after having received a fairly good education at palace schools. The military’s influential role during those centuries was reflected in the fact that, although at the time the ruling institution was made up of the palace, the religious and civil bureaucracies, and the military, it was referred to solely as “The Military” (*Askeri*).² From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the military continued to be an integral part of the oligarchic center that ruled the Empire.³

During the nineteenth century, the military had been both the object and the subject of modernization. Initially the aim was to create a military that was trained, disciplined, and obedient to central authority. However, having received Western-type educations, the military emerged toward the end of the century as the most fervent supporters of modernization. To them, the modernization in question implied, among other things, a gov-

METİN HEPER is chairman of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey, and founding member of the Turkish Academy of Sciences. He is the co-editor of and contributor to *Islam and Politics in the Modern Middle East*, *The State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, *Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey*, *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities*, and *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*; editor of and contributor to *Local Government in Turkey: Governing Greater Istanbul*, *The State and Public Bureaucracies: A Comparative Perspective*, and *Strong State and Economic Interest Groups: The Post-1980 Turkish Experience*; and author of *Historical Dictionary of Turkey* and *The State Tradition in Turkey*.

AYLİN GÜNEY, who has an M.A. degree from The Johns Hopkins University, is a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Bilkent University.

Address for correspondence: Professor Metin Heper, Department of Political Science, Bilkent University, 06533 Bilkent, Ankara, Turkey, e-mail at heper@bilkent.edu.tr.

ernment based on consultation, that is, a government not dominated by the Sultan alone.⁴ At the turn of the nineteenth century, as members in the conspiratorial Committee of Union and Progress, military officers played a critical role in the downfall of the absolutist regime of Abdülhamit II (1876–1908). In the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1918), the military, along with the civil bureaucratic elites, again played a significant part in politics. This was also a period during which such members of the military as Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and İsmet (İnönü), the future civilian leaders of the Republic (1923 to the present), realized that the military's entanglement in politics worked against both unity and discipline in the military and the military's professionalism.⁵

Basically as a consequence of this historical legacy, the military in Turkey fluctuated between the "liberal-democratic model"—a military differentiated from the civilian power but subordinated to it, highly professionalized and depoliticized—and the "ruler type of the praetorian model," in which the military takes over direct political power and shortly afterwards returns to its barracks, hoping to have created conditions for a better functioning democracy.⁶

During the single-party years of 1923–1945, civil-military relations in Turkey moved progressively toward the liberal-democratic model, although the military's professionalization lagged far behind its differentiation from and subordination to the civilian power, as well as its depoliticization. The pedestrian approach of General Fevzi Çakmak, Chief of the General Staff from 1922 to 1944, contributed to this arrested professionalization of the military.⁷ Along with the unsympathetic attitude of Atatürk and İnönü toward the military's day-to-day involvement in politics, Çakmak's orientation also led to the relegation of the military into a secondary position vis-à-vis the (single) political party and the civil bureaucracy. Still, during these years the military was considered by Atatürk and İnönü as the ultimate prop for the Republican regime.⁸

Since the installation of the multi-party regime in 1945, the military, as the guardian of the Atatürkian principles (of republicanism, nationalism, secularism, populism, statism, and reformism-revolutionism) intervened in politics three times (in 1960–1961, 1971–1973, 1980–1983) to "clean up the mess created by politicians," and in particular to safeguard the principles of republicanism and secularism in the Turkish polity. During this period, the military increasingly adopted a rationalist version of democracy; that is, democracy as an enlightened debate by which to find the best way.⁹ The three military interventions were conducted because the military had come to the conclusion that the politicians had been drifting away from rational democracy. On the other hand, particularly

after Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1952, the military became increasingly professionalized. Its leaders also realized that military intervention is not a successful means of bringing about a better functioning democracy and that each intervention could cause the military to lose prestige in the country. Moreover, Turkey began to face intense pressures both from within the country and from the West for greater democratization. As a consequence of these developments, the military not only returned to its barracks rather quickly following each intervention but over the years also became more and more reluctant to intervene at all.¹⁰ William Hale has recently even suggested that the military in Turkey not only gradually accepted the supremacy of the civilian power but also admitted civilian supremacy in its own field of professional expertise.¹¹

This article addresses the question of the extent to which the military in the Third Turkish Republic (1982 to the present) has a civilian ethic and to what extent it still aspires to exercise independent political power, particularly through the National Security Council.¹² More generally, it investigates the transition from a polity in which the military played a significant role from time to time to a polity in which the supremacy of the civilian power seems to be fairly well consolidated.

Analysis of this question is based on the views of three recent chiefs of the general staff—Kenan Evren, Necip Torumtay, and Doğan Güreş—on military-civilian relations in Turkey. For the views of Kenan Evren and Necip Torumtay, their published memoirs are drawn upon, and for those of Doğan Güreş, his public statements as reported in the newspapers.¹³ In this analysis study of the views of these chiefs seems crucial because, in contrast to the colonels' coup of 1960, the 1971 and 1980 military interventions turned out to be generals' coups. Indeed, both of the latter were conducted by the High Command, consisting of the chief of the general staff, and the commanders of the army, navy and air force, and of the general commander of the gendarmerie. In fact, in the first public statement made on the eve of the 1980 military intervention (12 September 1980) by Kenan Evren, who as then chief of the general staff carried out that intervention with the other members of the High Command, pointed out that the intervention was conducted "within the chain of command and by order." It may be further noted that because strenuous efforts from the early 1960s onwards were made to turn the military into an institution with a unique set of norms and ideologies isolated from its environment, and because the Turkish military has had a strong sense of hierarchy,¹⁴ the views of the chiefs of the general staff could essentially be expected to reflect the views of the military as a whole.

Three Chiefs of General Staff and Democracy

Kenan Evren

Kenan Evren became chief of the general staff on 6 March 1978. As already noted, on 12 September 1980, he and the other members of the High Command took over the government. Later, upon the ratification of the new 1982 Constitution, Evren became the president of the republic and, in accordance with the constitution, remained in that post for the next seven years. While in office as president, Evren, rather than the then chiefs of the general staff (Nurettin Ersin and Necdet Ürüg), acted as the spokesperson for the military.

According to Evren, the 1980 military intervention was carried out in order "to avert a civil war and to save the democracy that was going down the drain."¹⁵ He pointed out that the Turkish military was loyal to the Atatürkian legacy "that the best regime for Turkey is a republican democracy,"¹⁶ and added that the members of the military had no desire to become "rulers of the country."¹⁷

When the military intervened in 1980, they did not immediately close down the political parties. They expected that the political parties would not stand in the way of their efforts to put an end to what they considered an anarchical situation in the pre-intervention period and to set the economy right. When, in their opinion, the political parties did not cooperate and instead tried to exercise influence from behind the scenes, they were closed down. Evren noted then that the military had never been against political parties per se, but that they had problems with the political party leaders and their close entourages.

Following the reinstallation of party politics in 1982, criticisms against the continuing role the military played in politics mounted. Evren pointed out that he could not make head nor tail of these criticisms from different quarters (primarily the intelligentsia and the members of the media) because, he reiterated, the Turkish Armed Forces had always favored a genuine parliamentary democracy. When the Turgut Özal government nominated General Necip Torumtay as the next chief of the general staff rather than General Necdet Öztörün, who was recommended by the outgoing chief of the general staff, Necdet Ürüg, President Evren went along with Torumtay's appointment.

For a while, however, Evren and his co-intervenors toyed with the idea of founding a political party that, they thought, would keep alive their political philosophy. Evren explained:

What I was most concerned about was whether we could be able to go on exercising control once party politics was reinstated . . . Bülend Ulusu [a retired admiral who served as prime minister during the military regime of 1980–1983] seemed to be a person liked and respected by the people. We thought of Ulusu as someone who would act in line with our own political philosophy. That is why we wanted him to put together the party we had in mind . . . We were afraid that if, following the elections, a political party leader we do not approve of comes to power everything that we worked so hard to achieve may be done away with . . . and Turkish politics would once again revert back to its old ways.¹⁸

It should be noted that Evren and his co-intervenors perceived the founding of such a political party as necessary because of their concern that, if the pre-intervention style of politics reemerged, “Turkey could again drift into an authoritarian regime and it is possible that this time those who take power into their own hands may not have faith in democracy as . . . [Evren and his co-intervenors] did.”¹⁹ This comment by Evren is yet another illustration of the caretaker nature of Turkey’s military governments.

Evren elaborated his group’s political philosophy, who considered democracy to be a regime of virtue. Virtue in this context meant mutual tolerance, common sense, placing emphasis on the general rather than on the party and/or personal interest, prudent government, responsibilities along with rights, and limits to rights and liberties.²⁰ He believed that governments should pay close attention to Atatürk’s emphasis on the need to attain and even make contributions to the contemporary civilization,²¹ to the promotion of Turkey’s national interests, to the Turks’ historical and moral values, and to the principles of the indivisibility of the Turkish state and territory and of secularism.

Evren pointed out that it was imperative for the armed forces, too, to perform their duties with a view to the targets set by Atatürk, in particular the secularization of the Turkish polity. Throughout the 1980s, he emphasized “the danger of a reactionary movement gaining ground in Turkey.” When the religiously oriented National Salvation Party²² had been brought to court for “having used religion for political purposes,” Evren “hoped that the party will be convicted and that that ruling will in the future discourage political parties to use religion to garner votes.”²³ He had not been happy with the way Özal approached the issue of secularism and thought of Özal as a religiously oriented person; when Özal asked his

permission to found a political party, Evren told him that he should not recruit to his party people whose loyalties were with the then defunct National Salvation Party (or the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Action Party)²⁴ and that he would veto the appointment of such persons, in accordance with an act then in effect, if Özal admitted them to his party. He became quite alarmed when Özal, following his election as prime minister in the 1983 general elections, began to make such proposals as moving up the Director of the Office of Religious Affairs (which is affiliated to the prime ministry and is responsible for regulating Islamic education and services) in the state protocol. Evren's account of those years was that it was a mistake to allow Özal to establish a political party, and that Özal belittled the danger of a reactionary movement getting out of hand; the situation would have become even worse, he thought, if he (Evren) himself did not get into the picture from time to time. Toward the end of the 1980s, however, he became less vocal about the danger of a reactionary movement gaining ground in the country.²⁵

Throughout, however, Evren underlined the "distinctive qualities of the Turkish military" and the need to maintain the military's prestige in the eyes of the people. He noted that "in its long history, the Turkish military not only registered outstanding success in defending the country against its external enemies but, in times of distress, it also saved the country from its internal enemies, and then quickly returned to its barracks."²⁶ He argued that the military's achievements were due to two factors—it was an institution in which there was no room for the pursuit of personal interests, and its members were superbly trained.

For Evren, maintaining the prestige of the military, particularly in the eyes of the people, was very important. He thought that this could be achieved by preventing the military from being (1) politicized, (2) deprofessionalized, and (3) constituting a target for unjustifiably harsh criticisms. He asked the members of the media not to create the impression that he was the head of the government and, therefore, could be held responsible for government policies. He requested Özal not to conduct political party activities while staying at officers' clubs. And, despite the facts that chiefs of the general staff in Turkey are appointed for four-year terms and that their terms of office may be extended by the Council of Ministers up to three times for one-year periods, Evren opposed such extensions because, in his view, a chief of the general staff might turn into a yes-man in order to be able to stay in office longer. He also objected to the extensions because he thought that they would block promotions from below and thus lower morale and prevent merit from being rewarded. When Özal disclosed to the press that the Council of

Ministers did not want to see General Öztörün as the next chief of the general staff, Evren found the statement “unnecessary” and “a mistake,” because it could lower the prestige of the military in the eyes of the public. He also criticized the press for reporting what Özal had disclosed to them as “a success registered by civilians against the military,” “the victory of democracy against the military rule,” and the like; he added that the press should exercise utmost care when reporting news about the armed forces.

Evren’s discomfort seems to have derived from his perception of the members of the Turkish Armed Forces as not distant from and aloof toward the people. He liked to remind everyone that Atatürk had once said: “Sovereignty belongs to the people without qualifications and conditions.” In Evren’s view, representation was one of delegation by which the representative achieves goals set by the represented, and not one of trusteeship, in which the representative acts in a manner that he thinks best promotes the interests of the represented.²⁷ In one of his public speeches, he observed:

Now that we are making a transition to a parliamentary system of government, you, as the sole owner of this land [Turkey], have on your shoulders a critical responsibility. Always think carefully about those who will want your votes . . . Do not forget that you have sovereignty without qualifications and conditions. Whatever you say, whatever you want, will carry the day.²⁸

He also thought that government should be conducted in accordance with long-term plans and programs approved by the people. He elaborated:

Reform initiatives that are not objectively sound and do not conform to plans and programs formulated with a view to the people’s urgent needs, are nothing but initiatives based on personal preferences. Atatürk thought that developmental efforts should be carried out according to a plan; he was a statesman whose authority derived from the people.²⁹

Evren seems to have taken laws, on which plans and programs had to draw, as the embodiment of the Rousseauinian “national will”—the collective will of the community. He repeatedly criticized Özal, who, Evren

thought, "at times attempted to deal with problems not according to law but with a resort to [pragmatic] logic."³⁰

He observed that while the civilian authority had to act responsively to the people, the military should also act in that manner. He pointed out that the Turkish Armed Forces do not undertake a military intervention unless it is willed by the people, and the military returns to its barracks because the people want that as well. As already mentioned, he and his co-intervenors wanted Bulend Ulusu to found a political party because they thought Ulusu was liked and respected by the people. In a public speech, Evren said, "They refer to me as 'dictator.' Yes, I am a dictator when it comes to those who brought the country to this sorry state, who allowed anarchy and terror to mount to the level it did in the pre 12 September 1980 period. But I am not a dictator vis-à-vis you."³¹

Having always held the people in such high esteem, Evren tended to ask the people to act as a referee and arbitrate conflict in controversial matters. When the military was still in power he observed: "I am getting tired of this same old story that the bans on the former politicians [which were imposed following the 1980 military intervention] should be lifted. I am thinking of asking the people as to what should be done regarding this issue."³² When preparations were under way for drawing up the 1982 Constitution, he observed: "Whatever we say on the forthcoming constitution those with evil intentions continue to be prejudiced on this issue. We tell them, 'wait for the outcome, then you may criticize,' but it is to no avail. . . . We shall not submit the constitution to their approval but to that of the Turkish people."³³

Evren was convinced that the military had the people's support. He pointed out in a public speech that, "This sublime nation has always embraced with affection those who served it well and gave them their support. You support us, too."³⁴ On another occasion he was even more explicit: "Nothing can lessen the sympathy the people has toward its military."³⁵

Necip Torumtay

Necip Torumtay became chief of the general staff on 31 August 1987. In the conduct of his duties in that capacity, he always considered himself responsible to the government. He was very much incensed when it was reported in the press that then President Turgut Özal had wanted to send troops to the Gulf during the war there, but that the military had stood in the way, and maintained that the assumption that the military had no respect for the civilian government was not true. On another occasion,

he observed that the Turkish people had chosen democracy and he himself had always held the people in very high esteem.

Toruntay indicated that, for him, human rights were also important. In 1988, during the Iran-Iraq War, the Turkish government allowed Kurds to take refuge in Turkey, a decision that had to be made on the spur of the moment, without the necessary preparations. The refugee Kurds, therefore, faced some hardships. Later Toruntay expressed his sorrow for all that had happened at the time and lamented the fact that "consequently" Turkey was subjected to criticisms from abroad.

On the other hand, he seemed to be an ardent believer in Atatürkian principles. This is how he reminisced about the loss of Atatürk and events in the following decades:

We felt ourselves like orphans, but we had great pride in ourselves. It was because Atatürk had entrusted to us, "the Turkish youth," the duty of safeguarding [the norms on which] the republic [rested]. As years passed by, we came to appreciate much better what this meant. As we witnessed later developments . . . we came to the conclusion that our liberty, independence, and progress toward contemporary civilization . . . were dependent upon our safeguarding the secular and democratic Turkish republic and the Atatürkian principles.³⁶

In Toruntay's view, the Turkish military became a professional army through constant and careful training. Because professionalism permeated all ranks, one expected subordinates to show initiative; Toruntay did not approve of the yes-man: "The latter do not provide the necessary input to decision-making at the higher echelons, and therefore, it becomes impossible to make informed decisions."³⁷ In contrast to the military, Toruntay saw the decision-making style of then president Turgut Özal basically as a means of promoting himself. He did not approve of Özal's failure to consult others when making decisions.

In Toruntay's estimation, civilians paid little attention to matters pertaining to the military. He complained that ministries did not send officials in sufficient numbers and of suitable levels to the National Security Academy, where both the military and political aspects of modern warfare are part of a curriculum followed by selected officers and officials.³⁸ His perception of the military's display of professional traits and civilians' lack of them led him to think that the military (1) should have as much autonomy as possible from the civilian authority; (2) should be consulted on matters that also have military aspects; and (3) should have

the last word on solely military issues. Right after he became chief of the general staff, Torumtay told Özal that the military should remain depoliticized; "I told him that I shall make a special effort to keep the military out of politics; for this reason it is essential that I myself, too, remain out of politics and that he should not misunderstand me when I keep my distance from the civilian government."³⁹ Consequently, he did not approve of the government's turning his appointment as chief of the general staff into a "political showcase."⁴⁰ He would have preferred being appointed to that post in conformity with "past traditions," that is, he would have felt more comfortable if he were next in line to the outgoing chief. He also lamented the fact that the prime minister had made public, in a manner "offensive" to the military, the fact that he was not nominating the general next in line (Necdet Öztörün) as the new chief of the general staff.

Torumtay had also been critical of Özal's frequently leaving the military out of the decision-making process on issues deemed critical by the military:

Along with the unfolding of the crisis situation in the Gulf, some interesting changes began to take place in the way the government was conducted. In the first week of August 1990, the Turkish Radio and Television reported that the pipeline along the border was closed down. This decision could create a political tension between the two countries. We urgently had to take additional measures concerning surveillance, intelligence, and security along the Turco-Iraqi border, but I, as chief of the general staff . . . , was coming to know this decision only through the radio and television.⁴¹

As already noted, another instance of Torumtay's complaints that the government gave short shrift to the military was allowing the Iraqi Kurds to take shelter in Turkey before the civilian and military authorities could make preparations so that the refugee Kurds could live in Turkey with the least hardship.

Torumtay always made it clear that it is the government's responsibility to make foreign policy. For instance, during the crisis in the Gulf, he complained that for four months the military could not obtain from the government any guidelines on the basis of which to determine military strategy. He thought, however, that the military had the sole responsibility for formulating military strategy, and added that the Turkish Armed Forces

are led by highly qualified generals and admirals who were promoted to those ranks after proving their competence in previous ranks.

It was only to be expected, therefore, that he did not approve of President Özal's attempt during the Gulf War to meddle in military matters:

At the crisis management meetings . . . the president came up with novel ideas based on his frequent telephone conversations with political leaders of other countries and his constant watching of the CNN. Even on military issues outside of his expertise and experience, the president persistently made suggestions and demands, including a military operation against Iraq, which conformed to neither the basic principles of the military warfare nor the military strategy.⁴²

Toruntay pointed out that the military's headquarters, which he thought was full of well-trained and expert personnel, could not therefore contribute to the making of decisions about matters on which they should have had the final word. He insisted that there was a need for everyone to abide diligently by the rules and regulations that clearly designated the respective jurisdictions of the civilian and military authorities.

When this mutual respect for jurisdiction was not observed, Toruntay thought it his obligation to speak up: "Throughout my term of office [as chief of the general staff], I let others know what I thought and believed in, while remaining courteous and respectful to the sublime offices of the state."⁴³ This, in his opinion, was also "a duty on his part to the Turkish nation which had the right to know the facts." It was also an obligation to "a nation which had great admiration toward and pride in its military."

He believed that those who had been elected or appointed to posts in the administration must be respectful of the rule of law; thereby they would protect the honor and dignity of the posts they occupied as well as the sublimity of their nation. When Toruntay thought that he could no longer serve his country in this manner, he resigned, on 3 December 1990. His statement upon his resignation read: "The principles I believe in and my understanding of the way the state should function make it impossible for me to go on holding this office [of chief of the general staff]."⁴⁴

Doğan Güreş

Upon Torumtay's resignation, General Doğan Güreş was appointed as chief of the general staff and remained in that post until 31 August 1994. According to Güreş, the duties of the military were "safeguarding the modernistic and secular features of the Turkish republic, defending the country against its internal and external enemies, and performing these functions while remaining within the bounds of democratic principles."⁴⁵

On the last of these points, Güreş made several statements about the military's high regard for democracy: "The Turkish Armed Forces is an admirer of democracy;"⁴⁶ "the military is a democratic-constitutional institution; it holds in high esteem democratic principles; it is in a subordinate position to the civilian government;"⁴⁷ "the chief commander of the Turkish Armed Forces is the Turkish Grand National Assembly;"⁴⁸ the military has great respect for the Assembly."⁴⁹

He indicated that the military would not be involved in politics in the future, "... the duties of the Turkish Armed Forces are quite clear. Being involved in domestic politics is not one of them"⁵⁰ He also pointed out that the military in Turkey would not undertake another coup: "Out of the blue some people start talking about a military intervention. This makes me very sad; I, in fact, get offended by such remarks. In this country, we should no longer talk about military coups."⁵¹ On another occasion, he gave his word that the military would not take power into its own hands. At the end of his term, he pointed out that some people earlier had wanted the imposition of martial law for dealing with Kurds in the southeast, but now realized that this was unnecessary. Güreş believed that this was a welcome development because the people would no longer turn to the military whenever there was a crisis.

He noted that the military would no longer intervene in politics because democracy in Turkey was functioning in quite a healthy manner. He also stated that, among all political regimes, democracy is the least undesirable, and thus dispelled the possible concern that the military might intervene in politics if democracy did not function appropriately.

Güreş refrained from expressing his views on issues he considered to be political. For instance, when journalists wanted to know what he thought about Torumtay's resignation, he declined to respond, indicating that it was a "political question." Similarly, on the issue of sending troops abroad during the Gulf War, he observed: "It is not proper for me to suggest a policy line concerning this matter."⁵² On the occasion of the visit to Turkey of Kurdish leaders from Northern Iraq in 1991, he had an oppor-

tunity to address directly the question of military-civilian relations as he perceived them:

We were told that these leaders will come to Turkey and convey to our government their views [on the Kurdish issue]. We, too, told the government what we think. However, I am not in a position to say whether our views and the government's views on this issue overlap. They may or may not. In the last instance, it is the government, and not the military, that determines the policy.⁵³

If for him a matter was political but also critical, Güreş did make his views known, but tried not to give the impression that he was speaking on behalf of the military: "As a man in the street, I do not see a need for martial law,"⁵⁴ or "I have expressed my view that an early election might be useful in the course of an informal discussion I had with journalists."⁵⁵

He expressed his stand on human rights in similar ways. Concerning the ongoing armed conflict with Kurds in southeastern Turkey, he observed: "If we conduct our operations without due regard to the niceties of democracy we can bring this armed conflict to an end in six months. But it is important that we deal with the problem within the rules of democracy."⁵⁶ Once he flatly rejected the idea that there were counter guerrilla units in Turkey; some Turks thought at the time that such units existed and employed highhanded methods with the Kurds. Güreş pointed out that the Special War Methods Agency, which was thought to be the mastermind behind the presumed counter guerrilla units, was out in the open and thus could not and did not employ tactics contrary to law in the armed conflict in the southeast. He added that both that agency and the rest of the military were not taboo subjects. In fact, in fall 1992, journalists were taken on a tour of the Special War Methods Agency as part of an effort to develop a favorable public opinion toward the military and thus obtain through democratic means adequate governmental funds to meet the military's needs.

Güreş believed that the conflict in southeastern Turkey should be ended not by the Martial Law Authority but by the Emergency Rule Governor of the region. Once, during a visit there with then Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel and then Deputy Prime Minister Erdal İnönü, the governor of the province of Mardin complained that there was uncertainty as to whether the military or the civilian authority had the final authority in the region; Güreş abruptly interrupted the governor's briefing and said: "There must be a slip of the tongue here; the Military Security Command

reports to the Emergency Rule Governor." He suggested that if the governor used his full authority to deal with the issue, there would be no need for the military to play a more active role. It was Güreş's opinion that if the civilian authority could deal with the problem, then the military would be better able to fulfill its "primary function" of defending the country against its external enemies.

However, as noted, he believed that the military in Turkey was not only responsible for defending the country against its external enemies, but also for defending it against its internal enemies and safeguarding the modernistic and secular features of the Turkish republic. On such matters as these, the military should play a role.

Güreş thought that secularism in Turkey was of "primary importance," and, except for some fanatics, the Turkish people were also very sensitive about it. Thus he could not "figure out why the virtues of secularism were being debated by some in Turkey," and said that those who are debating were violating the constitution, which stipulates that the secular nature of the Turkish republic cannot be changed. He added that "democracy is a regime of laws; in a democracy one does not have the discretion to implement or not to implement a law."⁵⁷ He also pointed out that we should think about the question of how norms could be institutionalized in the system, implying that a diligent implementation of laws is one such norm, and that the smooth functioning of the judiciary is an integral part of democracy. All of this seemed to be a covert reminder to the government that it should not be lax in taking the necessary legal measures against "the enemies of secularism." At times, Güreş made overt reminders, too, once drawing attention to the fact that in the religiously conservative Fatih district of Istanbul some men with turbans were walking in public places against the laws of the republic, although public prosecutors were ignoring it. He also paid a special visit to the head of the Constitutional Court, Yekta Güngör Özden, who had personally taken a firm stand on secularism, and told Özden that the military supported him fully.

Compared to the issue of secularism, however, he thought that the military should play a greater role in defending the country against internal and external enemies. "The duty that has been given to me as the Turkish republic's chief of the general staff is that of defending the indivisible integrity of the Turkish state against its internal and external enemies."⁵⁸ Güreş expected governments to bring all important matters related to this problem to the attention of the National Security Council.⁵⁹ When, in his opinion, governments failed to do this, Güreş found a way of making his views known. At one point, he said: "It is claimed by some

that the undersecretary of the National Intelligence Agency covertly acted as spokesperson for the military. Neither the military nor I need others for such a purpose. As head of the military, I myself would say everything that I want to say, though in an appropriate manner.”⁶⁰ He did exactly that when the military became concerned about the activities of the now closed Kurdish oriented Democracy Party (DEP). At that time (February 1994), President Demirel told journalists that the military had serious reservations about the DEP, which had been brought to his attention not through a formal report but in an informal discussion with the chief of the general staff. Demirel added that the military wanted to see the Antiterror Act enacted as soon as possible. Güreş thought that the matter was of utmost importance and let his views be known in a straightforward manner: “I told the government that it should conduct defense operations, which would also involve offense, against the bandits [in the southeast] . . . in the most effective manner, without mincing my words and in unambiguous terms”⁶¹

If in his opinion a matter directly related to the external defense of the country in particular and to the military in general, he took an even firmer stand: he believed that the military should be consulted on such matters. If it was not, his complaints were strongly registered, even if by implication. When the issue of conscripted privates serving shorter terms was being considered by the government, he observed: “I read this in the newspapers; a statute on this issue cannot be [read: “should not be”] enacted without consultation with us.”⁶²

He became even more assertive when the prestige of the army was at stake. An implied critique of the combat effectiveness of the military from then president Turgut Özal made Güreş very defensive: inspecting units in the southeast just after Özal’s comments (made during the Gulf War), he declared that “the Turkish Armed Forces are fully capable of dealing with a possible Iraqi offensive into Turkey.” Not long after, he pointed out that “the Turkish High Command had predicted almost wholly how the war in the Gulf would unfold.”⁶³

Güreş became quite incensed at direct attacks on the military, and his responses on these occasions could be very harsh. When a mass assassination took place in a train station near the Turkish Reserve Officers Infantry School in Tuzla, Istanbul, it led to the death of a number of students at the school. When the leader of the DEP, Hatip Dicle, then a member of the parliament, referred to the event as another episode in the “war between the Turkish army and Kurds,” implying that the reserve officer candidates in question were “military targets,” Güreş became furious, pointing out that there were traitors [a very strong accusation in Turkey] under the roof of the Grand National Assembly.

He was no less harsh on an occasion when he came up with a general denunciation of the detractors of the military:

From time to time . . . some persons who are few in number and simpletons in quality but who are capable of creating great commotion, come up with unfounded slanders about the Turkish Armed Forces. Some of these may have received special commissions to perpetrate these acts against our country . . . Others are interested in constantly leveling false accusations to the military. Still others . . . want to become heroes in the eyes of their sympathizers. Some among the last category are quite naive and are unaware of the harmful effects of their activities for the country. They hide behind the democratic argument that the military is not a taboo subject.⁶⁴

Why did Güreş become so concerned when he thought that a matter fell within the jurisdiction of the military and the military was not consulted, particularly when he sensed an underlying critique of the military? First, as noted, the military considered itself responsible for safeguarding the modernistic and secular features of the republic and defending the country. He also regarded the military as the best judge of matters that, in his estimation, were directly related to the organizational set-up of the military and its strategy. When a civilian academician, Hikmet Özdemir, wrote a book explaining how the military should be reorganized, Güreş was quick to belittle it: "Hundreds of professional officers and experts have been working on this issue for the last two years. There is an [intense] effort . . . to complete this work as soon as possible. It is interesting that an academician [outside the military circles and all by himself] can come up with a model for revamping the structure of the Turkish Armed Forces root and branch."⁶⁵

When addressing troops in southeastern Turkey, he was not only more sarcastic but also very harsh on those who criticized the military's handling of the armed struggle against the Kurds:

While you are giving all you have to the armed struggle here, some are having their scotch by the Bosphorus [Strait passing through Istanbul] and making judgments about the military operations here. What right do they have to express an opinion on the military operations? Do they know military strategy?

Do they know military art? Did they ever go to the southeast? They opine without much knowledge. Even a theater critic can come up with a better evaluation of the situation.⁶⁶

A month before his retirement, Güreş even came very close to openly challenging President Demirel. Güreş thought that the terms of office of the commanders of the Navy and the Air Force should be extended for an additional year because changing members of the High Command all at the same time would adversely affect the combat effectiveness of the military. When Demirel made it apparent that he would not approve the extension, Güreş publicly stated that he would discuss the issue with the commanders in the High Military Council. The Council was not empowered to discuss such matters; Güreş was simply trying to emphasize the point that the opinion of the military should carry weight in such matters. At the time, he was supported by then Prime Minister Tansu Çiller, who argued that the ultimate responsibility for dealing effectively with the militant Kurds in the southeast belonged to her as prime minister, and that she wanted the experienced commanders in office for another year. In the event, the president agreed to the extension of the terms of office of the commanders in question.

One may hazard a guess that Güreş might have been less intolerant of those civilians he thought were encroaching upon the military's traditional prerogative of having the last word on military issues had he not perceived serious threats to national unity and the territorial integrity of the country. Drawing attention to the hostile postures of Turkey's neighbors and the threat the developments in the southeast posed for the territorial integrity of the country, he saw the role of the Turkish Armed Forces as even more critical.

His particular evaluation of the turn of events in Turkey, and his view of the role the military should play there, led him not only to want to keep the military apart from the "turmoils" of day-to-day politics, but also to protect the military's autonomy from civilian politicians vis-à-vis those duties of the military Güreş considered critical.

His dedication to preventing the military from being politicized became apparent when a group of intellectuals who wanted further demilitarization of Turkish politics suggested that the the office of chief of the general staff should be responsible to the Ministry of Defense and not to the prime minister, as it was. Güreş argued that if the chief of the general staff were responsible to the Ministry of Defense, the military would be "politicized to its gills." Further, to avoid giving the impression of a close

relation between the military and the political party in power, he requested Prime Minister Özal not to hold political meetings at the Officers' Club in Istanbul.

His quest for military autonomy from civilian authority on those duties of the military that Güreş perceived as critical led him to argue that, in the last analysis, the military is directly responsible to the people. He saw a close link between the military and the people: "The Turkish nation holds the military in high esteem; in turn the Turkish Armed Forces, whose members come from among the people, has great loyalty to the people."⁶⁷ Consequently, he thought, the military derives its powers from the people: "I report to the political authority; but this post [the office of chief of the general staff] has been granted to me by the people when the latter approved the 1982 Constitution."⁶⁸ Thus, when there is a basic conflict between the military and the civilian government, the final referee should be the people. In fact, during a debate on whether the Turkish Armed Forces was in need of reform, Güreş said: "If there is an intention to restructure the Turkish Armed Forces in accordance with a model that derives from the experience of foreign countries, it would be appropriate to find out what the people think about this project."⁶⁹

Conclusion

As the Third Turkish Republic entered its second decade, civil-military relations came close to the liberal-democratic model. After its last intervention (1980), the military (here and below, read "High Command") wished to maintain its influence in the polity through democratic means—by founding a political party. By the second decade, it had abandoned this aspiration, and also no longer wanted responsibility for ensuring that the regime functioned as a rational democracy. For instance, they no longer acted as defenders of substantive values such as secularism, which in the past had been sacred to them, through forceful means. Instead, they did no more than draw the government's attention to the critical nature of such matters.

During the early 1990s, the Turkish military was essentially interested in contributing to public policymaking in matters it deemed important—particularly those pertaining to internal and external defense. Officers believed they should make such contributions not because they were the ultimate guardians of substantive norms, but because they had the necessary expertise. Thus they retained their idealism only in the sense of ensuring that policy decisions were made on the basis of informed judg-

ment. Their idealism was moderated by a civilian ethic; they admitted that in all matters civilian governments had the last word.

However, officers were concerned about maintaining autonomy from civilian governments in order to maintain their professionalism. Thus they became impatient if civilian governments bypassed them in policy decisions on matters they deemed critical. If the matter was not too critical their language was diplomatic. If it was somewhat critical the language was less diplomatic. If the matter was very critical they suggested that the people should act as arbiters in the conflict with the civilian government. However, the officers gave the impression that if indeed the people supported them rather than the civilian government, they would not force the civilian government to act as the military thought best. As before, the military acknowledged that the civilian government had the final authority. Or, if the civilian government did not agree to such arbitration, officers went no farther than resigning their commissions, and would not carry out a coup.

The officers gently reminded the civilian government to respect the people's verdict because representation should be seen as delegation rather than as trusteeship. They argued that they, too, derived their power directly from the people. They did not wish to exercise independent political power but they did wish to persuade civil governments that in making certain policy decisions the military's views should be heeded. William Hale was correct in arguing that the military in Turkey gradually accepted the supremacy of the civilian power, but he was on shakier ground in suggesting that Turkish officers recognized civilian supremacy about the military's professional expertise.⁷⁰

Samuel Huntington once argued that in liberal democracies, the military's professional autonomy is not unacceptable.⁷¹ However, the Turkish officers' attempt to bolster their autonomy from civilian governments with the argument that they had always had a special relationship with the people and thus a power base of their own, did not exactly conform to the model of civil-military relations in a liberal democracy. On the other hand, Huntington recently erred when he included Turkey in the category of countries in which "powerful military establishments attempted to continue into the posttransition period powers and prerogatives that might be considered 'abnormal' for a constitutional democracy."⁷² In recent decades, the Turkish military has become not only less reluctant to intervene in politics but has also considerably narrowed down the issues on which it feels it should make a contribution. The Turkish military has increasingly extricated itself from politics primarily because (1) it had historically been an instigator of the project of Westernization that included democra-

tization; (2) it came under increasing pressure from both Turkey's western allies and a group of intellectuals in Turkey to adopt a hands-off policy in politics; (3) the military itself came to the conclusion that democracy cannot be consolidated through military interventions; and (4) the military's involvement in politics leads to its loss of prestige in the polity and society and to a lowering of morale within the military.

Inter alia, Brazil rather than Turkey fits better the category of countries in which "powerful military establishments attempted to continue into the posttransition period with powers and prerogatives that might be considered 'abnormal' for a constitutional democracy." As Daniel Zirker and Marvin Henberg have shown, the decline of communism and the Cold War as credible "threats" to Brazilian national security, the stabilization of international relations in Latin America, and the continuing poor economy in Brazil considerably weakened the standing of the military within the *sistema brasileiro*; and, in desperation, the military jealously held on to its powers and prerogatives at the expense of giving short shrift to the long-term interests of community.⁷³ In contrast, sure of its continuing high status in the Turkish polity and society thanks to its avoidance of involvement in day-to-day politics, the Turkish military can afford to forego most of its powers and prerogatives.

Notes

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *The authors are grateful to the Turkish Academy of Sciences for financial support.*

1. Halil Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600*, trans. Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 65–69.
2. H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, Vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 48.
3. Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Wilmington, England: The Eothen Press, 1985), 34.
4. Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Military [:Turkey]," in *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, eds. Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).
5. Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908–1914*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 47, 55.
6. On these models, see, inter alia, Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 10–18, 21.
7. William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London: Routledge, 1994), 82.

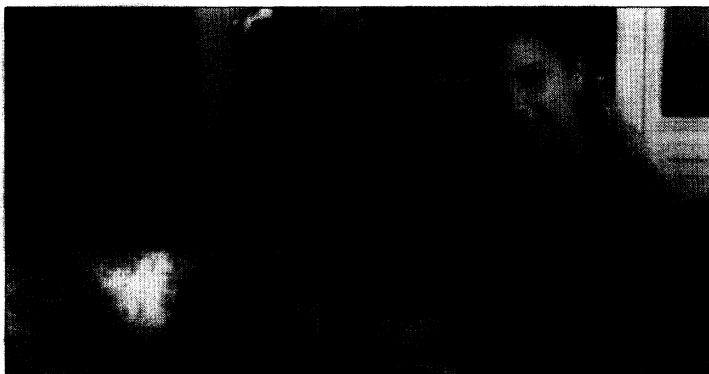
8. Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Army and the Founding of the Turkish Republic," *World Politics* 11 (1959): 549–550.
9. For this definition of democracy, we draw upon Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited: Part Two. The Classical Issues* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1987).
10. These developments are delineated, inter alia, in Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, "The State, Politics and the Military in Turkey," *Comparative Politics* 10 (1983): 17–33; Metin Heper, "The State, the Military and Democracy in Turkey," *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 9 (1987): 52–64; Kemal Karpat, "Military Interventions: Army-Civilian Relations in Turkey Before and After 1980," in *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, eds. Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988); William Hale, "Transitions to Civilian Government in Turkey: The Military Perspective," in *ibid.*; George Harris, "The Role of the Military in Turkey: Guardians or Decision-Makers?" in *ibid.*; and Ahmet Evin, "Demilitarization and Civilianization of the Regime," in *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*, eds. Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994).
11. Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military*, 242.
12. The National Security Council is composed of the prime minister, chief of the general staff, the ministers of national defense, internal affairs, and foreign affairs, the commanders of the army, navy, and air force, and the general commander of the gendarmerie, under the chairmanship of the president of the republic. The National Security Council submits to the Council of Ministers its views on making decisions and ensuring necessary coordination with regard to the formulation, establishment, and implementation of the national security policy of the state. The Council of Ministers shall give priority considerations to the decisions of the Council (Article 118 of the 1982 Constitution).
13. On Kenan Evren, we draw upon Kenan Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anıları* ("The Memoirs of Kenan Evren"), six volumes (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1990); on Necip Torumtay, upon Org. Necip Torumtay, *Orgeneral Torumtay'ın Anıları* ("The Memoirs of General Torumtay"), (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1994), and on Doğan Güreş upon several issues of *Hürriyet* (Istanbul daily), *Milliyet* (Istanbul daily), *Cumhuriyet* (Istanbul daily), *Sabah* (Istanbul daily), and *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara daily), published between 7 December, 1990 and 31 July, 1994.
14. Mehmet Ali Birand, *Emret Komutanım!* (Istanbul: Karacan Yayınları, 1986), abridged English translation, *Shirts of Steel: An Anatomy of the Turkish Armed Forces*, tr. Saliha Paker and Ruth Christie (London: J.B. Tauris, 1991).
15. Evren, I, 19.
16. Evren, II, 352.
17. *Ibid.*, 352.
18. Evren, IV, 68.
19. *Ibid.*

20. Evren, III, 131.
21. The founders of the Turkish Republic aimed at a "revolution of values." They wished to substitute a secular society for a religious community. See Şerif Mardin, "Ideology and Religion in the Turkish Revolution," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1971): 197–211.
22. On the National Salvation Party, see Jacob M. Landau, "The National Salvation Party in Turkey," *Asian and African Studies* 11 (1976): 587–606 and Türker Alkan, "The National Salvation Party in Turkey," in *Islam and Politics in the Modern Middle East*, eds. Metin Heper and Raphael Israeli (London: Croom Helm, 1984).
23. Evren, VI, 17.
24. On the Nationalist Action Party, see Jacob M. Landau, "The Nationalist Action Party in Turkey," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17 (1982): 587–606.
25. This was basically a consequence of the modus vivendi that developed between Evren and less strictly secularist Özal. See Metin Heper, "The Executive in the Third Turkish Republic, 1982–1989," *Governance*, 3 (1990): 299–319.
26. Evren, IV, 247.
27. On these two versions of representation, we draw upon A.H. Birch, *Representation* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 15–16. 60–67.
28. Evren, III, 148.
29. Evren, II, 185.
30. Evren, VI, 206.
31. Evren, II, 363.
32. Evren, IV, 381.
33. Evren, III, 46.
34. Evren, II, 363.
35. Evren, VI, 221.
36. Torumtay, 21.
37. *Ibid.*, 36.
38. *Ibid.*, 57.
39. *Ibid.*, 90.
40. *Ibid.*, 88.
41. *Ibid.*, 102.
42. *Ibid.*, 108.
43. *Ibid.*, 90.
44. *Turkish Daily News*, 4 December 1990.

45. *Turkish Daily News*, 13 December 1990.
46. *Milliyet*, 26 September 1992.
47. *Turkish Daily News*, 19 March 1991.
48. More specifically, the president of the republic represents "the office of the Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Armed Forces on behalf of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey" (Article 104 of the 1982 Constitution).
49. *Hürriyet*, 22 December 1992.
50. *Milliyet*, 6 June 1992.
51. *Milliyet*, 26 September 1992.
52. Ibid.
53. *Milliyet*, 19 March 1991.
54. Ibid.
55. *Hürriyet*, 20 March 1992.
56. *Hürriyet*, 18 October 1991.
57. *Sabah*, 25 December 1993.
58. *Hürriyet*, 2 July 1991.
59. *Turkish Daily News*, 20 February 1991.
60. *Hürriyet*, 20 March 1992.
61. Ibid.
62. *Turkish Daily News*, 12 February 1991.
63. Ibid.
64. *Sabah*, 25 December 1993.
65. *Milliyet*, 6 June 1992. The book in question was Hikmet Özdemir, *Rejim ve Asker* ("The Political Regime and Officer") (Istanbul: Afa Yayınları, 1989).
66. *Sabah*, 25 December 1993.
67. *Milliyet*, 19 March 1991, and *Turkish Daily News*, 19 March 1991. It must be noted in passing that in a nationwide opinion survey carried out in October 1990, the Armed Forces in Turkey was found to be an institution the people have greatest trust in (91.4 percent); the Grand National Assembly and the Turkish political system occupied the seventh (57.1 percent) and ninth (49.7 percent) places in the relevant rank-order. See Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği, *Türk Toplumunun Değerleri* ("Turks' Values") (Istanbul: TÜSIAD, 1991), 22.
68. *Milliyet*, 19 March 1991.
69. *Milliyet*, 6 June 1992.
70. See Note 7 above.

71. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).
72. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 238.
73. Daniel Zirker and Marvin Henberg, "Amazonia: Democracy, Ecology and Brazilian Military Prerogatives in the 1990s," *Armed Forces & Society*, 20 (1994): 259-281.

**When I hear the music, it reminds
me of my grandmother.**



She told me about U.S. Savings Bonds. They're backed by the full faith and credit of the United States. They gave her peace of mind.

*Ask your employer or banker about saving with
U.S. Savings Bonds. For all the right reasons.*



A public service of this magazine