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A BRIEF HISTORY OF MODERN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN TURKEY

Founded under the charismatic leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the modern state of Turkey has always had a unique status, both institutionally and culturally, with respect to its military. Emerging from the ashes of the multicultural Ottoman Empire, the new Turkish Armed Forces reflected many of the new nationalist ambitions and revisionist tendencies of the new state. Scarred by the post-World War I conflict to repulse occupation of the Anatolian heartland by the French, British, Greeks and others, the Turkish leadership was determined to form a strong nation-state that would defend the Turkish people and their culture from exploitation¹. This was reflected in a strong association between the Turkish military and Atatürk's Six Arrows to guide Turkey, most notably secularism and nationalism (which has strong ethnic undertones in this context). The existence of threats to these ideas, perceived or real, has been a constant motivation for powerful military institutions since this period and has continued to be a factor for civil-military relations². Building on a prolonged martial tradition and furthering that mythology under a former army officer in Atatürk, the early period of the republic would come to define the autonomous position the military would take in governance and society for the coming decades.

While the beginnings of modern Turkey were primarily driven by immediate threats, the civil-military relations of the Turkish republic since World War II were defined primarily by Turkey's strategic alliance, internal strife and comparatively weak political institutions that could not counter the military influence in politics³. Ruled primarily by the Republican People's Party (CHP) since 1924, Turkey began a long struggle with multi-party democratization with the election of the Democratic Party in 1950. A worsening economy and authoritarian tendencies led to a military coup

¹ William Cleveland, and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, (Philadelphia, PA: Westwood Press, 2013), 176-190.

² Ahmet Kuru, "The Rise and Fall of Military Tutelage in Turkey: Fears of Islamism, Kurdism and Communism." *Insight Turkey* 14.2 (2012) p. 45-46

³ *Ibid* 47-51

in 1960, one of four coups in modern Turkish history, and establishment of a new constitution. Greatly increasing its own power, the Turkish military came to define itself as an institutional check to any political force that may threaten the sanctity of the republic under the Kemalist principles of Western secularism and statism⁴. Once again this role would manifest itself in the 1970 and 1980 coups in which the military intervened as a measure of providing internal stability in the face of a polarized political environment. It was particularly with the new constitution of 1982, which remains the official constitution of the nation to this day, that military legitimized its autonomous role in domestic politics. Turkey's strategic position in NATO as a bulwark against the Soviet Union and close ties with Western militaries added insulation for military tutelage in government affairs as few policymakers abroad were willing to risk Turkey's partnership by supporting civilian control of the military⁵. What is evident from this period is that the TSK consolidated its political power in large part due to a vacuum of civilian leadership in times of threat and instability.

The end of the Cold War and in that sense the threat of communist has proven to be a seminal event in the evolution of civil-military relations. The removal of the largest threat facing the Turkish nation and the evolution of the NATO alliance significantly altered the security situation even if the military mindset lagged far behind. Having begun economic liberalization during the 1980s under Turgut Ozal, Turkey continued to progress to a Western open market and divert attention to economic needs rather than the security concerns and needs of the state⁶. The expansion of the European economic zone and increased exclusivity of NATO of former Warsaw Pact countries has had significant impacts on the critical concerns for the Turkish people. The end of the greatest existential threat to the state forced Turks to reconsider priorities and the need of an

⁴ Ibid. p.46-51

⁵ Douglas Howard, *The History of Turkey*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 157-174.

⁶ Ibid. p. 175-180

autonomous, extensive military establishment⁷. While persistent issues with Greece remained over Aegean holdings and the status of Cyprus, the prospects of an interstate war remained low. While Turkey had long looked to the West, it appears as though the trends of the 1990s had a great deal of impact on shifting the mindset from national survival with occasional lapses into authoritarianism to that of Western economics and institutions.

There were, however, factors that continued the relevance of a powerful military structure with influence over domestic affairs in guardianship of Kemalist principles, most notably the Kurdish separatists and the rising tide of political Islam in the Middle East. Reaching its violent zenith in 1993, the violence between the military and the Kurdish insurgency called the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) in southeast Turkey provided a substantial threat to the sanctity of the Turkish state in its current form⁸. The prolonged presence and violence between the Turkish military and PKK in the southeast region of the country has continued the immediate security concerns in the minds of all Turkish citizens since that time even despite the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999.

Despite the best attempts of the military and ruling governments, Islamism found many ways into Turkish society. The writing of Fethullah Gulen and the extreme politics of Gorius were stark reminders that the Turkish government, no matter how much it wanted to, could not ignore the religious aspects and foundations of their own society. Mainstream attempts at an actual Islamist political party started with the National Order Party in 1970 and have manifested itself (mostly due to constant repression from the military and government) into the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002. While there are still a number of similarities to other Islamic movements, Turkish Islamism has had to transform itself to fit the Kemalist structure of the Turkish state instead of deconstruct it. The constant antagonism between the groups, most evident in the soft-coup of Prime

⁷ Ibid. p.185-6

⁸ Oper cit. Kuru p. 52-55

Minister Erbakan in 1997, underlines the doctrinal dedication of the armed forces to a strong secularism that segregates religion completely from state apparatuses⁹. Through a long campaign of intimidation and suppression, the military had kept those with Islamist tendencies out of power until the rise of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party in 2002. Erdogan was in fact one of many targeted by the military for attempts to bring Islam into politics, something that would clearly influence the future leader's opinions on military autonomy¹⁰. The ideological divide and prolonged harassment between the Kemalist camps, frequently represented by the military, and the Islamists would have a massive effect on the relationship between government and the armed forces once a religiously conservative government under the banner of the AKP came to power in 2002.

In country with such reverence for its past, historical trends are critical for understanding how we have come to the current political, social and economic dynamics. Heavily victimized by the Western powers and immediate neighbors toward the end of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey reconstructed its society and government based on a Western statist model that emphasized nationalism and secularization above all else. This, in turn, left the military, once a heterogeneous amalgamation of the diverse peoples of the empire, as an autonomous guardian of the Turkish ethnicity, language and culture as well as the ideals of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. The existence of threats to these concepts in the forms of communism to the north, Kurdish nationalism in the southeast and a rise of political Islam overall all contributed to a legitimacy for this exalted military position. As a state primarily constructed to accommodate one-party rule adjusted to multiparty system post-World War II, there were numerous issues of political instability and poor civilian governance. With coups in 1960, 1971 and 1980 and the periods of military rule that followed each,

⁹ Ibid. p. 47-48

¹⁰ As mayor of Istanbul, Erdogan was arrested in 1998 and imprisoned for 18 months for reciting an Islamic poem at a political rally.

the generals in charge of the Turkish armed forces consolidated a unique standing both institutionally and societally. The changes, however, seen since the end of the Cold War, most prevalent of which being the rise of a viable Islamist-leaning party have taken many aspects of this independent military and called into question many aspects of the civil-military relations in Turkey.

Since the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the seat of power in Turkish government in 2003, there has been a dramatic shift in Turkey's civil-military relations. During the late twentieth century, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) played a large role in the development of foreign and domestic policy alongside and occasionally in spite of the civilian government. After a decade of AKP rule, the TAF has found itself in a position outside of policy-making and more subordinate to the civilian government. The military has found itself in this position for various reasons, including the nearly unopposed rule of the AKP, the ousting of Kemalist military leaders through instances such as the Ergenekon Affair, and the constitutional reforms made by parliament to bring Turkey's government in line with the standards of the European Union. Along with the TAF being sent "back to the barracks," Turkey has experienced various changes in its civil society as a result of the rise of civilian government over military influence. While the country has seen a period of unprecedented economic growth under the AKP, this Joint Research Project Team has found that Turkey has also experienced an expansion of political Islam in public life, a struggle in the definition of constitutional "Turkishness" with a reassessment of Turkish nationalism, and an increase in autocratic expressions of power against dissenting views from members of the media and protesters. All of these findings are symptomatic of the form of democracy Turkey has adopted since the rise of the AKP: an unusually powerful executive branch that is able to exert influence throughout Turkish society in the absence of institutional checks and balances.

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UNDERLYING THEMES

While the topics explored by each of us varied significantly in focus, there were certain commonalities that we found throughout our reviews of literature on the topic and from what we heard in interviews. Among the most prominent topics of discussion were the new role of political Islam in Turkey and what the decade of power by the religiously conservative Justice and Development Party has meant for the role of religion in politics. We also found evolving concepts of nationalism as linked with identity (Turkishness as it is called within the constitution) as a highly important topic within Turkish society given the sizable Kurdish population and the decades of violence in the Kurdish region of Turkey between government forces and Kurdish insurgents. A third topic often emphasized in interviews was the sense of creeping authoritarianism from the Justice and Development Party, particularly Prime Minister Erdogan, as most prominently displayed by the Taksim Square protest movement that occurred concurrently with our research. These three topics can be seen as unifying themes to our research on current Turkish civil-military relations.

Political Islam

Political Islam is only recently a successful occurrence in Turkish politics. Beginning in the 1970s, a concrete Islamic political movement rose under Necmattin Erbakan with his National Order Party.¹¹ However, in 1971 a Constitutional Court banned it, though Erbakan would later form another called the National Salvation Party in 1972.¹² In 1980 the military started a coup that ended the rule of political Islam, but at the same time it tried to combat Communism by emphasizing Islam in society while reasserting Turkey as a secular country in the 1982 Constitution. Under Turgut Özal's administration, the strengthened economy created a middle class of entrepreneurs who supported Islamic movements. In addition, capital flowed in from all over the

¹¹ Rabasa, Angel and Larrabee, F. Stephen. "The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey." *Rand Corporation: National Defense Research Institute*. Virginia: 2008. Web.

¹² Taspinar, Omer. "Turkey: The New Model?" *Brookings Institution*. April, 2012. Web.

Middle East and Muslim groups increased. By the 1990's the Welfare or Refah Party, a continuation of Erbakan's various parties, began to win large parts of the population, and benefitted from anti-West sentiments due to the EU's membership rejection.¹³ Yet again, in 1998 the Constitutional Court banned the Refah Party, but two of its former members Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gül would go on to form The Justice and Development Party (AKP). Finally, in 2001 the AKP came to power and like previous movements Erdogan combined nationalism and Islam, while also making democratic reforms to the judiciary, the military, and human rights to be in accordance with EU requirements. Combined with economic reforms that led to massive growth, the AKP became quite successful amongst the more rural and conservative parts of the country, but unlike previous movements managed to pacify the military and ally with the West.¹⁴

Within the government, there have been signs of growing Islamism. The AKP began to Islamize the judiciary and the education systems, former bastions of secularism, asserting more control over the judiciary and becoming more permissive of Islamic trends in higher education and illegal Quran schools. The *Diyanet*, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, is the government branch that manages Sunnis throughout Turkey, and during our stay many of the contacts pointed out its growing importance in the political scene.¹⁵ Critics of Turkey's foreign policy highlight a worrying trend of sectarian support in the Middle East, in which Turkey backs Sunni Muslims throughout the region and prefers those pursuing more overtly Islamist agendas. They cite Erdogan's support of Sunni rebels in Syria, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, and support for Hamas over more peaceful entities such as the Palestinian Authority, while they worry that it is growing increasingly anti-West

¹³ Oper cit. Rabasa and Larrabee

¹⁴ Oper cit. Taspinar

¹⁵ Oper cit. Rabasa and Larrabee

with its approach to Israel since the flotilla incident and its deals with Iran.¹⁶ Meanwhile, politically Fethullah Gülen has managed to establish himself quite firmly within the AKP and society. Gülen reinvented previous Islam movements in the country by transforming Turkish Islam into a social movement that pushed for greater cooperation between Christians, Jews, and Muslims, and which a number of universities, schools, and news sources now follow (such as *Today's Zaman* and Fatih University). The Gülen Movement makes a significant part of the AKP's support base, and it is also quite popular in the U.S. where Fethullah Gülen currently resides.¹⁷

In Turkish society, most of the population is Sunni Muslim, but there are significant portions of Alevis and Shi'ites. Some of have felt victimized by the Sunni government, but most were quite content with the economic prosperity they do no more than grumble, until the Gezi Park protests. Many of the demonstrators were protesting the increasing Islamic influence of the government, which was becoming more apparent through an attempt to criminalize adultery in 2004 that failed, or the decision to restrict the sale of alcohol after 10 PM in 2013. In terms of the role of women, while EU reforms have actually removed some legal obstructions to women in the labor force, the AKP lifted the ban on the wearing of the headscarf in public office and its rhetoric has increasingly emphasized women's role as mothers and the need to raise a generation of good Muslims.¹⁸ Indeed, Erdogan has used Islam in his rhetoric frequently to justify his actions, such as accusing Gezi Park protestors of drinking in mosques and arresting the imam despite his denials. As Erdogan continues to face opposition, he may change or alter his approach to political Islam as he deals with the West.

¹⁶ Cagaptay, Soner. Cornell, Svante. Lesser, Ian. Taspinar, Omer. "Turkish Foreign Policy under the AKP: The Rift with Washington." Ed. Soner Cagaptay. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. Policy Notes. Number 3, January 2011. Web.

¹⁷ Oper cit. Rabasa and Larrabee.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Turkishness

One of the most critical elements of Turkish culture is the unique national and ethnic identity they call Turkishness. A vague term that appears in the constitution, laws, literature, and political and popular dialogues, it has led to a lot of tension within the country due to its overarching power in encompassing every subordinate national and ethnic identity. Its predecessor, the Ottoman identity, was a broader, more pluralistic identity within the massive Ottoman Empire that did not exclude other unique nationalities, such as Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Georgians, and others. However, the current Turkish identity subdues all other national and ethnic identities in favor of the single Turkish one, which comprises a generally Sunni Muslim of Turkic descent who speaks the Turkish language.¹⁹ It is not just a form of citizenship but an ethnicity, and therefore there is no such thing as a German-Turk or a Kurdish-Turk because the Turkish aspect engulfs them all. The insistence on a single dominant identity has led to a lot of resentment from other ethnic groups within Turkey who see themselves as unique and separate from the overarching Turkish identity; most notably these groups include the Armenians, the Alevis, and the Kurds, who feel their minority rights impinged by the Turkish majority.²⁰

The idea of “Turkishness” comes from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at the inception of the Republic as Turkey formed a new nation. Atatürk wanted to create a unified country after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, so he thought that by unifying the diverse peoples that remained under one identity, it would make the state stronger. In 1982 the military drafted a new constitution in which several articles attempt to define a Turk. Article 3 makes Turkish the only official language of the state, while Article 66, rather than defining a Turk in ethnic terms, states that anyone who

¹⁹ Oran, Baskin. “Exploring Turkishness: Rights, Identity and the EU Essay Series: The Issue of ‘Turkish’ and ‘Türkiyeli’ (Turkey National; from Turkey).” The Foreign Policy Centre. Web.

²⁰ Finkel, Andrew. “The Curse of Ataturk.” International Herald Tribune Global Opinion. *The New York Times*. April 5th, 2013. Web.

benefits from and is bound by Turkish citizenship is a Turk.²¹ A direct effect of entering Turkish national identity into the law system is Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, which makes it a crime to insult “Turkishness” or the Turkish Identity punishable with up to three years in prison. This article has been used as an excuse to take several journalists and writers to court, including Orhan Pamuk and Hrant Dink, who were taken to court for speaking about the Armenian genocide. Article 301 has been an important roadblock in Turkey’s E.U. accession process due to its ability to limit freedom of speech on very ambiguous grounds; there is no exact definition of “Turkishness” which makes it a very flexible charge. At its core this article shows that the government has a hard time understanding that those who do not identify ethnically as Turkish could still be loyal to the state.

An important part of Turkishness is the religious aspect, in which the state, due to its history of secularism, regulates religion through the Directorate of Religious Affairs and employing imams through the government. Instead of separating religion and state, it makes Sunni Islam the state religion, and since nationality, religion, and ethnicity are both combined into the identity of a Turk, part of the definition of a Turk is being Sunni Muslim. Like the ethnicity question, this religious preference excludes other religions, most predominantly the Christians and the Alevis, who are Shi’a. Even though the Sunni Muslim majority is now in power under the AKP and has led to a lot of freedom of religious expression for all religions, the exclusion of other religions from the Turkish identity has led to a decline of non-Muslims in Turkey over the past decades, which contrasts with Turkey’s desire to appear the bridge between the East and the West.

For a long time the Kurds have demanded greater autonomy within Turkey, and part of their demand is an expansion of the Turkish identity to allow for a distinct cultures such as the Kurds to retain their identity without impinging on Turkish unity. The force of Turkish nationalism in the

²¹ Ibid.

past inspired the creation of an equally dominating Kurdish nationalism that, with the current peace process and constitutional reforms, is only now attempting to fit itself into the greater Turkish unity. The issue of Turkishness is central to Atatürk's creation of a unified Turkish state but it does not embrace diversity since all differences of ethnicity and religion are overtaken by the identity of a Turk. With the new constitution process and constitutional reforms, Turkey is slowly beginning to recognize it needs a more inclusive stance to all citizens, regardless of ethnic or religious belief.

Autocratic Tendencies

As stated above, the rule of the current government since 2003 has led to unprecedented economic success. The Turkish market has nearly tripled in the last decade due to numerous reforms under Erdoğan's AKP. Successes such as these have made Turkey attractive to the European Union, which has settled a free trade agreement with the nation as well as offered it EU membership on some level on the grounds that it implements certain democratically-oriented reforms. Based on the recent behavior of the government towards its people, however, many believe that Turkish leadership has devolved into a more autocratic mindset. This idea has come to a head with the government's reaction to the recent protests against a municipal development project that was set to renovate Taksim Square and Gezi Park with a shopping mall and mosque. A peaceful environmentalist petition evolved into full-fledged riots with police holding back protesters with riot shields, water cannons and tear gas. At a recent silent protest at the Marienplatz of Munich, Germany, Turkish immigrants stood holding a sign declaring "We are here, we are loud, because Erdoğan steals our freedom." An on looking German referred to the prime minister – who is set to run for president after ten years in office – as a "dictator."

This idea is not only held by troubled Turks, an official at Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) states pointedly that while the AKP has used its economic policies and EU reform packages only as tools to gain legitimacy and support to solidify its rule (cite TEPAV

rep). The AKP has created this favorable image through multiple criteria in addition to its economic successes. Erdoğan, the party's chairman, served a very successful term as mayor of Istanbul, Turkey's premier city, from 1994 to 1998. His socially conservative Justice and Development Party also has a strong religious network of practicing Muslims; both the devout Muslim and the businessman can identify with the party's ideals. Finally, the party's success has created such disarray amongst its opponents that it has rendered them nearly inoperable. The main opposition to the AKP is the Republican People's Party (CHP), a Kemalist and socially liberal party that is also the oldest functioning party since the beginning of the republic. The CHP today is in a state of "dementia," recons one professor, because of the vastly overwhelming majority held by the AKP. The CHP finds itself merely contradicting all of the AKP's social and foreign policies in an attempt to delegitimize the current government's position (Cite Ozel).

According to the TEPAV official, the aim of the AKP is to use this support to return Turkey to an Eastern, and specifically Islamic, political ideal. While Kemal Atatürk's policy of orienting Turkey toward the West modernized Turkey and brought it economic success, the AKP views the process of "westernization" as a mistake (cite TEPAV rep). Because of Erdoğan's prior stance on market liberalism and EU ascension, however, the party now finds itself in a struggle between Western liberalism and true goal: to return the country to its Eastern ideological roots. Whether this idea is true or the response to the Gezi Park protests is simply the product of ten years spent comfortably in power and away from the people, the actions of the Prime Minister against the right to demonstrate are evident of an increasingly authoritarian mindset.

Not unlike the government's treatment of protesters is its reaction to voices of dissent or even critical opinion toward its policies. Turkey currently ranks 154th, twenty-five spots from the bottom, in the 2013 Press Freedom Index produced yearly by Reporters Without Borders, an

organization that calls the country the “biggest prison for journalists”.²² In the past the government, AKP or otherwise, has jailed or legally harassed journalists, intellectuals and public figures who speak ill of the military. (can someone send me notes on Lale Demal to insert here?). In 1999 Andrew Finkel, a British freelance journalist based in Istanbul, was indicted for “insulting state institutions” for an article he wrote on the military operations against militant Kurds in southeastern Turkey (cite Finkel). In more recent years, the government has targeted anyone who speaks out against aspects of its policy. Last year, the Turkish pianist and composer Fazil Say was charged by the government for insulting Islam. The openly atheist composer wrote a tweet mocking a muezzin’s call to prayer, and later retweeted a verse by the poet Omar Khayyam mocking the Muslim conception of heaven. The formal charge is “publicly insulting religious values that are adopted by a part of the nation,” which illustrates the religious preference taken by the AKP²³.

None of the above examples have led to jail time, but the effect of such harassment by the government has been met with condemnation from multiple organizations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists as well as the European Union. To date, thirty-eight people have been arrested for anti-government, anti-military or anti-Islamic Twitter posts. In the past decade multiple internet sites have been under the threat of being banned. Between March 2007 and October 2010 Turkish courts imposed a ban on the popular internet video site YouTube.com, in response to a posted video that insulted Kemal Atatürk (cite Finkel). Cases such as this and countless more have left a feeling of fear among professional journalists as well as users of social media. Everything from published articles to internet posts are under scrutiny by the government; expressing disapproval of the government or religious values “adopted by a part of the nation” can be met with indictment and a jail sentence. The pressure does not always come from the government but sometimes from

²² “2013 Press Freedom Index,” Reporters Without Borders, (2013), p 23

²³ Arsu, Sebnem, and Daniel Wakin. "Turkish Pianist is Accused of Insulting Islam." *The New York Times*, June 1, 2012.

the very businesses that run newspapers and media outlets. According to a correspondent at CNN Turk, sixty percent of the Turkish press is currently beholden to Erdoğan and the AKP through business conglomerates that have close ties to the government.²⁴ In many cases, journalists are under pressure from both the government and their employers.

²⁴ Oray Egin, "The Silence of Surrender: Erdogan's War on Independent Media," *World Affairs* (2013),

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REVELATIONS FROM TAKSIM:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TURKISH CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND ITS EFFECT ON EU ACCESSION

By *Cadet Daniel Bieber, United States Air Force Academy*

Introduction

The response of government forces to environmentalist demonstrations in Taksim Square and Gezi Park in May 2013 sparked a wave of protests throughout Turkey. Some accounts tell of police using water cannons, tear gas, and occasionally rubber bullets on protesters. The protests shifted from environmentalists opposing the urban development of the popular Taksim Square in Istanbul to an expression of “pent-up resentment” against the Islamist Justice and Development Party led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.²⁵ Statements regarding the protesters as “thugs” and “louts” further polarized aggravated citizens. In addition, the government’s reaction to the protests has again stalled negotiations with the European Union regarding its bid for membership. Angela Merkel, Germany’s prime minister was “shocked by the treatment of protesters;” using her country’s influence within the Union to call for a postponement of accession talks that were scheduled to take place in late June 2013.²⁶ With the backing of multiple Union ambassadors including that of the Netherlands, the talks have been postponed until at least October, continuing three years of frozen negotiations. These developments add but a new chapter to the story of Turkey’s frustrated attempts to break into the European Union. One of the most significant aspects of the recent outbreak in Turkey, however, was not the response of the government but rather the lack of response from military leadership. Given Turkey’s history of military intervention in politics, their silence in the midst of nationwide protests is indicative of an important shift in the Turkish civil-military relationship within the past decade. This shift is a momentous advancement in the

²⁵ Representative of International Crisis Group, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team 26 June 2013.

²⁶ "Turkey's Protests: Erdogan Cracks Down." *Economist*. 22 Jun 2013: Web. 24 Sep. 2013.

democratization of Turkish society, something that the Turkish government has been working toward for decades.

Much of the democratic reforms accomplished in Turkey have been due to the long-sought aspiration of the country to join the European Union. This goal naturally follows from the westward orientation of Turkish society and policy since the 1923 revolution and subsequent rule of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Since the realization of what is known as the “Ankara Agreement” in September 1963, Turkey has undergone numerous reform processes in the hopes of one day achieving full membership status within the European Union. The Agreement’s aim was to achieve “continuous improvement in living conditions in Turkey and in the European Economic Community through accelerated economic progress and the harmonious expansion of trade” to bring Turkey closer to the European community of states. From reforms regarding parliamentary procedures to trade and women’s rights, the issue of democratizing Turkish society has been at the center of its politics for over fifty years. In this time, Turkey has reached multiple milestones regarding democratic reforms, particularly in the civil-military arena. For much of the late twentieth century one of the chief concerns of the European Commission was the infiltration of the military executive into Turkish politics. Due to the reforms removing the military from public life as well as the “new generation” of Turkish officers, the military today is incapable and largely unwilling to intervene in politics.²⁷ In the grand picture of European accession, however, the nation has made astoundingly little progress in achieving membership to the European Union considering that it was one of the first outsiders to seek ties with the European club since 1959, back when it was formally the European Economic Community. Today, the problem of Turkey’s accession to the European Union no longer lies with its civil-military structure, but with multiple aspects of the ruling government’s domestic and foreign policy. This report will show the progress of Turkey’s civil-

²⁷ U.S. Consular Official, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team 27 June 2013.

military complex in regards to the European Union's guidelines, as well discuss some of the remaining obstacles toward accession. While Turkey has made significant progress in reforming its civilian-military political relationship, a significant amount of reforms are required to bring Turkey within reach of European Union membership.

Turkey's Developing Civil-Military Complex

Throughout the history of the modern Turkish republic, the officer corps of the Turkish Armed Forces held significant sway in the development of the nation's political agenda. According to a commentary by Umit Cizre, the power previously held by the Turkish Armed Forces stemmed from three main sources: the ideology of Kemalism as a safeguard to secular politics, the military's established role in defining what constitutes a threat to that ideology, and an "active institutional role" through constitutional mandate that gave it veto power over the electoral processes of the public and parliament.²⁸ Through a series of coups throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the Turkish military "stood as a 'guardian' or 'ballast' keeping the ship of state on an even course and pushing it to draconian actions when it confronted what were defined as threats to secular security."²⁹ These coups were legally backed by Article 35 in the Turkish Armed Services Internal Service Code, stating that "the duty of the armed forces is to protect and safeguard Turkish territory and the Turkish Republic as stipulated by the Constitution."³⁰ According to Cizre, these threats ranged from communist or Islamist sentiment to a parliament suspicious of the army's power. Through these years, the Turkish Armed Forces transformed itself from a pro-democratic reformist institution to "one that viewed the world around it with disapproval, frustration, and

²⁸ Cizre, Umit. "Disentangling the Thread of Civil-Military Relations in Turkey: Promises and Perils." *Mediterranean Quarterly*. 22.2 (2011): 58. Web.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

³⁰ Yıldırım, Çağrı. "The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics and European Union Membership Negotiations." (2010): *Balkananalysis.com*. Web.

despair.”³¹ The military’s leverage in politics enabled it to project this attitude throughout the government. Turkish foreign policy, in turn, began to tend toward establishing itself as a “lone wolf” in the region rather than seek partnerships with neighboring governments.³²

This political independence of the military was bound to come into conflict with the nation’s aspirations to join the European Union. The relationship begun by the Ankara Agreement was primarily economic, laying the framework for the establishment of a customs union that would not come to fruition until January 1996. This agreement still did not come, however, without the implementation of the Additional Protocol of 1970 that called for more reforms to harmonize Turkish economic legislation with that of the European Union. Even though the customs union was finalized in 1996, it is evident in the European Commission’s 2012 progress report on Turkey that these additional protocols have still not been fully realized.³³ Regardless, Turkey was officially granted the status of candidate country for the European Union at the Helsinki Summit in 1999 following the European Commission’s recommendation in its Regular Report and twelve years after Turkey formally submitted its application for membership in 1987.

With acceptance as a candidate country, the military dilemma came to the table for Turkey-EU relations as Turkey was tasked to fulfill the Copenhagen Criteria: political, economic, and obligatory standards set down at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 that a country must meet before joining the EU. The Copenhagen Criteria do not specifically outline democratization of civil-military relations, but it implies the subordination of the military to the civilian government.³⁴ For several years after acceptance as a candidate country, the main criticism in progress reports on

³¹ Cizre, “Promises and Perils.” 62.

³² Professor Soli Özel, Istanbul Bilgi University, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team 27 June 2013.

³³ Commission Staff Working Document: Turkey 2012 Progress Report. European Commission. *Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013*. Brussels: , 2012. Web.

³⁴ Yıldırım, "The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics and European Union Membership Negotiations."

Turkey “concerned the perceived lack of democratic control over the country’s military.”³⁵ Among these complaints were the placement of the top military commanders on par with civilian leaders such as the president and prime minister within the National Security Council, giving the military a large role in influencing Turkish politics. Further, the Minister of Defense, a governmental position which, in Western defense communities, usually acts as a mediator between the armed forces and the prime minister, is currently placed under Chief of the General Staff. This structure effectively reverses the roles of the two highest positions in the Turkish defense community.³⁶ With pressure from the Copenhagen Criteria, the Turkish government took several steps to democratizing its civil-military structure.

The result of the Copenhagen Criteria was to remove most of the mechanisms that the military had previously used to exert power over the government, including Article 35, which gives the armed forces leverage to act against what it saw as a threat to the Turkish Republic.³⁷ Another remnant of the old Turkish constitutions was the position of the National Security Council. The Council was first established after the 1960 coup to give the armed forces a legitimate place in politics. The 1980 coup expanded the committee’s power to drafting both national security and foreign policy while consisting of top military commanders alongside various civilian government ministers. In the process of moving towards Union membership, amendments to the constitutional role of the National Security Council was altered to both remove the military’s influence and also to reduce the authority of the Council to an advisory body. The government also took steps removing the military from civilian government with the 6th Harmonization Package issued in July 2003. The reform package removed military members from government bodies such as the Board of Cinema, Video and Music, and paved the way for the military’s removal from policy making in realms such as

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Andrew Finkel, interviewed by 2013 ALLIES JRP Team, 1 July 2013, Contributor for New York Times and New Yorker.

education and broadcasting.³⁸ The reformulation of the National Security Council and the Harmonization Package were significant steps in reducing the power of the military to render it “incapable of intervening in politics.”³⁹

Reforms in legislation, however, are not in themselves enough to uproot such an engrained ideology. The original administration of Mustafa Kemal gave the military the charge to be the guarantor of a secular, western state upon the founding of the republic. What is required is a fundamental shift in the mindset of the military as not only as a force of secularism against Islamism, but as one rightly subservient to the civilian government to promote democracy. Turkey saw a glimpse of this “ideal military,” as one American embassy commentator describes it, during the coup of 1960. This coup was orchestrated by an officer corps that “thought Turkey could do better at governing itself,” and worked to introduce a multiparty system, a strong executive, checks and balances, an independent judiciary, civil rights and liberties, a free press, and “other standard features of advanced democracies.”⁴⁰ In the wake of various and somewhat regressive coups later on, as well as the vast imprisonment of politicized military officials during the Ergenekon trials, the military has seen a resurgence of this classically liberal mindset within the officer corps. While there are still remnants of the Kemalist ideology within the armed forces, many are entering the service with the Western idea of a civilian-controlled military meant to support the government. This is evident from an increasing reluctance of the military to issue statements in reaction to various political issues, from the intervention in Syria to the Taksim protests. During a visit to the Turkish Naval Academy in Istanbul, the officers hosting this research project politely declined to give any opinions toward the actions of the AKP in response to the Taksim protests. One official at the American

³⁸ Yıldırım, “The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics and European Union Membership Negotiations.”

³⁹ U.S. Consular Official, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team 27 June 2013.

⁴⁰ Cizre, “Promises and Perils.” 62.

⁴¹ While noting these benefits of the 1960 military coup, Cizre fails to mention that coup overthrew a popularly elected government and ended in the hanging of that government’s prime minister as well as the foreign and finance ministers.

Embassy in Turkey commented that the “average captain gets that the military needs to be controlled” by the civilian government.⁴² To many, the goal of the current government to send the Turkish military “back to the barracks” has largely succeeded.

It is worth noting that this shift in attitude of military officers did not happen arbitrarily. The reluctance of many officers to make political statements stems from the harsh punishments dealt by the government toward politicized military members or any group that could undermine civilian leadership. The trials for crimes stretching back to the 1980 coup as well as those of more recent coup plots including the Sledgehammer plot and the 28 February “Postmodern coup” landed a huge amount of suspected military conspirators in jail: more than one-fifth of all officers to include half of the Turkish Navy’s admirals.⁴³ The trials over the “Sledgehammer Plot,” a military coup dating back to 2003 that was initiated in response to the AKP’s rise to power, 324 suspects out of 365 concluded in the sentencing of 324 of 365 suspects for between 13 and 20 years in prison.⁴⁴ While the trials depoliticized the military, the trials were admittedly undemocratic with courts “handing down mass verdicts” to the accused.⁴⁵ These very public trials were more reminiscent of Nazi courts than the fair and balanced proceedings that are norms in the West. Sentences were often disproportional to the charges they were attached to, and accusations abound of doctored evidence and false charges.⁴⁶ With trials still ongoing as they have been for over a decade, it is questionable whether justice is actually being served. In the latest development of the ongoing Ergenekon case, Ilker Basbug, a former military chief of staff, as well as eighteen other high-ranking military officers were sentenced to life in prison in August 2013.⁴⁷ The sentences were met with

⁴² U.S. Consular Official, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team 27 June 2013.

⁴³ “Turkey and its Army: Erdogan and His Generals.” *Economist*. 02 Feb 2013: Web. 24

⁴⁴ Commission Staff Working Document: Turkey 2012 Progress Report. 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁶ “Erdogan and His Generals.” *Economist*.

⁴⁷ “Turkish Politics: Justice or Revenge?.” *Economist*. 10 Aug 2013: 46-47. Print.

numerous accusations of falsified evidence and were likened by some to “hostage-takings.”⁴⁸ To many experts paying attention to the trials, it is likely that they are meant to be a message to current and future officers to keep out of all things political. This strategy, despite its undemocratic faults, has largely worked: the civilian government has intimidated the military into passivity regarding political matters. The plan to send military officers back to the barracks apparently involved putting a significant number of them behind bars. In regards to EU accession, however, such trials have been markedly counterproductive. The undemocratic and extra-judiciary jailing of political military members does not bode any better for the AKP’s accession bid than the presence of politicized officers in the first place.

The civilian government has currently been learning how to work with this new, liberal military; one that is the second largest in all of NATO. This process is far from over. According to a journalist who wishes to remain anonymous, the military still has a problem with transparency toward both the government and the general public. Under the previous structure, nearly nothing of the military’s affairs was open to the public. Information such as the amount of military combatants and expenditures have yet to be fully disclosed on a regular basis, but not all military information can be kept public. While openness is increasing, Professor Mense Akgun, an expert at Istanbul’s Kultur University’s Global Political Trends Center, expressed that the government and the military must work together to find an adequate balance, aimed to appease the public with a proper eye towards operational security. The same UN report on Turkey noted consolidation of civilian and parliamentary oversight of the security forces’ defense budget as well as its internal actions. This same report included, however, that these practices are yet rudimentary and limited, and calls for further reforms to increase oversight of the military justice system and the country’s Gendarmerie.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Tuysuz, Gul, Talia Kayali, and Joe Sterling. "Ex-military Chief Gets Life In Turkish Trial." *CNN*. 05 Aug 2013: Web.

⁴⁹ Commission Staff Working Document: Turkey 2012 Progress Report. 13

Second, Turkey's armed forces still cling on to practices counter to those of Western militaries. The military exercises a strong presence in public schools in the form of retired army faculty and required classes that serve as indoctrination courses to paint Turkey as a military nation. Courses with adages promoting "every Turk as a warrior," that attempt to force students into a form of ultra-nationalism have little pedagogical purpose and do more to seed resentment of the state than anything else.⁵⁰ Turkey also holds onto the practice of conscription, with services that can vary widely both in manner and length of service. Male Turks are in most cases made to attend a form of boot camp where they are subject to many forms of maltreatment with little real-world benefits. According to one retired officer, conscripts often find themselves acting as servants to a privileged officer class rather than having the opportunity to serve their country. A step toward a western style democracy, according to a United States Embassy official in Ankara, would include a push for a professional, all-volunteer military.

The most fundamental problem is that the goal of sending the military "back to the barracks" may have gone too far. Rather than simply depoliticizing the military, the government has "shut down all channels of communication" with its experts in uniform. "The pendulum has swung way too far in the opposite direction," estimates one American military official in Ankara, meaning that the government has gone from one extreme to another. Before, the Turkish military was much too involved in forming government policy. Now, to the detriment of Turkish foreign policy, the government refuses to take advice from its military commanders on how the armed forces can best be employed. The best connection between the military and the government lies with the Minister of Defense, who, in an awkward position being appointed to serve as the voice of the military to the anti-military AKP, is not entirely sure what his role is in this complex. No clear orders are transmitted from the government to the military, and both parties are currently abashed on how to

⁵⁰ 3H Movement Representative, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team, 25 June 2013

issue either orders or recommendations to the other. “The government knows what military they don’t want,” says an embassy official referring to politicized Kemalism, “but they aren’t sure what type they actually do want.” If Turkey is to continue its attempt to join the EU, both parties must work together to find a balance in their civil-military complex that will serve both democracy and security.

Ousting the military from the public sector may give the civilian government more control in policy, remarks one former officer of the Turkish Army, but it does not imply progression towards democracy for the society as a whole. This retired officer, who graduated in the midst of the 1980 military coup, believes that such action can lead simply to authoritarianism whether it is prompted by legislation or the military itself. As was mentioned by numerous think tank representatives and university professors throughout the research project, the sharp decline in military influence left a power vacuum which the AKP has been filling with a vast expansion of the party’s executive influence throughout Turkish society. The AKP has removed the Turkish Armed Forces from public life only to replace them as the latest threat to a fully democratic government in Turkey. This is most evident from the behavior of the government in response to the 2013 protests, but signs of the executive’s autocratic tendencies have surfaced elsewhere such as issues regarding Turkey’s policies towards the Kurdish population, Cyprus, and freedom of speech.

Remaining Barriers to Turkish EU Accession

One of the biggest hurdles Turkey must clear if it is to join the European Union the nation’s current “Kurdish issue,” which is ultimately involves equality and representation of Turkey’s significant Kurdish population. Since Turkey’s independence in 1923, the government has made a point to silence the nation’s Kurds (estimated at some twenty percent of the population) as an active minority. Indeed, the term “Kurdish” was not officially recognized until just a few years ago, and the letters *q*, *w* and *x* could not legally be published as they are used in the Kurdish language and not

Turkish.⁵¹ This repression led to several violent Turkish uprisings, most notably that of the Kurdistan Worker's Party or PKK. The PKK insurgency became active in 1980, claiming some 40,000 lives and costing the government upwards of 400 billion Turkish lira. In the last year, however, the insurgency has calmed as the government has been working with the PKK's incarcerated leader Abdullah Ocalan to negotiate a peace. The government's policy to make peace with the PKK comes as a complete reversal from Prime Minister Erdogan's vows in 2011 to crush the Kurdish resistance and imprison Kurdish politicians and activists, a policy that led to the violent collapse of negotiations that same year.⁵² This about-face, which some speculate is primarily to win the AKP political favor, has made progress to bring the nation's Kurdish population back from isolation.

The government has yet to make reforms in regard to the Kurdish issue to quell the violence as well as make Turkey's democracy more inclusive and attractive to the European Union. There are three main demands of the Kurds according to a representative from the International Crisis Group. The first is to lift a ban on using the Kurdish language in education and services, an issue that is mostly a problem in the highly Kurdish southeast. Another is to remove numerous anti-terror laws which have been used in the past to repress free speech, especially against Kurdish activists. The third is to give the Kurds more autonomy in government, which would include doing away with ethnic discrimination in the legislature and lowering the threshold of a political party to enter parliament from 10 percent of the entire electorate.⁵³ This threshold is the highest among the Council of Europe member states, and is used exclusively to "keep the Kurds out of power," estimates one professor from Istanbul's Bigli University.^{54,55} Against a Kurdish minority or not, such

⁵¹ U.S. Consular Official, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team 27 June 2013.

⁵² "Turkey and the PKK: Peace at Last?" *Economist*. 12 Jan 2013: Web. 24 Sep. 2013.

⁵³ Representative of International Crisis Group, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team 26 June 2013.

⁵⁴ Commission Staff Working Document: Turkey 2012 Progress Report. 9.

restrictions to free speech and representation are contrary to the democratic values essential for joining the EU.

Another problem hurting Turkey's chances at EU accession is the country's policy towards the island country of Cyprus. Since its initial invasion in 1974, Turkey has occupied a large part of the island republic, now with some 40,000 troops, and actively "interferes with Cyprus' rights in its exclusive economic zone of maritime jurisdiction."⁵⁶ Turkey still does not recognize Cyprus as a sovereign state, which has itself been a part of the EU since 2004. As a member, Cyprus has blocked eight of the thirty-five chapters of Turkey's accession until it complies with various provisions of the EU's Additional Protocol regarding Turkish governmental reforms.⁵⁷ Chief among these provisions is for Turkey to carry out its withdrawal from the island, which has been promised in numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions. Thus far, however, Turkey has conceded very little toward a viable compromise.

Another large obstacle, one that has gotten significant attention, is Turkey's policy toward activists, journalists, politicians and well-known Turks who speak out against the government. The aforementioned sentencing of Ilker Basbug in the ongoing Ergenekon trials included life sentences and otherwise for numerous journalists and politicians. These sentences are made under the authority of numerous anti-terror laws that can cover a wide array of behaviors.⁵⁸ Journalists and others have been brought to court for anything from blasphemy, as popular pianist and composer Fazil Say was for Twitter posts that mocked the Islamic call to prayer, to insulting "Turkishness."⁵⁹ This term, defended by Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, encompasses a broad scope of

⁵⁵ Soli Ozel, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team, 27 June 2013, Professor at Istanbul Bilgi University.

⁵⁶ Jacovides, Andrew. "Turke'ys Cyprus Problem." *Foreign Affairs*. Jun 2011: Web.

⁵⁷ "Current Situation in Turke'ys Accession Negotiations." . Economic Development Foundation, 2013: Web. <www.ikv.org.tr>.

⁵⁸ U.S. Consular Official, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team 27 June 2013.

⁵⁹ Andrew Finkel, interviewed by 2013 ALLIES JRP Team, 1 July 2013.

definitions. The use of Article 301 has been used to illegalize insulting anything from Turkish ethnicity to government institutions, and has even been used to prosecute those that bring up troubled parts of Turkish history. Orhan Pamuk, one of Turkey's best-known novelists, was brought to trial in violation of Article 301 for mentioning the controversial subject of the Armenian genocide in the early 20th century.⁶⁰ The European Court of Human Rights' case *Akcam v. Turkey*, another case dealing with an academic's work on the Armenian genocide, stated that the "scope of terms under Article 301 . . . is too wide and vague and thus the provision constitutes a continuing threat to the exercise of the right to freedom of expression."⁶¹ Other articles of the penal code are used to the same effect. One journalist, who was brought to court for violating Article 159 of the Turkish constitution by "disreputing the organization of the Turkish state" for writing on the Turkish military's actions in southeastern Turkey, likened the government's habit of accusing journalists as the "fraternity hazing ritual of bringing journalists to court."⁶² These cases, brought about by laws that hamper free speech on subjects from religion to government action, further separate Turkey from the European democracies that promote free speech and demonstration.

Turkey's reaction to the Taksim protests was well along these lines. To many this response, which left thousands injured and five dead, go along with the arbitrary jail sentencing of journalists and opposition leaders to greatly impact Turkey's image to the European Union. What is significant about the protests from a civil-military perspective is the relative silence of military leadership in reaction to either the protesters or the government itself. Murmurs about some military intervention to quell the violence amounted to just that: rumors. Though the remnants of the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer affairs still hold significance, the civil-military relationship in Turkey is healing as the government finds a way to work with a new, liberal defense force. The current civil-military

⁶⁰ "Court Drops Turkish Writer's Case." *BBC News*. 23 Jan 2006: Web.

⁶¹ European Court of Human Rights. *Case of Altug Taner Akcam v. Turkey*. Stausbourg: , 2011. Web. 20.

⁶² Andrew Finkel, interviewed by 2013 ALLIES JRP Team, 1 July 2013.

relationship is palatable to European onlookers. Still, if the Turkish government aspires to join the EU, it will have to heed the warnings against its apparent authoritarianism that has taken the place of the military. Speeches given by Mr. Erdogan in the wake of the Taksim protests projected an “us versus them” mentality that pits the 50 percent majority that holds his party in power against the rest of the nation. *The Economist* purports that winning elections is not enough. Without inclusive representation of the minority, the magazine labels Turkey as a “zombie democracy. It has the outward shape of the real thing, but it lacks the heart.”⁶³

With the military largely out of the political picture, the AKP government itself has become its own worst enemy in regards to Turkey’s decades-long attempt to join the EU. Its autocratic tendencies in the last few years have left it increasingly isolated from the European community. Furthermore, the more Europe pushes away from Turkey, the less cooperative Turkey has become in complying with the EU selection criteria. Turkey’s government is likely to continue losing support for accession from its citizens as long as the Eurozone’s financial crisis continues. Opinion polls have shown a decrease of over 40 percent in the public’s support for EU accession, down to 32 percent from 74 percent a decade ago. One reporter commented that Turkey is keener to be a good candidate for the EU rather than an actual member. The current government is unwilling to give up its centralized authority enough to be considered for full membership, yet keeping prospects of accession at an arm’s length—just close enough to grasp, yet not quite—has its diplomatic and economic benefits. Another American embassy official proposed that any kind of plausible membership would look more like that of the United Kingdom’s than of any member on the Continent. It is still possible for Turkey to join the European Union, should the current government be willing to use its current majority to put in the legwork of reforms. The talks that will start up again in October will show whether or not Mr. Erdogan has had a change in heart; and perhaps he

⁶³ "Majoritarianism: Zombie Democracy." *Economist*. 22 Jun 2013: Web.

has. The meeting between Mr. Erdogan and Prime Minister Merkel of Germany will show how and if Turkey's EU accession will proceed in the coming years. The changes that must be made to bring Turkey to full membership, however, are vast. The chances of them being made sooner rather than later are slim. According to the most optimistic view given to this research team, however, the chance of Turkey gaining EU membership in the future remains "not impossible."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ U.S. Consular Official, interviewed by ALLIES JRP Team 27 June 2013.

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TURKEY'S UNENVIABLE SYRIA SITUATION

By Mr. Joe Sax, Tufts University

“Aware that development and progress in real terms can only be achieved in a lasting peace and stability environment, Turkey places this [the objective of Zero Problems with Neighbors] at the center of her foreign policy vision.”⁶⁵ Such is the example Turkey holds itself to in the conduct of its foreign policy; a vision for interacting with its neighbors with a “responsible and humanistic vision.” Indeed, in the past decades Turkey has become the preponderant regional player in the Middle East among its neighbors. Turkey projects its soft-power capabilities, via both rhetorical and economic influence, into the wider Middle East.⁶⁶ Then the protests in Syria began, and Zero Problems with Neighbors was, in the words of an American diplomatic official, “totally derailed.”⁶⁷

As the Syrian Arab Spring transformed into the ghastly Syrian Civil War, Turkey has found itself in an extremely difficult position, brought on by the inflexibility of Erdogan’s foreign policy and the inability of the Syrian opposition to coalesce into an effective alternative to the regime. The Syrian Civil War has shattered over a decade of uninterrupted growth in power and influence for Turkey. Where once Turkey found itself bridging international disputes and using economics to pry open formerly hostile areas, it now finds itself taking sides in a bloody crisis.

Turkey’s problematic policy towards Syria stands out as one of the Erdogan government’s major challenges, if not outright failures. While the government typically showed a fairly high approval rating for its foreign policy decisions, especially when tensions were high with Israel, its specific decisions with regards to Syria are viewed with disapproval by 70% of Turks.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ "Policy of Zero Problems with Our Neighbors." Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2013.

⁶⁶ Interview in Istanbul, 27 June 2013

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Interview in Istanbul, 26 June 2013

This paper will attempt to examine how Turkey went from a meteorically rising power in the Middle East, repairing its battered relationship with Syria and widening economic ties with its neighbors, to a partisan and supposedly sectarian player in the bloodiest chapter of the Arab Spring. From the kidnappings in Deraa to the bombings in Reyhanli, we will track Turkey's role in the Syrian conflict from the strategic perspective within Syria to the domestic Turkish political scene.

Among the questions to be answered are the following: Did Turkey act rashly in declaring Assad morally bankrupt and throwing itself behind the opposition? When did the Syrian Civil War become a Turkish domestic issue? How do Turks feel about Turkish policy towards Syria? Finally, what are the consequences of Turkish support for Syrian rebel groups, and is Turkey succumbing to sectarianism?

Erdogan may have thought he'd have western backing for his belligerent stance on Syria, but he unquestionably forfeited an advantageous position as middleman by reacting with such venom to Assad's intransigence. As for sectarian motivations for his actions, he has been supporting opposition elements of many stripes and colors since long before more explicitly Islamist groups gained prominence, but at present sectarian affiliation is the only way to align oneself with the main players on the ground.

Before the eruption of the Syrian crisis, before even the immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, Turkey was carving out a sphere of influence in which to project power within the Middle East. Some have labeled this new Turkish outward-facing focus "Neo-Ottomanism," which Etyen Mahçupan sums up in *Today's Zaman* as seeking to be a prominent actor in global affairs. The particular flavor of Neo-Ottomanism added by the AK Party also includes an Islamic identity, almost to the point of exclusivity.⁶⁹ The result has been that Turkey is certainly the predominant

⁶⁹ Mahçupan, Etyen. "Neo-Ottomanism." Editorial. *Today's Zaman* [Istanbul] 15 Sept. 2011: n. pag. Print.

economic power in the region, though the degree to which it is truly accepted by its Arab neighbors as a role model is uncertain.

Does this mean that Turkey's foreign policy logic will be guided by predominantly religious impulses? "Absolutely not," says James Jeffrey, quoted by Malik Mufti from a leaked WikiLeaks cable. "At the end of the day we will have to live with a Turkey whose population is propelling much of what we see. This calls for...a recognition that Turkey will often go its own way."⁷⁰ What Jeffrey calls "Turkey going its own way" is interpreted by Malik Mufti as Turkey projecting both hard and soft power regionally as the US does globally.⁷¹ Mufti quotes an International Crisis Group report which asserts that Turkey has shifted its foreign policy concerns from a focus on "hard security" issues to an emphasis on soft power and economic matters.⁷²

Interviews in Turkey provided manifold examples of Turkish economic hegemony. Turkish Airlines flies to more destinations than any other airline in the world. Turkish firms export to Syria, Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan while Turkish construction companies collect contracts all over the Middle East.⁷³ Another Turkish professor noted skyrocketing exports in the past 30 years, from \$2 billion in 1980 to \$150 billion at present.⁷⁴ This economic contact has translated into cultural and social penetration, with Turkish soap operas dominating the television shows of Syria's traditional geopolitical partner Iran. In fact, Turkey seems to be winning a battle for influence over the Syrian street through public diplomacy and soft power, even if Iran continues to enjoy the absolute geopolitical loyalty of the Syrian government.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Mufti, Malik. "A Little America: The Emergence of Turkish Hegemony." Brandeis University. Crown Center for Middle East, May 2011. Web. 16 Aug. 2013

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Interview in Istanbul, 28 June 2013

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Lesch, David W. Syria: The Fall of the House of Assad. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2012. Print. Chapter 5.

In addition to commercial ties, Turkey has made a great deal of the fact that it is seen as a role model in the region. However, interviews in Turkey did not bear out this assessment. A professor at Istanbul Kultur University was of the opinion that narratives of Turkey as a regional role model were intended primarily for domestic rather than international consumption. He added that this narrative was particularly resented by the Arab intelligentsia.⁷⁶ A US Diplomatic official commented that the Arab world was “sick” of hearing about Turkey as a role model.⁷⁷

In addition to seeking the status of role model for the Middle East, in the past decade Turkey has sought to elevate its importance in the global community. Our brief case example for this will be Davotoglu’s clever if ill-fated attempt to reach a compromise on the Iranian nuclear swap deal. In 2010, at the height of tense negotiations regarding Iran’s nuclear program, Foreign Minister Davotoglu teamed up with the Brazilian prime minister to ship Iranian low-enriched Uranium abroad for enrichment. This would allow Iran to mine its domestic uranium supply and fuel its civilian nuclear infrastructure, without having the kind of uranium enrichment capabilities which could be used to produce weapons-grade material. Iran, for its part, viewed the deal favorably.⁷⁸ However, the deal was squashed by the US and new rounds of sanctions were applied, much to the chagrin of the Turkish foreign policy establishment, who felt, in the words of an American diplomatic official, “blindsided.”⁷⁹

Turkey and Syria have had historically tense relations, but the decade of AKP rule that preceded the beginning of the Syrian civil war showed a marked improvement in relations between the two countries. Previously, Syria had earned the ire of Turkey by hosting Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan, providing him with safe refuge against Turkish security forces. In 1994, however,

⁷⁶ Interview in Istanbul, 2 July 2013

⁷⁷ Interview in Istanbul, 28 June 2013

⁷⁸ Hafezi, Parisa. "Turkey, Brazil Seal Deal on Iran Nuclear Fuel Swap." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, 16 May 2010. Web. 16 Aug. 2013.

⁷⁹ Interview in Istanbul, 26 June 2013

the Turkish military began applying heavy pressure on the Syrian regime to evict Ocalan. Hafez al-Assad, president at the time, bowed to Turkish threats and surrendered the fugitive Ocalan to Turkish law enforcement.⁸⁰

Ocalan's capture by Turkey with the help of Syria set in motion a process of healing for the two countries' relations. After the death of Hafez al-Assad, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan personally reached out to Syria's new president, Bashar al-Assad, with overtures of friendship and international partnership. According to an article published in the Turkish newspaper *Today's Zaman*, Erdogan and Assad "have met frequently and are known to have a friendly relationship. Trade ties have also grown between the two countries."⁸¹ There was truly a thaw between the 1990s and the 2000s, in which Turkey and Syria genuinely worked together though the relationship shared by their respective leaders, including a resolution of the two countries' territorial dispute over the status of the province of Hatay. These factors lead to about \$1 billion dollars in Turkish investment in Syria between 2000 and the beginning of the rebellion, as well as "many other investments in the political and social spheres."⁸² Syria became integral to what a US diplomatic official called Turkish "economic mercantilism," or creating an economic situation in the Middle East conducive to Turkish influence and soft power projection.⁸³ Turkey even tried to work out a peace deal between Syria and Israel; however, the effort was canceled following the outbreak of hostilities in Gaza in 2008.⁸⁴

Bashar al-Assad, president of the Syrian Arab Republic, gave a poignant interview to the *Wall Street Journal* in January 2011, which is quoted by Fouad Ajami in his book *The Syrian Rebellion*:

⁸⁰ Mango, Andrew. *The Turks Today*. New York: Overlook, 2004. 97-98. Print.

⁸¹ "Erdogan Meets Assad in Bodrum for Peace Talks." *TODAY'S ZAMAN*. Zaman with Reuters, 6 Aug. 2008. Web. 17 Aug. 2013.

⁸² Megnezi, Aviel. "Will Assad-Erdogan Love Affair Last?" *Ynet*. Ynet News, 3 Apr. 2011. Web. 30 Aug. 2013. <<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4051380,00.html>>.

⁸³ Interview in Istanbul, 26 June 2013.

⁸⁴ Lesch, chapter 2.

“Syria is stable. Why? Because you have to be strongly linked to the beliefs of the people. This is the core issue.”⁸⁵ When Bashar al-Assad came to power in 2000, many in Syria and abroad hoped that he would live up to these words. The international press in 2000 expressed hope that the new president would lead Syria to achieve great things and rise above the violence of years of dictatorship under Hafez.⁸⁶ Much was made of Assad’s western, apolitical upbringing. After the death of his older brother Basil, Bashar was even called “The Hope” within Syria.⁸⁷ However, Bashar was quickly fast-tracked through the ranks of the Syrian security apparatus and ultimately given authority over Syrian operations in Lebanon in 1998, a field in which he would later distinguish himself for his ruthlessness. The entire Baathist regime bent over backwards and made a mockery of the “democratic” institution of the Syrian presidency to prepare for Bashar’s succession, going so far as to amend the Syrian constitution’s dictum that the president be at least 40 years of age. The minimum was changed to 34 years...Bashar al-Assad’s exact age.⁸⁸

Bashar al-Assad’s first significant act to squash his image as “The Hope” was the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005. According to Ajami, Hariri’s killing was undeniable proof to the Syrian people that “the regime had not changed, Bashar was his father’s son.”⁸⁹ On the international scene, Bashar played a geopolitical game for control of Lebanon every bit as brutal as Hafez, continuing to pick off prominent Lebanese figures who worked against Syria’s control of the country in the mid-2000s, including journalists Samir Kassir and Gebran Tueni.⁹⁰

Bashar’s economic policy also did not help to dissuade fears that he would be anything but benevolent and liberal. He undertook certain liberalizations to the Syrian economy, but these were

⁸⁵ Ajami, Fouad. *The Syrian Rebellion*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, Stanford University, 2012. Print. Chapter 5

⁸⁶ Lesch prologue.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, Chapter 1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

⁸⁹ Ajami chapter 4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

mostly to the benefit of his own inner circle and a cabal of Sunni business leaders whose loyalty had long since been bought by the regime.⁹¹ There were some audacious moves in the 2000s to invigorate Syria's truly tepid economic situation, but most were ineffectual. Syria's first private banks opened in 2004, with a total of 13 operating nationwide by 2010.⁹² Attempts were made to make the bureaucratic recruitment process more meritocratic, and some Baathist subsidies were gradually rolled back.⁹³ David Lesch, who spent many years in Syria and at one time knew Bashar al-Assad personally, notes the proliferation of civil society groups and organizations calling for reform during the early Bashar years, only for high-ranking members of the security services to go to Bashar and tell him off allowing such calls to gain momentum.⁹⁴ Ultimately, Lesch firmly discounts expectations of Bashar al-Assad's benevolence as misplaced. He points out that Assad spent only 18 months in London, and has a mindset defined by the Cold War, Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Lebanese Civil War.⁹⁵ Bashar should be viewed as an Assad; he is, after all, the son of Hafez, the man who killed over 15,000 Syrian civilians in Hama.⁹⁶

In March 2011, a group of kids from the town scrawled the now-famous chant "ash-sha'b yureed isqat an-nazam" ("the people want the downfall of the regime") on a wall in the town of Deraa, near the border with Jordan.⁹⁷ They were picked up by security forces from the military base outside of town, tortured, and returned several days later to their terrified families.⁹⁸ Protests sprang up in the city, which were beaten back with water cannons.⁹⁹ Assad, who was by all accounts

⁹¹ Lesch chapter 1

⁹² Ibid chapter 4.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid chapter 1.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid, prologue.

⁹⁷ Ajami chapter 5.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

genuinely startled and surprised by the uprising,¹⁰⁰ authorized greater use of force by the regime. Ten days of lethal confrontations between the regime and the protesters left 200 civilians dead, many from sniper fire.¹⁰¹ Ajami puts the kill-count by early May at 887, around half of which from Deraa.¹⁰²

During the early stages of the Syrian uprising, before it can truly be called a Syrian Civil War, the long *détente* between Turkey and Syria which had begun with the expulsion of Ocalan had not yet soured totally. Former Israeli ambassador to Turkey, Alon Liel, went so far as to claim: “Despite all the casualties, I don’t see Erdogan abandoning Assad, or calling him to resign.”¹⁰³ Even in May 2011, Erdogan and Assad had not totally severed ties. In February of 2011, Erdogan insisted that “there should be no problems between brothers,” referring to himself and Bashar al-Assad.¹⁰⁴ The *Zaman* quoted Erdogan insisting that president Assad was “a good friend of mine...However, he was late in taking these steps [towards reform]...”¹⁰⁵ Turkey spent the next few months in intense talks with the Syrian regime in an attempt to convince Assad to accept the cause of reform and end the violence.

However, the Turkish-Syrian relationship rapidly disintegrated in the face of continuing violence and encroachment on Turkish territory. Through until late September, Turkey worked to convince Assad to stop the violence and accept reforms, but to no avail. Erdogan’s patience began to visibly fray in June of 2011, when he called Maher al-Assad, Bashar al-Assad’s younger brother, “brutish and inhuman.”¹⁰⁶ The next month, sources reported that Turkey had sent a letter to Bashar

¹⁰⁰ Lesch chapter 3.

¹⁰¹ Ajami chapter 5.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Megnezi 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Ilgit, Asli. "The Many Roles of Turkey in the Syrian ." *Middle East Research and Information Project*. Middle East Research and Information Project, 28 Jan. 2013. Web. 07 Sept. 2013. <<http://www.merip.org/mero/mero012813>>.

¹⁰⁵ "Erdogan: Assad Is a Good Friend, but He Delayed Reform Efforts." *TODAY'S ZAMAN*. N.p., 12 May 2011. Web. 30 Aug. 2013.

¹⁰⁶ Lesch chapter 7.

al-Assad demanding he fire his strongman brother. The regime, of course, did no such thing.¹⁰⁷ As it became increasingly clear that no political settlement would be reached, Turkey moved towards a policy that expected, and frankly encouraged, regime change.

The intensification of the crisis, especially in northern Syria, and the deteriorating relations between Syria and Turkey as 2011 drew on led to the evolution of Turkey's role in the crisis, from that of back-door channel to Assad to sponsor of the opposition and protector of refugees. The first refugees crossed the border into Turkey in April, settling in Hatay province.¹⁰⁸ This prompted Foreign Minister Davutoglu to call an emergency cabinet meeting, which, upon its conclusion, announced Turkey's willingness to give refugees shelter if "they are not happy at their homes."¹⁰⁹

While refugees poured into Turkey fleeing mass killings of civilians in northern Syrian cities, Turkey gradually shifted its government policies to match its growing distaste for the Syrian regime. Over the summer of 2011, it became clear that not all of the Syrians on the Turkish side of the border were refugees fleeing the violence. Concurrently with the emergence of numerous Turkish NGOs giving themselves names such as "Change for Syria," the Turkish government began to allow armed rebels to take refuge within its borders. The most high-profile such group was the group of Syrian army defectors under the leadership of Riyad al-As'ad, a former Air Force colonel, which declared itself the new "Free Syrian Army."¹¹⁰ Even before the organization of the unified military opposition to Assad, Turkey had hosted the meeting that would prove to be the embryo of the internationally recognized political alternative to the Baath Party in Syria: the Syrian National Council. This meeting, held in Antalya and running from late May to early June 2011, kicked off proceedings by rejecting a rather ersatz-seeming amnesty deal and call for national dialogue by Assad

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ilgit 2013.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

himself, announcing themselves the legitimate representatives of the Syrian people and declaring the beginning of a process to bring about a “new, democratic Syria.”¹¹¹

The beginning of August saw a barrage of negative PR by Turkish president Abdullah Gul thrashing the Syrian regime and revealing the degree to which Turkey was losing patience with it’s “little brother.”¹¹² Erdogan declared on August 7th that the Syrian Crisis had become a “domestic issue” for Turkey because of the shared border between the two countries, informing the world that Turkey would not sit idly by and ignore the chaos in Syria if it threatened its critical national interests.¹¹³ Six hours of meetings on August 9th between Foreign Minister Davotoglu and Syrian officials, which included a two-hour conversation with President Assad, went nowhere, and a week later Davotoglu issued a public statement demanding an unconditional end to the government crackdown or “there would be nothing more to discuss.”¹¹⁴ Another statement issued a few days later read: “We do not want foreign intervention in Syria but we do not accept and will not accept any operations against civilians.” This was Turkey’s “final word” on the situation,¹¹⁵ and in a final round of statements accusing Assad of lying, butchering civilians, and failing to follow through on political promises, Erdogan revealed his government had broken all ties with Assad.¹¹⁶

The diplomatic rift between the Turkish and Syrian governments has been exacerbated by a number of cross-border incidents involving the militaries of both countries. The first such incident was the downing of a Turkish reconnaissance jet that allegedly penetrated Syrian airspace on 23 June 2012.¹¹⁷ While early indications suggested a possible escalation of tensions,¹¹⁸ Assad adamantly

¹¹¹ Lesch chapter 6.

¹¹² Lesch chapter 7.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Muir, Jim. "Syrian Military Says It Downed Turkish Fighter Jet." *BBC News*. BBC, 23 June 2012. Web. 08 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18561219>>.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

avoided bellicose rhetoric and expressed regret that the Turkish plane had been brought down.¹¹⁹ In October in the same year, Syrian artillery shells crossed the border and caused deaths in Turkey on a number of occasions. When a Syrian mortar killed five people in Akçakale, the Turkish parliament then passed a bill authorizing retaliatory military action against Syrian targets. Turkish artillery killed three Syrian soldiers in retaliation.¹²⁰ Turkey, like Assad earlier in 2012, made it clear that direct war with Syria was not their intention, Deputy Prime Minister Besir Atalay, quoted in Today's Zaman, remarked: "The bill is not for war, it has deterrent qualities."¹²¹ AKP spokesperson Huseyin Celik added, "This is not a resolution that licenses war. If you want security and peace, you must be ready for a fight at all times."¹²² The balance struck by Turkish rhetoric here bears mention. While making it quite clear that Turkey did not want open war with Syria, it also sent the message that Turkey was willing to take military action against the Syrian government should provocations continue. However, despite this bellicose rhetoric, there would be no meaningful Turkish military action inside Turkey, even though spillover of the Syrian conflict continued.

This spillover manifested itself most painfully on 11 May 2013, when two car bombs were set off in the market of the Turkish city of Rehanli, killing 53 people.¹²³ Turkish authorities immediately connected the attacks to Syrian intelligence, returning to bellicose rhetoric with Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinç promising to "do what is necessary" should the Assad regime be

¹¹⁹ Al Arabiya, Agencies. "Assad Regrets Downing of Turkish Jet, Says Won't Allow Open Combat with Ankara." *Al-Arabiya News*. Al-Arabiya, 03 July 2012. Web. 08 Oct. 2013. <<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/07/03/224145.html>>.

¹²⁰ "Erdoğan Says Another Syrian Mortar Has Fallen in Turkey, Can't Be Accident." *TODAYSZAMAN.com*. Today's Zaman, 04 Oct. 2012. Web. 08 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-294340-erdogan-says-another-syrian-mortar-falls-in-turkey-cant-be-accident.html>>.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Parker, Emre, and Nour Malas. "Turkey Strikes Syria, Adds War Powers." *The Wall Street Journal Online*. The Wall Street Journal, 5 Oct. 2012. Web. 12 Oct. 2013. <<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10000872396390443635404578035822373395226>>.

¹²³ "ISIL Threatens Erdoğan with Suicide Bombings in Ankara, İstanbul." *TODAY'S ZAMAN*. Today's Zaman, 30 Sept. 2013. Web. 31 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-327739-isil-threatens-erdogan-with-suicide-bombings-in-ankara-istanbul.html>>.

behind the attacks.¹²⁴ The day after the bombings, police arrested 9 Turkish nationals and charged them with carrying out the bombings at the behest of the Syrian Mukhabarat (secret police).¹²⁵ At time of writing, the Turkish daily *Hurriet Daily News* reports that the trials are ongoing, with a total of 33 suspects behind bars. Of those 33, 19 will be tried, with prosecutors pushing for aggravating life sentences for 14 of them. Two of the suspects are Syrian nationals. Fourteen of the suspects are being charged with “membership of a terrorist organization,” (exactly which organization is not specified).¹²⁶ According to Turkish news site *worldbulletin.net*, the Adana prosecutor’s indictment accuses the suspects of having collaborated with Syrian intelligence,¹²⁷ though such accusations have not been carried widely in recent Turkish media coverage of the trials, in sharp contrast to the immediate aftermath of the bombings when Turkish officials were leaping to blame Syria. Some sources indicate that the culprits behind the bombings were not, in fact, the Syrian government, but radical groups within the opposition. In particular, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant claimed responsibility for the bombings as part of a larger battery of threats hurled at the Turkish government for closing certain key border crossings between Turkey and Syria.¹²⁸ One contact in Turkey suggested the possibility that groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra sought to bring Turkey into direct conflict with the regime, though quickly added that the hypothesis of Syrian regime involvement was just as likely.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Dorell, Oren. "Turkey: 9 with Syrian Ties Arrested in Car Bombings." *USA TODAY*. USA Today, 12 May 2013. Web. 12 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/05/12/turkey-syria-car-bombings/2153245/>>.

¹²⁶ Anadolu Agency. "19 to Be Tried for the Reyhanlı Bombings." *www.hurriyetdailynews.com*. Hurriyet Daily News, 23 Oct. 2013. Web. 28 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/19-to-be-tried-for-the-reyhanli-bombings-.aspx?pageID=238>>.

¹²⁷ "Reyhanli bombing suspects may face aggravated life imprisonment." *Worldbulletin*. N.p., 23 Oct. 2013. Web. 28 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber>>

¹²⁸ "ISIL Threatens Erdoğan with Suicide Bombings in Ankara, İstanbul." *TODAYSZAMAN.com*. Today's Zaman, 30 Sept. 2013.

¹²⁹ Interview in Istanbul, 2 July 2013.

Whether or not anyone was trying to bring Turkey into direct involvement in the Syrian Civil War, the Reyhanli bombings served to decisively prove at least one thing: that the Turkish government, despite its heated tone, is totally unwilling to become internally entangled in Syria. As put by a Turkish university professor, the Erdogan government is suffering from a gap between rhetoric and capability.¹³⁰ For example, as late as August 30 2013, Erdogan was pushing for decisive intervention in Syria to stop the violence. “It must be like the one in Kosovo. It must not be an in-and-out intervention over one or two days, but aim at making the regime give up,” said the Prime minister, despite American insistence that any military action be of a limited nature to punish chemical weapons use rather than instigate regime change.¹³¹ However, only three days later on September 2nd Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc made a far more modest claim: “...If there were to be an invitation to Turkey to take a role, then we would have looked at the authority we have in hand, and could work around something within the limits of that authority. But...the United States will unilaterally decide to conduct such an operation.”¹³²

Contacts in Turkey articulated a number of causes for Turkey’s lack of capacity for a unilateral intervention. First, the military is apparently hesitant to become involved in cross-border operations. A Turkish university professor and retired military officer speaking with the author both related the military’s hesitation to take sides.¹³³ In addition, contacts in Turkey expressed a range of opinions on the degree to which recent trials and detentions of military officers had adversely affected the capabilities of the Turkish military. Far from the age in which the Turkish military took

¹³⁰ Interview in Istanbul, 27 June 2013.

¹³¹ Idiz, Semih. "Turkey's Middle East Policy Lies in Shambles." *Al-Monitor.com*. Al-Monitor, 3 Sept. 2013. Web. 28 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/turkish-middle-east-policy-shambles.html>>.

¹³² Daloglu, Tulin. "Is Turkey Backpedaling on Syria?" *Al-Monitor.com*. Al-Monitor, 3 Sept. 2013. Web. 31 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/09/turkey-changes-syria-policy.html>>.

¹³³ Interviews in Ankara, July 2013.

a lead on foreign policy, Turkey's Syrian policy was described by more than one contact as a failure of civilian strategic thinking with the military remaining largely passive.¹³⁴

As important as what the Reyhanli bombings reveal about the Turkish foreign policy establishment's stance towards Syria, is what it has revealed, or caused, with regards to public perceptions on Turkey's role in Syria. Jihad al-Zein, writing in Lebanon's *An-Nahar* and quoted by *Al-Monitor*, suggests that Reyhanli was what truly triggered public debate in Turkey over the Syrian Civil War.¹³⁵ The two Kemalist opposition parties, the CHP and much more hard-line MHP, have leapt upon the blasts as an opportunity to criticize the Erdogan government for its Syria policy. The MHP party leader Devlet Bahçeli issued the following statement shortly after the bombings: "The privileges granted to the Syrian opposition, and assistance provided and support given to them have prepared the ground for the conflagration on our neighbors' soil to spread to our borders. Prime Minister Erdogan's war narrative against Syria...and his threats against the Damascus administration have drawn our country into a dirty and bloody maelstrom."¹³⁶

As we have seen, Erdogan has long maintained that the Syrian Civil War is an issue of domestic security for Turkey, but only recently, since Reyhanli has it become a domestic political issue as well. Public demonstrations against Erdogan's policies in Syria first flared up immediately after the bombings, but were limited to border witnessing the effects of the neighboring conflict firsthand. The city of Antakya, the cultural and economic center of Hatay and home to many Arabic-speaking Turks, has become the focal point for demonstrations between Turkish Alawites

¹³⁴ Interviews in Turkey, June-July 2013.

¹³⁵ Al-Zein, Jihad. "Turkey Struggles With Syrian War." *Al-Monitor.com*. Al-Monitor, n.d. Web. 30 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/05/turkey-regional-policy-struggling-syria.html>>.

¹³⁶ Çandar, Cengiz. "Explosive Message on Turkey's Border." *Al-Monitor.com*. Al-Monitor, 12 May 2013. Web. 31 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/05/turkey-bombing-syria-reyhanli.html>>.

and Alevis supporting the regime and Syrian refugees who fled its violence.¹³⁷ With the explosion of protests at Taksim square, Turks critical of Erdogan turned in part to Syria to illustrate their grievances with AKP rule. Syria news aggregator *Syria Deeply* polled a small number of protesters at Gezi Park for their thoughts on Erdogan's Syria policy, and their responses were universally negative, though for varying, and sometimes contradictory, reasons.¹³⁸ One respondent described a "huge rage" since the bombings in Reyhanli, Demographically, Erdogan's most vocal opponents are Alevis, relatives of Syria's Alawites, who view the opposition as hijacked by extremists and the survival of the Assad regime as the lesser of two evils.¹³⁹

Arming the rebels is a point of particular contention for critics of Erdogan. Turks, especially Turks of a secular bent, want nothing to do with extremist groups and do not look kindly on a future Syria administered by said groups, yet Erdogan has tried to draw international attention away from the extremism of various Syrian armed groups, saying it was "more important to focus on the 'chaos' that al-Assad has created."¹⁴⁰ However, according to Semih Idiz, a foreign-policy commentator for Al-Monitor harshly critical of Erdogan's Syria policy, by turning a blind eye (at best) or supporting (at worst) extremist groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra or ISIL, and allowing them to seize the attention of the world, Turkey inadvertently guarantees that Western powers will refuse to fund and arm any Syrian opposition groups for fear that the weapons could end up in the wrong hands.¹⁴¹ Many Turks see the government's sheltering of the rebel groups as highly irresponsible.

Elizabeth O'Bagy, an analyst at the Institute for the Study of War, quoted in *Syria Deeply*: "Domestic

¹³⁷ Aazzi, Mazen, and Al-Hayat. "Antakya's Turkish and Arab Citizens Feel Impact of Syria War." *Al-Monitor.com*. Al-Monitor, n.d. Web. 31 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2013/07/antakya-turkey-syria-crisis-alawites-history.html>>.

¹³⁸ Tepper, Fabian. "What the Gezi Park Protesters Think of Erdogan's Syria Policy." *Syria Deeply: Syria News*. Syria Deeply, 15 July 2013. Web. 31 Oct. 2013. <<http://beta.syriadeeply.org/2013/06/gezi-park-protesters-erdogans-syria-policy/>>.

¹³⁹ Aazzi, Al-Hayat, "Antakya's Turkish and Arab Citizens Feel Impact of Syria War."

¹⁴⁰ Idiz, Semih. "Turkey's Syria Policy in Shambles Over Support for Jihadists." *Al-Monitor.com*. Al-Monitor, 23 July 2013. Web. 31 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/turkey-syria-policy-support-jihadists.html>>.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

instability in Turkey is partly because of [Turkey's] intervention inside of Syria. A lot of people in Turkey are angry that the Turkish government is allowing Syrians to use the Turkish border to take in weapons and supplies,"¹⁴² remarking further that Turks are angrier at the Turkish government than at the Syrian rebels themselves.

Erdogan's support for the Syrian rebels is predicated on the logic that the groups with the best track record on the battlefield are the groups most deserving of funding and support; however, the clearly religious bent of Turkey's favored groups and inelegant use of the word "Sunni"¹⁴³ has very much put Turkey, with or without Erdogan's permission, in the "Sunni" camp in an increasingly sectarianized conflict. However, not only is the broader middle east becoming sectarianized around the conflict, Turkey's internal politics are being split and polarized by the Syrian Civil War. According to Cengiz Çandar, Turkey's 15 million Alevis, while distinguishing themselves from Syrian Alawites, are united in "a spirit of solidarity against Sunnis as a common denominator."¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, this group, making up a fifth of Turkey's population, is a core part of the constituency of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Turkey's main opposition party. The wild accusations the CHP and AKP sling at each other, including of responsibility for the Reyhanli bombings, are, according to Çandar, yet another omen of how Sunni-Alevi conflict with its contagious features that can be exported from Syria to Turkey."¹⁴⁵

While it is very difficult to call Turkey's policy towards Syria a success, Erdogan and Davutoglu were certainly not unique in predicting an inevitable end to the Assad regime when the violence began. Erdogan almost certainly expected more western backing than he ultimately got. Regardless, Turkey's policy approaches towards Syria have achieved little aside from blowing "Zero-

¹⁴² Leigh, Karen. "Will Istanbul's Protests Shift Turkey's Syria Stance?" *Syria Deeply: Syria News*. Syria Deeply, n.d. Web. 31 Oct. 2013. <<http://beta.syriadeeply.org/2013/06/istanbuls-protests-shift-turkeys-syria-stance/>>.

¹⁴³ Interview in Istanbul, 27 June 2013

¹⁴⁴ Çandar, Cengiz. "Spillover Effects of Syria's Sectarian Conflict on Turkey." *Al-Monitor.com*. Al-Monitor, 16 May 2013. Web. 31 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/05/syria-turkey-spillover-sectarian.html>>.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

problems” out of the water, exposing its population to the dangers of the conflict next door, fracturing its already polarized political scene, and forfeiting its status as a non-sectarian player in the region. Turkey’s long process of rapprochement with Syria would have given them an enviable position had they remained a bystander to the conflict, but Erdogan squandered his personal channel to Assad when he broke ties completely, attempting to ride the waves of the Arab Spring to even greater Turkish popularity on the Arab Street. Now, two years on and over a hundred thousand dead, Turkey is starting to truly feel the pressure from the Syrian Civil War in its domestic politics.

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ZERO-MILITARY FOREIGN POLICY: TURKEY'S ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

By Mr. Roland Gillab, Tufts University

Introduction

At one time, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) had a unique role in shaping Turkey's place in the Middle East; however, for the past decade the civilian government has shifted them out of influence and power. In the past, the military was a dominant force in the Turkish political scene as a bastion of secularism, but due to the considerable political consolidation in recent years of the reformist and moderately Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP), the military has lost much of its power and influence over Turkish domestic and foreign affairs. This loss has been partially caused by the unprecedented removal of numerous senior military officials in coup trials. In addition, the focus of Turkish foreign relations has shifted from a focus on E.U. accession and the West to asserting influence over the Middle East, and Ahmet Davutoglu, the Turkish Foreign Minister, emphasizes Turkish interest in acting as a mediator in the region through zero-problems foreign policy, in which Turkey would better its relations with its neighbors. Due to recent events such as the Syrian Civil War, allegations of Islamist foreign policy, and the Israel flotilla incident, Turkey has discovered it cannot stay as neutral as it would like. Even before the rise of the AKP, the civilian government began to reduce the influence of the military in politics, and this new civil-military relationship combined with rising economic interests redefined the concept of Turkish national interest. The new national interest modified Turkish foreign policy, which has reduced the necessity for the military in policymaking and led to a foreign policy based on soft-power ambitions.

In order to conduct this research this team of researchers, comprised of students from Tufts University and cadets from West Point, the U.S. Naval Academy, and the U.S. Air Force Academy, visited both Istanbul and Ankara in the summer of 2013. For three weeks the team met with various government organizations, think tanks, and university professors such as Kadir Has

University, Hürriyet Daily News, the Center for Strategic Research at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and the Turkish Military and Naval Academies. The team also visited the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul and the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, where officials shared their expert views. In the short time we had in Turkey we were lucky to get a balanced range of views, as opinions on the present government varied widely between individuals interviewed and the organizations visited. Many of our contacts wished to remain anonymous, so I have honored their request, and these are for the most part their personal opinions and do not represent the larger views of the organizations they represent.

A Theoretical Perspective

In comparing the theory of civil-military relations to the actual relationship between the government and the military, too much involvement in each other's affairs has led to increased tension between both sides, while they both operate almost antithetically. Samuel P. Huntington's main point in his work on civil-military relations is what he calls "objective civilian control," in which the civilian leadership leaves the military to enhance its own professionalism without too much interference and keeps it separate from ideological changes in order to let it concentrate on maximizing its capability to fight and defend.¹⁴⁶ Most importantly, it becomes politically neutral because it is an autonomous body from the civilian government but will obey any legitimate civilian authority. Any interference has a negative impact on the military's ability to democratize since its very structure and identity is authoritarian, hierarchical, and "insists on discipline and obedience, subordinating personal needs and desire to the group" while democracies are supposed to be egalitarian, individualistic, and "[celebrate] disagreement and diversity of perspective."¹⁴⁷ Kohn also argues that the best measure of civilian control rests on "ideas, institutions, and behaviors that has

¹⁴⁶ Huntington 96-97

¹⁴⁷ Kohn

developed over time in democratic societies.”¹⁴⁸ In this case, the reduction of the NSC led to a new conception of civil-military relationship with the state, and the coup trials have emphasized the refocusing on civilian control by punishing the military that tries to fall out of line.

Background

The military used to be a very powerful force in government, and in the past the military orchestrated and conducted much of foreign affairs, but the government just before the AKP and continued by the current used reforms to diminish their influence. Ever since the rule of the Ottoman Empire, the military has protected and preserved the state by frequently interfering in politics, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk made this interventionist his legacy in what became known as Kemalism, the military guarded the secular base of the republic and modernize the country by supporting a liberal democracy at any cost.¹⁴⁹ The military maintained power through a series of coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997 and also through a body called the National Security Council (NSC) with which to influence Turkey politically. Although they always returned power to the civilian government after each coup, the military grew larger and became more willing to overthrow the government after each one, especially in response to perceived Islamism and Kurdish threats, which led them to gain a lot of influence in foreign and domestic policy.

Currently, the pendulum has swung the other way and the influence of the military in government has decreased since its function in foreign policy for the region is tied to its role in the government, which has diminished. Due to the AKP and its predecessor government’s emphasis on firmly establishing civilian control of the military, the party has used Turkey’s E.U. ambitions to secure civilian control of the military through reforms and coup trials that decimated the upper tiers of the military leadership. Internationally, both the U.S. and the E.U. have called for the military to move away from politics, so under the auspices of reforms the AKP took advantage of these E.U.

¹⁴⁸ Kohn

¹⁴⁹ Lim 10-11

membership criteria on the military as well as the military's comfort with democratic reforms that permitted the government to remove the military from influence.¹⁵⁰ Karen Kaya argues that these legal reforms changed the bureaucracy that gave the armed forces such power over policymaking, especially changing the power of the NSC by reducing the number of military officers in civilian positions.¹⁵¹ Previously, the chairman of the NSC had always been a military general, but in 2002 for the first time he was replaced with a civilian position, with now civilians outnumbering the military, setting the agenda, and meeting once every two months solely in an advisory capacity.¹⁵² Suddenly, the military no longer had any executive authority in government to control Turkey's foreign relations.

The military has already lost allies among the business elite since they felt they no longer needed the military to curb social unrest, while they also alienated small businesses, believing them to be financial backers of political Islam, and estranged entrepreneurs.¹⁵³ Not content with simply removing the military from power, the government targeted top military leaders using conspiracies of coups to systematically strip the military of all opposition to their rule. Huntington argues that objective civilian control is broken when the military gives up some of its professionalism to get power, which will result in the liberal ideology of civil society almost eliminating the armed forces when there is no external threat, or changing the military in accordance with its own values which will result in the loss of autonomy and capability when there are many external threats.¹⁵⁴ The first case is what we are seeing in Turkey with the reforms and coup trials. In 2007 the military tried a "virtual coup" threatening to overthrow the government, which led to a large backlash from the public and began the government's military reform process which resulted in denunciations by the

¹⁵⁰ Hürriyet Daily News Editor

¹⁵¹ Kaya 7

¹⁵² Mesut Özcan

¹⁵³ Uzgel

¹⁵⁴ Ibid

government and the arrest of numerous retired and active duty military officers in connection with other conspiracies to overthrow the government.¹⁵⁵

There have been several interpretations about the validity of these trials; Soli Özel commented that the coups, named “Ergenekon” and “Sledgehammer,” were revelations about “all the dirty things the Turkish military believed it had license to do.” While he believed there was evidence for actual abuses, he argued the cases against them had deteriorated in legitimacy and also highlighted an interesting view whereby the sections of the military that were more pro-West (those known as “Atlantacists”) were removing elements that argued for a new alignment with Iran and Russia (the “Eurasianists” camp).¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, academics more in line with the government such as Mensür Akgün claimed there was wide evidence of severe abuses of power and treasonous networks of Kemalists. These ideological conspiracies are believed to have infiltrated throughout the military, even leading right up to the former Chief of Defense in what believers termed the “Deep State.”¹⁵⁷ However, U.S. Embassy officials noted that there is a lot of distrust in Turkey for everyone with power. Whether or not it exists the Deep State has certainly been used as an excuse to remove the military.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, a retired Turkish officer argued that not only were many of the charges false, but even presented evidence co-written with the U.S. Department of State showing how some of the evidence was falsified after it was supposed to have been written.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, both serving generals and admirals as well as retired officers were arrested in response to Deep State accusations. By a U.S. Consular Official’s estimate 15-16% of Turkish flag officers are in jail, and in

¹⁵⁵ Kaya 7

¹⁵⁶ Soli Özel

¹⁵⁷ Mensür Akgün

¹⁵⁸ U.S. Embassy Officials

¹⁵⁹ Retired Turkish Armed Forces Officer

2011 the military high command resigned, further securing civilian control from possible coups and garnering its own power.¹⁶⁰

Turkish foreign policy, like most foreign policies, stayed on a relatively similar path in recent history. The current administration, however, has gone through a re-orientation under the current leadership of Davutoglu from Turkey's past foreign policy under the military, which was characterized by suspicion and isolation. As a default, it saw itself as standing alone, autonomous, able to act without relying on outside interference; this "Lone Wolf" philosophy meant that Turkey lacked many allies amongst its neighbors, distrusting them and believing itself surrounded by enemies.¹⁶¹ This outlook only encouraged Turkey's isolated and defensive policy, and it is partly due to a significant decrease in existential threats to the country, such as Greece, that this attitude has changed, which would then in turn change the definition of national security and lead to the new policy.¹⁶²

Although the military largely subscribed to the lone wolf belief, they were not averse to negotiating with Turkey's neighbors to keep them from supporting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (P.K.K.). The TAF cultivated good relations in Syria, Israel, Jordan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the Ukraine to deter them from supporting Kurds, although with regards to Syria they had to put pressure on them to drop their support of the Kurds. They also became closer to Israel and especially with the Israeli Defense Forces in order to deter Syria from having too much influence on the region. While the AKP does not really consider nuclear proliferation on its borders a risk, the Turkish military fears that a nuclear Iran would complicate relations with the U.S., Israel, and Europe, and any intervention by these allies would strain their ability to work with their neighbors. Also, Turkey could become a smuggling route for nuclear arms to Iran which would divert needed

¹⁶⁰ U.S. Consular Official

¹⁶¹ Soli Özel

¹⁶² U.S. Consular Official

resources from other threats such as the P.K.K.¹⁶³ The military holds that foreign policy is a matter of survival, which makes it a national security issue; therefore, they try to impede any newly elected government from tampering with foreign policy in sensitive areas. However, their recent loss of power has made a power vacuum that is currently filled by the civilian government and more specifically gives the AKP an excess of influence to solely define Turkey's relations with other countries and its place in the region without a credible opposition or neutral part of the government to counter it.

I. Redefining National Security

This inordinate amount of AKP control has caused a change in the definition of “national security” and “threat,” whereas previously the military’s control of foreign policy led to a more isolated, “Lone Wolf” approach, Turkey’s civilian-controlled policy towards national security focuses on stability through outward-looking economic prosperity and diplomacy. Richard Kohn writes, “The point of civilian control is to make security subordinate to the larger purposes of a nation, rather than the other way around. The purpose of the military is to defend society, not to define it.”¹⁶⁴ After a series of coups during which time the TAF defined an isolated approach in foreign relations, civilian control has led to a vision of an economically integrated Middle East. It also seeks to jointly mediate conflict with regional and international cooperation while looking for civilian solutions amenable to all parties rather than military solutions. The AKP government even believed it could somewhat unite the Middle East under Sunni leadership in each country, and in working towards common goals it would increase security. This new vision of national security is executed through the soft power means of diplomacy and economic hegemony, avoiding the use of the military at all.

¹⁶³ Kaya

¹⁶⁴ Kohn

The shift from a defensive strategy to a cooperative strategy is largely due to a decrease in existential threats. With the end of the Cold War, the Soviets and the Eastern bloc no longer bordered Turkey, so the preponderance of threat-oriented policy began to decrease. With Greece no longer a menace, those that remain lie in the Middle East with Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Northern Iraq has a very powerful Kurdish population who in the past has supported the P.K.K. Recently however, Turkey has had good relations with the Kurds and encourages trade and economic growth due to its oil pipelines.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, due to the new peace process with the Kurds, the P.K.K is ceasing to be a major issue in security discussions at all.¹⁶⁶ Since the military drew a lot of its legitimacy by combating insurgency both within the country and support from Turkey's neighbors, their influence has fallen with the P.K.K.'s withdrawal.¹⁶⁷ Although Iran is frequently an ideological threat due to its extreme Shia policies, Turkey does not view a nuclear Iran as a danger. Despite sanctions limiting trade, Turkey still imports natural gas from Iran.¹⁶⁸ Syria used to be Turkey's biggest threat in the Middle East both militarily and by sheltering and supporting Abdullah Öcalan, head of the P.K.K. However, previous to the recent civil war Erdogan began cultivating good relations with Assad with the result that Öcalan was handed over to Turkey. Currently, Syria's civil war provides a different type of threat, but the past good relations contributed to the new outlook.¹⁶⁹

The friendlier outlook excludes the need for military force, and indeed the very reduction of the military's involvement in the formulation of policy has changed the approach to national security. According to the U.S. Embassy in Ankara the military is no longer consulted on matters of

¹⁶⁵ Itler Turan

¹⁶⁶ International Crisis Group

¹⁶⁷ Gencer Özcan

¹⁶⁸ U.S. Embassy Officials

¹⁶⁹ Although state threats have diminished, terrorist groups, both from the Kurds and extremist Muslim groups remain, but they do not require the same need to see all neighbors as enemies, so it allows for the friendlier outlook on the region that would lead to zero-problems foreign policy and the view that Turkey's place in the region can be to unite the Middle East through economic and diplomatic means.

national security; instead that role has been taken over by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁷⁰ Mesur Özcan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed the military still has an important say but agreed that their role had decreased.¹⁷¹ Actually, it is not a surprise that such a decrease in the military, whose members are trained to analyze foreign relations from a threat-based point of view, would lead to a dramatic change in policy. Huntington writes that the military mind does not believe war can be abolished and approaches soft power methods of diplomacy and economic trade with skepticism.¹⁷²

In fact, there is an actual written definition of national security in Turkish policy; the National Security Policy Document (NSPD), also known as the “Red Book,” identifies threats in detail and is put together in cooperation with the NSC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the National Intelligence Organization. With the reorganization of the NSC, military control weakened over the contents of this document, and the “Red Book” of 2005 was, in fact, written mostly by civilians. It removed the threat of force in their diplomatic language, which implied a limit to military influence in foreign policy since zero-problems foreign policy made these concepts seem out of date. Also, as relations improved between Turkey and its neighbors, the military had to adjust its view. The new language of the “Red Book” highlights the loss of military influence in the definition of what constitutes Turkey’s security, as Turkey began to see its safety in the Middle East lying outside of hard-power security concerns. Indeed the bid to join the E.U. is also evidence of Turkey seeking safety through diplomatic and economic means rather than a strong military since Turkey would always want to be on the stronger side of any negotiation, and clearly they believed they were acting in their own best interests by attempting to join the European club of states instead of remaining alone.

¹⁷⁰ U.S. Embassy Officials

¹⁷¹ Mesut Özcan

¹⁷² Huntington

II. Soft Power – Zero-Neighbors Without Problems

Turkey now sees both its security and future power lie with soft power, which are reflected in its non-confrontational zero-problems diplomacy and economic hegemony. Mensür Akgün describes Turkey's foreign policy as based on conflict resolution, and indeed Davutoglu's core philosophy involves zero-problems policy, in which Turkey would seek to change its relationship with its neighbors (especially Greece, Cyprus, Armenia, Iran, and Syria) by acting as the peacemaker and mediator throughout the Middle East. It would also look to partner with the U.S. to combine global power with regional and historical influence.^{173,174} Davutoglu's zero-problems policy eschews the need for military actions, with Turkey acting not as the strongest nation by military power but intermediary. He defines his mediation through a theory of global governance, a policy that relies on mutual respect between different actors and is spurred on by international diplomacy, fostering economic interdependence, and moving towards a multicultural coexistence. His theory hinges on five principles: an inclusive understanding of the world that allows for multiple centers of power; a comprehensive approach incorporating a wide variety of ideas and regions in the solutions; attempting to deal with participants who truly represent their sides and not just single factions; proactive and preemptive attempts to deal with conflicts; and finally a future-oriented vision that while understanding the past moves beyond prejudices and tackles global issues as part of a "common history and destiny."¹⁷⁵ Idealistic goals, Turkey has only managed to maintain this balanced mediating policy in the Middle East in some cases.

In practice, Turkey's zero-problems foreign policy can best be exemplified by the case of the Iran nuclear swap deal, which although unsuccessful showcases many of Davutoglu's policies in action. As Iran moved forward with its nuclear enrichment program in 2010, Davutoglu, for whom

¹⁷³ Mensür Akgün

¹⁷⁴ Traub

¹⁷⁵ Davutoglu 5

a nuclear Iran was not a threat in the same way as it was to Israel and the U.S., tried to strike a deal over nuclear materials by swapping raw uranium with Brazil, who would then enrich and send it back for civilian nuclear power plants.¹⁷⁶ This is a classic example of Davutoglu's form of mediation, proactively jumping into the situation before the U.S. and Israel could take action to ease tension in the region and comprehensively include a disinterested center of power with great economic growth (not unlike Turkey itself). The deal envisions a civilian-led diplomatic trade that bears great similarity to an economic deal, another cornerstone of Turkey's soft power, and encourages negotiation over military action. Also, the deal showed Turkey's ability to overcome prejudice with Iran and normalize relations as they were traditional rivals since the 1500s and currently a rival to political dominance in the Middle East. In addition, they are the strongest Shia nation against Turkey's Sunni-led government. Unfortunately for Turkey, the U.S. was not enthralled with the idea of a swap and even less so with Turkey's interference, so preferring sanctions they declared they were not interested in the deal and there was no swap. The U.S.'s refusal sent a clear message to Turkey telling them to stay out of regional interference. In the U.S.'s view, it prefers that Turkey act as an important player and regional ally but worries that its desires do not always coincide with those of the U.S.¹⁷⁷ Just as the Turkish military feared, their negotiating with Iran showed Turkey will no longer unquestioningly follow the U.S.'s lead on that country.¹⁷⁸ The nuclear swap attempt highlights the emergence of a new order of foreign policy, driven entirely by diplomacy and trade, and which attempts to resolve tension affecting the whole region by bringing two parties together to solve the issue and avoid conflict. It also emphasizes the beginnings of a disconnect between what Turkey sees as its role in the Middle and what others, such as the U.S., would prefer to see.

¹⁷⁶ Traub

¹⁷⁷ Soli Özel

¹⁷⁸ Cagaptay *et al.*

One important element of zero-problems foreign policy was the good relationship between Turkey—a predominantly Muslim country with a moderately Islamic ruling party—and Israel. Turkey was, at one point, one of Israel’s few allies in the Middle East, and it allowed Israel certain privileges in their relationship while facilitating talks between different parties. However, better relations with Iran and the flotilla incident to Gaza in 2010 soured relations between them, and consequently relations with the U.S. declined as well.¹⁷⁹ Although relations were soured by the incident, Israel has now issued a formal apology and lifted its arms embargo. Contrary to the philosophy of zero-problems policy Turkey is continuing to disagree over compensation. Akgün argues, in fact, that Turkey was simply “not ready for normalization and intentionally delaying negotiations.”¹⁸⁰

Even before the flotilla incident Turkish relations with Israel were beginning to grow tense in 2008 when they facilitated negotiations in Istanbul between Israel and Syria over the Golan Heights. In an attempt to remove Iran’s influence on Syria, after six or seven rounds of talks in Istanbul they were close to a deal. At the same time they were encouraging President Abbas of the West Bank to negotiate with the Israeli Prime Minister Olmert. However, when U.N. forces decided to remain in the Golan Heights to keep the peace, the negotiations failed. Meanwhile President Abbas, on the advice of the Bush Administration, decided not to negotiate with Israel over Gaza in the hope that when Hamas attacked, Israel would remove Hamas entirely. Hamas started firing missiles and Israel attacked, but the ensuing conflict only led to a collapse of negotiations, not the removal of Hamas from power. Turkey’s prestige as a mediator had also failed, but instead of coming away diminished, they angrily criticized Israel’s aggression in Gaza. Tensions reached a head at the World Economic Forum in Davos where Erdogan furiously criticized President Shimon Peres of Israel and stormed out while Ban-Ki Moon of the U.N. and Amr Moussa of the Arab League

¹⁷⁹ Traub

¹⁸⁰ Mensür Akgün

looked on, inept.¹⁸¹ The tension between Israel and Turkey paid off, and Turkey's popularity increased enormously within the Middle East, especially due to the Secretary-General of the Arab League's lack of defense for Palestine. To many, it looked like Turkey was standing up for Arab rights better than the Arabs were. Sympathy increased enormously for Turkey, and the incident showed Turkey could challenge Arab exceptionalism and still be successful in the Middle East.¹⁸² Although Turkey managed to increase its reputation after the failure of negotiations, it was at the expense of the neutral zero-problems approach.

The issue of Israel represents some of the many limits to zero-problems, as there are a large number of voices within Turkey who clamor for a harsher stance against Israel. Many have described the frugidity with Israel a form of Islamism and cite it as part of a growing trend; however, Dr. Mesur Özcan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs says there is a tendency in the region to blame sectarianism for a number of policy choices.¹⁸³ Professor Mensür Akgün acknowledges that there are anti-Semitic elements within the AKP, but that Davutoglu is not an anti-Semite.¹⁸⁴ The Davos incident highlights the tension between Turkey's attempts to appear the neutral facilitator of negotiations with its aspiration to be a great leader of the Middle East. Turkey believes that through zero-problems diplomacy it will appear great, but they have inspired more appreciation by taking a side than they did by remaining impartial. The incident also highlights what has become a frequent upset to the balanced zero-problems diplomacy, Erdogan's erratic reactions. A journalist from Al-Monitor notes that Erdogan's highly emotional responses have had an impact on foreign policy, both with his sudden outburst in the meeting at Peres and with his response to Syria.¹⁸⁵ Unfortunately, while the mere fact of having good relations with Israel displays Davutoglu's

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¹⁸² Mensür Akgün

¹⁸³ Mesut Özcan

¹⁸⁴ Mensür Akgün

¹⁸⁵ Journalist from Al-Monitor

comprehensive attempt to fairly include all participants, Turkey has failed to move away from historical prejudices as it supports Arabs over appearing balanced. Although its respect within the Middle East has increased, trust for its role as mediator has diminished while its role as a regional ally to the U.S. has also come under threat, both in the cases of Iran and Israel.

Unfortunately, zero-problems foreign policy has several obstacles other than the relationship with Israel, most importantly its recent policy to Syria and allegations of Islamism. Before the Syrian crisis began, Erdogan spent a lot of time building stronger ties with Assad. When the protests began he offered democratic assistance, sent his Intelligence chief to Damascus, and even prepared a reform plan and invited the family to Turkey for safety but when it broke out into conflict, Erdogan felt betrayed and supported the opposition.¹⁸⁶ There are several different explanations for the numerous factors that led to the breakdown of relations between Turkey and Syria. Soli Özel argues that Turkey misjudged the situation, believing the opposition could easily overpower Assad's forces with the help of the U.S., as in Libya. Özel and a journalist from Hürriyet both posited that the AKP, seeing the rise of a democratic Sunni Islamic movement in Egypt, Syria, and the rest of the Arab Spring, assumed Syria's would be successful so calling themselves Turkey's version of a Muslim Brotherhood, they believed they could build a single Sunni entity in the Middle East with Turkey at the center.¹⁸⁷ Instead they got disaster; Andrew Finkel points out that with regards to Turkey's condemnations of dictators during the rest of the Arab Spring, they "arrived late with Gaddafi, right on time with Mubarak, and too early with Assad."¹⁸⁸ Another interpretation from Soli Özel worries that as Turkey supported the increasingly extremist Sunni opposition in Syria, they were displaying a sectarian policy in the Middle East.¹⁸⁹ Whether or not it is an Islamist policy, it certainly appeared so to a number of people, which damaged Turkey's ability to remain neutral and

¹⁸⁶ Mensür Akgün

¹⁸⁷ Hürriyet Daily News Editor

¹⁸⁸ Andrew Finkel

¹⁸⁹ Soli Özel

legitimately continue mediation efforts in the Middle East. One journalist from Al-Monitor claimed that the prime minister had wanted to shift away from Israel and his Syria policy allowed him that opportunity. In any case, the reaction to Syria derailed zero-problems policy and Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East suffered, especially by straining ties with Hezbollah, Russia, and the U.S. due to their support for several terrorist groups that are believed to be included in the Syrian opposition. With regards to Russia, Davutoglu has held several talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov trying to control the damage, while with the U.S. they have learned they cannot intervene without support.^{190,191} Of course, the switch to a more sectarian line of policy has also done incredible damage to all ability to negotiate impartially, and the core values of inclusion of all parties and a lack of prejudice were thrown to the wind with Erdogan's support of only the Sunni rebels, which include tolerating some extremist groups. Turkey's misjudged response in Syria was counter to all its ambitions of being the mediator and unifier in the Middle East, instead picking a side that had consequences for its relations with all its other neighbors as they were each drawn into the conflict.

Allegations of Islamism with Syria are only part of wider accusations of a whole trend of policy across all of the Middle East. The result has been, as one retired military officer puts it, that the zero-problems with neighbors policy has resulted in "zero-neighbors without problems."¹⁹² Soner Cagaptay defines Turkey's form of foreign policy as Islamism, which espouses the view that Muslims are always in conflict with the West, and therefore Turkey will consistently favor Islamists over other Muslims.¹⁹³ Unsurprisingly this has caused certain problems with Israel, especially with the flotilla but also the intransigence at reaching a rapprochement. Internal politics play an important role since the AKP is supported by the more conservative Sunni part of the populace,

¹⁹⁰ Mensür Akgün

¹⁹¹ Hürriyet Daily News Editor

¹⁹² Retired Turkish Armed Forces Officer

¹⁹³ Cagaptay, *et al.*

while Erdogan has denigrated Alevis (a form of Shi'a Alawites in Turkey) more than is appropriate.¹⁹⁴ Iraq has become particularly tricky as the president, Maliki, is a Shi'ite while the country is split along Kurdish, Sunni, and Shi'a lines. The Turkish government has sided with the Sunnis against Maliki, who is backed by Iran.¹⁹⁵ As mentioned before, Turkey supported all the Sunni oppositions during the Arab Spring, especially in Egypt, believing they would create a united Sunni region. Turkey's furious reaction to the Egyptian military coup is evidence of desperation at the loss of yet another Sunni ally (as well as flashbacks of interference from their own military). Cagaptay argues that Turkey favors more extremist elements such as Hamas in Palestine or the Sudanese government over more peaceful, secular governments like the Palestinian Authority.¹⁹⁶

However, several sources have refuted the insistence on a Sunni policy and claim this takes the criticism too far. Mesur Özcan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs points out that what may look in hindsight like a series of deliberate attempts to support one side actually came about due to specific factors in each area. Özcan provides that relations with Iran are pretty good despite it being a Shi'a nation, while others within Iraq blame Maliki, not just Turkey.¹⁹⁷ In addition, a U.S. Consular official agreed that he would not classify the foreign policy at large as Sunni, though he acknowledged there are certainly definite biases.¹⁹⁸ If zero-problems policy is a more peaceful, diplomatic consequence of the reduction of military influence in foreign policy, then the Islamist policy is a negative side-effect of civilian government without any checks on their own power.

Besides Syrian policy and Islamist tendencies, Turkey's biases are caused by its relationship with the U.S., as well as its dependence on certain countries for energy. Turkey has historically maintained a strong relationship with the U.S. throughout the Cold War and afterwards with

¹⁹⁴ U.S. Embassy Officials

¹⁹⁵ U.S. Embassy Officials

¹⁹⁶ Cagaptay, *et al.*

¹⁹⁷ Mesut Özcan

¹⁹⁸ U.S. Consular Official

NATO, and Turkey is especially important to the American government because they bring access to the region for negotiation.¹⁹⁹ However, despite their neutrality they have trouble making firm allies within the region. Also, Turkey is finding it hard to support the Syrian opposition because it is dependent on Iran and Russia for oil and gas, which emphasizes a gap between their ambitions, their desires, and their actual capacities.²⁰⁰ Any of these biases add to the challenge of Turkey mediating in an impartial way without prejudice or to work towards common goals. In addition, due to the current government's emphasis on keeping the military out of anything to do with politics, they are unlikely to favor a solution that calls for military action.²⁰¹

In order to overcome several of the weaknesses, Mensür Akgün points out that zero-problems policy is a principle, not always a practice.²⁰² Turkey must also recognize that when it comes to making decisions on Syria, they are secondary to the U.S. and Russia. Turkey's entire strategy has been security through soft power means, so attempting to favor one side in an armed conflict without including the military seems contradictory. Far from being neutral they have already chosen a side, making them biased.²⁰³ One journalist from Al-Monitor argued that if Turkey wants a more active voice in discussions it must devolve itself from a side and return to just helping sides communicate.²⁰⁴ Several people suggested that with a different government zero-problems foreign policy might have been more effective, especially since the AKP are too prone to biases in the case of Islamism. Erdogan, moreover, is not a forgiving man in the manner that zero-problems requires.²⁰⁵ Contrarily, many countries where Turkey still mediates, especially Afghanistan and Somalia, prefer having a democratic, moderately Islamic nation like Turkey mediate than an outsider like the U.S.

¹⁹⁹ U.S. Embassy Officials

²⁰⁰ Soli Özel

²⁰¹ U.S. Embassy Officials

²⁰² Mensür Akgün

²⁰³ Hürriyet Daily News Editor

²⁰⁴ Journalist from Al-Monitor

²⁰⁵ Hürriyet Daily News Editor

In any case, despite its previous mishaps Turkey still plays a mediating role in the wider region, most notably with Afghanistan and Pakistan, Sudan and South Sudan, ethnic groups in Iraq, and in Somali lands. In Afghanistan, even with the appreciation of Muslim Turkey in the armed forces intervention, Turkey did not want to contribute much on the military end and instead focused on civilian-based approaches to improve socio-economic growth in regions occupied by the Taliban and spreading humanitarian aid. Believing an unstable Afghanistan would have negative consequences for the entire region, Turkey “mainly eschewed power politics and relied heavily on soft power instruments.”²⁰⁶ It founded the Istanbul Process to mediate in which neighboring countries agreed to take part in confidence-building measures for increased cooperation on building stability and increasing jobs and diplomacy. Displaying a typical attempt to comprehensively include all regional participants, Turkey brought together Afghans and Pakistanis to negotiate, hoping that including Pakistan would stop its isolation and give it a stake in stabilizing Afghanistan. It emphasized the need to give Afghans ownership of the process and tried to include everyone from Karzai to the Taliban in talks. Meanwhile it united the business sector within Istanbul to push for greater infrastructure and business. This negotiating process is an excellent example of current zero-problems diplomacy that is still effective despite their poor diplomatic approach in Syria, but Şaban Kardaş of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notes that the main challenge is getting both sides to believe they can reconcile and improving Afghan institutions and economic structures.²⁰⁷ In addition, despite the numerous conferences it is hard to make a meaningful impact in the same way that a single country on the ground such as the U.S. or Pakistan does. The involvement of Pakistan invariably led to problems with India, who felt they ought to be included.²⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Turkey’s

²⁰⁶ Şaban Kardaş 18

²⁰⁷ Şaban Kardaş

²⁰⁸ Weitz

work in Afghanistan shows that despite the issues of Islamism, zero-problems foreign policy can still be used effectively, and Turkey has not lost its place as mediator in the Middle East.

In other ongoing negotiations, countries came to Turkey and asked them to facilitate talks between opposing parties. This was the case with Sudan and South Sudan, who requested Turkish help in negotiating disputes between both sides, especially due to Turkey's ability to encourage economic development.²⁰⁹ In April of 2013 Davutoglu met with South Sudanese negotiators who pushed for bilateral talks with Sudan facilitated by Turkey.²¹⁰ After its secession from Sudan, South Sudan has had slow economic growth since it needs pipelines to carry oil across the border to Sudan, which has been mired with disputes. South Sudan looked to Turkey to help industrialize the country and, as an outsider with the potential to benefit both countries, it could help both sides reach an amicable resolution. Again, Turkey emphasizes its soft power capability, in this case notably its economic and industrial skills combined with diplomacy. It is also unique in that the majority of South Sudan is Christian while Sudan is mostly Muslim, and the approach to Turkey from South Sudan suggests that allegations of Islamism have not deterred and do not entirely factor into their ability to mediate.²¹¹

In a similar way, Turkey has been working to negotiate between the Kurds in Northern Iraq and Maliki, an interesting prospect due to Turkey's history of enmity with Kurds and a sign of changing relations, perhaps even a normalizing of relations. Again, Turkey's strong oil and natural gas trade ties with Northern Iraq play a large part in their ability to negotiate.²¹² In April, Turkey held talks between Somalia and Somaliland to bridge the gap between the two and work towards unity, and together they produced the Ankara Accord.²¹³ Similar to many of the other countries it

²⁰⁹ Donat

²¹⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs

²¹¹ Donat

²¹² Tastekin

²¹³ Cengiz

negotiates with, Turkey gives a lot of aid to Somalia and works on infrastructure, reconstruction, and stability within various countries. In addition, since Turkey is a Muslim country that lacks a colonial history in Africa, it has certain advantages in negotiating without looking like conquerors.²¹⁴ All of these examples of current negotiation point to certain trends, namely the correlation between Turkey's economic success and its ability as a mediator. Not only is its soft power prized by other countries, it has been successful in working out short-term agreements, though longer-term successes may be out of Turkey's control. It is also significant that two of Turkey's current mediation projects lie outside the Middle East, so they were not as affected by the biases Turkey previously displayed within the region. Turkey's diplomatic success is further evidence of a continuing role as a mediator both within the region and on the international stage, as well as the success of its soft power, which after previous failings of diplomacy combines both that and economic reach to further attain its goals.

III. Soft Power – The Trading State

Turkey's economic growth has expanded enormously in the past decade, as has its reach within the Middle East; in fact, where once Turkey craved a political hegemony around the former Ottoman Empire, it has been replaced with an economic hegemony that has stayed strong despite its political blunders or successes. Since Turgut Özal laid the foundations for a growing economy in Turkey, the rapid growth has led to a rediscovery of the Middle East as a market, which in turn has led to a reorientation from a Western focus.²¹⁵ The military's frequent interventions in the political sphere, while frequently destabilizing the country, did at least prevent too much political intervention in business, which permitted them to operate more freely and ignore labor demands.²¹⁶ In the 1990s, economic factors came to prominence in policymaking as big businesses and their

²¹⁴ Kagwanja

²¹⁵ Cagaptay, *et al.*

²¹⁶ Itler Turan

organizations such as the Turkish Businessmen's and Industrialists' Association (TUSIAD) and the Turkish Union of Chambers and Bursaries (TOBB) lobbied for their interests politically. In the Middle-East, Davutoglu created a visa-free zone for Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria and is moving towards free trade amongst them, furthering his vision of a united Middle East with Turkey at the center.²¹⁷ At the same time, Turkey exported another type of soft power besides diplomacy and economy; namely its soap operas. According to Mensür Akgün it too helped break down the divide between Arab nationalism and Turkish nationalism.²¹⁸

As noted with Afghanistan, Sudan and South Sudan, and Somalia, Turkey was continually asked to mediate and intervene due to its economic prowess. Despite its mishaps with Syria, its successful economy underpins and stabilizes Turkey's role as a mediator and vision for a united Middle East. By 2008, Turkey had a political economy and according to Nihat Ali Özcan, it was using its businessmen as actors in foreign policy.²¹⁹ Where once the military were the primary agents of Turkish foreign policy, businessmen now play the same role in foreign policy as soft power. In fact Soli Özel commented that you can measure the reach of Turkey's economy by the number of locations to which Turkish Airlines flies because they carry Turkish businessmen all over the world, and recently a large number to Africa.

With the erratic stability of zero-problems policy, why is it that Turkish economic relations with other countries do not suffer? According to a U.S. Embassy official, Turkey keeps a "firewall between the economic and political side" of its foreign policy.²²⁰ While the businessmen spread Turkey's diplomatic ends, they do not let the decisions of the government affect the steady flow of goods. While politically countries may lose good relations, the economic side has remained unchanging and pretty strong. A U.S. Consular official terms it a mercantilist economy, exporting

²¹⁷ Traub

²¹⁸ Mensür Akgün

²¹⁹ Nihat Ali Özcan

²²⁰ U.S. Embassy Officials

Turkish goods, or what Mesur Özcan terms a “trading state.”^{221,222} In some ways, the economic policy has not only supported foreign policy but also driven it, since Turkey constantly needs new markets to export their manufactured goods, which according to Itler Turan reach \$150 billion worth. Turkey also has a growing energy trade with Northern Iraq, which has also yielded improved political relations with the Kurds, and new markets in Africa with development programs in Somalia and aid and embassies all across the continent. Israel has “small but critical trade links” with Turkey according to a U.S. Embassy official, and even with the flotilla incident trade volumes stayed the same, which is evidence of the success of this firewall.²²³ Economic policies have been hampered by the political decisions in Syria, which used to be a major export route to the Gulf and will now require more expensive ways.²²⁴ It also complicated trade with Iran, who supports Assad while Turkey supports the rebels. Although politically they continue to talk, due to sanctions trade with Iran in natural gas has slowed.²²⁵ Economics can also complicate political decisions, as in Libya where Turkey had invested \$25 million in construction and automotive industries with 22,000 workers who all had to be evacuated during the conflict, and therefore Turkey was a little “late” in condemning Gaddafi because of their profitable trade links.²²⁶ As displayed in its relations with numerous countries, Turkey’s questions of economic prosperity frequently go hand-in-hand with security concerns. To that end zero-problems was a foreign policy designed to normalize conditions to improve trade relations. However, when the politics turned sour the economic relations could always surmount the obstacles. Turkey now sees that its security lies with securing its economic prosperity, while this prosperity will provide a greater role for Turkey in the Middle East by encouraging integration and emerge as a regional power with the strongest economy.

²²¹ U.S. Consular Official

²²² Mesut Özcan

²²³ U.S. Embassy Officials

²²⁴ Itler Turan

²²⁵ U.S. Embassy Officials

²²⁶ Itler Turan

As Turkey has grown in power and influence, many experts have cited a growing hegemonic trend in the Middle East, frequently referred to as Neo-Ottomanism. Malik Mufti writes that Turkey is seeking to become a “small America” in terms of national greatness and its growing stance as regional hegemon over the Middle East by exerting both hard and soft power. In the past it tried to appear apart from the Middle East, but it is now seeking to “*shape* Turkey’s geopolitical environment rather than simply react to it.”²²⁷ He examines the increasing Islamism of the AKP and questions whether it is Neo-Ottomanism, a practical, *realpolitik* form of hegemony that seeks to refashion old Ottoman power, or ideologically-based change.²²⁸ Certainly Turkey’s rise has challenged Arab exceptionalism, while they have also confronted anti-Islam sentiments in Europe and earned respect throughout the Middle East. The mistake is to assume that this respect translates into a wish to be lead by or become Turkey. According to a U.S. Consular official, no Arabs want the Turkish model (and they are certainly not interested in Ottomanism), although they are admired for having a successful combination of democracy, religion, and a burgeoning economy in a region that lack such success.²²⁹ However, Turkey viewed the Arab Spring as a pan-Sunni movement and maneuvered itself to lead, so they therefore believed they had that ability, at least in terms of a combination of hard and soft power. Without including the military in any discussions and a focus on soft power capabilities, as stated before Soli Özel notes a gap between such ambitions and actual capacities.²³⁰ At its best Turkey’s place in the Middle East will not be as regional hegemon, at least not politically, but with all its economic expansion it could well play many leading roles, especially since its economy has allowed it so much range in mediation. In addition, its close ties with the U.S. give it a unique place as an ally with special access to the rest of the region, different from Israel. There is still a possibility that the economic hegemony could become a form of regional hegemony, but

²²⁷ Mufti 2

²²⁸ Mufti

²²⁹ U.S. Consular Official

²³⁰ Soli Özel

without the hard power component like America, it is at least a more gradual process. The combination of zero-problems foreign policy with economic prosperity has changed Turkey's role from standing alone and isolated to participating with its neighboring countries and emerging as a leading player in the region.

Conclusion

Turkish foreign policy in its current form has nationalist and hegemonic ambitions, but instead of seeking to empower its military and encourage the use of military in the conduct of foreign affairs, it instead pursues economic integration and a philosophy of zero-problems with its neighbors to exclude the need for military force. Turkey now sees its safety lying outside of hardline security concerns, while looking instead for an economically and politically integrated Middle East, with itself both as the leading economy and a powerful mediator. Through soft power means it uses zero-problems foreign policy to normalize relations with other countries and resolve conflicts through civilian means, while also encouraging its own economic prosperity by finding new markets for its goods as a trading state. This soft power has allowed it a greater role on the international stage with mediation efforts that combine Brazil with the Middle East and places in Africa. The power vacuum left by the military, however, has led to some important missteps by the AKP-controlled civilian government, which has filled that vacuum. Turkey's response to Syria and its increasingly biased responses to events in the Middle East have lost it credibility and legitimacy to carry out its soft power aims. It has also recognized that it is hard to appear a great leader in the region while still remaining neutral, as is the case with its relationship with Israel, and it will continue to balance these two aspirations. Thanks to its economic policy, it can still pick up the pieces of its political mess and continue to mediate and open new markets. However, its concentration on soft power aims without addressing its hard-power capabilities leaves a gap between its ambitions and capacity, so it remains to be seen how it will attempt to combine these capabilities to further its role

in the region. Finally, Omer Taspinar describes Turkish foreign policy as “nationalis[t] and self-interest[ed], both increasingly impelled by a perception that Turkey’s interests are not necessarily aligned with Western interests.”²³¹ If Turkish nationalism lies at the heart of its foreign policy, and that policy is changing, then Turkish nationalism itself is changing. Perhaps this change will have a greater effect on Turkey’s relations with other countries and the role it plays in the Middle East.

²³¹ Cagaptay, *et al.*

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TERRORIST FINANCE IN TURKEY AND THE REGION

By Midshipman Drew Calcagno, United States Naval Academy

Terror regimes, such as the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), utilize drug trafficking as a major source of revenue. If there are efforts to undermine the drug trade, such terror regimes' ability to act will be likewise undermined. There has been a responsibility shift from military to civilian government in counter-narcotics (CN) efforts. An example of this phenomenon is the increasing influence of financial intelligence efforts by the Turkish Ministry of Finance and the interdiction operations by the gendarme (rural state police of sorts) as of late. Drug trafficking through Turkey hinders the nation's economic development. Drug trafficking may not be stopped, but if shown to be harmful to the Turkish economy, could be harnessed and utilized for the nation's development in terms of public health as well as economic growth. This may involve legalization of production, trafficking, or consumption, or perhaps a combination of the three.

Turkish FININT has established that the PKK conducts terrorist operations against the Turkish state. The PKK has well-established drug trading routes from Afghanistan to Europe with Turkey as the highway. There is exponential price growth of value-addition. The UNDOC data suggests that value-addition is largely along these routes of bribery and security provided mainly by the PKK. Military interdictions used to be the norm to slow trafficking but now there has been a decline of military power and presence. In this decline, civilian responsibility for previous military-oriented missions has increased. This civilian responsibility is a theme for the nation at large. The Ministry of Finance has picked up the slack in the FININT effort for CN and CT. The FATF has been an international effort, of which Turkey has been a part for over two decades. Whether mere correlation or potential causation, the PKK has steadily retreated from Turkey into Northern Iraq and Syria. Thus, there has been a reasonable FININT success in discovering trade routes, shutting

down sources of money-laundering, and enabling local policing efforts with the rural gendarme. Rather than pure direct action (DA) or military intervention, CN through FININT is the future of civilian Turkish government.

Is legalization in any form totally off the political table? Proponents say that legalization will drive the price down in already-saturated markets and crowd-out traffickers. Critics say that there are no panaceas. Even if traffickers are forced out of the drug business, they will turn to other illicit trades, implying that such a shift is worse than the status quo. But is it?

The first premise of the pro-legalization argument is that the drug market is already saturated. Short of strolling into a Walmart, consumers can purchase illegal drugs easily due to a widely proliferated black market. This may be a considerably lengthy leap. Nevertheless, the Columbia Journal of International Affairs suggests that such market saturation is actually the case.

Thus, one may consume without tremendous *de facto* barriers. There are examples of legal use facilitated by a government in both the United Kingdom and Portugal.²³² With legal use in clinics in hopes of eventual detoxification, there are already programs that have looked at pragmatic approaches to bettering public health amidst drug risk.

What if these *de jure* consumptions became more accessible? What if any drug was free as long as detoxification was part of the deal in a regulated clinic? The critic may argue that drug use hinders the logical capabilities of those involved. Perhaps one cannot agree to such a deal when afflicted with a drug addiction. Therefore, the long-term goal of detoxification with free and *de jure* use as the means is undermined and perhaps not worth the cost. But what if those people would feed their addictions outside of such a deal, regardless? What if more money than the clinics would need is already being spent on counter-narcotics (CN) or in general, counter-drugs policies and

²³² Anonymous US Government Official, The DEA, Turkish Counter-Narcotic Efforts, and Special Operations, In-person, July 5, 2013.

programs that are barely efficient? Perhaps these *de jure* clinics would be better examples of tax-dollar stewardship. There is no road devoid of dirt on the way to living clean. Is there is an economic incentivization option that would entail *de jure* vertical integration for the sake of reducing intermediate costs?

The goal of this analysis is to illuminate the multilateral nature of counterinsurgency with an economic lens. Terrorism lies beneath the umbrella of insurgency and given that the US Government wishes to eliminate terrorism for the sake of a safer world, one ought to utilize economic and legislative warfare as an ethical and efficient means. I will logically progress from what terrorism is and how it may be thwarted. In order not to get lost in a sea of counterinsurgency issues, the ultimate question is to determine the efficacy of counternarcotic operations in Turkey, particularly the potential of legalization legislation that would place financial strain on terrorist regimes.

When I began thinking about terrorism, I realized that terrorism is an intermediary in a complete understanding of conflict and its finance. Counterinsurgency scholar David Kilcullen makes it clear that it's insurgency that we're worried about. "When the...US...declared a global War on Terrorism...some viewed the whole notion as logically flawed."²³³ Dr. Kilcullen continues to explain the flaw through the words of another scholar. "Francis Fukuyama commented that 'terrorism is only a means to an end; in this regard, a war on terrorism makes no more sense than a war on submarines'. Such views are irrelevant in a policy sense: the term 'War on Terrorism' was chosen on political, not analytical grounds."²³⁴ Thus, it is imperative to work on the insurgency problem analytically from now on.²³⁵

²³³ David J. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (2005): 597, doi:10.1080/01402390500300956.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ John A. Nagl, Is Afghanistan waning in importance for the US?, In-person, March 21, 2013.

It is vital that we observe the intersection between terrorism and drug trafficking accurately. “The nature of the relationship between terrorists and drug traffickers is most often viewed, erroneously, as a strategic alliance instead of the more common marriages of convenience or even antagonism that characterizes such ties.”²³⁶ Giraldo continues to explain an example of such interaction; “one of the most publicized is the levying of taxes on growers or traffickers of drugs in areas that guerillas control, as has occurred in Columbia with the FARC and in Peru with Sendero Luminoso.”²³⁷ Despite assumptions that terrorist regimes are in strategic alliance with traffickers, Giraldo encourages us to realize that these ties can be broken. Money talks, particularly with the Kurds.

The objective is to eliminate the terrorist act. Ideally, counterinsurgency forces could eliminate the desire to commit the act. As of now, I do not believe that changing the hearts and minds of an extremist people is feasible. Thus, counterinsurgency forces must succumb to eliminating the ability to commit the act. This effort appears to have two options of varying degrees. First, eliminate the means by which the terrorist acts, either through matériel or funds. Manipulation of funds can be considered economic warfare. The more severe option is to eliminate the terrorist’s life through direct action – SOF or drone target elimination, or killing the terrorists to be explicit.

As a result, how may we exploit these ties in a confusing balance of government, military, civilian, and criminal interaction? I propose that the most effectual way is through economic pressure. This economic pressure can be multifarious. Perhaps the most poignant option is drug legalization.²³⁸ Turkey is a trafficking rather than a sourcing nation. The US is, too. American

²³⁶ Harold Trinkunas and Jeanne Giraldo, eds., *Terrorism Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective*, 1st ed. 26-27. (Stanford University Press, 2007).

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Anonymous LT, USN, Where to look next on the drug issue?, Phone, March 25, 2013.

politics may dictate legalization a pie in the sky. But does that recalcitrance hold in Turkey? If it could work there, could it eventually work here? What could that mean for reduction in civilian violence and military interdictions?

Per Kilcullen's *Countering Global Insurgency*, insurgency is a "popular movement that seeks to overthrow the status quo through subversion, political activity, insurrection, armed conflict and terrorism." From the same source, terrorism is "politically motivated violence against non-combatants with the intention to coerce through fear...[which is] in the tactical repertoire of virtually every insurgency." Logically, one should understand the progression towards financial intelligence and financial operations. First, ought Terrorism to be practiced? No. The targeting of innocents, amongst other blatant violations of human life's sanctity makes it difficult to call the terrorist a just man. Ought an action to be thwarted if it should not be practiced? Yes. Terrorism ought not to be practiced. Therefore terrorism ought to be thwarted. This paradigm could give rise to the reversal problem. Perhaps the Turkish way of life ought not to be practiced through the Kurdish extremist lens. The Turkish way of life ought to be thwarted and the methods of thwarting include terrorism as I have defined. However, as a member of the United States Military, I have made the existential choice of which camp to join: a Turkish allied nation. Thus, I will proceed as the extremists fulfilling the role of terrorists and put the reversal problem to rest. Can terrorism be thwarted? Yes. One may eliminate the terrorist act in a number of ways. Perhaps eliminate the desire to commit the act. But is the hearts and minds campaign feasible. Can one eliminate the ability to commit the act? We may eliminate the means by which the terrorist acts, in terms of materiel and funds, known as economic warfare. The other option is to eliminate the terrorist's life through direct action. So, what are our intelligence and economic warfare resources?

Figure 1.
Per Dr. David Asher, *Center for a New American Security*²³⁹



The essential change of military interdiction towards civilian responsibility is a shift indicative of the entire nation's walk away from the military. For the past few decades, there were extensive military operations to conduct CN. Now, with Erdogan's policy decisions leading to more civilian government ministries, particularly the Ministry of Finance, one may observe that there is a relatively new, calculated approach to CN. This push is implicitly academic. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is another example of financial intelligence in Turkey's scheme towards

²³⁹ Dr. David Asher, "Financial Hardball: Corraling Terrorists and Proliferators" (presented at the Committee on Foreign Affairs; Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, Washington, DC, April 6, 2011).

combatting terrorism in the economic realm. Turkey has been a member of the FATF since 1991, “to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering...In October 2001, the FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing, in addition to money laundering.”²⁴⁰ The FATF mission explains, “initially the focus of combatting the finance of terrorism (CFT) efforts was on non-profit organizations, unregistered money services businesses (MSBs) (including so called underground banking or ‘Hawalas’) and the criminalization of the act itself. [FATF made] recommendations [that] have become the global standard for CFT and their effectiveness is assessed almost always in conjunction with anti-money-laundering (AML).”²⁴¹

Turkey also has several alternatives to conventional warfare, given this influx of civilian ministry responsibility. Lawfare is such an example. “Perhaps the first use of the term ‘lawfare’ was in a 1975 manuscript arguing the Western legal system has become overly contentious and utilitarian as compared to the more humanitarian, norm-based Eastern system, called Whither Goeth the Law.”²⁴² There is further insight; “A more frequently cited use of the term was Charles J. Dunlap, Jr.’s 2001 essay authored for Harvard’s Carr Center. In that essay, Dunlap defines lawfare as “the use of law as a weapon of war.” He later expanded on the definition, explaining lawfare was “the exploitation of real, perceived, or even orchestrated incidents of law-of-war violations being employed as an unconventional means of confronting” a superior military power.”²⁴³ Being a nation that allies itself with the United States, Turkey has followed the American lead of military efforts being clear and uniformed. As more and more national efforts are being conducted without gray-painted materièl, one may see the approach towards a spectrum of warfare styles. This paper has considered economic warfare under civilian responsibility as a legitimate option to study and counter

²⁴⁰ Financial Action Task Force, “About the FATF,” 2012, <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/pages/aboutus/>.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² “Lawfare,” *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, June 10, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lawfare&oldid=559193709>.

²⁴³ Ibid.

the effects of narcotics trafficking towards CT missions. Nevertheless, as adversaries are more and more nebulous and less likely to be state-actors, Turkey must consider the potential of other kinds of warfare. Chinese analysis of 超限战 (Unrestricted Warfare),²⁴⁴ has the following parts:

Figure 2.
Per Qiao Liang, Wang Xiangsui, authors of Unrestricted Warfare²⁴⁵

Military	Trans-military	Non-military
Atomic warfare	Diplomatic warfare	Financial warfare
Conventional warfare	Network warfare	Trade warfare
Bio-chemical warfare	Intelligence warfare	Resources warfare
Ecological warfare	Psychological warfare	Economic aid warfare
Space warfare	Tactical warfare	Regulatory warfare
Electronic warfare	Smuggling warfare	Sanction warfare
Guerrilla warfare	Drug warfare	Media warfare
Terrorist warfare	Virtual warfare (deterrence)	Ideological warfare

September 11th, 2001 began a change in how terrorism is funded. State sponsorship was a large source for Terrorist Financing (TF), but the United States and numerous other countries (some of which were not even affiliated with America previously) became extremely vigilant in Financial Intelligence (FININT). As a result, hybrid activity and outsourcing of financing activities became more prominent. Organized crime may facilitate a low-profile, yet terrorist activity by definition does not foster a low-profile environment for the sake of political change.

Now, let us consider some preliminary economic modeling of FININT and TF. The Southern Economic Journal of April 2013 indulged in an Economics of Terrorism Symposium, yet the majority of the work was based in the effects of terrorist activity on domestic governments, vice

²⁴⁴ “Unrestricted Warfare,” *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, April 6, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Unrestricted_Warfare&oldid=541297770.

²⁴⁵ Asher, “Financial Hardball: Corraling Terrorists and Proliferators.”

how an organization appropriated funds for operations.²⁴⁶ SEJ's James Piazza suggests, "A latent assumption among conflict scholars is that price volatilities for basic consumer goods produce hardships for people that increase popular grievances, damage government legitimacy, and raise the chances for terrorism."²⁵¹ Piazza continues to explain the correlation between food price fluctuations and terrorism. Rapid increases in food prices predict an influx in terrorist activity, but not the opposite. Housing and energy fluctuations do not have statistical significance as predictors. Piazza concludes, "Third, the relationship between food price volatility and terrorism is most consistently present in nondemocratic and "hybrid" political regimes and in medium human development countries rather than in democracies or in countries characterized by very high or very low economic development."²⁵² Nevertheless, Piazza's argument is the most causal of the SEJ articles, discussing the world's economics surrounding terrorism's effects. SEJ's Khusrav Gaibulloev asserts that "Findings show that the survival of terrorist groups is bolstered by diversifying attacks, having multiple home bases, locating in the Middle East, locating in a democratic country, and limiting reliance on transnational terrorist attacks."²⁵³ Again, the SEJ focuses on the simultaneous equation model of how terrorist activity interplays with economic development indicators.

Furthermore, Turkish TF and drug smuggling is an example of a shadow economy. A shadow economy describes economic activity that *de facto* contributes to Gross National Product

²⁴⁶ Todd Sandler, "Advances in the Study of the Economics of Terrorism," *Southern Economic Journal* 79, no. 4 (April 2013): 768–773, doi:10.4284/0038-4038-2013.007.

²⁴⁷ Khusrav Gaibulloev and Todd Sandler, "Determinants of the Demise of Terrorist Organizations," *Southern Economic Journal* 79, no. 4 (April 2013): 774–792, doi:10.4284/0038-4038-2012.269.

²⁴⁸ Claude Berrebi and Jordan Ostwald†, "Exploiting the Chaos: Terrorist Target Choice Following Natural Disasters," *Southern Economic Journal* 79, no. 4 (April 2013): 793–811, doi:10.4284/0038-4038-2012.268.

²⁴⁹ James A. Piazza, "The Cost of Living and Terror: Does Consumer Price Volatility Fuel Terrorism?," *Southern Economic Journal* 79, no. 4 (April 2013): 812–831, doi:10.4284/0038-4038-2012.270.

²⁵⁰ S. Brock Blomberg, Ricardo Fernholz, and John-Clark Levin, "Terrorism and the Invisible Hook," *Southern Economic Journal* 79, no. 4 (April 2013): 849–863, doi:10.4284/0038-4038-2012.290.

²⁵¹ Piazza, "The Cost of Living and Terror," 812.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Gaibulloev and Sandler, "Determinants of the Demise of Terrorist Organizations," 774.

(GNP), yet is unregistered. This may be similar to underground activity, or black market activity. The means of making money may be legal, such as an innocent example of owning a lawn business, but not reporting profits would imply tax evasion, therefore is contributing to the shadow economy.²⁵⁴ Typically, tax-related shadow economies stem from “The burden of total direct taxation, the burden of indirect taxation, the complexity of the tax system, and the intensity of government regulations”²⁵⁵ Likewise, in a few African countries, such as Nigeria or Egypt, where expected penalties for tax evasion and illegal bartering are low, the shadow economy thrives. Given an average GDP from 1990-1993, those two countries had shadow economies nearly three quarters of the official GDP (68-76%).²⁵⁶ This would equate to an estimated range of \$42bn - \$53bn (constant 2005 USD) for Nigeria and an estimated range of \$33bn - \$41bn (constant 2005 USD) for Egypt.²⁵⁷

Just as there are numerous sources of terrorist finance, a shadow economy is a manifestation of illegal activity. Shadow economies are efficient and effective, there are layers of protection, and there are tie-ins to other nefarious networks. Furthermore, there is an added benefit of destabilizing the government-led economy, creating instability in the government itself. Thus, mastering a shadow economy, such as drug trafficking, can create political leverage through economic entropy.²⁵⁸ The White House has asserted that “the terrorist organization al-Shabaab has engaged in criminal activities such as kidnapping for ransom and extortion, and may derive limited fees from extortion

²⁵⁴ Friedrich Schneider and Dominik Enste, *Shadow Economies Around the World: Size, Causes and Consequences*, SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, September 1, 1999), 5–6, <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=272624>.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁵⁷ World DataBank, *World Bank: World Development Indicators DataBank*, Constant 2005 USD GDP Graph (Nigeria, Egypt, September 24, 2013), <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/chart.aspx>.

²⁵⁸ Major Robert Dyer, USMC, “Sources of Terrorist Finance: Illegal Activity” (Class Presentation, US Naval Academy Economics Department, September 2013).

or protection of pirates to generate funding for its operations.”²⁵⁹ It is important to distinguish that shadow economies do not need to be only illegal in nature, although the aforementioned White House examples are, indeed, illegal activities within a shadow economy.

Turkey also has difficulty governing its border with Syria. The RAND Corporation has considered the role of ungoverned territories in the study of terrorist finance. There are four particular considerations of the study.²⁶⁰ First, RAND considers the level of state penetration. A lack of physical infrastructure may stem from difficult terrain and a sparse population.²⁶¹ This lack of infrastructure leads to corruption and informal economies.²⁶² Second, the study looks at the extent to which the state has a monopoly over the use of force.²⁶³ The presence of organized, armed criminal groups – outside of the state’s control – in ungoverned territories make it difficult for the legitimate government to have a monopoly on the use of force. Likewise, once those criminal networks establish links to terrorist organizations, a common enemy – the government – as well as similar logistical and operational requirements creates a convenient synergy for mutual reinforcement of illegal and terrorizing activity.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, a population with access to weapons, which is beyond mere legalization, creates a culture of violence which may foster these groups.²⁶⁵

Third, RAND looks at the extent to which the state controls its borders. Control depends on the difficulty of geography and terrain, as well as neighboring country disagreements. The goal is

²⁵⁹ “Transnational Organized Crime: A Growing Threat to National and International Security | The White House,” accessed September 24, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/nsc/transnational-crime/threat>.

²⁶⁰ “Ungoverned Territories: A Unique Front in the War on Terrorism | RAND,” accessed October 10, 2013, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB233/index1.html.

²⁶¹ Major Robert Dyer, USMC, “Determinants of Terrorist Finance: Ungoverned Territories” (Class Presentation, US Naval Academy Economics Department, October 10, 2013).

²⁶² T.S. Allen, “Addressing an Ignored Imperative: Rural Corruption in Afghanistan,” *Small Wars Journal* (February 19, 2013), <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/addressing-an-ignored-imperative-rural-corruption-in-afghanistan>.

²⁶³ “Ungoverned Territories.”

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Major Robert Dyer, USMC, “Determinants of Terrorist Finance: Ungoverned Territories.”

to have functional cooperation among neighboring states to inhibit the growth of terrorism, particularly when borders are dynamic. Fourth, whether or not a state is subject to external intervention may correlate to the existence of terrorism or facilitation of its finance. The inability to enforce regulations based on external support to ungoverned territories by an externality fosters an environment conducive to terrorist cells.²⁶⁶

One may find it important to analyze the characteristics of an area conducive to terrorist presence while discussing FININT. Infrastructure and operational access may include buildings, communications, transportation, and a banking system. In the words of Major Robert Dyer, USMC, “Cell phone service is more important than electricity,” for terrorist to operate in ungoverned territories.²⁶⁷ Layers of separation are imperative in operating with any hope of secrecy, particularly with mobile banking and email in addition to traditional physical movement and courier travel.

Income sources are location specific, particularly when one is speaking about availability of those sources. For example, in the Federally Administered Frontier Areas (FAFA, or Tribal Areas – FATA)²⁶⁸ between the Pakistani-Afghan border – not much unlike the Turkish-Syrian border – there is plenty of drug, weapon, and human trafficking. There are markets for stolen vehicles, money laundering, and false documents in FAFA as well.²⁶⁹ Favorable demographics, involving the presence of extremist groups already in place, supportive social norms among the population, preexisting state of violence, and informal social assistance also contribute to terrorist presence and its finance. Another characteristic of location is invisibility. Invisibility may be homogeneous or heterogeneous, specifically with regard to race and ethnicity. A close-knit tribal area would require

²⁶⁶ “Ungoverned Territories.”

²⁶⁷ Major Robert Dyer, USMC, “Ungoverned Territories, Continued” (Class Presentation, US Naval Academy Economics Department, October 15, 2013).

²⁶⁸ Angel Rabasa and John E. Peters, “Chapter 4: Comparative Analysis of Case Studies,” in *Ungoverned Territories: A Unique Front in the War on Terrorism* | RAND, 23, accessed October 15, 2013, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG561.pdf.

²⁶⁹ Major Robert Dyer, USMC, “Ungoverned Territories, Continued.”

homogeneous invisibility to conduct secretive operations, while New York City may facilitate heterogeneous invisibility.²⁷⁰ Thus, when conducting FININT, one must be cognizant of the specific location and ethnic ties.

Going further for more research and field analysis, there is an inherent difficulty in analyzing the drug trade and its effects is the lack of readily accessible and reliable data. There is a possibility of regressing time series data with volume of drugs trafficked against the amount of crime as a proxy for the detriment of potential economic growth. Variables need to be explored further if quantitative results are desired. Questions to be posed may be as follows. Can Turkey legalize drug trade revenue? Tax it? How can data be reliably found? Would UNDOC be a proper source? What is a good proxy variable for the hindrance of economic development due to trafficking?

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

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BACK IN THE BARRACKS BUT NOT FORGOTTEN: LASTING CULTURAL LEGACIES OF THE TURKISH
ARMED FORCES

By Mr. Patrick Hamon, Tufts University

In cases of deep antagonism between the forces of civilian political control and autonomous military power such as Turkey, a huge point of contention is influence over culture. No truly viable political entity exists without a high degree of public support, a fact the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) was extremely mindful of in carving out an untouchable status within society and using such clout to shape societal attitudes. This included institutional tutelage and informal practices that elevated the already existent concepts of military guardianship and selfless service to the Turkish nation in every action of the officer corps. These practices reached their zenith when in 1980, spurred by the military coup d'état, the Turkish state was redefined to suit the needs of domestic tranquility as provided by the military. Proceeding unabated until 2001 constitutional reforms and election of the Justice and Development Party in 2002, TSK left an indelible mark on cultural establishments and opinions that continue to shape the Turkish public on the issues of civil-military relations.

The situation has, however, changed markedly from what had been implicit military predominance in most if not all spheres of Turkish society since the reforms of 2001 and subsequent election of the Justice and Development Party in 2002. The military professionals, retired or still commissioned, that had been ubiquitous in many of Turkey's most powerful purveyors of culture have been phased out. The public image of the TSK has been frequently tarnished by media reports of coup plots and conspiracies among other abuses of power while the once verbose generals have gone all but silent. Despite this, the Turkish military remains the most trusted government entity with 66.2 percent of respondents to a 2012 survey indicating full trust of the military and 18.7 percent of respondents indicating partial trust of the military (this is compared

with 14.6 percent of those surveyed that indicated no trust in the military)²⁷¹. This paper will attempt to answer the persistence of this popularity and powerful cultural role provided to the security apparatus of Turkey.

This paper asserts that the persistence of military attitudes, many of which are detrimental to healthy democratic practices, is the result of prolonged institutional control by the military over the last thirty years and an opportunistic incorporation of many aspects of military culture by the executive. The implications of this is that while the military has been all but removed from institutional power in the civilian sector in the past, militarism will remain a large part of Turkish culture if it remains politically expedient. The scope of analysis will be limited to the fields of higher education defined as secondary school and university education, conscription policies and attitudes, and military involvement with journalistic media. While there are many different aspects of Turkish culture that could be examined, these three were chosen for the measurable decrease in direct military influence on each sector and persistence of certain pro-military attitudes despite this. While the Turkish people trust their military, pro-military attitudes do not mean an inclination for domestic political intervention as seen in the past. Instead it means that the powerful executive in the form of Erdogan, able to get his way institutionally, must seek to coopt rather than destroy many of the aspects of Turkish life that favor the military.

Concordance Theory:

Concordance theory, proposed by military scholar Rebecca Schiff in 1995, adds a different aspect to the frequently dichotomous methods of civil-military scholarship with the inclusion of civil society, defined as the citizenry and seen as separate from civilian political elites and the military. Schiff asserts four key categories of agreement between the three primary actors for optimal civil-

²⁷¹ Zeki Sarigil, "Public Opinion and Attitude towards the Military and Democratic Consolidation in Turkey," Working paper (2013) p. 14

military relations: (1) composition of the officer corps, (2) political decision-making process, (3) recruitment methods, (4) military style²⁷². Disagreement on these four principles is, according to Schiff, a recipe for domestic military intervention. While the topics addressed in this essay do have some overlap with the important aspects of Schiff's theory, the main purpose of including this concept is explaining the emphasis of first the military and now the civilian government on convincing the citizenry to agree with the concepts of civil-military relations that they each extoll. In contrast to much civil-military literature, Schiff's theory and this essay look at institutions as tools in a larger attempt by the military or political elite to persuade the masses to support certain perspectives and policies beneficial to said officers or elites.

Methodology:

Using the analytical framework of the concordance theory of civil-military relations, this paper will attempt to explain the continuation of many militaristic trends despite what would appear as civilian institutional control of the Turkish military²⁷³. The primary method of research was in-person interviews with knowledgeable individuals conducted during the months of June and July of 2013 as well as an extensive review of relevant literature on the topics of Turkish culture and civil-military relations. All surveys and polling data cited in this paper were the products of separate research.

Higher Education:

Education has always occupied a crucial place in the constant ideological and political battles of modern Turkish political history. While the Ottoman Empire had attempted rudimentary reforms to better educate Ottomans in the Western model, it was not until the transformative War of

²⁷² Rebecca L. Schiff, "Civil-military relations reconsidered: A theory of concordance," *Armed Forces and Society*, 22.1 (Sept. 22, 1995) p. 7-24

²⁷³ Perlin Turgut, "Erdogan's Showdown with Generals Shows Advance of Turkey's Democracy," *Time Magazine*, (August 3, 2011). Online

Independence that education became a political tool. Enshrined in the 1924 constitution written by Atatürk and the other founders of the Turkish Republic²⁷⁴ as well as the Law of Unification on Education, state education has long been seen as an equalizer in society and one of the most important measures in bringing parity between Turkey and Western Europe. The right to primary education was accessible in varying degrees to large swaths of society. While such a strong support for increased education represented an increase in the general welfare of those in the Turkish state, it was far from apolitical. Emanating from a decidedly powerful central state, the education system favored statist ideology and Turkish ethnocentrism (a huge point of contention with the Kurdish minority²⁷⁵) in making of curricula and even the pledges that students would take²⁷⁶. This would manifest itself especially in the material and subject matter presented to students, much of which openly glorified the state.

Higher education was no exception as the government increased enrollment in public universities while barring the creation of private education institutions in addition to the already strict controls on secondary schools through national exams and standards. Among many other points of emphasis on each tier of education was the cultural role of the Turkish military in establishing the nation during the war of independence and the outsized impact of military officers like Mustafa Kemal on Turkish history. With indirect influence over almost all aspects of government, the TSK and those that adhered to the aforementioned Kemalist ideology set up an education that served to selectively expose young thinkers to the former's form of history.

²⁷⁴ Article 87, Section 5 of 1924 constitution: "Primary education is obligatory for all Turks and shall be gratuitous in the government schools" Source: JSTOR

²⁷⁵ Andy Curtis, "Nationalism in the Diaspora: A Study of the Kurdish movement," University Utrecht, (February 4, 2005).

²⁷⁶ Vercihan Ziflioğlu, "Turkish minorities condemn 'Our Pledge' but fear speaking out," *Hurriyet Daily News*, (August 15, 2011), Online

These trends would continue past the lifetime of Ataturk as Turkey moved past the turbulent period of creation and consolidation of a state and into the dangers of the Cold War. Sitting on the front of a massive ideological battle, Turkish governments used state education as one of many tools to battle communism²⁷⁷. While the threat of Russia had been a consistent theme in Turkish history, the creeping ideological spread threatened to radically shift Turkish society away from the Western European model Turkey was emulating. Also rising was the modern manifestation of political Islam, a trend started domestically in the 1960s and 70s by the likes of Fethullah Gulen and many others receiving inspiration from developments in the Arab and Iranian worlds²⁷⁸. Emphasizing the military, the poster boy for this Europeanism, served as a bulwark against these two ideologies. This was most apparent after the 1960 and 1980 coup. Both coups, particularly the 1980 coup, would lead to a restructuring that further internalized pro-military culture into Turkish schools. It was after the 1980 coup that the government established the National Security studies class, a course that, according to Ekin Can Genc of the liberal 3H movement and many others that with which we spoke, featured an incredibly bias textbook as approved by the military and had a military officer as an instructor.

What happened in 1980 was nothing short of a military takeover in higher education with the creation of the Higher Education Council and the establishment of a number of government powers over the higher education system including direct executive control over certain university personnel²⁷⁹. The Higher Education Council continues to serve as the primary regulator of public university and to a lesser degree private school curricula as well as guardians of the competitive

²⁷⁷ Ahmet Kuru, "The Rise and Fall of Military Tutelage in Turkey: Fears of Islamism, Kurdism and Communism." *Insight Turkey* 14.2 (2012) p. 45-46

²⁷⁸ Anwar Alam, "Islam and Post-Modernism: Locating the Rise of Islamism in Turkey." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20.3 (2009) p. 352-75

²⁷⁹ Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, Chapter Two, Section 1, D4 and Chapter Two, Section 4, E

entrance exams. Retired members of the military have always dominated the selective group of 24 and shaped higher education policy accordingly. As indicated by a Turkish professor of education, the military also barred all political activity on campus after the 1980 coup and professors who were critical of Turkish military policies did so at a risk to their career. Given the circumstances which brought about the 1980 coup (primarily violence between leftist parties), it made sense for the military to target leftist leaning institutions like universities. While the bans on political parties and politicians generally eased, the draconian measures taken after the 1980 coup had a chilling effect on college campuses. “[The military policies] left a whole generation apolitical,” said the same professor. There was also an effort to undermine students from Islamic secondary schools (called imam hatip schools) by deducting points for all students of technical high school which included imam schools. Once again it seems that the TSK was dictating through institutions how Turkish youth should act and what they should know. The institutional control was so deep that the clandestine military group linked with the 1997 post-modern coup that removed Erbakan, the West Study Group (BCG), alleged had offices in the Higher Education Board²⁸⁰.

A further validation for the idea of institutional influence over culture can be found in the contentious nature of education policy in Turkey during the periods of military strength. As a reaction to the numerous attempts by the central government to instill Kurdish youth with Turkish nationalism and language instead of allowing them ethnic-specific education, the PKK actually targeted teachers during the 1990s²⁸¹; while the attacks were highly unpopular even among the Kurds, the killings show how strongly linked public educators are to the state and how influential the ideological leanings of said state are in the classroom. Islamists, another long-time foe of the

²⁸⁰ “Shady group had office at YOK during 1997 coup,” Today’s Zaman, 29 March 2013. Online

²⁸¹ Helmut Oberdiek, “Holding Armed Groups Accountable A comparative study of obstacles and strategies: The situation in Turkey”, The International Council on Human Rights Policy(1999). p. 22-24

military, also put enormous pressure on government to reform policy. An initial plank of the first Islamic party, education policy changed with the military junta of 1980 and the successive constitution that not only permitted education in religion but required it²⁸². Still, the military did all it could to uphold secularism and statism in education like every other institution it controlled.

The story of the last 10 years, however, has been one of waning military influence over the educational units as the executive has asserted dominance in this most critical area of education. The Higher Education Council no longer implicitly takes orders from the National Security Council and the number of former military on the 24-person board sits at just two²⁸³. The National Security studies class ended in January 2012 on decree by the Ministry of Education²⁸⁴ and members of the discriminatory practices against imam hatip students has been removed from entrance exams²⁸⁵. Many other similar steps have been taken by the AKP in the last five years as a means of reducing the direct impact that military professionals can have on the most vulnerable segment of the population. Other developments, such as the proliferation of private universities within Turkey since the opening of Bilkent University in 1984²⁸⁶, have also served to lessen the power of central authorities to influence youth opinion. The military has largely been silent on the topic of allowing headscarves in universities and public institutions in the last few years despite clear ideological objections to permitting the religious garb.

Given the removal of many military influences on civilian education, one would expect the impact of military culture in this sector to decrease quite a bit. The Turkish Armed Forces, however, cannot be removed from Turkish history as they were from institutional control of that history.

²⁸² Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (1982), Chapter 2, Article 24

²⁸³ Information provided by a Turkish professor of education interviewed in June, 2013 at a university in Istanbul. The subject of this interview wished to remain anonymous.

²⁸⁴ Op. cit. Kuru, 42

²⁸⁵ “What’s 4+4+4?” Andrew Finkel, New York Times, 23 March 2012, Online

²⁸⁶ “University numbers on the rise in Turkey 2011,” Hurriyet Daily News, 4 September 2011, Online

University requirements for Turkish language, culture, and history classes still exist and are by the account of one professor quite popular with students. More than that, it appears that by in large the AKP leadership has allowed the heavily bias history textbooks extolling the role of the Turkish military in creating the nation to stay a part of secondary school education. Higher education still exists under the watchful eye of government officials with the Higher Education Council the final authority on national education. The AKP has ensured, particularly with new reforms passed in 2012, to allow early and extensive religious education²⁸⁷ (much to the chagrin of secularists like military flag officers) while continuing a long-established emphasis on statism in education. As long as Turkish students learn to differentiate between Kemalism and a love of the Turkish state, Erdogan seems fine to let the glorification of military exploits continue unabated. Horrific abuses, among them being the Armenian genocide and the treatment of Kurdish political activists, are just as risky to tackle now as an academic as they were when the military controlled every aspect of education.

School obviously exists as one of the most critical institutions for socialization of ideas and it has always existed in the Turkish context as a political tool for ensuring whatever political ideology is most present at the time. For much of Turkish history, this interest has been in socializing appreciation and admiration of the TSK as guardians of the Turkish people. The TSK worked extensively to proliferate their own popularity through education. Now with an empowered executive displacing the institutions and individuals that previously tried to mold youth along their own ideological lines, the landscape of power has changed. With the large exception of secularism and the new inclusion of religiously-oriented classes, the AKP has been content to let many of the military practices continue in education. These practices, mostly centered on glamorizing the TSK while exaggerating the threats faced by Turkey, serve the parliamentarians as much as the

²⁸⁷ Op. cit. Finkel.

paratroopers. During our stay, we had the opportunity to visit a government-sponsored war simulation museum on the peninsula of Gallipoli. The exhibits here would be described by even the most ardent Turkish nationalist as highly jingoistic and lacking subtlety. Yet still, Turkish citizens are financially encouraged to vacation to this area and visit highly subjective museums as a formal policy of state. These policies of political education seem most aimed at those with little world experience and the lack of ability to gain any in the near future. Exposure to other cultures and realization that the Turkish government is not the positive exception to all laws governing societies is quite likely linked with more education²⁸⁸. Why would the AKP fund projects that inflate military prestige if that prestige does not in some way serve their interests as well? It seems quite clear from all available evidence that the executive is more than willing to take the aspects of education, mainly the glorification of the military and through that the state, that suit his interests while removing the military from the actual process. This is a further political legitimization of the AKP's grip on not just the tutelage of politics but that of all aspects of Turkish society.

Conscription:

As any cursory look through Turkish history will tell you, Turks have long been associated with martial traditions and ability since their days on the Asian steppes. It had been through military expertise that the Turks had taken Anatolia from the Byzantines and it would be through this same ability that they expanded their territory from the Balkans to the Hejaz. The Ottoman army represented the amalgamation of innumerable peoples into one coherent force loyal to the Sultan. Made up almost entirely of Muslims, the Ottoman army of the 19th century represented an attempt at nation-building and unity under one banner across varied ethnic backgrounds under both a common religion and the somewhat quixotic belief in fostering an Ottoman nation rather than just a

²⁸⁸ Zeki Sarigil, "Deconstructing the Popularity of the Turkish Armed Forces," *Armed Forces and Society*, 30.4 (Aug. 2008), p.718

collection of subservient provinces²⁸⁹. This manifestation of Ottomanism certainly represented the most ambitious attempt by any nation to form a national army as the empire had little of the cultural and economic aspects that allowed nationalism to flourish in the 19th century Europe.

The military, however, changed dramatically with the defeat of World War I and the traumatizing experience of the War of Independence. Turkey instituted a policy of conscription that would see all Turkish males serve in defense of their specific peoples and culture as preserved in the new constitution²⁹⁰. The army, which had once represented a multicultural approach, became a nationalistic force tied closely with the concepts of Turkishness and excluding all those living within the borders who did not acknowledge this superiority. More than just that, the military came to reflect these ethnic ties through the secular lens of Kemalism rather than the multicultural Islamism that had once been a linchpin in the sultan's army²⁹¹. Such exclusivity would serve to create massive tensions with the Kurdish minority, especially after the onset of the Sheikh Sayyid rebellion in 1926 and the mutual distrust that continues between the central state and the Kurds. Fighting numerous enemies, including the hated Greeks, during both WWI and the following War of Independence, the Turkish military (among armed groups) served to defend both the land and its people. This mentality, while not unique given the number of wars for national separation in modern times, was expertly cultivated by Atatürk and those that followed him as a means of political influence.

Since the creation of the republic, those within the military and their allies outside of it have worked diligently to maintain the ability to shape hearts and minds through time in the military. Institutionalizing service at 18 months, doing your time in the military became the way through

²⁸⁹ Erik-Zan Zurcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System In Theory and Practice 1844-1918", *International Review of Social History*, 43.3 (1998), p.437-449

²⁹⁰ Edward M. Earle, "The New Constitution of Turkey," *Political Science Quarterly*, 40.1 (March, 1925) p.77-100

²⁹¹ Tolga Koker, "The Establishment of Kemalist Secularism in Turkey", *Middle East Law and Governance*, 1.2 (2009), p. 35-37

which boys became men in the eyes of the society around them²⁹². The practice has proceeded unabated since the time of Ataturk and allowed the Turkish military to maintain the second largest army in NATO after only the United States²⁹³. In truth, the practice was just as much about upholding state ideology as protecting it from any outside threat. As Professor Serhat Guvenc of Kadir Has University said in an interview with us, “Conscription remained for a long time a way of influencing society.” Young recruits, especially those from the rural communities, were instilled with manners, obedience to authority, and a deep sense that the military in which they were participating was as much a part of Turkey as the soil on which they stood. Successive generations of generals were able to convince the public of the merit of conscription. As the oft-repeated phrase goes, “Every Turk is born a soldier,” and the military has always had a deep interest in making sure Turks keep seeing it that way.

Turkish military and civilian laws as well as the 1982 constitution are filled with specific measures designed to institutionally protect the social influence of conscription. One of the most controversial examples is the criminalization of conscientious objection. As one of only three Council of Europe members, Azerbaijan and Armenia being the others, not to allow conscientious objection to military service²⁹⁴, Turkey finds itself unique in Western states for such a denial of what the European Court on Human Rights calls a fundamental right of all human beings²⁹⁵. Those who choose to invoke this right are imprisoned for years and face a daunting amount of abuse from fellow inmates for perceive cowardice and dearth of patriotism²⁹⁶. While there have been legal attempts for reform on the issue, most notably a 2012 decision by a military court to recognize

²⁹² Varoglu A. and Bicaksiz A., “Volunteering for Risk: The Culture of the Turkish Armed Forces,” *Armed Forces & Society*, 31.4(2005) pp. 585

²⁹³ Turkish Armed Forces official website www.tsk.tr

²⁹⁴ European Commission, “Turkey 2010 Progress Report,” (9 November 2011), p. 24

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 23, 26

²⁹⁶ Voice of America, Dorian Jones, Nov. 22, 2011, Online

conscientious objection as a right²⁹⁷, the only real reform would come with the drafting of a new constitution. Currently, only citizens willing to pay 30,000 TL are able to completely skip service though those pursuing higher education degrees spend significantly less time (around six months for those getting a bachelors) than those choosing to work straight out of secondary school, about 80 percent of men. This could be part of the reason for the gender balances of universities (majority female in a male-dominated economy) and a manifestation of the oft-discussed cosmopolitan elite and rural poor divide. It is forbidden under Turkish law to voice displeasure at this conscription system and how it affects Turkish youth. The most pronounced examples of this are the clauses of Article 301 of the Turkish penal code which prohibit insulting or denigrating “the Turkish nation” which includes “the military and security organizations”²⁹⁸. This could apply to any individual in society and could easily cause a great amount of distrust even in normal conversations. The Turkish military has also pursued this policy of suppression when it comes to coverage of the issue in the media, a topic that will be further discussed in the following section of this paper. The institutional emphasis on conscription goes further with ordinances requiring businesses to fire men without military service first no matter their relative importance to the business operation.

Turkish society, pressured from the top by the TSK and the aforementioned regulations like Article 301, has in many ways incorporated the military philosophy as demonstrated by a number of practices still in effect today. One of the most common examples of such is the widespread discrimination of those that have not completed military service in the workforce. Taking a cue from the preferential laws in place, companies are unlikely to risk hiring individuals without some sort of military experience, however irrelevant it may be to the position. Citing your time in the military on your resume is such a key requirement that those with legitimate medical reasons to skip service will

²⁹⁷ “Turkish military court recognizes conscientious objection for the first time” Hurriyet Daily New, March, 9, 2012. Online

²⁹⁸ Turkish Penal Code, Fourteenth Section, Article 301

in fact work to conceal those conditions²⁹⁹. Families, especially those from the countryside, will refuse their daughters to marry any man who has not done his duty and those without stories of their days in uniform face stigma wherever they go³⁰⁰. While these practices are almost always socially enforced, it clearly takes cues from the multitude of ordinances in place to suppress any public discussion or debate on the legitimacy of not wanting or being able to serve. Even after the civil-military turmoil of the past six years, conscription remains incredibly popular with over 74 percent of Turks in favor of the policy³⁰¹ and many prominent politicians, including Prime Minister Erdogan, show full support for the continuation of this policy.

One would think that given such overwhelming institutional and societal support conscription would be an enriching experience for both the men and the families to which they return, but the truth is quite different. Abuse is widespread though rarely public; only in the recent case of a fatality in Cyprus due to harsh treatment has brought some light on the topic³⁰². US military officials interviewed on this topic noted the horrid conditions and lack of financial support for conscripts (soldiers get a small stipend well below the minimum wage). The labor for most conscripts is by all accounts menial at best with troops stationed at officer retreats and bases in service jobs. Those not lucky enough to get such jobs are posted to the southeastern region of the country in the ongoing fight against the Kurdish insurgency group PKK despite what US military experts would contend as insufficient training³⁰³. With the advanced nature of modern weapons systems, it is unlikely recruits are able to properly prepare given the short 15-month timespan of conscription.

²⁹⁹ Op. cit., Varoglu A. and Bicaksiz A., pp. 594

³⁰⁰ Ibid. pp. 585

³⁰¹ Oper cit, Sarigil, 2013, p. 13

³⁰² Information provided in an interview with a journalist who wished to remain anonymous. This interview was conducted on July 8, 2013 in Ankara.

³⁰³ Information provided by U.S. military officials stationed in Turkey in interview on July 5, 2013 at U.S. Embassy in Ankara. Subjects wished to remain anonymous.

Just like with conscientious objection, institutional controls have become cultural norms that make questioning the treatment and deployment of conscripts an insult to the martial pride of the Turkish peoples. In 2007, a group of journalists, academics, and other prominent individuals famously questioned the deployment of conscripts to Turkish Kurdistan in a very rare move of public dissent against military policies. Soli Ozel, a journalist and academic, questioned the effectiveness of a force with poorly trained soldiers as the vast majority of personnel and a US military official familiar with the TSK flatly rejected the notion of Turkey being able to invade and occupy any nation in the region. Yet, despite logical leaps to get there, the narrative from current Turkish military officials when visiting two of the Turkish military academies was much the same opinion expressed publically by the government; the enlisted were and still are necessary for defending Turkey from domestic and internal threats. There has been more of an effort in recent years to enlist soldiers and reduce conscription time, but the general idea of all men serving the nation remains relatively untouched.

While an increased emphasis on professionalization has occurred mostly due to modern military needs, conscription appears to be ingrained in Turkish society for the long haul despite massive shortcomings. Erdogan frequently attacks generals and other top brass for the plots and coups of the past but yet he waxes on poetically about “Mehmet”, the Turkish equivalent of an American Johnny Boy soldier, in his speeches about patriotism and loyalty to the Turkish nation³⁰⁴. The government ardently defends the policy, including the sovereign right of Turkey not to recognize conscientious objection, despite repeated calls to reform. Some like Serhat Guvenc believe that there will be a questioning of conscription in the coming decade as more Turkish citizens realize

³⁰⁴ Ralph Boulton and Parisa Hafezi, “Analysis: Turkey’s history of military coups hangs over protests,” Reuters, 12 June 2013, Online

the unnecessary drain of young men on society for largely symbolic labor³⁰⁵. Given the recent anger from Turkish liberals, particularly those that are well-educated and known to be against conscription³⁰⁶, a questioning of the policy is possible. What will be interesting, however, is that the AKP will be on the side of the military and fighting to keep this influence on society. Erdogan, empowered by his electoral victories and now firmly in control of military officers, has coopted the institution of conscription rather than crush it. All evidence points to the fact that he and other powerful AKP allies want to keep putting young men through this mutual experience of service.

The reasons are likely manifold, most prevalent being the hope to instill a pride in government and the Turkish nation (something that now serves those in positions of power within the government). Zeki Sarigil, a professor of political science at Bilkent University and an expert on civil-military relations noted, to us that the AKP has an ideological distrust of flag officers but not of the common soldier³⁰⁷. Flag officers, by both resources and access, also represent a much larger threat to civilian control of domestic affairs. Conscripts and other low-ranking military officials remain non-threatening while still being tremendously popular among the public. Erdogan has incorporated conscription in his government, allowing the institution to remain largely autonomous and lacking transparency. As long as mandatory service does not subvert the ruling party, something highly unlikely given the hundreds of military officers currently convicted or detained for plotting against the government, then the AKP will continue to defend the idea of a martial tradition being inseparable from the Turkish identity.

Press:

The press in Turkey has always had an outsized role in shaping modern Turkish politics and that power has been very tightly controlled by the state including the military. Besides forcing what

³⁰⁵ Information attained from an interview at Kadir Has University conducted on July 1st, 2013.

³⁰⁶ Op. cit., Sarigil, 2008, p. 724-26

³⁰⁷ Interview conducted with Professor Sarigil on July 10, 2013 at Bilkent University in Ankara.

basically constituted a written language change, Ataturk also placed numerous restrictions on the media as part of protecting the new Turkish state. The Sheikh Sayyid rebellion was the pretext for the closing of numerous newspapers³⁰⁸ and the Independence Courts of the early republic tried many journalists who were seen as threats to the state. The existential threats of both fascism and communism furthered censorship measures well into the 1960s and 70s. The coup of 1960, caused primarily by the possibility of Soviet aid and harsh economic conditions, further implanted the officers, especially the lower-ranking ones, as guardians of the state. The military was always considered the most sacred part of Turkey and thus afforded the most protection against any sort of harsh press criticism, a structure that would only grow with the military junta between 1980 and 1983.

A common theme throughout this paper has been the manifestation of military power into complete institutional control after the 1980 coup and this held just as true in journalistic controls as it did in higher education and conscription policy. As it sits now in the current constitution, the section on freedom of expression allows the “right to express and disseminate his thoughts and opinion through speech, in writing, in pictures or other media” but as listed in the second paragraph of the section:

“The exercise of these freedoms may be restricted for the purposes of protecting national security, public order and public safety, the basic characteristics of the Republic and safeguarding the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation, preventing crime, punishing offenders, withholding information duly classified as a state secret, protecting the reputation and rights and private and family life of others, or protecting professional secrets as prescribed by law, or ensuring the proper functioning of the judiciary.”³⁰⁹

One can see how this clause that gives numerous explicit grounds for censorship could be applied to media that was critical of the military or other important state institutions. Other measures were

³⁰⁸ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Fifth Edition, (2013), p. 169-170

³⁰⁹ Constitution of Turkey (1982), Chapter 2, Section 8, Article 26

passed under the military junta and afterwards that gave immense power to suppress reports that might threaten military autonomy. The Anti-Terror Law, originally passed in 1990 and eventually repealed three years ago, gave ability to charge those reporting on issues like Kurdish separatism or Islamic fundamentalism in unfavorable ways as terrorist collaborators. The famous Article 35 of the TSK Internal Service Code provides the military legal framework to independently intervene in domestic affairs while the Article 301, passed in 2005, illegalized insults to “Turkishness” and as mentioned before, the military and security structures. When asked by us about Article 301, a US official working in Turkey mentioned the incredibly flexible nature of what constitutes an insult. The fact remains that the decision comes from the very people being criticized, a recipe for both active and self-censorship.

The Turkish media evolved to largely incorporate the military mindset as to avoid reprimanding under these voluminous and quite frequently repetitive institutional protections against criticism. A veteran journalist working at a major newspaper speaking to us on the condition of anonymity described the media atmosphere of two decades ago as self-censorship as the majority of journalists agreed with the measures taken by the military. This would not only lead to selective reporting but harsh (and unbalanced) media vitriol against ideas like Islamism and Kurdish rights that were contradictory to military interests. For those that did not agree, there was little advancement to be had. Just like many large media markets, newspapers and television reporting was under massive conglomerates with strong government ties, many of them in other sectors of the economy that could place pressure on dissenting journalists without actual prosecution. The military also used the media as tool for spreading their particular message with numerous press releases on issues ranging from whether or not women should be allowed to wear headscarves in public institutions to education to Kurdish rights. In times of turmoil and uncertainty, Turks would turn to the words of the Chief of the General Staff as guidance on how the situation should be resolved. It

was largely through this media that the 1997 post-modern coup occurred as the military, using media as a tool to inform public opinion, maneuvered to force Erbakan and his government to resign³¹⁰.

While these examples do not constitute direct control like the ordinances above, the influential nature of the self-censorship, lack of media oversight on military abuses, and power of generals' press releases indicate the weight the military and their civilian allies put in public image.

Media has evolved much like education with new players, mostly from the conservative AK Parti, and much less institutional say from the TSK since the failed attempt to prevent the presidency of Abdullah Gul in 2007. In this supposed "e-coup", the Chief of the General Staff posted a vaguely threatening statement indicating the desire of the military to defend secularism in reference to Gul's wife wearing a headscarf; the threat failed as AKP called early election and won decisively³¹¹. Gul recently amended Article 35 of the Internal Service Code to prevent domestic interference from the military³¹². Recent media coverage of the TSK has centered on bringing officers allegedly responsible for coup plots to justice. The two most famous of these plots are the Sledgehammer case in which officers allegedly ran a coup simulation overthrowing an Islamist government and the Ergenekon case, a complex organization that involved perpetrating terrorist acts to sway popular opinion against the AKP government. Well over 391 officers have been detained in these two cases alone³¹³, many of whom will sit in jail for one or two decades because of their involvement. Even older military offenses are being brought to light with retired General Kenan Evran being brought before court for his role in the 1980 coup and military junta that followed as well as the February 28th process and the "soft-coup" that followed.

³¹⁰ "Reforms curb Turkey's armed forces," The Washington Times, June 25, 2005. Online

³¹¹ Soner Cagaptay and H. Akin Unver, "July 2007 Turkish Elections: Winners and Fault Lines," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, July 2007.

³¹² "Amending Article 35 and our captivity" Bulent Kenes, Today's Zaman, July 14, 2013, Online.

³¹³ "List of Arrested Military Officers in the Turkish military cases" State Department, Unclassified Document

Even more surprising has been the relative silence in the last five years during these endless diatribes against current and former military officers. The officer corps, once responsible for endless press statements and headlines, has all but disappeared from public commentary. When discussing this, Professor Serhat Guvenc stated, “We don’t hear from the military anymore and that’s a good thing.” With some notable exceptions, most famously when the entire General Staff resigned in 2011 as a protest to the many military trials, the officers have been keeping quite. This has meant the end of the weighty statements defending secularism and even basic statements about how certain military operations are being run. What has been occurring during the last few years is basically a media freeze driven by both fear of reprisal and a public acceptance of civilian primacy.

Ownership of media groups has shifted with a sizable share of the media market now firmly in the ideological camp of the ruling party. When asked how this happened, an anonymous journalist we talked to answered, “The AKP built their own media.” This meant media acquisitions by powerful conservative businessmen who were more than willing to support the AKP for its economic policies. Journalism grew from decidedly in favor of Kemalism to highly divided within the first years of the new millennium, a trend that has continued to this day. While publications may each have their own ideological leanings, the media remains decidedly tied to business interests and thus the government.

One would think that with the arrival of new opinions and a ruling party that had been smeared in the press for so long that Turkey would have developed an increasing amount of press freedoms. This, however, has not been the case. Turkish media ranks among the worst in the developed and developing world, sitting at 154th in Reporters without Borders press freedom index³¹⁴. This was displayed to us quite prominently by the coverage of the Gezi Park demonstrations from May to July, 2013 as we were conducting research at the same time. What we

³¹⁴ “2013 Press Freedom Index,” Reporters Without Borders, (2013), p 23

saw in the press and what we heard from those experiencing it on the ground in Istanbul was remarkably different³¹⁵. Reports of police brutality and unnecessary violence were hard to find, especially at the beginning of the protests. This censorship has applied to military accountability too. In 2011, the Turkish media faced a gag order to not report on a bombing run in which TSK pilots had mistaken smugglers for PKK fighters. The incident led to the death of 34 civilians and in a healthy system of governance there would be full public inquiry into what went wrong and who should be held accountable; this did not occur in the contemporary Turkish media environment. It was indicative of the media coverage surrounding many incidents in the Kurdish area with mostly a pro-government line and intimidation of pro-Kurdish journalists. A journalist with extensive experience in reporting on military abuses of power, tasks which have brought this person to court before, railed against the protection afforded the military by the AKP, especially when it comes to military contracts. The military acquisitions process in Turkey is notoriously insular and corrupt, something you would expect to be reformed by a party largely unenthusiastic about autonomous military procedures. As mentioned before in the section on conscription, physical and psychological abuse in the ranks is also highly underreported.

Many place the causal factor of this censorship at the feet of restrictive measures like Article 301 and on media owners with close ties to government. At one point it seemed media ownership functioned along ideological lines but given the immense economic growth in Turkey during the last ten years and the continued links between big business and government contracts, it seems that those at the top of these media companies have cared more for the bottom line than journalistic integrity. Whatever the case, it seems that the government is content to protect the military from criticism in the media and prosecute those that dare defy them as long as the final decision and

³¹⁵“The Turkish Media’s Darkest Hour: How Erdogan Got the Protest Coverage He Wanted” Piotr Zalewski, Foreign Affairs Magazine, The Council on Foreign Relations, June 14, 2013, Online.

statement comes from the Prime Minister's office and not that of the Chief of the General Staff. Soli Ozel put it best when commenting on the AKP's protection of military against outside criticism by saying, "Now, it's his [Erdogan's] military," and Erdogan has made sure to emphasize this point at any available moment. Much like with conscription and higher education, the empowered executive has incorporated the press techniques and insulation of the military with his office at the top of the pyramid rather than remove these democratic pathologies.

Conclusions:

The Turkish cultural experience in the last five years has been one of accommodating the past and future trajectories of the nation. As has been displayed quite prominently in this paper, the military made a concerted effort in the 20th century to consolidate political control by controlling culture. While the topics chosen for this particular paper were higher education, conscription, and the press, the TSK had their hands in many other aspects of everyday life in their effort to persuade public opinion in their favor. In examining these specific topics it can be seen that the TSK chose a top-down institutional form of influence that relied on exclusive bodies and little oversight. In civil-military terms, this led to a skewed public perspective and little trust of civilian leadership in comparison to that within the military. With majority public backing, the military acted for years with impunity as unelected guardians of the state. Through both mistakes made by the military and effective party politics by the Justice and Development Party, however, this ability to directly influence society has changed. Those in the military that once dominated many of the most important cultural institutions have been all but replaced and a number of the measures they put in place have vanished. In addition to this, the military has frequently been lambasted in the public for past abuses of power and plots to overthrow the democratically elected government. One would expect that this meant a new era in which military culture decreased in the public consciousness and

the pro-military attitudes of the public would fall off dramatically. The truth has been actually quite different.

What expert testimony and a number of polls show is that the Turkish civil society still remains decidedly positive about the military despite a long history of coups and abuses (with a strong caveat that there is polarization). With the apparent failure of Erdogan's soft power policies in the case of Syria³¹⁶, it can be expected that the public will only look further to the military for protection against the horror across the border. From a cultural perspective, this has meant the continuation of many attitudes about military policy and many of the same cultural norms that existed a decade ago when the military was far more powerful in domestic politics. The defining political development in Turkey has been the emergence of a powerful civilian executive with numerous powers but with culture this executive has had to be far more accommodating when it comes to the military past. He has, in the same way with all political institutions, exerted control over the decision-making process. Despite this, the narrative of these institutions has decidedly pro-military with many of the same cultural norms being expressed. A political pragmatist in many regards and with full knowledge of the link in Turkish identity to the military, Erdogan has adopted all cultural impacts of the military that do not threaten his power. While he has worked consistently to decry any domestic involvement, he has repeatedly lauded the service of those in the lower ranks of the TSK. The ability of the prime minister and largely the public to differentiate between the actions of flag officers and the common soldier was an interesting caveat to these findings. Between the media censorship, education policies, or the consistent support for conscription, the leadership of the AKP has made sure to prop up the military in the view of the Turkish public now that the generals are no longer pulling the strings. Support of the majority of the public, even when it is

³¹⁶“Testing Turkey: Why War in Syria could bring Ankara and Washington Closer” Soner Cagaptay, Foreign Affairs Magazine, The Council on Foreign Relations, May 28, 2013, Online

highly polarized, has always been a crucial aspect of Turkish statism and continuing a nation mythos of militarism is a chief component of this. The AKP has known this and knows that contributing to this militarism to a certain degree is a way of legitimizing their government. All those following Turkish politics can expect the continuation of this military support and protection from cultural damage even when it directly contradicts aspirations such as European Union membership.

Extrapolating the current trends in higher education, conscription, the press, it seems that the Turkish military will long remain ever important in cultural consciousness. In education, this will mean the continuation of formal state controls over universities and a highly centralized model of state education for the foreseeable future. One can expect to have Turkish students exposed to triumphant military exploits and the hero worship of certain figures like Ataturk. Given the rise of globalized media (especially in the form of social media) and the increasing irrelevance of military actions in Turkish foreign policy, it remains to be seen whether or not Turkish youth will continue to be persuaded by these selective presentations of national history. A more nuanced approach that accounts for the triumphs and many failures of the military is a more desirable track for Turkish students, especially those in the intellectual elite of university students.

Conscription also appears to be destined to continue a strong and untouchable presence within formal Turkish politics. Socialization against dissent as well as formal controls on public debate of the subject will prove hard-pressed into the psyche of civic society. With the lack of media oversight of the abuses and military issues of conscription, any pressure for change in mandatory military service will come from outside NATO allies pushing for Turkish military modernization or from more extreme wings of Turkish politics, left wing or conservative Islamists. While a continuation of conscription, unlike the other two trends explored, does not indicate pathologies within the civil-military relations of Turkey, the lack of public debate and measures to which the

government protects the policy represents a fundamental distortion of civil society that inhibits objective control of the military as defined in Huntington's terms.

The evolution of the press remains the most troubling aspect of these findings, especially what has become the trading of one method of suppression (the military) for another (the executive). What this means from a cultural sense is that the supposed fourth estate of society will not be subject to the political whims of the empowered executive, a trend reflected in media coverage of the military. While a fair amount has come out to shame the military for coups and conspiracies to the point the once powerful media machine that was the press office of the Chief of the General Staff is silenced, a distinct tone of laudation exists with little in the way of objective oversight of military actions. This is most prominent in the areas of military acquisitions and abuses of power within the ranks. If public oversight of the military is to truly exist within Turkey, the situation will have to be much more reliant on non-formal sources of media not under the tight controls of Erdogan and his allies.

The cultural situation in Turkey is however incredibly fluid and while it may be easy to predict what the government line will be in five years, it is much harder to know if the public support for such will be the same. The military is deeply unpopular with certain segments of the population³¹⁷, Kurds and Islamists especially, and the many trials involving military officers certainly have had a small net effect. A prospective peace deal with Kurdish leadership has just been reached but with de facto autonomy in both Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan, it is hard to know what the future holds for Turkish-Kurdish relations. Turkey has always been a culture defined by threat and it seems at the current moment the threats as well as cultural heritage is enough to continue military relevance. There could be a significant shift if Turkey were to see a prolonged period of regional and domestic stability though the prospects for such remain distant. Despite these possibilities, the truth

³¹⁷ Op. cit, Sarigil 2008, p. 718

remains that in the present the government actively works to uphold many aspects of the military mythos in Turkey and seems destined to do so for some time. The implications for this in the Turkish context is the continuation of things such as current budget levels, lack of oversight, a highly obfuscated security network, and non-compliance with many requirements of the European Union.

Turkey exists as a unique nation with its own distinctive history and culture but this situation described in this paper has civil-military repercussions across a variety of nations. The transition from military autonomy to fully apolitical democratic control of the military (or as Huntington would call it objective control) is fraught with possible setbacks and undemocratic deviances. The Turkish situation in terms of culture displays one of these deviations with the incorporation of many aspects of military infallibility and influence over society except under the domain of a democratically elected civilian. While this represents significant progress toward a military accountability, many shortfalls still remain. New civilian leadership appears much more likely to accommodate certain military privileges and adopt certain aspects of militarism instead of washing away the norms of the past. The consequences for nations emerging out of long periods of military autonomy and dominance in politics is the proliferations of many democratic weaknesses in terms of accountability and an attempt by government to gain concordance from the citizenry on civil-military issues. For much of modern Turkish history it has been the TSK that has done the convincing of the citizenry but now it appears that the AKP has taken that mantle and is using its full political might to keep fighting for a uniquely Turkish militarism.

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THE RIGHTS OF TURKISH WOMEN
By Midshipman Shannon Cutbber, United States Naval Academy

I am a woman. I am a citizen of the United States of America. I am a member of the U.S. Navy. I live a life that would have been unimaginable several decades ago. I live in a man's world and am learning what that entails. I see the responsibility and opportunities that the American legal system has granted me. I feel the pressure from myself and society to fill my role as a woman, a nurturer, a wife, and, eventually, a mother. I want these things, but I also want to create an identity for myself separate from this image of caretaker. I want to lead. I want to create. I want to impress. These feelings are not unique to me. People from all walks of life strive to balance their professional and personal lives so that they can be successful in both realms. Although I struggle with this balance, I recognize that I am free to choose which ever path I want. I am going to be an Officer of the United States Navy and hopefully someday a mother as well. Can all women around the world say that they have this type of opportunity?

When I went to Turkey, I had many preconceived notions of what the role of Turkish women would be. I predicted that the majority of women would be covered and publicly devout Muslims. This was not the case. Turkey has what one reporter referred to as an oral ban on wearing a headscarf in public places. Turkish law does not actually ban the wearing of headscarves specifically, but does include vague rules on what can be worn in public areas. These laws have been interpreted such that wearing headscarves in public institutions is illegal. The ban was a measure taken by Mustafa Kemal in the 1920s to push Turkey towards secularism. Mustafa Kemal, given the name Ataturk, or father of the Turks, wanted to ensure that Turkey did not come under the influence of political Islam. Another preconceived idea that I had about Turkish women was that there would be few female Turks who had received their college degree. This was also an untrue assumption. During the ALLIES 2013 Joint Research Project (JRP) to Turkey, we visited several universities in both Istanbul and Ankara. By observing the campus and talking to both male and

female professors, we found that the number of female and male students in higher education was very similar. So, upon arriving in Turkey I made two observations that seemed very important. The first observation was that Turkish women are not forced to be covered in public, which would indicate that they do not feel pressure to lead a religious and conservative lifestyle. The second observation was that Turkish women have the same opportunity as men to attend college and further their education. Both observations serve as evidence that Turkish women and men are given equal education opportunities and that women have the freedom to pursue the lifestyle of their choosing.

Since the secular reforms of Ataturk in the 1920s, men and women have been legal equals. However, this legal equality is not always apparent when viewing Turkish society. One female reporter we spoke to stated that men and women were legal equals in Turkey; someone just forgot to let the men know. Looking closer at the two points made above in regard to the headscarf ban and women's higher education, there are some disconcerting facts. When I first saw the impact of the headscarf ban, I viewed it as a positive societal factor. Islam can be used as a force to normalize the oppression of women and as an excuse to cover them and control them. When one walks through the streets of Istanbul or any metropolitan city in Turkey, the fact that you see uncovered women gives the impression that women do not feel societal pressure to conform to the ideals of womanhood dictated by Islamic doctrine. Because it is illegal for women in Turkey to cover in public spaces, they cannot be pressured by family or society to do so. In one light this can be viewed as a positive consequence of the ban. Upon closer reflection, it is clear that the ban itself violates women's freedom of choice. The government's forbidding women to wear a headscarf in public restricts their religious freedom and limits how they can express their faith. Through the interviews conducted during the ALLIES JRP, I saw that the majority of professors and journalists that we interviewed were of the opinion that women should be allowed to cover if they choose. One

professor from Istanbul's Kadir Has University stated that if women cannot cover in public, they cannot demonstrate that they are good Muslims.³¹⁸ This is where political correctness must be placed aside. If covering makes a woman a good Muslim, must she be a good Muslim in order to be valued as a good woman? Does a Turkish woman have to be Muslim in order to be considered moral? So which is the lesser evil, banning the headscarf or allowing women to cover and risking a conservative shift in Turkish society that aligns with restrictive Islamic ideals? One female journalist we interviewed stated that she already feels societal pressure to be a "good woman," which involves settling down and getting married.³¹⁹ She feels that lifting the ban will increase the pressure placed on women to conform and cover in public. These are the vicious problems that the headscarf ban presents. It is one of the more apparent and publicized women's rights issues in Turkey and demonstrates the unique nature of the topic. When discussing the rights of women in Turkey, one must recognize the several layers of the issue. One has to establish a balance between giving women freedom of choice and ensuring that women do not feel pressure from Islamic elements.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's current Prime Minister, has been pursuing an increasingly conservative agenda. Several of the individuals that we interviewed stated that this shift was concerning because it might work to increase the influence of religion in Turkish society. If this happens, it is possible that Turkish women will be the victims of such an occurrence. Like all strong societal forces, Islam can become an oppressive force if it is too radicalized. Islam has the potential to cage women, as some practiced forms of extremist Islam place women's worth beneath the worth of a man and force them to submit to servitude. Currently many women in Turkey do not feel the bonds of religion holding them back. They dress as they please, work in offices alongside men, are well educated, and are well respected. This climate needs to remain in Turkey. Women need to

³¹⁸ Surhat Guvenc, interview by 2013 ALLIES Team, July 1, 2013, Professor of International Relations and Military History at Istanbul's Kahdar University.

³¹⁹ Tulan Daloglu, interview by 2013 ALLIES Team, July 9, 2013, Journalist for Al-Monitor.

continue to climb the ranks in business, politics- all leadership positions. If there is a strong conservative shift in society towards political Islam the number of women in Turkey's workforce may decline, depending on the extremism of that shift. A professor at Bogazici University in Istanbul stated that many of the covered girls in her classes do not continue on into the workforce after they receive their degree.³²⁰ She commented that they simply go to college because it is available to them and do not have plans of using their schooling to pursue a career. According to this professor, the trend among many of these women is that once they receive their degree, they then return home and marry.³²¹ That is not to say that wanting to be a wife and a mother is a decision for which these girls should be condemned. As long as these girls are choosing that path for themselves, then it is perfectly acceptable. The issue arises when that is the only option that they believe they have. If you raise a young girl to believe that she will be a servant to her husband, then you will end up with women who gladly put aside their own desires so that they can fill the only role that they have ever known. By making the disempowerment of women normal in society, you ensure that you create a population of obedient wives. This is a future that Turkey must be wary of. If political Islam permeates society to a high enough degree, the legal equality between men and women might remain the same, but in practice the equality between men and women will erode.

Looking at the observation of females in higher education, if we revisit the information expressed above about the trend among covered women at the university and their lack of ambition in pursuing careers after graduation, we see that even though females do reach college, they are still lacking any substantial representation in leadership positions. Men dominate the upper echelons of power within Turkey, meaning that it will also be men who write the laws, negotiate trade agreements, and make decision that carry any significance in Turkey. If the government does push a

³²⁰ Interview by 2013 ALLIES Team, July 2, 2013, Professor at Bogazici University.

³²¹ Ibid.

more conservative agenda that becomes restrictive toward women, there will be little legitimate opposition from women because there are simply not enough of them in positions of authority. Turkey is a democracy, and more than fifty percent of the population supports Erdoğan, but the cause for this may be that there is no opposition party in which the Turkish people can put their faith. Erdoğan belongs to the Justice and Development party, also known as the AKP. In Turkish politics there is not currently another party popular enough to challenge the power of the AKP. So the Turks accept the AKP because there is no one else that can conceivably replace it. Since the AKP is not threatened by another Turkish party, there is less of an institutional check on the government. Without legitimate checks upon its power, the AKP can conceivably put through any agenda that it wants. As we have seen with the Gezi Park protests, the Turkish minority groups do have the power to come together and limit the actions of Erdoğan's government. However, they do not have any figure of authority to rally behind so their capability to bring about political change is weakened. They serve as a defensive tool instead of an offensive organization. It is consoling to know that the minority groups in Turkey were able to put their differences aside in order to oppose the actions of the government. It seems logical to assume that a good number of those groups would react similarly if the government began to pursue policies that infringed on the rights of women. The disturbing aspect of the Gezi Park protests is the disproportionate force that the police used in response to the protestors. One student that we interviewed who is involved with the ongoing conflict described how the police aimed tear gas shells at civilians and used excessive force to subdue the protestors. This callousness shows that if the Turkish government was set on enacting certain policies, it would be able to combat any resistance from the populace through violence by their police force.

Since the 1920s and Atatürk's rise to power, the Turkish military has been the vanguard of secularism. The military's influence has been increasingly waning, and many view it as a closeted

force. The military has been pushed back to the barracks and the government has been absorbing the power and influence that the military has lost. For example Timur Kuran states that, a “2010 constitutional amendment allowing military officials to be tried in civilian courts contributed to the gradual loosening of restrictions on Erdoğan’s authority. More than 400 generals have been imprisoned for allegedly plotting coups, in many cases on the basis of patently fabricated evidence. Erdoğan has also misused the legal system to stifle the media and repress citizens’ freedom of expression.”³²² Thus, the Turkish government has lost the major opposition that it once faced, clearing the way for the government to manipulate policies as it sees fit. This again highlights the precarious nature of women’s rights in Turkey. The government claims to be democratic. Yet, it is a party with Islamic roots. The AKP could change what is perceived as normal in Turkey. It is a democracy run by men, and it could be a democracy run by men for men, which some would argue it already has become. The issue of women’s rights has already been made a political issue with the headscarf ban and other policies in regard to the freedoms of women. If the Turkish military continues to be irrelevant in the Turkish power sphere, then secularism will lose its greatest champion and protector. In the past, the military stepped in and staged coups in order to protect the secular legacy of Mustafa Kemal. They have overthrown several governments and were an omnipresent force that kept politicians in check. Without this force in place, there is the very real potential for the government to move Turkey away from a secular ideal. If this happened, the rights of women in Turkey would change. The social norms would change and resemble the agenda of the government. Based on the actions of the present government and prime minister, this could mean an incorporation of political Islam in Turkish politics and culture. There is a broad range of possible transformations that Turkish society could undergo. The shift from secularism could simply

³²² Timur Kuran, “[Political Islam’s Loss of Democratic Legitimacy.](http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/political-islam-s-retreat-from-pluralism-and-legitimacy-by-timur-kuran#iGrIrGQ0LOFTMqUw.99)” [Project Syndicate. August 2, 2013.](http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/political-islam-s-retreat-from-pluralism-and-legitimacy-by-timur-kuran#iGrIrGQ0LOFTMqUw.99) <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/political-islam-s-retreat-from-pluralism-and-legitimacy-by-timur-kuran#iGrIrGQ0LOFTMqUw.99>.

manifest itself in conservative dress for women and a surge of religious fervor in society. It appears that this religious fervor has already taken hold in Turkey, and there “is now one mosque for every 350 people in Turkey -- and one hospital for every 60,000.”³²³ Looking at the extreme possibility, the shift could also entail the end of legal equality between men and women. If one looks at other countries where political Islam is a strong political force, it is easy to see the degradation of women’s rights. The enactment of sharia law makes women second class citizens. If this happened in Turkey, the forward progress that Turkish women have made in education and the work force would be erased from society. If Turkey d to remain secular it is vital that the military reclaims some of its old power and presence so that it can successfully restrict the conservative agenda of the government. If the Turkish military regains some the authority it once had, Turkey will remain a secular state, and the legal equality of women will not be changed. The military should not have the power to control all aspects of the government, but it must be allowed to have enough clout to act as an institutional check. Therefore the military must find a way to continue to be a significant player in Turkish affairs. If the military loses all influence in society, then the security of women is threatened.

The military is not the only guardian of secularism and the rights of individuals. Various sectors of the Turkish populace would protest if the government infringed on the rights of citizens. As discussed earlier, the Gezi Park protests demonstrated the ability of the Turkish people to rise up in retaliation to the actions of the government. The public could protest, but one must wonder if they could accomplish real change. Going back to the same concern voiced previously, if the Turkish government enacted slow reform and gradually changed the Turkish idea of the role of women, it might not take long to take legal action to change the role of women in Turkish society.

³²³ Daniel Steinworth, “Erdogan the Misogynist: Turkish Prime Minister Assaults Women's Rights.” Spiegel Online International, June 12, 2012. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/turkish-prime-minister-erdogan-targets-women-s-rights-a-839568.html>.

One must follow the following train of thought. Turkey is a Democracy. Turkey is also more than 95 percent Muslim. Some practiced forms of radical Islamic doctrine put women in a second class citizen role. Due to its geography, Turkey is influenced and heavily involved in the issues plaguing the Middle East. Looking at this train of thought, who is to say that Turkey will not adopt the socially restrictive views that some of its neighbors have towards women? If political Islam takes hold in Turkey, the government could justify their actions by saying that it has been done in the name of religion. The mindset of the Turkish populace would then be at a cross roads. Do they follow their government and religion, or do they defend legal equality? This is the extreme possibility, but it is still a very real one. The perseverance of the government officials to impose their own ideological views on society would be the determinant factor if this outcome ever occurs. The Turkish military must regain a limited, but still relevant, amount of authority. If the government does betray the secular path that Turkey has been on for almost one hundred years, then the military can step in even if they do so in a different manner than they have in the past. It is essential that the military maintains itself as an acting force in Turkish society. If it does not, Turkey as we know it will cease to exist.

It is hard to image such a societal transformation occurring in a country. One walks down a street in any of Turkey's metropolitan cities and sees women dressed in all types of fashions, working in many different fields. How then could society progress backwards to the point where women are once again confined to role of obedient wife and attentive mother? There are signs that foreshadow this societal degradation. For the past year, the Turkish Parliament has been attempting to revise the constitution. As of late a new constitution has not been agreed upon by the Turkish government, but one of the major goals of the prime minister through the revision is to strengthen the role of the Turkish presidency. Some skeptics predict that Erdoğan's true desire for constitutional reform is to increase presidential power so that when his term as prime minister is

over he will be able to continue to run the country as president. If this comes to fruition, Erdoğan will be in a position to continue his “ increasingly authoritarian tendencies — such as alarming crackdowns on press freedom and social media — and a more religiously conservative social agenda, viewed by many as a threat to Turkey’s secular heritage.”³²⁴ There are other trends that foreshadow the decrease of the security of women’s rights. The number of women in Turkey’s political leadership is low. For example, the “representation of Turkish women in the national parliament is 14.3 percent.”³²⁵ There are not enough females in positions of power to work as a strong opposition force to a politically spurred decrease in women’s rights. The number of women in the Turkish work force is decreasing with the “employment rate among women in Turkey...currently at 29 percent, the lowest among all 34 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).”³²⁶ Turkish women have a low representation in the political and economically prospering realms of Turkish affairs. To counter this, women should strive to become more involved in Turkey’s leadership and business worlds. They must be assured the legal opportunities to do so and should be given the opportunity to live in a culture that embraces the concept of gender equality at all levels in society.

One impetus for Turkey to make democratic reforms is their desire to join the EU. Turkey applied for full membership to the European Union in 1987, and negotiations to achieve this goal began in October of 2005.³²⁷ Turkey is an EU candidate country and has opened up 13 chapters.³²⁸ In order to become a member of the EU, Turkey must meet their human rights standards, which

³²⁴ Muftah, Constitutional Reform in Turkey.

³²⁵ Elcin Poyrazlar, “No Country for Women,” Huffington Post. May 24, 2012.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elcin-poyrazlar/no-country-for-women_b_1538775.html.

³²⁶ Daniel Steinvorth, “Erdogan the Misogynist: Turkish Prime Minister Assaults Women’s Rights.”

³²⁷ “EU enlargement: The next seven,” BBC, July 1, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11283616>

“Turkey’s E.U. Bid, The New York Times, June 24, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/25/opinion/turkeys-eu-bid.html?_r=0.

³²⁸ Ibid.

has “encouraged Turkey to make important political and economic reforms.”³²⁹ This pressure to abide by EU standards has driven Turkish policies to take on a more democratic tone. Since it applied for full membership to the European Union, it has tried to reach that goal by embodying to some degree the values and standards present in EU countries. Essentially, Turkey has been under the microscope since it applied for EU membership. Any undemocratic or excessively harsh policy hinders their prospect of becoming a member, which has overall legally benefitted the minorities in Turkey. However, the Gezi Park protests that took place in June and July of 2013 have revealed to the EU the measures the Turkish government is willing to take to exert its control over the Turks. Under the authority of Erdoğan, riot police used excessive force to try to clear the park and end the protests. The aggressive response from the Turkish police that Erdoğan has sanctioned has upset many European leaders. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, was “‘appalled at the very tough’ response by the prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in ordering riot police to clear central Istanbul of thousands of protesters.”³³⁰ The prime minister’s harsh action has pushed back Turkey’s acceptance as a member of the EU because it does not live up to the human rights standards set by the organization. In the European Union the governments of member countries are to adopt 35 criteria, which “include a respect for civil rights, freedom of the press and other democratic values, as well as compliance with free-market principles.”³³¹ It seems that Turkey’s prospects of joining the EU are “being dashed because of the government’s ruthless response to three weeks of street protests amid worsening friction between Ankara and Berlin.”³³²

³²⁹ “Turkey’s E.U. Bid,” *The New York Times*, June 24, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/25/opinion/turkeys-eu-bid.html?_r=0.

³³⁰ Ian Traynor, “Turkey’s EU membership bid falters as diplomatic row with Germany deepens,” *The Guardian*, June 21, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/21/turkey-eu-membership-falters-row-germany>.

³³¹ “Turkey’s E.U. Bid,” *The New York Times*, June 24, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/25/opinion/turkeys-eu-bid.html?_r=0.

³³² Ian Traynor, “Turkey’s EU membership bid falters as diplomatic row with Germany deepens.”

The desire to work towards Turkey's becoming an EU member is dying within both the EU and the Turkish political leadership. Erdoğan has become frustrated with the slow progress towards EU membership and after the union "criticized his authoritarian ways, he denounced the union as 'anti-democratic' and said he would no longer recognize the European Parliament."³³³ The prime minister's feelings are shared in Turkey and "Ankara has taken to warning that the EU needs Turkey more than it needs Europe."³³⁴ If Turkey stops working towards EU membership, it will lose one of the forces that was pushing it towards a democratic agenda. The Turkish government will no longer have to worry about their policies and actions damaging Turkey's chances of gaining EU membership. This is a threat to the security and rights of minority groups in Turkey. In particular, if Turkey stops working towards EU membership, the security of the rights of women will be threatened. If Turkey's ties to the west are severed, the potential for their ties to the east may increase as a result. This increases the opportunity for political Islam to strengthen in Turkey. The move away from EU admission foreshadows a widening in the gender gap in Turkish culture and politics.

The Turkish government has the potential to drastically shift Turkish politics towards a more conservative agenda. The Prime Minister, Erdoğan, will likely be the figure to lead this shift. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan started his political career with the Islamic Welfare Party and was elected as Istanbul's mayor in 1994.³³⁵ In 2003, Erdoğan became Turkey's prime minister, this time running as a member of the Justice and Development Party.³³⁶ He has maintained his position of prime minister since 2003, and his "government steered the country out of economic crisis to usher in Turkey's

³³³ Turkey's E.U. Bid," *The New York Times*.

³³⁴ Ian Traynor, "Turkey's EU membership bid falters as diplomatic row with Germany deepens."

³³⁵ "Recep Tayyip Erdogan," Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, Encyclopedia Britannic Inc., 2013, Web. 13 Aug. 2013, <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/913988/Recep-Tayyip-Erdogan>>.

³³⁶ Ibid .

most prosperous period, and introduced reforms that have quashed the power of the army.”³³⁷ When “the governing Justice and Development Party of Prime Minister [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#) came to power in 2002, determined for Turkey to join the European Union, women’s rights were a priority. Laws that discriminated against women were removed. Others were added: rape within marriage was criminalized, and life sentences became possible for perpetrators of so-called honor killings.”³³⁸ This demonstrates that when the government was focused on becoming a full EU member, its policies emphasized the protection of women’s rights. However, the focus on gender equality diminished and Erdoğan’s actions have made many question the role that he wishes to cast women in.

In the spring of 2012, thousands of women protested against the government of the prime minister “after he announced his intention to crack down on abortions and Caesarean section births,” which sparked debates on the appropriate role of women in Turkey.³³⁹ Comments made by the prime minister point to his misogynist nature. For example, in 2010 in front of an audience of representatives of women’s organizations at Istanbul’s Dolmabache Palace Erdoğan stated that he did not “believe in equality between men and women.”³⁴⁰ In 2011 on International Women’s Day, “Erdoğan talked about violence against women and statistics stating that so-called honor killings had increased 14-fold in Turkey from 2002 to 2009. But that, said the premier, was only because more murders were being reported, and that there are basically few acts of violence against women.”³⁴¹ This statement from the prime minister completely undermines the issues that Turkish women face. Instead of addressing the issue of honor killings, he dismisses it and does not identify the need for a

³³⁷ “Leaked email says Turkish PM Erdogan has cancer and just two years to live,” Al Arabiya News, March 6, 2012, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/03/06/198975.html>.

³³⁸ Daniel Etter, “Women See Worrisome Shift in Turkey,” The New York Times, April 25, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/26/world/europe/women-see-worrisome-shift-in-turkey.html>

³³⁹ Daniel Steinvorth, “Erdogan the Misogynist: Turkish Prime Minister Assaults Women's Rights.”

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

public conversation on why the killings are taking place. The prime minister has also begun to voice his opinion that Turkish women should have “at least three children each” and has made the argument that “birth control was advocated by those who wanted to weaken Turkey.”³⁴² If these policies came to fruition, Turkish women would effectively be locked in the house, “given that state childcare facilities are practically absent.”³⁴³ Erdoğan wants women to embrace motherhood, but does not advocate an increase in the facilities, such as state childcare, that would allow them to pursue both a career and a family.

The Turkish government could redefine the role of women in Turkey, as the prime ministers recent actions have shown. Elcin Poyrazlar, a Turkish blogger for the Huffington Post, states that women in Turkey “are encouraged to assume traditional roles and women who want to go after their careers are generally not seen positively. And the dominant male and conservative political culture is certainly not in their favor.”³⁴⁴ Poyrazlar also writes that “in the last ten years, violence against women in Turkey has increased by up to 1400 percent....violence and discrimination against women can be found at any level of society, educated or not. On certain streets of Istanbul, if you are wearing revealing clothes, you can easily be harassed -- and in case of rapes, the judge may decide that you seduced the rapist.”³⁴⁵ Poyrazlar writes that this “New Turkey” is diminishing the rights that women were once able to exercise and predicts that gender inequality will become more dramatic with time. As stated above, violence against women in Turkey has increased by 1400 percent in the last ten years. Erdoğan’s party, the Justice and Development Party, or the AKP, has been in power since 2002- over those same ten years. The AKP was born from the success of the Welfare Party in

³⁴² “Time for Turkish women's voices to be heard,” Aljazeera, 17 June 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/2011614125644439453.html>

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Elcin Poyrazlar, “No Country for Women,” Huffington Post, May 24, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elcin-poyrazlar/no-country-for-women_b_1538775.html.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

the 1990s, which was “an Islamic party founded in 1983.”³⁴⁶ The Welfare Party was “buoyed by the increasing role of Islam in Turkish life in the 1980s and ‘90s-evidence of changes in dress and appearance, segregation of the sexes, the growth of Islamic schools and banks, and support for Sufi orders- the WP won an overwhelming victory in the 1995 parliamentary elections and become the first Islamic party ever to win a general election in Turkey.”³⁴⁷ Turkish politics have been shaped by the fact that the AKP is an Islamist party. Turkey’s secular nature has been marred, making it necessary for the military to take back some of the authority that it once had.

Islam is praised as a peaceful religion. However, as with all religions and faiths, there are many different practiced forms of Islam. The extreme and radical sects of Islam are the ones that this paper is addressing. In some of these practiced forms of Islam, the killing of nonbelievers and the oppression of women are elements of the religion. There are doctrinal issues with all religions, and one point that makes it impossible for some forms of Islam to be incorporated into a government that respects the rights of minorities is the rigid interpretation of the Koran. Some believers do not think that the interpretations of the Koran can vary; everything must be taken literally. This is the root of the problem. Islam, when viewed in this light has not evolved since its birth. Therefore, it has not modernized in order to be able to coexist with Western ideals of freedom. This leads to a clash of societies. Women in particular are hurt by this clash. They want to pursue their freedoms that their counterparts in the West enjoy. They are restrained, however, by extreme Islamic theology, which decrees that they are their husband’s property and a servant to the men in their family. Women in Islamic societies are covered, which, depending on an individual’s desires, can be a violation of their freedom of choice. Ayan Hirsi Ali, a Somali woman who fled from her family to escape a forced marriage, wrote that the “veil deliberately marks women as

³⁴⁶ “Justice and Development Party,” Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2013, Web. 13 Aug. 2013, <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1018363/Justice-and-Development-Party?anchor=ref1103621>>.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

private and restricted property, nonpersons. The veil sets women apart from men and apart from the world; it restrains them, confines them, grooms them for docility. A mind can be cramped just as a body may be, and a Muslim veil blinkers both your vision and your destiny. It is the mark of a kind of apartheid, not the domination of a race but of a sex.”³⁴⁸ Ayan Hirsi Ali uses her experience of living within Islam to describe the suffocating effect it had on her rights. She explains the dangers of extremist Islam in regard to the freedoms that a woman has over her own body and mind. She also explains why fewer Muslim women have spoken out against the oppression that they feel. Ali writes that it “is easy to be disgruntled if you are denied rights and freedoms to which you feel entitled. But if you are not coherent, if you cannot put into words what it is that displeases you and why it is unfair and should change, then you are dismissed as an unreasonable whiner. You may be lectured about perseverance and patience, life as a test, the need to accept the higher wisdom of others.”³⁴⁹ If it is normal in a society for women to be pushed to the side and governed by men, it is less likely that anyone will protest against the wrongs done to them. Violations of freedom will be perceived as normal, as everyday occurrences. This is one path that the Turkish government could decide to take. Using religion as justification as a means to “honor” women, the equality between men and women that has been legally established would be lost. Crimes such as honor killings, domestic abuse, and female circumcision can all be justified through radical Islam. This is the extreme outcome, one in which severe religious beliefs are allowed to permeate all areas of society. These acts of violence are not unheard of in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. Turkish society must preemptively act against any force that could open the door for the ideals and acts such as these from finding a domestic audience.

³⁴⁸ Ayaan [Hirsi Ali](#), *Nomad: From Islam to America: A Personal Journey Through the Clash of Civilizations*, Free Press, May 18, 2010.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Turkey is a unique country in the Middle East because it has been a secular nation since the end of WWI. The reforms of the 1920s have shaped Turkey into the country it is today. The pillar of secularism that modern Turkish politics and society were founded may be in jeopardy in the very near future. As a direct effect, the rights of Turkish women are also not secure. In order to remedy this and allow Turkey to work toward economic growth, domestic peace, and a just government that upholds the rights of its people, Turkey's secular nature must be protected. This is again why the military must not allow itself to fade into the shadows of Turkish affairs. A cooperative relationship between the government and the military must be formed and nurtured. A balance of power that allows for institutional checks is necessary in order to keep individual rights and peace alive in Turkey. Although it is not guaranteed that an Islamic society will be oppressive towards women, there is still the danger that a radical form of Islam could take root in society if not pushed back. In order to combat this, Turkey must foster a positive relationship between the military and the Turkish civilian sector. The Turkish populace has to trust the military so that they can recognize a source of authority in Turkey that is not solely the AKP. This balance of power between the government and the military will serve as a bulwark for Turkish women's rights.

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