

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Turkish Armed Forces and Civil-military Relations in Turkey after the 15 July 2016 Coup Attempt

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This article places the 15 July coup attempt in Turkey into a wider context by examining the historical role of the Turkish military in politics, developments in civil-military relations since the turn of the millennium, and finally the implications of the recent coup attempt for relations between the military, the government, and society. It is argued that under Turkey's new "strong" presidential system civilian political control and oversight of the armed forces will be strengthened, but there will not be any civilian democratic control and oversight as we usually understand this concept.

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Military coups in Turkey were supposed to be a thing of the past, a bad memory from the darkest days of the country's modern history. Nevertheless, on the evening of 15 July 2016 units from the Turkish armed forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri* or TSK) attempted to take control of the state and depose the elected civilian government of President Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* or AKP).

In this article an attempt is made to place the 15 July coup attempt in a wider context by examining the historical role of the Turkish military in politics, developments in civil-military relations since the turn of the millennium, and finally the implications of the recent coup attempt for relations between the military, the government, and society.

## The 15 July Coup Attempt

Late in the evening of 15 July 2016 units from the Turkish military attempted to take control of the government, state institutions, national media, and key points of communication in the country. Operating under the name "The Peace at Home Council" (*Yurtta Sulh Konseyi*), the coup organizers declared on national television that the TSK had seized control and was now governing Turkey with a view to reinstating the constitutional order, human rights and freedoms, rule of law, and general security.

However, within hours it became clear that the Chief of Defense and other top commanders did not support the coup attempt, and that the civilian government had not actually been deposed. Both President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım denounced the coup and assured the population that it was about to fail. Erdogan also encouraged people to take to the streets and resist the coup attempt – which they soon did in significant numbers. Crowds of civilians managed to force soldiers from the streets, and the police and security forces went into action and started to round up military officers suspected of participating in the coup attempt.

Even though the coup attempt was brief, it was more violent than any other military takeover in Turkish history. Previous military coups involved few confrontations between military personnel and ordinary citizens. This time, clashes between soldiers and civilians left almost 250 dead and many more injured. Moreover, the coup faction used fighter jets and helicopters to attack such key institutions as the National Assembly, the police headquarters, and the National Intelligence Service (MIT) headquarters in Ankara. Rather than acting in defense of the Turkish state and nation, the coup plotters appeared to be attacking the state and national institutions. The psychological impact on Turkey and its people of such conduct from their own military forces can hardly be exaggerated.

The coup plotters acted outside the chain of command, and the top military leadership both resisted the coup attempt and remained loyal to President Erdogan and the civilian government throughout the course of events. Judging from arrests and detentions in the wake of the coup attempt, the leaders were high-ranking officers at levels immediately under the top commanders – i.e. in the ranks of generals and colonels. Units from all branches of the military were involved, although the paramilitary gendarmerie and the air force seem to have been more heavily involved than other branches.

Turkey has not experienced a coup attempt of this nature since the 1960s, when junior officers initiated one successful and two failed coup attempts. Since then, the top military leadership has kept tight control of the officers' corps precisely to avoid such unauthorized action from within its own ranks. The 15 July coup attempt revealed deep divisions within the officers' corps and demonstrated that the chief of defense and other top commanders lacked crucial internal control over their subordinates (Haugom 2016: 3).

The coup attempt was soon blamed on Hizmet, a movement headed by the preacher Fetullah Gülen who has lived in exile in the U.S. since 1999.<sup>1</sup> Based on numerous interviews with former Turkish military officers by this author, it seems certain that there were many Gülen supporters among the Turkish military officers before the recent coup attempt. However, we do not know for certain how many officers actually belonged to the Gülen fraternity, or to which extent these officers participated in the coup attempt (Haugom 2016, 3).

President Erdogan had previously demanded hundreds of Gülenist officers removed from their posts, but the military leadership resisted such a drastic move, fearing the effects on cohesion and morale in the officers' corps. Nevertheless, a major reshuffle including the discharge of Gülenist officers was expected in early August 2016. If officers connected to the Gülen movement were indeed a driving force behind the coup attempt, the fear of being discharged (at best) or sentenced to life in jail (at worst) could have sped up the coup and explain why the coup plan seemed so ill prepared and badly executed (Haugom 2016: 3–4).

Even if Gülenist officers were a driving force behind the coup attempt, it seems likely that it had a broader base than this in the officers' corps. The name of the council set up by the officers and the language used in the public declaration both have a distinct Kemalist ring to them. In addition, the high number of officers who had to leave the TSK after the coup attempt indicates that more than a faction of Gülenists was involved. That there were high-ranking Gülenist officers in the Turkish military seems beyond doubt, but the idea that almost half of its generals and admirals were affiliated to Hizmet seems far-fetched. More likely, the coup organizers were a mixed group of Gülenists and other officers, who for some reason wanted to get rid of Erdogan and the AKP government or were opportunistically looking for promotion in the military system or appointment to positions in a future military-led government (Gurcan 2016: 1).

Regardless of the ideological persuasion and motivation of the coup plotters, their actions can be seen as an expression of a mentality with deep roots in the Turkish military. According to this 'traditionalist' mentality, military officers have a right and duty to intervene when the interests of the Turkish state and nation come under threat – even if this means unseating democratically elected governments (Haugom 2016: 4). In order to understand the background for this mentality, a brief look at the historical role of the TSK in politics is in order.

## The Turkish Armed Forces and Politics

The military has always had a central place in the Turkish state and society. In Turkish security culture the dominant discourse has traditionally centered on the preservation of the state, and the main mission of the military has been to defend the state against external and internal enemies (Karaosmanoglu 2011: 259). This legacy from Ottoman times was continued in the modern Turkish republic after 1923. In this paradigm, the state takes priority over the government, and the mission of the military is to defend the state (but not necessarily the government). In Turkish political culture the state has been seen as representing stability and continuity, while the government has been associated with fluctuating political power (Aydinli 2009). The military, in this context, has represented the state and been perceived by Turkish society as an element and

<sup>1</sup> Hizmet, or the Gülen movement, is a religious fraternity preaching the unity of Islam and modern science. The movement was previously known for running numerous high-quality schools and universities in Turkey and around the world as well as media businesses and non-profit organizations. Many Gülenists have become successful businessmen and later become part of and contributed financially to the global network. On the other hand, Hizmet is known for strong internal discipline and for a culture of unquestioning loyalty and obedience to its leader. For a long time Fetullah Gülen was a close ally to President Erdogan and the AKP, making it possible for Hizmet to build a strong presence both in the state apparatus and the private business sector in Turkey. However, in 2013 the Gülen movement became too strong and unruly for the government's liking and was accused of plotting to seize state power. Today Hizmet is officially designated as a terrorist organization in Turkey under the acronym FETÖ and stands accused of masterminding the 15 July 2016 military coup attempt.

a guarantor of stability. Its prestige and status in Turkey have at times reached almost mystical proportions (Narli 2009: 61).

According to the late Turkish political leader Süleyman Demirel, "In Turkey, God first created the military. Then he realized his mistake, and created the Turkish people as an afterthought" (quoted in Göcek 2011: 102). During his political career Demirel was unseated twice as prime minister in military coups. The TSK's approach to politics may seem paradoxical to an outsider. On the one hand, since the early days of the republic the TSK has distanced itself from the political process and strongly discouraged its officers from engaging in any form of political activity. On the other hand, the military has perceived itself as a defender of Kemalism, the state ideology of the modern Turkish republic, and a driving force behind the country's modernization and Westernization. Rather than being part of politics, the military has positioned itself outside and above the civilian government, but with a clear stake in outcomes of the political decision-making process.

In its approach to politics, the TSK has tended to concentrate on security and defense policy and rarely attempted to influence the civilian government in other areas. However, the TSK's security concept, following the legacy from Ottoman times, has been broadly defined to include both external and internal threats to the state – including perceived threats to Kemalism (Jenkins 2001: 41).

Since the first military coup in 1960, the role of the TSK in politics has largely been that of 'guardians'. Eric A. Nordlinger defines this guardian role as one through which the military seeks governmental control with the objective of preserving the *status quo* and correcting what it perceives as malpractices and deficiencies (Nordlinger 1977: 22). According to Nilüfer Narli, "the military built what A. Robin Luckham defines as a 'covert guardianship model' that permitted it to use various forms of intervention, ranging from a coup to controlling and influencing the civilian political process through formal and informal mechanisms" (Narli 2011: 215). One could say that civilian governments during much of the republican period shared power with the military. Through its role as political guardian, the military has had a powerful position in the affairs of state and been able to decide the fate of governments and politicians.

The political influence of the TSK has largely rested on its institutional autonomy within the state apparatus in Turkey, support from powerful civilian groups, and its high standing in the Turkish population.

In Turkish protocol the chief of defense has ranked as number three – below the president and the prime minister, but above the minister of national defense. Consequently, the chief of defense has reported directly to the prime minister, not to the minister of national defense, and the Turkish General Staff has performed tasks which in most Western countries fall under the responsibilities of a defense ministry – including defense policy, strategy, and planning. Competence in defense matters has therefore been concentrated within the military organization and correspondingly been lacking in the Ministry of National Defense and other parts of the civilian bureaucracy. This situation has given the TSK considerable advantage vis-à-vis the civilian government in the handling of military affairs. The institutional autonomy of the TSK has also been reinforced by the absence of any real parliamentary oversight of the armed forces and a general lack of transparency into military and security matters in Turkey.

Historically, the TSK has also enjoyed support from powerful civilian groups in the public and private sectors. Such groups have to varying degrees included members of Turkey's Kemalist establishment in the judiciary and other parts of the state bureaucracy, academia, media, and the private business sector.<sup>2</sup> However, this does not mean that the TSK has taken openly partisan positions or been allied with any particular political party or societal group. The generals have rather made and changed civilian allies according to their own goals and purposes (Sakallioglu 1997: 154).

Last, but not least, the military has had a very high standing in the Turkish population. Generally, the ties between the military and the population have been good and strong, and until the 2000s it was rare to hear or see any open criticism of the TSK. Previously known for its adherence to law and order and incorrupt ways, the military has been the most trusted institution in Turkey, scoring much better in opinion polls than any civil political organization. Moreover, military interventions in politics were largely accepted by the population as a necessity in times of national crisis.

On four occasions (1960, 1971, 1980, 1997) the military has intervened directly to change the government. Although these interventions differed greatly in terms of goals and the means used to achieve them,<sup>3</sup> all

<sup>2</sup> The support of such civilian groups became most apparent in 1997 when they openly assisted the military in ousting the coalition government led by Necmettin Erbakan.

<sup>3</sup> The interventions in 1960 and 1980 were military coups in a traditional sense with a full military takeover of government followed by a period of military rule. In 1971 and 1997, on the other hand, the military forced civilian governments to resign and replaced

were successful in the sense that the military was able to change the course of events in its own favor. Moreover, after each intervention the military leadership strengthened its influence on the political system and (to some extent) on the judicial system. From 1971 onward, one can say that the TSK became a de facto veto power in the political decision-making process (Hale 1994: 315). In the 1982 constitution and in other laws passed during the period of military rule (1980–83) the role of the TSK as a veto power became even more pronounced. Through its dominance of the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurumu* or MGK), the military leadership could in practice instruct the civilian government and overrule its decisions.

## Years of Change

It was around the year 2000 that civil-military relations in Turkey began to change. One can say that this development has gone through three main stages. The first stage consisted of institutional reforms in the early 2000s which removed the military from formal positions in government decision-making. The second was the *Ergenekon* and ‘Sledgehammer’ (*Balyoz*) legal processes starting in 2008 and 2010, respectively, which discredited and pacified the military as a factor in Turkish politics. The third and provisionally last stage was the 15 July 2016 coup attempt, which in all probability will subject the TSK to increased civilian control and oversight.

Starting in 2001, institutional reforms displaced the military from formal positions of power in the political process. Most importantly, the MGK became an advisory body under civilian government control, and the military lost its representation in government bodies that oversee higher education and the media. The TSK’s role as a veto power in government decision-making thus ended.

Institutional reforms were first and foremost driven by Turkey’s bid for membership in the European Union, a process which started in earnest after the Helsinki Summit in 1999. The EU’s criteria for membership required Turkey to undertake a number of political reforms, including the establishment of civilian supremacy and oversight of the armed forces. The passing of EU reforms was the result of a grand compromise between the major political forces in Turkey – including the military – which saw them as necessary for future membership of the union. The TSK considered EU membership an important step for Turkey to become a modern, secular, and democratic country with a strong economy and a modern army (Aydinli, Özcan & Akyaz 2006: 84–5). For the AKP government, on the other hand, the EU criteria became an important tool for reducing the political influence of the military (Özpek 2014: 6).

Withdrawal from formal positions of power did not mean that the TSK ceased to be a factor in Turkish politics. The military leadership continued to issue public announcements on subjects well outside their professional field, such as the protection of secularism and changes in education (Hale & Özbudun 2010: 88). There were also many confrontations between the TSK and the AKP government during its first period in power. The conflict came to a head in 2007 when the military together with other parts of the Kemalist establishment actively tried to prevent the AKP’s Abdullah Gül from becoming president. However, the TSK always stopped short of a direct intervention to force the hand of the government. The military leadership continued to adhere to the non-interventionist line of thinking that was inaugurated by the then Chief of Defense, General Hilmi Özkök in the early 2000s. The rationale for this new line of thinking was simple: Previous military interventions had failed to achieve the intended political goals and, at the same time, done damage both to the professional organization of the military and to the prestige of and support for the military in the Turkish population. According to Metin Heper, Turkish military leaders at the turn of the millennium therefore decided to put democracy first and respect and trust the judgment of the people as expressed through democratic elections. The military would still make its views on matters of national security known, but not act as political overseers and intervene directly in the government decision-making process (Heper 2011). This ‘reformist’ attitude to a political role of the TSK stands in contrast to the ‘traditionalist’ mentality, according to which the military has a right and duty to intervene if it finds that national interests are under threat.

Adherence to role beliefs<sup>4</sup> in military organizations is extremely difficult to measure, but it seems that the ‘reformist’ attitude became the dominant role belief among Turkish officers in the 2000s – in particular

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them with other civilian leaders who would govern the country until new elections could be held. Ideologically, military interventions have also differed. The 1960 coup had a liberal-leftist profile, while the intervention in 1971 and the 1980 coup were distinctly anti-left. The 1997 intervention, on the other hand, was made in the name of secularism against political Islam. However, all military interventions were legitimized by the military as necessary to protect the state and the project of Kemalism.

<sup>4</sup> In the narrow sense, ‘role beliefs’ refer to military conceptions of its role in politics. In a broader sense, ‘role beliefs’ include the entire complex of attitudes that define officers’ normative models of civil-military relations. Role beliefs thus include explicit and

among the senior military leadership.<sup>5</sup> This could be one explanation for why most of the top commanders and so many other high-ranking officers refused to go along with, and actively resisted, the 15 July coup attempt.

Institutional reforms during the 2000s were not limited to the political field. Judicial reforms enacted in 2006 and 2010 made it impossible for civilians to be tried in military courts in peacetime, but made it possible to try military officers in civilian courts of law. The latter law change paved the way for a number of legal cases that were to implicate scores of military officers in alleged coup plots against the government. Known under such names as *Ergenekon* and 'Sledgehammer' (*Balyoz*), these cases developed into the largest legal process in recent Turkish history, involving hundreds of people accused of crimes against the state. As a result, in 2012 over half of all Turkish admirals and one in 10 generals found themselves behind bars.

Even if the legal processes were later dismissed as fabrications orchestrated by members of the Gülen movement in the legal branches of government, these cases nevertheless served to discredit the military in the eyes of the public and largely pacified the TSK as a factor in Turkish politics. Moreover, the sentencing and subsequent discharge of so many senior officers on what was perceived as trumped-up charges threw the Turkish officers' corps into disarray and gave rise to widespread anger and resentment – directed both at the military leadership for its perceived passivity during the trials and at the Erdogan government for allowing the processes to take place. If we assume that the recent coup attempt involved more than a group of Gülenist officers, such unrest forms a possible backdrop for the attempted takeover and could help explain why it happened outside the chain of command.

*Ergenekon* and 'Sledgehammer' also served to weaken the TSK's position vis-à-vis the civilian government, and the many discharges of officers that followed in their wake made it easier for the then Prime Minister Erdogan to assert influence on senior promotions in the armed forces. In August 2011 the prime minister caused a minor crisis in civil-military relations by refusing to promote officers who stood accused of conspiracies against the state. The then Chief of Defense, General Isik Kosaner, already feeling pressured by the legal cases, resigned his post over the issue of the promotions, along with the commanders of Turkey's land, sea, and air forces. This became an important symbolic victory for Erdogan over the generals and gave the civilian government real influence on senior promotions in the TSK. Ironically, many of the officers who now stand accused of organizing the 15 July coup attempt were promoted due to reshuffles in 2011 and the following years.

A question that begs an answer is how the TSK, once a veto power and kingmaker in Turkish politics, could be weakened as a political factor in this way.

One important explanation is the increasingly strong position of the AKP in Turkish politics. The party came to power in 2002, supported by a majority in the Grand National Assembly, and enjoyed widespread political and societal support.<sup>6</sup> During the first three AKP governments (2002–11) Turkey also experienced a long period of political stability and sustained economic growth, adding to the popularity of and electoral support for the party. With such a solid support base, the AKP was gradually empowered to carry through its political program, which included the removal of the military from the political field.

Moreover, under the AKP government new religious-conservative elite groups became prominent within government institutions, the state bureaucracy, education, business, and the media. Many members of these elite groups were part of or had links to the now outlawed Gülen movement. The emergence of these new elites deprived the military of many of its former allies in state and society, thereby weakening the TSK's influence on processes in state and government (Aknur 2013: 141–42).

In addition, Turkish society had evolved in its view of the military's role as a guarantor of political stability. Even if the TSK remained the most trusted institution in the country, public opinion polls conducted throughout the 2000s clearly showed that a majority of Turks was opposed to military interventions in politics. This change in public opinion placed limitations on how forcefully the military could act vis-à-vis the civilian government without risking its high standing and legitimacy in the Turkish population (Sarigil 2011: 275). In Turkey, where the armed forces still rely on conscription to fill its personnel needs, this is no small matter.

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implicit notions of the proper relationships between civilian authorities, the armed forces, and society (Fitch 1998: 61).

<sup>5</sup> A change in role beliefs to a more 'reformist' attitude became most apparent in public statements by and interviews with the then Turkish Chief of Defense, General Hilmi Özkök (2002–06). Such a change is also confirmed in several interviews by this author with former senior military officers in Turkey.

<sup>6</sup> From the outset, the AKP was supported by a broad coalition of Islamists, religious conservatives, secular liberals, parts of the Kurdish community, pro-EU groups, and other forces seeking to change the old Kemalist system (Özpek 2014: 6).

Even if the civilian government managed to weaken the TSK as a political factor and placed some limitations on its institutional autonomy – most importantly regarding senior promotions and the management of major procurement projects – the TSK remained a relatively autonomous institution within the Turkish state apparatus. Özpek (2014) has therefore rightly noted that the changes in civil-military relations that took place after 2000 were more about a de-militarization of politics than a civilianization of civil-military ties. In other words, even if the military was weakened as a political factor, it was still not fully subjected to civilian control and oversight. For example, the TSK retained a high degree of autonomy in the education and management of its personnel, peacetime force deployment, and the allocation of budgetary resources. In addition, it continued to have significant influence in such fields as security policy, strategy, and defense planning because of its near monopoly on military expertise in the Turkish state bureaucracy.

While accepting a more withdrawn role in politics, the TSK has resisted attempts to subject the military to greater control and oversight by elected politicians. For example, the military leadership refused proposals by the EU in the early 2000s to make the chief of defense answerable to the minister of national defense rather than the prime minister. From the EU's perspective, this was seen as part of an overall attempt to increase civilian control over the armed forces by upgrading the ministry's role to include defense policy and planning. However, fearing a politicization of defense management, the TSK preferred to continue the existing arrangement in which the military was attached to the Prime Minister's Office.

For its part, the AKP long proceeded with caution in dealings with the military, fearing a reaction from the generals that could jeopardize its own position in power. The TSK's strong standing in the Turkish population also made the government hesitant about strengthening civilian control lest it could be interpreted as an attempt to weaken the military. However, at some point President Erdogan was expected to make a move to strengthen the government's control and oversight with the armed forces. The 15 July coup attempt gave the president the opportunity he needed to do so.

### **Implications of the Coup Attempt**

For the Turkish military, the 15 July coup attempt was a great national humiliation. Not only did the coup attempt demonstrate a fateful lack of internal control on part of the military leadership, but also that the military organization had been colonized by a religious fraternity determined to seize state power. The negative impact of such an event on the reputation and popular standing of the TSK is likely to be high.

Restructuring of the Turkish armed forces has taken place at a rapid pace since the coup attempt. The recent changes in civil-military relations have largely come as a result of the coup attempt and the transition from a parliamentary to a 'strong' presidential system of government in Turkey. Even if this process is still in the making, and may be subject to setbacks and reversals, the contours of a new civil-military relations regime in Turkey are becoming visible.

The chain of command at the top has been changed. The chief of defense will now be appointed directly by the president, and the General Staff will be attached to the Ministry of National Defense instead of the defunct Prime Minister's Office. In addition, the president will be able to give orders directly to the commanders of Turkey's land, air, and sea forces without having to go through any other office or authority. The Supreme Military Council (YAS) has also been relieved of many of its previous functions, leaving all major decisions concerning the armed forces, including promotions and assignments of colonels and generals, to the president. Furthermore, a new Board of Security and Foreign Policy, one of nine consultative bodies attached to the presidency, has largely taken over the the policy guidance functions of the previously so powerful MGK.

In his new and enhanced role, the minister of national defense will now be a key decision-maker regarding military affairs. The defense ministry will be responsible for the education, finances, and budget of the armed forces, as well as Turkey's defense industry, shipyards, military health services, and infrastructure.

In addition, the military educational system has undergone major changes. Military high schools have already been closed, and the existing military academies have been fused into a new National Defense University under the Ministry of National Defense. The TSK has also been stripped of many of its former units and functions. Most importantly, the paramilitary gendarmerie and the coast guard have been fully subjected to the Ministry of Interior.

The consequences for the TSK of such comprehensive measures are not easy to assess at this stage. Some of these reforms were already in the cards, for example the subjection of the gendarmerie and the coast guard to the Ministry of Interior. Industrial facilities, shipyards, and hospitals also strictly speaking fall outside the core activities of a modern military organization and may eventually have been transferred to civilian ministries in any case.

Other measures seem more radical and potentially disruptive for the TSK. Political appointments go against a long and honored tradition of meritocracy in the armed forces, and the direct appointment of the chief of defense and other senior military leaders by the president is likely to stir up fresh controversy in the officers' corps.

Moreover, the establishment of a new National Defense University will discontinue the position of Turkish military academies – institutions with traditions that go back over a century.

The rationale for increasing government control of the military after the 15 July coup attempt is not difficult to understand. The aim is to transform the TSK into a better-managed and more efficient defense force that is capable of handling Turkey's current and future security challenges, but without becoming a threat to the civilian government.

President Erdogan's appointment of former Chief of Defense, General Hulusi Akar to the post of Minister of National Defense was an important move in this regard. Akar proved his loyalty to Erdogan and the civilian government during the 15 July 2016 coup attempt and appears to be on excellent terms with the president. As former chief of defense, he knows the inner workings of the TSK and has a good working relationship with the top officers in the Turkish military hierarchy. In addition, as a retired four-star general Akar has seniority over all the branch commanders. For all these reasons, he will most likely be able to implement the new system and chain of command without much opposition from the military top brass.

However, in the longer term, beyond the tenure of General Akar, the TSK runs the risk of becoming a more politicized and dysfunctional organization with greater internal rivalry between branches and a more restive officers' corps. This *could* also provide fertile ground for renewed political factionalism in the military.

What seems clear is that Turkey's new strong presidential system will increase civilian *political* control and oversight with the armed forces, but not civilian *democratic* control, as we usually understand this concept.<sup>7</sup> Civil-military relations now seem largely based on the personal relationship between the president and the minister of defense, without much participation from other government or state actors (Gurcan 2018). Democratic control and oversight of the military in Turkey would in addition require a genuine oversight role for the Grand National Assembly, increased transparency in military and security affairs, and a real public debate on questions regarding these issues. Without such measures, it is difficult to see how the TSK can become truly accountable to the Turkish citizenry and their elected representatives.

In 2010 Hale and Özbudun wrote on civil-military relations in Turkey that "achieving meaningful oversight by the legislature would require a fundamental shift in outlook by parliamentarians, and ultimately the electorate, both of whom inherit an ingrained tradition of leaving defence policy, and its execution, to the professional soldiers" (Hale & Özbudun 2010: 97). Perhaps strengthening civilian government control of the TSK can lead to such a 'fundamental shift' sometime in the future, but Turkey does not appear to be at this point yet.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion on the meaning of democratic control and oversight of the armed forces, see for example: Born, H. (2002). *Democratic Oversight of the Security Sector. What does it mean?* Geneva Center for Democratic Control of the Armed Forces – DCAF. Retrieved from <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/9632/uploads>; van Ekelén, W. F. (2002). Democratic Control of Armed Forces: The National and International Parliamentary Dimension. *DCAF Occasional Papers*, 2. Retrieved from <http://www.dcaf.ch/Publications/Democratic-Control-of-Armed-Forces>; and European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) (2006). *Report on the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces, Council of Europe*. Retrieved from [http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2008\)004-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2008)004-e).

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