



TENTATIVE TRANSITION

Civil-Military Relations in Turkey Since the July 15 Uprising

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With the two-year anniversary of the July 15, 2016, failed coup in Turkey not far off, the moment is apt to assess the nation's evolving civil-military relations (CMR) in light of this dramatic event. Indeed, the subsequent military reforms and purges have reshaped CMR and deeply affected the institutional identity of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). Such developments have not only influenced the character of the Turkish state but also refigured Turkey's strategic ties to NATO. Thus, a closer look at the Turkish military-security domain is essential for achieving a better understanding of the country's future direction.



This study, which seeks to provide an insider perspective on Turkey's security sector, suggests that both Turkish CMR and the TAF are experiencing multilayered institutional challenges that require delicate management. Regarding CMR, it appears that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's office has accumulated power at the expense of the prime minister's office and the Turkish General Staff (TGS). Meanwhile, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), led by President Erdogan, has stoked rivalry in the security sector by empowering the General Directorate of Security (national police) and the Gendarmerie Command as potential checks on the TAF. Likewise, persistent ambiguity concerning TGS status in the post-July 15 security architecture produces competition between the TGS and the Ministry of Defense in sharing responsibilities. For decades, the Turkish military embodied a *unitary* identity, composed of a staunchly secularist worldview blended with nationalist themes. Among officers, a pro-Western mentality prevailed. Now, within TAF an increasingly visible power struggle among military elites with conflicting outlooks indicates a shift from the TAF's traditional unitary identity and institutional primacy of the TGS to a *diverse*, fractured identity, and institutional subordination to the Defense Ministry. Lastly, at the operational level, the study suggests that, in the case of the TAF's Operation Euphrates Shield, carried out in Syria in 2016–17, the diffusion of power among cliques has altered the body's internal power structure. This has been exacerbated by a lack of political vision regarding the roles and mission of the TAF, insufficient civilian capacity on security issues, absent coordination and civil-military integration between the TAF and Defense Ministry, excessive politicization in CMR, and the associated negative effects on the TAF's operational effectiveness.

Altogether, the study underlines the need for Western allies to engage constructively with the TAF in order to preserve a reformist spirit and democratize CMR so as not to revert to the pre-July 15 status quo or, worse, lapse into stasis, with the resultant operational consequences.

Introduction

Militaries serve as a protective force for a state. This is the premise underlying their creation. But in certain cases, militaries evolve in ways that threaten the public, requiring protection *against* them. On July 15,

2016, Turkey experienced this paradox in bitter fashion. Ultimately, the Turkish nation passed a major test of its democracy, pacifying a military uprising aimed at hijacking state power.¹ Thousands of citizens who took to the streets that night delivered the clearest message: those who rose to office through elections will leave only through elections. As for the military equipment employed by the coup plotters on July 15, it included M60T Sabra and Leopard 2A5 tanks, AH-1W and T129 ATAK helicopters, and F16s, mostly in Ankara and Istanbul; 240 civilians lost their lives, 1,440 were wounded, and 104 putschists were killed.²

Since July 20, 2016, the government has enforced a state of emergency, which will last, in President Erdogan's words, "until everything has settled down."³ In the interim, the government has issued more than ten executive decrees aimed at both restructuring state institutions and ridding the bureaucracy, through mass purges, of alleged followers of Fethullah Gulen, the U.S.-based cleric who inspired—or, as viewed by some, led—the July 15 plot through his covert network nested in the TAF over decades.⁴ The speed and scale of the Turkish decrees have spared few and sacrificed many.⁵ Yet these actions hardly safeguard the country's future, which remains imperiled by multiple elements within the state, the military, and Turkish CMR.

For the AKP-led government, the most effective remedy against these dangers is the expeditious formalizing of the executive presidency, a "practical reality" that became an "urgent need" after July 15.⁶ In fact, this dream was realized by the April 16, 2017, constitutional referendum on the executive presidency.⁷ For advocates of this change, political fragmentation under the former, parliamentary system was closely related to successive weak governments in the 1990s and corresponding periods of national instability.⁸ The next logical step, according to this viewpoint, is to monopolize presidential control over CMR, not only to avoid a repeat of July 15 but to facilitate a more effective military.⁹ Yet in the continuing state of emergency, the executive decrees have become the main tools in the comprehensive transformation of Turkish governance.

Since the uprising, the hasty transfer of CMR to civilian control, under the executive president, is aimed purportedly at establishing civil-military harmony and filling all necessary gaps. Whereas previously the TAF was granted liberal privilege to manage the military-civilian nexus, the current plan is to anchor the TAF in the exec-

utive presidency, in the process bypassing the prime minister's office and weakening the TGS. Absent from this process, however, has been any sense of overall vision. The dynamic has created such a power asymmetry, meanwhile, favoring the executive that it threatens to undermine the TAF's operational effectiveness. Further, the Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Commands, for which the TGS had, before July 15, controlled personnel policies, budgeting, procurement, logistics management, and military education, came under full operational control of the Ministry of Interior immediately after the failed coup. The ministry's attempts to procure sophisticated systems such as T129 helicopters, TB2 Bayraktar and Anka-S type armed drones,¹⁰ and air-defense capabilities for the national police and the Gendarmerie Command have raised questions about potential attempts to stir up internal rivalries, or divide and rule, with the ultimate goal of diminishing the TAF.¹¹ In response, elements of the TAF appear to be yearning for a return to the pre-July 15 status quo.

In the TAF context, therefore, the main current power struggle involves military autonomy and civil-military relations, not politics. A central question, as discussed, involves whether Turkish military authority should return to its pre-uprising status or evolve toward a new one. Indeed, the shift now under way could transform the Turkish military's institutional identity, marking a transition from a *unitary* identity, symbolized by the primacy of the TGS, to a *diverse* and fragmented one. The TGS would thus weaken, both within the military and with respect to the executive presidency and Defense Ministry. Facilitating such a transition is a divided military elite corps, which the civilian centers have exploited to consolidate their power. A related risk for the military, if not managed skillfully, entails potentially longer-lasting damage to harmony and coherence among the officer corps.

With such risks in mind, this paper emphasizes that, to stave off a repeat of the July 15 overthrow attempt, Turkey needs to undergo not only *civilianization* (transfer of political power from the military to civilian elites) but also *democratization* (diffusion of political power among the executive branch, parliament, and civil society through effective oversight and monitoring mechanisms). On the latter count, the democratization of CMR, to include elected officials as well as academia and think tanks, would enable transparency and checks and balances. Evidently thwarting such progress has been the presidentially declared state of emergency, tied to not only

the July 2016 uprising but also Ankara's continued fight against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and violent Salafi-jihadist networks both inside Turkey and abroad, including in Syria. Also affecting such developments has been domestic political debate on the characteristics of a Turkish-style executive presidency. In this ultrasecuritized context, many security-sector institutions remain yoked to the presidential palace—whether officially or unofficially—and it is unclear when they will be granted further independence amid a more democratic system.

In this context, close attention must go to the covert Gulenist network that incrementally yet decisively hijacked the military-judicial system over a decade preceding the failed coup attempt, including its appointment and promotion, staff officer, and military intelligence and health components. This network also infiltrated attempts in 2012–15 to transform the TAF, areas traditionally kept as “autonomous/privileged areas” outside civilian and democratic monitoring and oversight. Indeed, Gulenist officers were tacitly and sometimes openly empowered in the military by the formerly sympathetic AKP leadership, such as through the purging of competent non-Gulenist senior officers in the Sledgehammer/Ergenekon¹² and Izmir cases, both of which played out from 2008 to 2011. Such a trend constituted the major driver of the July 15 uprising. Thus, in seeking to transform the TAF as an institution, Turkey should be especially mindful to remedy the absence of democratic monitoring and oversight mechanisms for the military's autonomous/privileged areas. Such a model must seek to achieve an all-important balance among three equally important pillars for healthy CMR: (1) civilian oversight; (2) democratic control; and (3) operational effectiveness, or the ability to accomplish missions formulated by civilian elites.

To achieve these goals, the TAF itself must resist a return to the pre-July 15 status quo—i.e., operating as a black box away from civilian oversight and monitoring mechanisms—and a “reformist spirit” must be renewed within the forces. Such efforts, however, must be balanced through maintaining the TAF's professionalism, discipline, and cohesion. Most important, the *esprit de corps*, which is rooted in morale, devotion, and equality among the officer class, should be protected from political interference, and the civilian authorities should respect military expertise within this system.

The greatest challenge for the TAF entails avoiding a stalled transition, wherein it gets caught in the larger

shift from a parliamentary to an executive presidential system. Simply put, the current move of TAF authority from the military to the civilian track, arbitrary and poorly planned, has lacked inclusive debate, a crystalized political vision, a clear road map, or consensus-building mechanisms, thereby disrespecting the institutional continuity of the TAF. This process threatens not only to accelerate Turkey's trajectory toward authoritarianism but, more locally, to deepen existing power struggles within the military.

Government-Military Relations After the Uprising

The Turkish Land Forces (Army), Navy, and Air Force Commands, which had been under full TGS control before July 15, 2016, have now been brought under the Defense Ministry—which runs professional military education at the undergraduate and graduate levels, force generation and operational planning, military intelligence, and logistics. With these changes, the TGS, which previously answered to the prime minister's office, has been transformed into a coordinator under the shadow of the presidential palace. Given Erdogan's determination to create a strong executive presidency, a desire to subordinate the TGS to the presidency could well be seen to follow; however, a constitutional amendment is still required to enact this change, which was not among the eighteen amendments voted on as a bloc in the April 16, 2017, referendum. Furthermore, executive decrees following July 15 have brought about important changes in the command-and-control mechanisms of the TGS and institutional settings of the Turkish military. The chief of staff will now be appointed directly by the president, who will be able to give orders directly to any commander without the chief of staff's approval. Ultimately, this change could reduce the chief of staff to something more like a coordinator of military affairs, and eventually dilute his status as the top commander of the armed forces. In its new, empowered role, the Defense Ministry would also be able to choose civilian ministry staff rather than making do with the personnel provided by the TAF. Moreover, the Defense Ministry would be the ultimate decisionmaker on officer promotions, starting from the lieutenant rank. In sum, all military reforms since July 15 fall into three categories, as illustrated in table 1.

In addition to these reforms, the Turkish government conducted four major purges over a six-week period in 2016 (July 27, July 30, September 2, September 7), as well as others, resulting in the dismissal of some 7,800 military personnel. Since then, speculation has been rife over the impact of these purges—still ongoing as of December 2017, although entailing lower numbers—on the TAF's combat effectiveness, while sparking questions over whether the military will struggle to fill critical posts (see figure 1).

Among those purged, 4,690 personnel have been from the Land Forces Command (87 generals, 2,500 officers, 1,016 noncommissioned officers, and 1,087 contracted sergeants), 1,075 from the navy (31 admirals, 646 officers, 368 NCOs, and 30 contracted sergeants), and 1,726 from the air force (32 generals, 1,103 officers, 536 NCOs, and 55 contracted sergeants).¹³ In addition, all cadets from the three military high schools and war academies, in total around 16,000 students, have been dismissed.

The class most affected by the purges has been the commanding elites. Indeed, of the 325 generals or admirals in the Turkish army, navy, and air force, 167 (45.8%) were discharged. Among them were 2 four-star generals, 9 lieutenant generals, 30 major generals and vice admirals, and 126 brigadier generals and rear admirals.¹⁴ Among those 167 generals, nearly 44 percent of army generals, 42 percent of air force generals, and 58 percent of navy admirals were formally discharged.¹⁵ An additional 586 colonels were forced to retire by the Supreme Military Council on August 23, 2016.¹⁶

The officer group most depleted by the dismissals is air force combat pilots. As of September 2017, Turkey had 320 combat planes (of which 240 were F-16s), 90 transport planes, 7 tankers, and 105 training planes. As of October 2017, after the largest dismissal, affecting about 280 combat pilots, Turkey had some three hundred combat-ready pilots. Before the overthrow attempt in July 2016, nearly two pilots were available for each warplane. This ratio was down to 0.8 as of September 2017. A similar group affected by the dismissals is army helicopter pilots. About thirty of them, including assault helicopter pilots, have been dismissed. Their absence means a much heavier workload for the remaining pilots, who have major tasks in the Turkish government's long-running fight against the PKK, including the PKK-affiliate Peoples Protection Forces (YPG) in Syria.

TABLE 1 Military Reforms since July 15, 2016

INITIATED AND COMPLETED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subordinating the Turkish Army, Air Force, and Navy to the MoD* ▪ Subordinating the Gendarmerie Command and Coast Guard to the Ministry of the Interior† ▪ Foundation of National Defense University (NDU) and subordinating this institution to the MoD, closure of military high schools and attachment of war academies and Staff College to the NDU* ▪ Revision of officers' promotion and appointment criteria within TAF, making the MoD the final authority on the appointments of all officers‡ ▪ Abolition of the autonomous military health system and independent military judiciary* ▪ Civilianization of the Supreme Military Council with the involvement of deputy prime minister, foreign, justice and interior ministers from the cabinet along along with the prime minister, chief of General Staff, defense minister, and the service commanders** ▪ Revision of the curriculum of the professional military education system at the undergraduate and graduate levels ▪ Abolition of the privileged staff officer system
INITIATED BUT NOT COMPLETED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sharing of command-control, personnel-recruitment, operations, intelligence, logistics-acquisition, military education, and budget management functions/responsibilities between the TGS and MoD in a coordinated and synergistic way mainly due to the TGS's still uncertain status in the security sector architecture ▪ The redesign of the MoD's organizational structure according to the MoD's expanding roles and responsibilities, especially the strengthening of the MoD structure in terms of personnel management (promotion and assignment) and consultancy (decision support), command-control, operation and military intelligence issues, in addition to military education, military procurement, acquisition, and budgeting ▪ Empowerment of the institutional agency of MoD within the security architecture so as to rescue it from the dominance of the TGS ▪ De-Gülenification of the military through purges and dismissals
DESIRED BUT NOT INITIATED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ending the ambiguity over the status of the TGS, its roles and missions in the Turkey's security architecture ▪ Decreasing the number of TAF personnel ▪ Ensuring jointness and full civilian control over the military at all levels ▪ Transition to an all volunteer and fully professional military by increasing contracted sergeant and contracted Private-First-Class (PFC) cadres and abolishing the military draft system ▪ Developing "civil capacity" in the field of defense/security for the empowerment of the civilian cadres in the MoD, NDU, Undersecretary of National Security, and other security sector actors

NOTES

* See Decree No. 669, July 25, 2016 (Turkish), <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/07/20160731-5.htm>.

† See Decree No. 668, July 27, 2016 (Turkish), <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/07/20160727M2.htm>.

‡ Metin Gurcan, "Turkey Tells a Story with Major Military Personnel Moves," Al-Monitor, August 3, 2017.

* "Top Ministers to Join Supreme Military Council," Anadolu Agency, July 31, 2016.

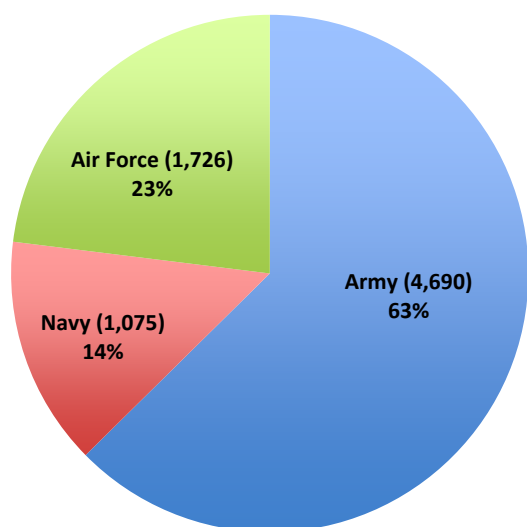


FIGURE 1 Distribution of Purged Military Personnel

Among the dismissals, moreover, is a disproportionate number of battalion and team commanders in the Special Forces, from the Turkish navy's elite underwater assault unit and the TAF's combat search-and-rescue personnel. Many Special Forces battalion and team commanders were arrested and dismissed on charges of participating in the uprising. Similarly, reports have indicated dismissals of a high number of helicopter pilots and other officers and NCOs serving in the air force's elite search-and-rescue teams. The presence of these elite military commands tell much about the Gulenists' strategy of infiltration within the military.

In the army, most dismissals were from the TGS headquarters, service commands in Ankara, and corps and brigades in both Istanbul and Ankara, given their overwhelming participation in the July 15 uprising. By comparison, those least affected have been the 2nd Army Command (Malatya), responsible for combating terrorism in the southeast and ensuring border security with Syria, and forces that served in Operation Euphrates Shield. This approach might point at the government's pragmatism in ridding the military of Gulenist elements. For example, with their new commanders, about twenty brigades from the 2nd Army Command are operational, representing full pre-July 15 levels and operational readiness. In the navy, the service command least harmed by the purges, most dismissals were from the offices in Ankara or of personnel serving in rear headquarters such as the Navy War College and Naval Training Command. Although the TAF appears to be coping with the effects of the dismissals, the most

elite forces will need at least two more years to restore their personnel numbers to pre-uprising levels.

Levent Turkkan and the Gulenist Recruitment Scheme

As for the Gulenists, and their cooptation of the TAF, the group may be regarded as a secret network with a distinct quasi-utopian religious-political vision whose members exploited opportunities to realize its vision through occupying senior military posts, as well as other security roles. Here, intriguing questions arise as to who the Gulenist loyalists actually they were, how they were recruited and indoctrinated, and how they could, apparently without hesitation, give up their families and bright futures in the TAF. Moreover, how had they managed to keep their posts without attracting suspicion?

A profile of alleged coup plotter Lt. Col. Levent Turkkan provides some clues. Turkkan first wore the uniform as a military high school cadet in 1989, when he was just fourteen. He joined the army as a lieutenant in 1997 and would remain an officer for the next nineteen years. Between 2011 and 2015, Turkkan served as a junior aidedecamp (ADC) to then chief of general staff Necdet Ozel. In August 2015, when Gen. Hulusi Akar took over as head of the TAF, Turkkan was appointed as his senior ADC, indeed the general's closest advisor, with knowledge of all developments and responsibility for arranging the commander's meetings and daily schedule. The ADC likewise reviews and processes all incoming information and documents, and in turn transmits oral and written orders from the commander to others. In rigid armies like the TAF, in which internal hierarchy and discipline are highly valued, whatever the ADC says is treated as his commander's word. In his testimony following the uprising, Turkkan said his first contact with the Gulen movement, in 1989, came when his "older brothers" (*abi*)—fellow Gulenists who had befriended him—prodded him to strive to become an officer. Turkkan said he was supplied in advance with questions on the military high school entrance examination.

He explained further: "In military high school I stayed in touch with older brothers Serdar and Musa. We were meeting once a month to pray and chat. We read Fethullah Gulen's books. My brothers even taught to me how to perform ablution before prayers without being detected, which could have given away my affiliation."¹⁷

When he moved to the military academy in Ankara, a seven- or eight-month gap in his Gulenist liaisons occurred, which he attributed to his relationship with a girlfriend. Separately, Turkkan said he was not directed to embrace any special political ideology and usually voted for Erdogan's AKP. "When I was in military schools, they didn't assign me any duties," he added. "We were told that our only mission was not to be identified."¹⁸

In describing the absolute secrecy adhered to in the movement, he explained that everyone knew his "older brother," and carried out certain tasks, but didn't know or ask more. To these "older brothers" with whom he evidently was not acquainted at all on a personal level, he interestingly displayed complete loyalty. Related here is the point that the Gulenist movement operates according to a horizontal, rather than a vertical, hierarchy. For example, reports suggest that on the night of July 15, many generals were given orders by colonels and even more-junior ranks.

When Turkkan was named ADC, the Gulenist demands spiked, unsurprisingly. Turkkan said he continued to conduct tasks without questioning them, such as recording conversations from and obtaining personal details about commanders. He was even ordered to detain and mistreat his own commander during the coup. Consistent with the larger portrait, he told the prosecutor that the movement attached importance to compartmentalization and maintaining its cell structure within the TAF. Gulenist-affiliated officers did not know each other.

Furthermore, Turkkan, like some jihadists, did not hesitate to modify his behavior to avoid detection. To indicate irreligiosity, he drank alcohol and refrained from fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. In addition, a particular area of Gulenist adeptness, according to investigators, was social media, including by imams and others. In addition to live couriers, the favorite Gulenist avenues for communication were the messaging applications CoverMe, which erases messages after they are read, and WhatsApp.

A striking example of Gulenist tendencies emerges in the testimony of Muhammed Uslu, a civilian working in the prime minister's office who was also Turkkan's "older brother." Amazingly, Uslu received daily recordings from the office of the Chief of General Staff and passed them on to another civilian brother he did not even know.¹⁹ This ethos of blind obedience meant that many TAF officers with master's degrees and doctorates, not to mention high-level security clearances, were passing on their knowledge to anonymous "older brothers."

The Gulenist program, in broader terms, was rooted in gaining influence in the TAF's personnel management system with the aim of controlling promotions and appointments, and thereafter military intelligence, the military judicial system, and the military's autonomous healthcare system. It did so to promote its hidden agenda of first influencing and then controlling strategic decisionmaking mechanisms in the TAF, with a very deliberate, strictly covert, and prolonged strategy implemented by soldiers and their civilian "older brothers." The organization thus operated in a compartmentalized way, in absolute secrecy.²⁰ This addiction to secrecy, one must note, was central to the failure of the overthrow attempt, along with the absence of coordinated actions, a common ideology, a joint operations center, and a leader.²¹ Once the wheels fell off, the coup operators kept forging forward in an information vacuum, unable to adjust to changing circumstances and adapt their plan accordingly.

The Turkish Military's Identity After July 15

The distribution, as of February 2017, of the TAF's active military personnel (a total of 362,284, excluding the Gendarmerie Command and coast guard, given that these two fully attached to the Interior Ministry after July 15) is shown in figure 2.²² Here, reflecting the TAF's most recent official release of its personnel numbers, 43 percent were identified as professionals, while 57 percent were conscript soldiers or conscripted reserve officers.²³ In comparing these figures with those from March 2016, four months before the uprising, one notes a 40 percent reduction in generals, which then numbered 325 across the three branches, and a 20 percent reduction from 32,451 officers. Particularly after the dismissal of almost 1,200 staff officers (70%) and the abolition of the staff officer system in August 2016, one would suggest that those staff officers—the most privileged group among the officer corps given that they had received priority in the selection of missions abroad, deployment to critical posts at headquarters, and assignment to the rank of general—were the second hardest hit group after the generals.²⁴ It is not difficult to surmise that the staff officer system was the prime target for control by the Gulenists.

In determining whether the TAF will be truly transformed by the current process or revert to the status quo ante, one can usefully assess the post-July 15 stance

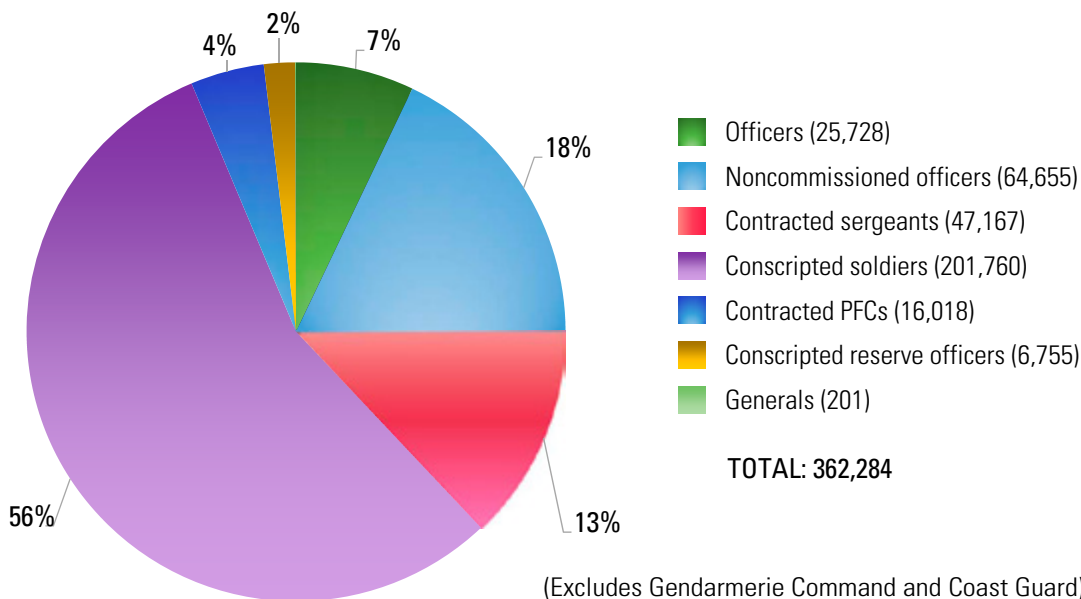


FIGURE 2 Distribution of TAF Active Military Personnel as of February 2017

held by military elites toward change, based on several measures: opinions on military transformation; world-views and political orientations; service affiliations; ranks; perspectives on officer service as a profession; and views on rank, privilege, and status. Such an analysis yields three general categories:²⁵

1. FREE RIDERS Military elites who have a “parasitic” relationship with the TAF, reaping benefits from the system without providing adequate value in return. This group appears to include many colonels, the top rank reached by about 97 percent of officers. In return for the sacrifices of an arduous career for themselves and their families, these officers are viewed as seeking a comfortable life and retirement. They feel they “deserve” their rank.²⁶

2. CAREERISTS Military elites who have a pragmatic relationship with the military, thinking first of their own personal survival and advancement. Of the three types described here, these elites are the most receptive to political influence, focusing on short-term outcomes rather than the values inherent in the military institution or a long-term strategic vision. To support the dominant political discourse is, for them, a reliable path to upheld job security. In the Sledgehammer and Ergenekon cases,²⁷ as well as the post-July 15 actions, none of the careerists’ names were placed on any purge lists or published online or in other media, reflecting their inclination to self-preserve. Careerists are therefore the true winners of the post-July 15 scene, mainly due to

their cleaner records and adeptness in hiding their actual political stances. Accordingly, a great majority of those generals appointed in critical TAF cadres after July 15 have a staunchly careerist—and flexible—orientation. At the moment, such figures are likely to keep fronting strong pro-Erdogan, pro-government stances.

3. REFORMISTS Those hostile to the status quo, as demonstrated by their constant criticism of TAF thinking and action. Reformists tend to see the TAF as a Cold War entity and thus inferior, in either technology or tactics and techniques, to other modern militaries. Within the reformist category, two variants can be found: *traditionalists*, for whom current TAF values have diverged from values espoused during the early years of the Turkish republic (e.g., staunch secularism, Kemalism, etatism, nationalism, elitism, enlightenment), and who thus prioritize restoration of such values in any transition; and *progressives*, who favor a more forward-looking perspective based on the functional effectiveness of the military. Overall, the great majority of officers at the major and lieutenant colonel ranks, usually ages 35–45, are progressives with a reformist spirit (while some are careerists and a small proportion appear to be free riders).²⁸ Considering the political headwinds at the higher ranks, and the limited quality of lower-level recruits since July 15, such officers appear to be the only group capable of leading an institutional transformation of the TAF.

In post–July 15 debates over the TAF, differences among the commands have also emerged over the pace, scale, and drivers of change. As a starting point, a common understanding holds that enacting Turkey’s regional and global vision based on threat perceptions demands “jointness and interoperability” based on land-sea-air cooperation. Yet, each service command appears to view jointness and interoperability in different ways. Here, generally speaking, the Land Forces Command holds a pro–status quo stance (including preserving existing privileges), versus a more reformist bent from the Air Force and Navy Commands (including ending privileges), leading to institutional rivalry and corresponding TAF factionalism.^{29,30} Related issues affected by this dissonance include the TAF military education system.

Following July 15, the opinions of four-star generals constituting the High Command are pivotal in the promotion and appointment of other TAF generals—but evaluation from the presidential palace is no less crucial. This explains why TAF generals outside the High Command generally shape their positions to conform with those of their military superiors as well as of President Erdogan, the ultimately decision-maker. Such careerism compels the generals to fully absorb the dominant sentiment in both domestic and foreign policy matters. Abroad, this approach helps explain extreme risk aversion in dealing with the political leadership on power-projection efforts such as control of the Jarabulus–al-Bab–al-Rai triangle in northern Syria and forward military basing in Qatar, Somalia, and Sudan. For this reason—setting aside the traditionalist and progressive reformists, who represent roughly 25 percent of the generals—one can surmise, as of December 2017 that the great majority are pro–status quo careerists who have lined up behind the prevailing pro-Erdogan discourse.³¹ Yet it must be mentioned that these generals are not devout Erdogan believers, and are susceptible to changing their stance parallel with power shifts in both Turkish politics and CMR.

Further broad trends emerge, as one moves down the military hierarchy, with regard to collectivism versus individualism; elitism versus egalitarianism in society; and idealistic versus opportunistic service.^{32, 33} Here, one can suggest that the great majority of captains and lieutenants, like their higher-ranking colleagues serving as majors and lieutenant colonels, constituting the largest group in the TAF, harbor discomfort with the existing alignment. They want change.

Setting aside the tripartite division of officers laid out earlier, no clearly discernible pro- vs. anti-Erdogan split exists among the officer class, as it does in broader Turkish society. The absence of a pro-Erdogan bloc constitutes the major obstacle to reshaping the military in the president’s image, at least over the next short to mid-term. A further check on Erdoganization exists in the comparative power of left-leaning traditionalists within the TAF, versus less-capable conservative military elites with Islamist leanings who theoretically could foster a pro-Erdogan camp. Thus, the overall question remains as to whether Erdogan will ultimately ally with the status quo bloc or continue his ambitious reforms, thereby siding with the traditionalists, his ostensible ideological rivals. Either way, the TAF must keep pursuing transformation as well as implementing unfinished and new military reforms, such as transfer of various responsibilities to the civilian leadership.

Implementation of Military Reforms Within the TAF

According to a civilian bureaucrat working in the security sector,³⁴ internally driven transformation appears to be a very difficult task for the TAF. Two additional hindrances seem to be: inadequate civilian capability in the defense/security field, even as the civilian and military sectors become integrated, and a continuing lack of civilian trust toward the military class. (See figure 3 for a portrayal of current civil-military lines of authority.)

One further note is that the prime minister’s office is excluded from authority in the post–July 15 security architecture. As indicated by the dotted lines in Figure 3, uncertainty persists regarding the institutional status, roles, and missions of the TGS, creating friction with the Defense Ministry, which has traditionally coordinated mainly procurement, budgeting, and drafting, otherwise remaining subordinate to the TGS. After the uprising, however, the Defense Department gained control of the professional military education system and operational control of the army, navy, and air force. Despite more than eighteen months having passed since the uprising, an optimal balance has yet to be established between the Defense Department and TGS. Establishing such a balance is indeed essential to achieving operational effectiveness for the TAF.

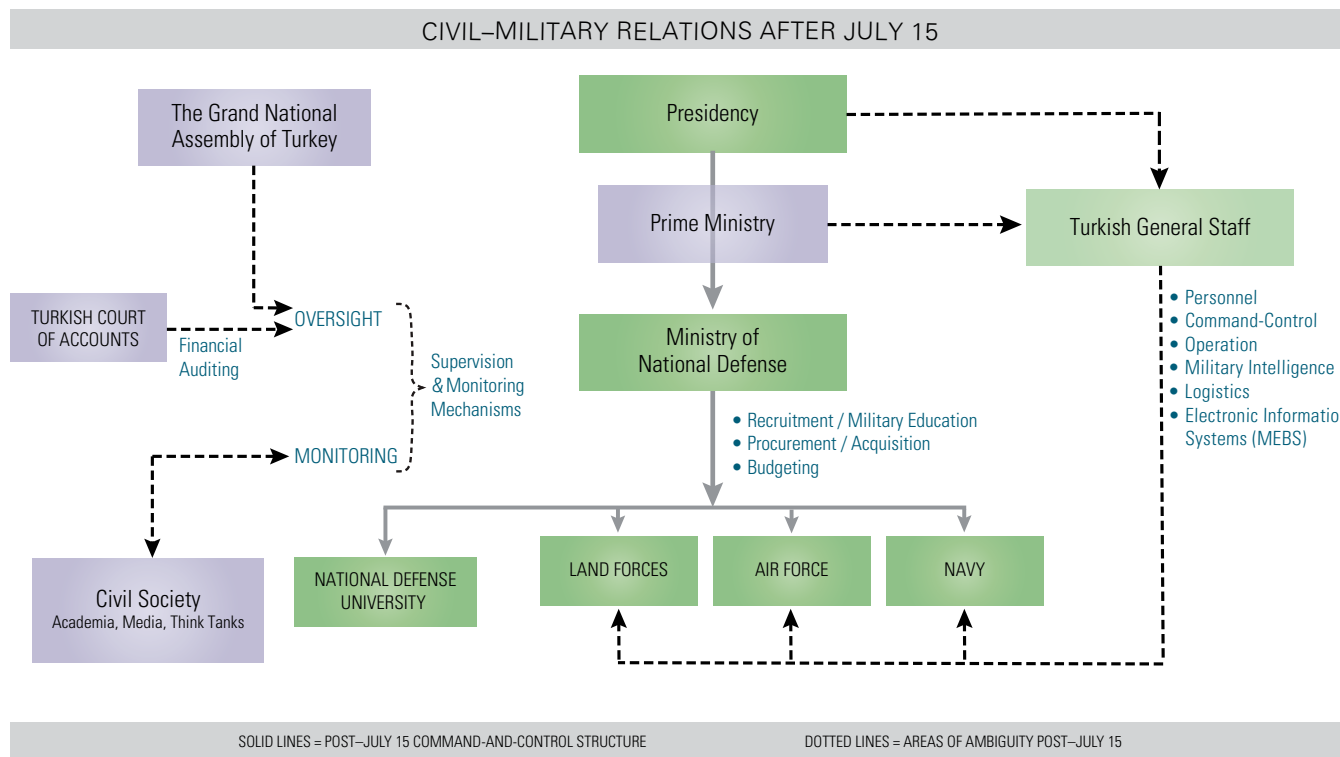


FIGURE 3 Current State of TAF’s Institutional Transformation

SOURCES OF FRICTION

The following four sources of friction in the post-July 15 scene have heightened tensions among military elites, harmed progress at the strategic-political level, and hindered operations:

- Friction between civilian and military elites over the causes, scale, and tempo of needed military reforms
- Friction between the Defense Ministry and TGS regarding optimal balance of responsibility given continuing ambiguity over the TGS’s role in Turkey’s security architecture
- Friction between the pro-status quo camp (free riders; most careerists) and the reformists over the future direction of the military; relatedly, between traditionalists and progressives within the reformist camp—all of which is intensified by Erdogan’s apparent indecision over whether to ally with the status quo bloc or the reformists
- Friction between military elites with different worldviews as applied to the military’s new institutional identity; e.g., questions about the role of Islam; pro- or anti-U.S. sentiment; pro- or anti-NATO stance

and participation in the Western security architecture as opposed to a “nonaligned” position

The post-July 15 TAF, meanwhile, has the following principal needs, owing to inadequate coordination between civilian and military elites, the broader Defense Ministry-TGS rivalry, and the intramilitary struggle between status quo adherents and reformists:

- Jointness, civil-military integration, and proper assignment of operational functions in multi-domain battlespaces to achieve greater operational effectiveness
- A professional military education system at both the undergraduate and graduate levels so as to quickly make up for deficient intellectual capital
- Religious balance between the military’s freedom from religion and religious freedom within the military

POSSIBLE ROLES FOR THE TGS

Amid uncertainty over the TGS’s role in an emerging civilian-centered military architecture—encompassing the Defense Ministry, president’s office, and service commands—three potential scenarios arise:

1. **Direct subordination to the president's office**, joined by preservation of the current TGS organizational structure and reacquisition of recently ceded privileges (e.g., over military education and promotions) so that it retains full control of the service commands, as pre-July 15. This is the preferred approach for careerists and free rider military elites, allowing them direct engagement with the president's office and the TGS, and thus to keep a range of privileges. Relatedly, traditionalists seek a return to the parliamentary system, while the TGS wants to regain previous areas of autonomy, such as that over the military health system, along with an independent military judiciary and full control of the officer promotion system.
2. **A "hybrid model" that merges the Defense Ministry and TGS** to manage operational capabilities for the service commands. Around the midpoint between status quo and reform, this approach would necessitate delicate management and incremental change. Hypothetically, it could become viable if current chief of staff Hulusi Akar voluntarily retired. Erdogan could then, in theory, appoint him defense minister while symbolically allowing him to retain his chief of staff portfolio, should a full-fledged executive presidency be established after the presidential election scheduled for November 3, 2019.
3. **Direct TGS subordination to the Defense Ministry**, including transfer of its current organizational structure. In this scenario, the TGS would be transformed into a mere "coordinator agent" with symbolic status in the new security architecture, thereby dealing an obvious blow to the TAF's institutional continuity. This reform approach was proposed by a number of pro-government pundits and experts³⁵ after the July 15 uprising, yet it has not been realized—and is unlikely to be realized in the near future, given insufficient resources and intellectual heft at the Defense Ministry needed to enact the complete takeover.

As implied thus far, the dual civil-military management of Turkey's national security system has many shortcomings, including an unclear TGS–Defense Ministry division of labor and duplicative processes in areas such as strategic planning and force generation, professional military education, procurement, and personnel

management. Such redundancies have hampered the effectiveness of the TAF, engendering strategic confusion on the management of military transformation and blocking the emergence of space for greater interoperability and civil-military integration. These setbacks can be remedied in the following ways:

- TGS–Defense Ministry sharing of functions for personnel management, operations, military intelligence, logistics management, and Combat Electronic/Information Systems (MEBS, in the Turkish acronym)
- Resolution of TGS–Defense Ministry uncertainty concerning strategic issues, such as management or coordination of jointness and civil-military integration, by definitively deciding which branch should manage the reforms so as to avoid existing overlap
- Resolution of which branch should control the professional military education system curriculum, including the NDU

PERSONALIZATION OF TAF PROMOTIONS

A major outcome of the August 2, 2017, meeting of Turkey's Supreme Military Council was to reinforce the agency of current Chief of Staff Akar. The underpinnings of this development show how near-term civil-military relations can perhaps be best grasped not from an institutional perspective but rather by understanding the strong personal rapport between General Akar and President Erdogan.³⁶

The emboldening of Akar was not without earlier signals. In particular, it was predated by the naming, on July 19, 2017, of then defense minister Fikri Isik as deputy prime minister and his replacement in the Defense Ministry with Nurettin Canikli, who has an economics background and a strong vision for the Turkish defense industry. Indeed, the sharp differences between Isik and Akar on matters such as military education and the TAF's institutional transformation were no secret. Isik's departure thereby drained the ministry of some potency against the chief of staff and, in turn, boosted Akar not only in the military milieu but also within the Defense Ministry and broader civilian government, given his support from Erdogan. This dynamic of presidential control over the TGS will be strengthened, and likely persist until 2021, if Gen. Yasar Guler, the incumbent Land Forces commander, reputed for his strong careerist approach, succeeds Akar

as TGS chief in August 2019. More generally, the extreme personalization could effectively deinstitutionalize Turkish CMR and, by extension, weaken the TAF as an entity, ultimately degrading its operational effectiveness.

Even earlier, on December 24, 2016, the government issued Decree No. 696,³⁷ shifting control of the Undersecretariat for Defense Industries (SSM), which is responsible for defense procurement, from the prime minister's office to the Defense Ministry.³⁸ For 2018, the SSM has been allocated nearly \$11 from the general budget and is effectively operating under full control of the presidency. Such presidential authority encompasses procurement, the creation and signing of all deals relating to the country's military and police forces, and the chairing of the Defense Industry Executive Committee, Turkey's top committee on procurement. All this marks a further reduction in the prime minister's agency in Turkey's defense-security architecture—and the corresponding empowerment of the president.³⁹ Yet to be determined, however, is whether the presidency will engage mainly the Defense Ministry or TGS in running Turkey's defense-security procurement system. This outcome will be decisive in shaping the end state of the rivalry between the Defense Ministry and the TGS.

Changes at the Operational Level

In examining one Turkish military exercise (Efes 2016) and one military operation (Euphrates Shield) that occurred, respectively, before and after the July 15 uprising, one can deduce ways in which officer effectiveness derives from the TAF's structural and organizational status and has been shaped by post-uprising transformations. More pointedly, the TAF's operational effectiveness appears to have been gradually corroded by a lack of clear-cut political directives, insufficiently coherent civil-military integration, very low levels of jointness, and the power struggle among military elites.

EFES 2016 MILITARY EXERCISE

From May 4 to June 4, 2016, the TAF carried out its most sophisticated combined/joint military drill ever in the Aegean town of Efes/Selcuk (ancient Ephesus), providing insight into the extent of its pre-uprising conventional capabilities. The exercise held the overarching goal of improving combined and joint combat operations, including amphibious, air assault, and counterterrorism operations. In particular, the exercise allowed the military

to test the first Turkish-made corvette developed as part of the National Ship Project (MILGEM), along with T129 military helicopters and Bayraktar TB2 armed drones. Close observation of both the planning and active phases of the drill attests to the successful integration of the new weapon systems and platforms.⁴⁰ Also worth mentioning is that, along with Turkey's land, air, naval, and gendarmerie forces, some nine hundred military staff from Turkey's major allies, including the United States, Azerbaijan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Britain, Pakistan, Poland, and Germany, participated in Efes 2016, which was watched by 255 delegates from seventy-nine countries.⁴¹

Participating units executed scenarios pertaining to a hypothetical request for United Nations assistance by the imaginary country of "Arnlad" against invasion by another country. These scenarios required a dynamic mission set to meet the challenges of a multi-domain battlespace, including cyberspace. Among the apparent successes registered by the TAF were those involving a brigade-level beachhead seizure, counterterrorism operations, a special operations mission centered on hostage rescue, humanitarian aid operations for refugees, and cyberwarfare. Whether or not the TAF conducts the Efes military exercise scheduled for May 2018, and whether it does so successfully, will indicate much about the conventional operational effectiveness of the post-uprising force.

OPERATION EUPHRATES SHIELD

On August 24, 2016, just over a month after the uprising, Operation Euphrates Shield was initiated, coinciding with military reforms directly affecting the nature of CMR, along with the mass purges. In the initial phase, Ankara emphasized the limited time and scope of the mission, which was aimed at maintaining border security and confronting the Islamic State, thereby constituting an act of self-defense against terrorism codified under Article 51 of the UN Charter. The operation, however, gradually encroached southward, ending, after seventy-two days of fierce fighting, with the capture of al-Bab, north of Syrian-government-controlled Aleppo. On a tactical level, Euphrates Shield achieved some successes, such as familiarization with Islamic State fighting methods and the need to blend unconventional with conventional military capabilities, particularly in urban settings. But at the diplomatic-political level, the campaign was constrained by poor management. The TAF, furthermore, struggled to adapt to changing circum-

stances on the ground while demonstrating low levels of situational awareness at the operational level.

The initial achievements of the operation, which can be broken down into four phases, arguably led to a gradual widening beyond the initial objective, which was to clear and hold only the border area between Jarabulus and al-Rai:

1. **Capturing Jarabulus (3 days, Aug 2016).** This phase was designed and planned as a Special Forces operation by Maj. Gen. Zekai Aksakalli, a commander whose reputation and popularity rose after July 15, given his apparent role as among top generals to have actively resisted the coup plotters.
2. **Clearing the border area between Jarabulus and al-Rai (14 days, Sept–Oct 2016).** During this period, forces cleared an area encompassing 1,100 square kilometers.
3. **Encroaching southward (≈30 days, Nov 2016).** During this phase, Turkish forces found themselves increasingly exposed to improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and antitank guided missiles from the Islamic State, a change in the adversary's approach that could not be meticulously assessed at the Turkish operations center in Kilis, which focuses on special operations. At the heart of this assessment failure was the dominance of Special Forces planning personnel in a changing campaign. Indeed, the gradual evolution of Euphrates Shield from a Special Forces operation to a new type of counterterrorism operation requiring an optimal blend of conventional armored units, indirect heavy-fire support with tube and rocket artillery, commando battalions, and unconventional capabilities (e.g., guiding proxies for desired tactical outcomes, anti-IED measures, anti-drone warfare, and tunnel warfare in urban settings) should have facilitated the introduction of new staff with appropriate expertise at the operations center—yet this requirement was not fulfilled.

After the killing on November 24, 2016, of three Turkish soldiers in an IED attack in northern al-Bab, just six days before the start of the al-Bab offensive, some groups within the Free Syrian Army (FSA), Turkey's local partner in the region, deserted owing to internal rivalries and lack of discipline. To compensate for this loss of support, the Turkish military deployed a battalion from the 57th Commando Regiment–Sarikamis, a battalion from the 4th Com-

mando Brigade–Tunceli, and two battalions from the 1st Commando Brigade–Kayseri. Furthermore, all battalions of the 2nd Armored Brigade–Istanbul, equipped with Leopard 2A4 tanks, and the 20th Armored Brigade–Urfa, with M60T tanks, were deployed to the theater of operation. This increase in conventional capabilities implicitly elevated 2nd Army commander Gen. Metin Temel, a development that, in turn, riled General Aksakalli, who perceived a “conventionalization” of the operation that could tarnish his ascendant stature in Ankara. Such operational friction between the generals constituted the primary factor leading to the mismanaged planning and conduct of the operation.

4. **Siege and capture of al-Bab (100 days, Dec 2016–Mar 2017).** The Islamic State's establishment of resilient defensive perimeters in urban areas, along with its use of suicide-vehicle-borne IEDs (SVBIEDs), tunnel warfare, and antitank missiles, called for revamped planning for the al-Bab offensive. Yet General Aksakalli and his staff, which overwhelmingly comprised officers with a Special Forces background at the Kilis operations center, did not foresee the Islamic State's resolve within al-Bab's city center, and thus did not accordingly increase numbers of staff officers with conventional warfare backgrounds in the planning room. Further, they appear to have failed to recognize the need to increase situational awareness through intelligence-surveillance-target acquisition-reconnaissance (ISTAR) capabilities, provide armor and mechanized support for the advancing FSA fighters who remained, and furnish close air support to neutralize the Islamic State's armored units and fortified fixed facilities inside al-Bab—as well as indirect fire support involving heavy tube and rocket artillery fire to cover the advancing groups toward the Islamic State's well-fortified defensive perimeters in and around al-Bab.

The first offensive aimed at capturing Aqil Hill, a key area northwest of the city center, was initiated in early January 2017. Yet this campaign was carried out without proper planning and coordination among the participating units and lacked adequate numbers of armored/mechanized units and fire-support systems; most important was the absence of close air support. Unsurprisingly, this dearth of tactical coordination and support, and the associated

confusion—which also affected the FSA elements—contributed to operational problems. This was the case even though the broader campaign can be seen to reflect a tactical success (as elaborated later). Still, in any future such engagement, the Turkish military will have to learn from such failings, improving coordination and support especially when it comes to battle against unconventional adversaries in urban terrain.

A comparison of the successes of the Efes 2016 military exercise with the shortcomings of Euphrates Shield, particularly at the operational planning level, suggests Turkey may have lost some of its pre-uprising ability to design and plan its own missions, and conduct joint operations within the TAF and along with international partners.

LOSSES SUSTAINED

According to the TGS's official press release, sixty-nine Turkish soldiers were killed in action during Euphrates Shield. The data set produced by the Jane's research group suggests that 40 percent of the total casualties were caused by VBIED attacks—sixteen Turkish soldiers in one such attack on December 22, 2016—while 30 percent were caused by indirect Islamic State mortar and rocket fire as soldiers rested in forward operational bases, and 20 percent by roadside IEDs, particularly inside al-Bab. Other accidents account for the remaining 10 percent. On February 9, 2017, three Turkish soldiers were accidentally killed by a Russian airstrike due to “lack of coordination,” as reported by the Russian sources. Not a single Turkish soldier, it is worth noting here, was killed during an armed engagement with the Islamic State. In addition, around 220 Turkish soldiers were wounded, mostly by VBIED and roadside IED attacks. According to a source who fought during Euphrates Shield within a Turkic brigade known as the Sultan Murad Division, FSA groups supported by Turkey suffered a thousand wounded and around four hundred killed, most of whom were from Ahrar al-Sham, Sultan Murad, and Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zinki.⁴² On March 31, 2017, the TGS announced that about three thousand Islamic State militants and five hundred militants from the Syrian Kurdish People's Defense Units (YPG) had been “neutralized” during the operation.

Regarding material losses, a list leaked on social media on December 23, 2016, allegedly prepared by the Kilis operations center, indicated various levels of damage to the following Turkish military armored vehicles: ten Leopard 2A4 tanks, one M60-A3 tank, three

improved armored personnel carriers (known in the Turkish acronym as GZPT), and three Cobra armored vehicles, with the last targeted mainly near Aqil Hill, where severe clashes took place from late December 2016 to early March 2017. Additionally, around twelve ACV-15-type armored personnel carriers delivered by the Turkish military to the FSA were damaged or captured by the Islamic State. Official Turkish sources did not contradict the leaked list.

LESSONS LEARNED FOR ANKARA

In seeking to improve coordination among different participants in largely urban campaigns such as Euphrates Shield, the Turkish military must learn to blend conventional armored operations with counterterrorism operations carried out by elite units. As demonstrated during the Syrian campaign, Special Forces appear best suited to a secondary role in planning and execution against an unconventional adversary such as the Islamic State. Better outcomes will likely require small-unit battles with combined arms, mixing conventional capabilities like armored warfare, close air support, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and tunnel warfare with conventional capabilities like counter-IED efforts and improved proxy support.

Mainly due to political-diplomatic mismanagement of the last two phases—the advance southward and the capture of al-Bab—Turkey did not benefit from full support from the U.S.-led anti-Islamic State coalition, nor could it persuade Russia, which held airspace dominance west of the Euphrates River, to allow for better provision of close air support. Ankara's inability to elicit either U.S. or Russian backing during these later phases, reflecting diplomatic-political inefficacy, became manifested as operational challenges on the ground. For instance, the absence of both effective coalition support and Russian cooperation during the capture of al-Bab caused operational deficiencies in ISTAR capabilities as well as medical evacuation and critical logistical support from helicopters. The limited ISTAR capabilities, rooted mainly in an inability to use UAVs and fixed-wing intelligence airplanes twenty-four hours a day, specifically increased exposure to the highly time-sensitive SVBIED attacks, a new threat for the Turkish military, exacerbated by extremely low situational awareness. The failure to provide close air support, meanwhile, resulted in inadequate responses, in particular to Islamic State armored units and safe havens inside al-Bab. Lastly, undelivered

medical air evacuation in all phases of Euphrates Shield harmed the fighting morale of Turkish soldiers.

In recent historical context, Operation Euphrates Shield was, in many respects—including its drivers, conduct, direction, losses sustained, foreign policy implications, and other consequences—unlike any other Turkish cross-border operation, with points for comparison including Operations Hammer I and II (1997–98) and Operation Sun (2008), both into Iraq. Overall, Euphrates Shield could be defined as a tactical success, but one that suffered from poor management at the operational level and very poor direction at the political-diplomatic level. As already implied, Ankara's political-diplomatic efforts failed to foster the necessary conditions to achieve optimal operational effectiveness, such as round-the-clock airspace control during an operation. Turkey also faltered when seeking to integrate the FSA groups into its plans, and fell short when devising strategies to influence Washington and Moscow and reassure these potential partners that Assad would remain neutral, if not fully supportive, of such operations. The aforementioned inability to adapt to changing circumstances on the ground, as well as to diplomatically facilitate a more secure operational theater for ground troops, represents a particular hurdle for future Turkish military engagements of this type. Despite positive outcomes such as the capture of Jarabulus and al-Bab, and improved border control, the evolution from a Special Forces to a counterterrorism operation requiring mixed military capabilities led to a gradual shift in objectives and resulted in an unplanned long-term commitment, otherwise known as mission creep.

Conclusion

For decades, the Turkish military embodied a staunchly secular, modernist perspective blended with nationalist themes. Among officers, a pro-Western mentality prevailed. Other attributes included sympathy for NATO, satisfaction with and separateness from the civilian sphere, distrust of and a desire to be above politics, a high sense of moral responsibility, an aristocratic approach to officership, the notion of soldiering as a way of life, and a feeling that military schools groomed “eliteness.”

After the uprising on July 15, 2016, however, these characteristics should no longer be considered immune to change. Operationally, the TAF has indeed been very busy, conducting counterterrorism operations

both inside Turkey and abroad, border security missions, peacekeeping tasks in Afghanistan, and force-projection efforts in places including Qatar, Somalia, and on Sudan's Suakin Island. But such activity should not be misconstrued as operational coherence. Without a doubt, since the uprising, hasty reforms and mass purges have unsteadied the institutional ground beneath the TAF. Strategic-political confusion reigns, owing to the absence of a clear political vision, the ambiguity of the TGS's post-July 15 status, and the Turkish political system's transition from a parliamentary to an executive presidential system. Consequences have included aggravated power struggles and apparent insufficient intellectual capital in the military, and the dwindling of already low security-related resources in the civilian sector. More important, all these institutional challenges coincide with never-ending crises between Turkey and its Western allies, particularly the United States.

Trends for the remainder of 2018 look no brighter. The long-running Turkish drift away from the West will likely prompt a continued deterioration in military ties with the Western security bloc. Domestically, Erdogan's push toward the finalization of an executive presidency will tie up the state's decisionmaking apparatus—with the overall bureaucracy continuing to bend toward the president's vision—and Turkey's armed conflict with the PKK will continue while the country simultaneously deals with violent Salafi-jihadist networks, both at home and across the Syrian border. Regional dynamics affecting Turkey—namely, souring ties with the European Union; the Islamic State's mutation from a governing entity back into an insurgency in Iraq and Syria; Ankara's strategic interactions with Baghdad, Tehran, Damascus, and Erbil; and the expansion of the semiautonomous Kurdish enclave in northern Syria known as Rojava—will likely increase tensions in the Middle East.

Despite the obvious challenges, the time is right for Turkey's traditional allies to constructively engage with the TAF to help it overcome these challenges—while preserving at least a portion of Turkey's traditional Western orientation—beginning with the following steps:

- ***The United States, in particular, should seek opportunities to engage with the TAF, both to help the Turkish military remedy its post-coup deficits and to revitalize its Atlanticist, reformist spirit.*** One important related move would be expanding

the International Military and Education program for Turkish officers and NCOs beyond its pre-2016 scale at U.S. military institutions and civilian universities. In particular at the graduate level, the United States should facilitate funding and fellowship opportunities to enhance the TAF's professional military education. To this end, the pursuit of scholarly engagement between the U.S. NDU and its newly founded Turkish namesake institution through activities such as student exchange programs, fellowship offerings, and joint seminars and workshops could remind the Turkish military class of the merits of a progressive, Western approach.

- **To boost bilateral military-to-military relations, U.S. decisionmakers and policy shapers should establish mechanisms for separating the diplomatic domain with Turkey, bogged down by chronic crises, from the professional-military one.** Here, the trap of "short-termism" must be avoided. Instead, a big-picture approach should focus on enhanced cooperation with the TAF in the fields of institutional transformation, strategic foresight, and future design.
- **To promote scholarly debate on new approaches, models, and perspectives on CMR and security sector reform, U.S. and Turkish academics could organize seminars, workshops, and panels.** Furthermore, U.S.-based think tanks with a security focus should be encouraged to be more engaged with Turkey-related issues.
- **NATO must be more involved in the TAF's transformation.** Unfortunately, such a responsibility has been mostly neglected by the alliance since the July 15 uprising. The corresponding sentiment that NATO has "turned its back on the TAF" has gained traction in Turkey, fanned by Russian agitation and propaganda.⁴³ In response, NATO's Allied Command Transformation should engage more closely with the TAF to reshape its structure, forces, capabilities, and doctrine, thereby helping refresh the military's approach and ability to adapt to changing circumstances, a need the Euphrates Shield operation demonstrated so starkly.

Notes

1. Contrary to conventional thinking, the author is inclined not to define the act on the night of July 15, 2016, as a classical coup attempt, but rather as an "attempted military uprising" by a small clique comprising Gulenist officers, officers with strong sentiments against Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party, elements being *blackmailed or deceived* by the Gulenist network, careerists, and others merely obeying orders. Indeed, the putschists were not guided by a profound ideology or coherent esprit de corps, a strong and all-encompassing motivation to break the will of pro-government forces, or a clear political road map for the transfer of political power. For many senior officers who had been on the government's monitoring or detention lists owing to their links to Gulenists, participation in the attempted overthrow was instead a kamikaze-like gesture. Had they not acted on that night, they would have been dismissed at the Supreme Military Council meeting in early August 2016 and then subjected to legal investigations. Their involvement appeared to be their only preemptive bet.
2. Metin Gurcan, "What Went Wrong with Turkey's WhatsApp Coup," *Al-Monitor*, July 19, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/turkey-coup-attempt-basic-cause-was-premature-birth.html>.
3. "Erdogan, KHK ve OHAL'e devam dedi: Referandum için üzerime düşeni yapacağım" [Erdogan says state of emergency will continue: "I will do what I can for the referendum"], *Diken*, Mar. 2, 2017, <http://www.diken.com.tr/erdogan-khk-ve-ohale-devam-dedi-referandum-icin-uzerime-duseni-yapacagim/>.
4. Metin Gurcan, "Profile of a Dedicated Gulenist in Turkey's Military," *Al-Monitor*, July 27, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2016/07/turkey-coup-attempt-profile-of-gulenist-soldier.html>.
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6. Burhanettin Duran, "The Executive Presidency and Turkey's Future," *Daily Sabah*, Jan. 31, 2017, available at <https://www.setav.org/en/the-executive-presidency-and-turkeys-future/>.
7. Metin Gurcan and Megan Gisclon, "Turkey's Security Sector after July 15: Democratizing Security or Securitizing the State?" *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2017): pp. 67–85, <http://turkishpolicy.com/article/843/turkeys-security-sector-after-july-15-democratizing-security-or-securitizing-the-state>.
8. Burhanettin Duran and Nebi Mis, "The Transformation of Turkey's Political System and Executive Presidency," *Insight Turkey* 18, no. 4 (2016): pp. 11–27, <https://www.setav.org/en/the-transformation-of-turkeys-political-system-and-the-executive-presidency/>.
9. "Turkey in Need of Effective Executive Presidency, Deputy PM Kurtulmus Says," *Daily Sabah*, Jan. 7, 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2016/01/07/turkey-in-need-of-effective-executive-presidency-deputy-pm-kurtulmus-says>.

10. Metin Gurcan, "Turkey-PKK Drone Wars Escalate," *Al-Monitor*, Sept. 18, 2017, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/09/turkey-pkk-drone-conflict-escalates.html>.
11. Gürcan and Gisclon, <http://turkishpolicy.com/article/843/turkeys-security-sector-after-july-15-democratizing-security-or-securing-the-state>.
12. Dani Rodrik, "The Plot against the Generals," June 2014, available at <http://drodrik.scholar.harvard.edu/files/dani-rodrik/files/plot-against-the-generals.pdf>.
13. These numbers were released by the Ministry of Defense in early July 2017.
14. Metin Gurcan, "Will Turkey's Military Turn East or West?" *Al-Monitor*, Aug. 23, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/turkey-what-is-next-for-military-east-west-both.html>.
15. Gurcan, "What Went Wrong," <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/turkey-coup-attempt-basic-cause-was-premature-birth.html>.
16. "Military Council Retired Nearly 600 Colonels," *Hurriyet Daily News*, Aug. 24, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/586-colonels-retired-by-turkeys-supreme-military-council-103156>.
17. Gurcan, "The Profile of a Dedicated Gulenist," <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2016/07/turkey-coup-attempt-profile-of-gulenist-soldier.html>.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Metin Gurcan, "Why It's So Difficult to Decipher the Gulenist Network," *Al-Monitor*, Aug. 2, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/turkey-coup-attempt-who-difficult-to-decipher-gulenists.html>.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Metin Gurcan, "Why Turkey's Coup Didn't Stand a Chance," *Al-Monitor*, July 17, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/turkey-kamikaze-coup-attempt-fails.html>.
22. Since February 2017, no drastic change has occurred in the numbers and ratios within the TAF services and ranks.
23. See "TSK'nin Subat 2017 Personel Mevcutlari," February 1, 2017, <http://www.milscint.com/tr/tsknin-subat-2017-personel-mevcutlari/>.
24. Before July 15, 2016, staff officers holding a master's degree after their two-year education at the Staff College in Istanbul were the most privileged members of the TAF officer corps. Indeed, they constituted roughly 90% of the international TAF cadres and 95% of the general cadres. Worth mentioning is that international posts (*daimi görev kadrosu*) are the most desirable, as they entail a 3-year deployment, during which an officer can earn up to \$7,000/month. By saving half this payment, which most can do, they can amass \$120,000 after the full deployment. Roughly 400 officers serve in this international role.
25. As established and defined by the author.
26. Metin Gurcan and Megan Gisclon, "What Is the Turkish Military's Strategic Identity after July 15," *Policy Brief* (IPC, Sept. 2016), <http://ipc.sabanciuniv.edu/publication/what-is-the-turkish-militarys-strategic-identity-after-july-15/?lang=en>.
27. Rodrik, <http://drodrik.scholar.harvard.edu/files/dani-rodrik/files/plot-against-the-generals.pdf>.
28. According to Gurcan, "Turkish Military."
29. Metin Gurcan, "Turkish Military before and after July 15," PhD diss., forthcoming (London: Helion & Company, June 2018). It compares the TAF pre- and post-July 15 in terms of organizational structure, institutional setting, and changes in officer attitudes.
30. Rodrik, <http://drodrik.scholar.harvard.edu/files/dani-rodrik/files/plot-against-the-generals.pdf>.
31. Based roughly on the author's semistructured in-depth interviews with retired and serving officers, conducted March–October 2017, Ankara and Istanbul.
32. Metin Gurcan, "A Snapshot of the Blackbox: A 2015 Survey of the Turkish Officer Corps," *Turkish Studies*, Sept. 10, 2017, abstract available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14683849.2017.1374862>.
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37. See Decree 696, issued Dec. 24, 2017 (in Turkish), <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2017/12/20171224-22.htm>.
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39. *Ibid.*
40. Based on the author's personal experience.
41. "Turkey Showcases Domestic Military Might in Efes-2016 Drill," *Daily Sabah*, May 30, 2016, <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2016/06/01/turkey-showcases-domestic-military-might-in-efes-2016-drill>.
42. Sultan Murad Division combatant, interview by author, Istanbul, April 17, 2017.
43. Metin Gurcan, "Russia's Winning the War for Turkish Public's Trust," *Al-Monitor*, Nov. 20, 2017, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/11/turkey-west-and-nato-are-about-to-lose-turkish-public.html>.

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