

ARMED FORCES AS A SIGNIFICANT ACTOR IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: REFAHYOL GOVERNMENT PERIOD IN TURKEY*

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Abstract

The Turkish military, which dominated Turkish domestic politics in a continuation of its coups throughout the 1970s and 1980s, also dramatically increased its interference in foreign policy for a brief period in the mid-1990s during the Refahyol coalition government. This involvement in foreign policy was evidenced in Turkey's relations with various Middle Eastern countries including Israel, and with the EU, in addition to the extension of Operation Provide Comfort. This article investigates why Turkish military's role in foreign policy decision-making increased at this time by drawing on three approaches: Claude Welch's classification of "military control with partners", Michael Desch's framework on the relationship of civilian control to intensity of internal threats and Joe Hagan's fragmented regime analysis.

Keywords: Turkish foreign policy, Refahyol government, Civil-military relations, Civilian control, Internal and external threats, and fragmented regimes

Türk Dış Politikasında Önemli Bir Aktör Olarak Ordu: Türkiye'de Refahyol Hükümeti Dönemi

Öz

1970 ve 1980'ler boyunca özellikle darbeler sonrasında Türk siyasi hayatında baskın bir rol oynayan Türk ordusu, 1990'ların ortasında özellikle Refahyol hükümeti döneminde kısa bir süre için Türk dış politikasındaki müdahalesini de arttırmıştır. Ordunun dış politikaya bu müdahalesi kendini Türkiye'nin İsrail de dahil olmak üzere Orta Doğu ülkeleri ve de AB ile ilişkilerinde, ayrıca Huzur Harekatı'nın (Çekiç Güç Harekatı'nın) süresinin uzatılmasında göstermiştir. Bu makale Refahyol hükümeti döneminde Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerinin Türk dış politikasına müdahalesinin artmasının arkasındaki nedenleri bulmak amacıyla üç yaklaşıma yönelecektir. Bu yaklaşımların içerisinde Claude Welch's "ortakları ile askeri kontrol" sınıflandırması, Michael Desch'in sivil kontrol ile iç tehditlerin yoğunluğu arasındaki ilişkiyi anlatan çerçevesi ve de Joe Hagan'ın parçalanmış rejim analizi yer alacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Türk dış politikası, Refahyol hükümeti, Sivil-asker ilişkileri, Sivil kontrol, İç ve dış tehditler ve parçalanmış rejimler

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Armed Forces as a Significant Actor in Turkish Foreign Policy: Refahyol Government Period in Turkey

Introduction

Since the 1960s, the Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri* – TSK) have remained an influential actor in Turkish politics, seen in the 1960 and 1980 direct, and 1971 and 1997 indirect coups. Besides these coups, the TSK has also maintained a significant role in Turkish politics through the prerogatives it has received in the aftermath of each intervention. The majority of these direct and indirect coups were interventions over domestic politics rather than foreign policy. The one serious exception to the TSK’s lack of direct interference in foreign policy occurred throughout the mid-1990s during the coalition government of the pro-Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*—RP) and the centre-right True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi* – DYP (known as the *Refah-Yol* government, a portmanteau of the Turkish names of the two parties), which lasted less than a year. During this period the TSK dramatically increased its influence in foreign policy, even directly involving itself in many foreign-policy decisions. For example, the General Staff hindered the Refahyol government’s attempts to improve relations with Iran and forced the reluctant government to negotiate agreements with Israel. Moreover, by holding its own security summit meetings, the TSK made various national security decisions, for example to permit the extension of Operation Provide Comfort and back Turkey’s inclusion in the Customs Union.

In order to analyse the Turkish military’s extensive intervention in foreign policy during the Refahyol government, this article will draw on three approaches of comparative politics and international relations. First, it will analyse this rise in the military’s involvement in foreign policy in relation to Claude Welch’s “military control with partners” classification, which measures different levels of military control in politics (Welch, 1976: 2). It will argue that the TSK, which already possessed foreign policy prerogatives through the departments it established, also acquired partners, such as opposition parties, the media, civil society organizations and business groups that supported its involvement in foreign politics. The article will then examine the military’s

impact on foreign policy with the help of Michael Desch's framework, which is based on the relationship between civilian control and intensity of internal threats (Desch, 1999: 13-15). The article will argue that the simultaneous existence of both high external and internal threats leads to poor civilian control and strong military control of politics. Finally, the study will use Joe Hagan's fragmented regime analysis. According to Hagan, weak and fragile coalition governments that can not agree on the policies to pursue give other societal actors, including the military, a greater chance to intervene in domestic and foreign policies (Hagan, 1987: 345).

Following a brief analysis of the background of the TSK's involvement in Turkish domestic politics, the article will examine various actors and institutions that dominated Turkish foreign policy from the early days of the Republic until the mid-1990s. The study will then provide an in-depth analysis of the military's intervention in foreign policy during the period under examination by analyzing the reasons in terms of Welch's "military control with partners" classification, Desch's civilian control versus internal threat argument and Hagan's fragmented regime analysis.

1. The Leading Role of the Turkish Armed Forces in Domestic Politics

The Turkish military has always had a significant impact on politics since the days of the Ottoman Empire. TSK legitimized the 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997 coups in the framework of their self-assigned task of protecting Kemalist reforms and principles. However, besides the Turkish military's incentives of acting as the guardians of these reforms and principles, the coups under examination were also the result of the political struggle between the military as well as the state with the political elite. Turkish military even acted as a political actor by interfering in politics indirectly through various institutional mechanisms, such as the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Konseyi* – MGK), the Senate (between 1961 and 1980) and the presidency, as well as through military staff functioning in institutions like the State Security Courts, the Council of Higher Education, and the Radio and Television Supreme Council. Through these institutional mechanisms, the military became a significantly influential political and social actor, even between coups.

In 1960, the Turkish military intervened in politics by overthrowing the governing Democrat Party for following authoritarian, anti-Kemalist and particularly anti-secular policies. The 1971 and 1980 military interventions both resulted from crises of political representation and legitimacy, which were accompanied by ideological, religious and ethnic polarization as well as economic problems in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. The 1980

military coup allowed both capital and social relations to be reorganized in harmony with the new capital accumulation strategy in order to overcome the political crisis (Ozan, 2012: 59). Whereas the military only enforced major changes in the government in 1971, in 1980 it completely removed the governing and opposition parties from power and banned their leading members from politics. In the aftermath of each intervention and during the restoration of multi-party elections, the TSK reserved certain privileges for itself through specific institutions, such as the MGK, the Senate, the Presidency, the State Security Courts, the Council of Higher Education, and the Radio and Television Supreme Council.¹

Until the mid-1990s, the TSK's political involvement was mainly related to domestic issues rather than foreign policies. In fact, different actors and institutions have played influential roles in Turkish foreign policy since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. From the early years of the Republic until the full transition to a multi-party system in 1950, two strong leaders, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü, who both served as presidents, controlled foreign policy-making. During the multi-party period, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dominated by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes of the Democratic Party, was responsible for foreign policy decisions. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a variety of actors significantly influenced foreign policy-making, including dominant prime ministers like Süleyman Demirel, successive Ministers of Foreign Affairs and public opinion (rightist and leftist movements). The only period in which the TSK mainly controlled both domestic and foreign policy decision-making occurred between the 1980 coup and the end of 1983. From the 1980 coup until the mid-1990s, strong civilian leaders like Prime Minister and later President Turgut Özal and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dominated Turkey's foreign policy-decisions. During Özal's period in office, even business groups had a moderate impact on foreign policy-making from time to time (Uzgel, 2004: 73-90).

2. Areas of Conflict between the Refahyol Government and the Military

Outside the 1960-1961, 1971-1973 and 1980-1983 coup periods, the TSK generally did not intervene in foreign policy, with civilians dominating such decisions, in contrast to the TSK's regular involvement in domestic politics. However, following the formation of the vulnerable coalition government of the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*—DYP) and Social

¹ For details of these prerogatives, see (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1997a: 151-166).

Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*—SHP), particularly under the incompetent rule of Prime Minister Tansu Çiller (1993-1996) and during the Refahyol coalition government (1996-1997), the military's political influence considerably increased. The instability of the DYP-SHP coalition government under Çiller's premiership led to frequent changes of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Indeed, Çiller, who lacked support from either her party or the opposition, relied mainly on the military. By securitizing the Kurdish questions rather than following peaceful methods, she resorted to military solutions.² The weakness of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs enabled the military to participate in foreign policy-making (Yenigün, 2010: 70). However, the military's interference in foreign policy rose even more dramatically during the short-lived Refahyol coalition government between June 1996 and June 1997, under the leadership of pro-Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan.

In the 1995 general elections, Erbakan's RP received the most votes (21.4%). However, the TSK, supported by the efforts of President Demirel and the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association (*Türk Sanayicileri ve İş Adamları Derneği* – TÜSİAD) orchestrated the establishment of a coalition government between the second largest party, the centre-right Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi* – ANAP) (19.6%) and the third largest party, Çiller's centre-right DYP (19.2%). However, this imposed coalition did not last long, enabling Erbakan to establish a coalition government with Çiller's DYP in June 1996. The anti-secular and anti-regime policies followed by Prime Minister Erbakan and the anti-Kemalist rhetoric of RP members quickly drew reactions from supporters of the status quo, which allowed the Turkish General Staff to get involved in both foreign policy issues and domestic politics. Although Çiller was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs as the leader of the junior member of the coalition government, the RP's elites bypassed her foreign policy decisions until the military took over making these. The Erbakan government's foreign policies that the military found particularly controversial included Erbakan's efforts to establish close ties with radical Islamist countries by visiting and signing various economic and military agreements, taking steps to sever relations with Israel, attempting to terminate Operation Provide Comfort

2 PKK stands for *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, the Kurdish Workers Party, originally established as a Marxist-Leninist workers party to protect the rights of Kurds living in Turkey, allied with Turkish leftist movements. However, it gradually transformed itself into an armed separatist nationalist movement, aiming to carve an independent Kurdistan out of Turkish territory. For more information, see (Aknur, 2008: 164-189).

(OPC),³ proposing an alternative solution to deal with the PKK through the discourse of “Islamic brotherhood”, discouraging full EU membership and planning to leave the Customs Union.

Of these, the most significant issue encouraging the TSK to intervene in foreign policy was the dramatic rise in violent attacks by the Kurdish separatist PKK, which led to thousands of casualties and endangered the country’s territorial integrity. Neighbouring states’ support for the PKK even led the Turkish military to resort to cross-border military operations. The Erbakan government’s tendency to establish close links with countries supporting radical Islamist groups gave the TSK another excuse to get involved in foreign policy-making as the TSK considered reactionary Islam to be a major national security threat.

Prime Minister Erbakan was a member of the National Outlook Movement (*Milli Görüş Hareketi*), which supported the idea of returning to the roots of national and Islamic values as an alternative to imitating Western values. The government also supported the creation of an Islamic Common Market by abandoning the dream of European Union membership, as well as establishing international organizations to help build a new Muslim world order. During the election campaign, Erbakan even proposed the creation of an Islamic United Nations to replace the United Nations (Baştürk, 1999; Dikici-Bilgin, 2008: 409; Robins, 2003: 146-147). Building close relations with the Muslim world also meant distancing Turkey from Israel and eventually cutting ties with the country.

During this period, the military intervened in foreign politics through the securitization of these issues by considering them as dangers to the territorial integrity and secular characteristic of the Republic, thus moving them out of the political domain (Bayramoğlu, 2001: 51). The military was able to intervene in foreign politics through various institutional (formal) mechanisms, such as the MGK, government departments, centres, groups and official documents, and through non-institutional (informal) mechanisms such as various speeches by senior military members concerning both domestic and foreign policies. Thus, it became common to see high-ranking Turkish military officers giving briefings to high-level bureaucrats in the ministries of foreign affairs and justice as well as to academics and leading journalists. In an attempt to shape public opinion, senior members of the military even made direct public statements

3 As will be examined in detail below, Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) was a no-fly zone over Iraq marked by the 36th parallel, created by the USA, Britain and France in the aftermath of the first Gulf War to keep Saddam Hussein’s forces out of northern Iraq and protect Iraqi Kurds.

concerning both domestic and foreign policy issues (Özcan, 2001a: 21). Such interventions were made in regard to improving relations with radical Muslim countries, the rise in PKK attacks, the continuity of OPC, relations with Israel and full EU membership.

1.1. Rising PKK Attacks, Relations with Muslim Countries and OPC

The TSK considers the Kurdish separatist movement shaped by PKK since the mid-1980s as one of the most significant threats to Turkey's territorial integrity. This movement is not only considered as an internal threat but also an external one that has damaged Turkey's relations with its neighbours, including Iran, Iraq and Syria, since they have all supported PKK attacks in Turkey in various ways and at different times. During the 1980s, the TSK gained the upper hand against the PKK by establishing its "village guard system" in 1985, the Governorship of the State of Emergency of Region (*Olağanüstü Hal Bölge Valiliği*) in 1987, the Gendarmerie Command of Public Security of the Region (*Jandarma Asayiş Bölge Komutanlığı*) in 1990 and the Special Operations Team (*Özel Harekat Timi*) in 1983 (Çelik, 2014: 102; Ülman, 2000: 108).

Although Erbakan believed in a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish problem by referring to a common religion and brotherhood under Islam, once he came to power, he was forced by the TSK to turn a blind eye to the military's use of hard power (Ülman, 2000:118). In fact, Erbakan came to power when PKK attacks had peak, with the TSK's fight against armed PKK groups expanding to cross-border operations since the movement was supported by Turkey's Muslim neighbours, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Some PKK militants were trained in Syria before attacking Turkey from across the Syrian and Iraqi borders. In response, the Turkish military started a series of cross-border operations against both countries.

Rising PKK attacks particularly increased the TSK's concerns about Erbakan's moves to establish close relations with neighbouring Muslim countries. In fact, Erbakan was aiming to alter Turkey's traditional foreign policy by attempting to establish closer relations with Middle Eastern states rather than the West. At the same time, he was also trying to maintain warm relations with radical Islamist groups, such as the Algerian Islamist Front, Hamas, Hezbollah and Muslim Brotherhood (Kirişçi, 2001a: 104). These foreign policies contradicted the military's policies since the TSK, as the guardian of Kemalist policies, favoured close ties with the West. The TSK was especially worried about support to PKK given by neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, by making his first official visits to radical Islamists countries, such as Iran and Libya, Erbakan showed he paid little attention to the Turkish

military's concerns regarding these countries. Both the Turkish state elite and the military considered these visits as a rupture from traditional foreign policy. The Turkish Foreign Ministry even attempted to stop the visits by imposing visa restrictions (Yinanç, 1996). In response, Erbakan violated diplomatic protocol by excluding Foreign Ministry diplomats from his visits to Iran and Syria (Kirişçi, 2000b: 42). Erbakan's undiplomatic treatment by Egyptian President Mubarak and a hostile welcome from Libyan leader Qaddafi were also harshly criticized by the state elite and the public.

Prior to his visit to Iran's Prime Minister, Erbakan ignored a National Intelligence Agency report about Iranian support for terrorist organizations such as PKK and Hezbollah. The Iranian authorities rejected this accusation and even proposed joint cooperation with the Turkish government against terrorism (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003: 134-135; Hale, 1994a: 35). In August 1996, Turkish Energy Minister Recai Kutan and Iranian Oil Minister Gholamreza Aghazadeh signed a multi-billion dollar gas supply agreement despite US sanctions on foreign companies investing in Iran's oil and gas sectors. This agreement made Iran Turkey's second biggest natural gas supplier after Russia, thereby decreasing Turkey's dependence on Russian gas (Hürriyet Daily News, 1996). Moreover, Erbakan initiated the establishment of the Developing-8 Association of Muslim countries, to include Turkey, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria and Pakistan, as well as the Economic Cooperation Organization, which aimed at increasing cooperation among member states in banking, equity markets and privatization (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003:135).

Tensions between Turkey and Iran rose in August 1996 after the two countries supported opposing factions in a fight among Iraqi Kurds. The Iranian authorities accused Turkey of having its eye on oil resources in northern Iraq, and also criticized it for proposing to establish a security belt along its borders with Iraq to prevent PKK infiltration into Turkey (Gunter, 1998a: 33-40). Erbakan's proposal of defence industry cooperation with Iran received a harsh reaction from the Turkish General Staff and the US government. The Turkish military criticised such an initiative given that Iran was allegedly backing the outlawed PKK and trying to export Islamist fundamentalism to Turkey. One high-ranking officer said that Turkey should cooperate with the West rather than countries that are endangering Turkey's territorial integrity. Aligning with the TSK, Turkish Defence Minister Turhan Tayan from the DYP immediately declared that such an agreement was unfeasible (Hürriyet Daily News, 1996).

Chief of General Staff Karadayı emphasized that political and economic support given to the PKK by Turkey's neighbours should be stopped in order to eradicate the group (Milliyet, 1996) while the General Staff stated in its report to the MGK that, besides Iranian support for Kurdish separatism, Syria and Iraq were also providing weapons to PKK members. According to this report,

Iranian, Iraqi and Syrian nuclear, chemical and biological weapons posed a serious security threat for Turkey so Turkey should sign a defence industry cooperation agreement with Israel to balance this regional threat. Accordingly, the Turkish military initiated a cooperation agreement with Israel, in contradiction with the Erbakan government's enthusiasm to develop bilateral relations with Iran (Değer, 1996).

In February 1997, the RP-controlled municipality of Sincan on the outskirts of Ankara held a night called 'Jerusalem Night', at which the Iranian ambassador joined the crowds calling for the return of Shari'a law. Following this event, Deputy Chief of General Staff General Çevik Bir gave a speech in Washington, in which he called Iran a "registered terrorist state" and accused it of exporting the "Islamic revolution to Turkey", "supporting the PKK" and "manufacturing weapons of mass destruction" (Özcan, 2001a: 22). In the aftermath of the Jerusalem Night event, Turkey's ambassador to Iran was immediately recalled. The consul generals of Iran in İstanbul and Erzurum were also expelled upon their criticism of the Turkish military (Çongar, 1997; Hürriyet Daily News, 1997).

Concerning the PKK threat, "the Border Security Research Committee of Turkey's parliament made public a detailed report on the location of PKK training and logistic support camps in Iranian territory by pointing out the border violations, attacks, and mine-laying activities by PKK militants infiltrating from Iran" (Gunter, 1998a: 38). As with earlier statements from the military, General Kenan Deniz, the chief of the Turkish general staff's domestic security department, accused Iran of using terrorism for its political ends by giving logistical support to the PKK and fundamentalist Islamic organizations.

During the First Gulf War, which began with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the Turkish military provided logistical support to the US-led international coalition. Even before Erbakan's government came to power, the TSK had already got involved in Turkey's foreign policy: it implemented UN embargo decisions on Iraq by deploying troops on the Iraqi border, closed down the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık oil pipelines and opened its NATO air bases to US military aircraft (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu, 2009: 552). In the aftermath of the Gulf War, clashes between Iraqi Kurds and Saddam Hussein's forces led to 400,000 Iraqi Kurds fleeing to Turkish territory. In response, the US-led coalition created a no-fly zone at the 36th parallel. Within this zone, the US, Britain and France conducted Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) to enforce a no-fly zone

over northern Iraq to keep Saddam's forces out and protect Iraqi Kurds.⁴ The periodic renewal of the OPC mandate of by the Turkish parliament gradually became a disputed issue (Gunter, 2008b: 14; Benli-Altunışık, 2006: 184). In order to facilitate cross-border operations in Iraq to fight the PKK, the Turkish military had consistently recommended the mandate's renewal, forcing the parliament to follow its recommendations (Jenkins, 2001: 75). During the election campaign, Erbakan promised that the deployment of OPC would be strictly forbidden. However, once he came to power, following a briefing given by the Turkish General Staff on the significance of the zone in its fight with PKK, he could no longer keep his promise (TBMM, 1995; Özcan, 1998b: 185-196). Consequently, the Erbakan government was pressured by the Turkish military to renew the OPC mandate in July 1996 until the end of 1996. In May 1997, the OPC (this time under the name of Northern Watch) was accepted by the military by bypassing Erbakan government. (Özcan, 2000c: 84).

During this period, the military dominated decision-making regarding the Kurdish issue and any foreign policy issues concerning the PKK, particularly cross-border operations into neighbouring countries and decisions concerning the OPC, without interference by Erbakan's government. In this way, the Turkish military continued its cross-border operations against both to Iraq and Syria by ignoring government policies.

2.2. Relations with Israel

During the 1990s, Turkey's relations with Israel improved due to the peace process between the Israelis and Palestinians. The moderate policies followed by the majority of Arab states towards Israel following the peace process enabled Turkish governments to establish close relations with Israel. In addition, increasing PKK attacks both inside and outside Turkey, and Arab state support for the PKK forced Turkey to search for a new strategic partner in the region, which led to the rapprochement with Israel. In the first half of the 1990s, besides high-level visits between the two states, various economic and strategic agreements were signed. In 1992, Tourism Minister Abdülkadir Ateş, in 1993, Foreign Affairs Minister Hikmet Çetin and in 1996 both President Demirel and Prime Minister Çiller visited Israel to promote economic and political cooperation (Inbar, 2001: 23). In 1992, the Tourism Cooperation Agreement and in 1996 the Military Training and Cooperation Agreement and

4 Operation Provide Comfort was renamed Operation Provide Comfort II (OPC2) in 16 July 1991, which was called Operation Poised Hammer. After 1996, it was renamed Operation Northern Watch. See (Sönmezoğlu, 2006: 546).

Free Trade Agreement were signed between the two countries (Hale, 2000b: 297-298). These agreements dramatically increased the total trade volume between Israel and Turkey in the second half of the 1990s. During his election campaign for December 1995 general elections, Erbakan called Israel a Zionist state and announced that he was planning to terminate all diplomatic ties with Israel upon coming to power. Although before coming to power Erbakan had promised to cancel Turkey's military agreement with Israel, once he came to power in June 1996, he found himself implementing this agreement due to military pressure. The Turkish military argued that cancelling this modernization project would damage relations between the two countries and weaken Turkey in its fight against the PKK (Kirişçi, 2001a: 103; Çakır, 1994: 166-167; Kirişçi, 2001a: 104-105; Kul, 1996).

High-level visits resumed in February 1997 with the visits to Israel of Turkish Chief of General Staff İsmail Hakkı Karadayı and Defence Minister Turhan Tayan. The Israeli government showed the significance it attached to this visit by welcoming General Karadayı at the highest level, by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Ezer Weizman (Kösebalaban, 2011: 138). Karadayı's visit concentrated on the negotiation of a framework of a Military Training and Cooperation Agreement, which included technology transfer, intelligence sharing and joint military exercises between the two countries (Eliş and Yazaroğlu, 1997). Reciprocally, in April 1997, Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs David Levy and Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai visited Turkey. Although the Erbakan government initially rejected Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Levy's visit, due to Karadayı's intervention, Erbakan was forced to meet Levy (Özcan, 2008: 124; Kösebalaban, 2011: 138).

In May 1997, Turkish Deputy Chief of Staff Çevik Bir signed a Military Training and Cooperation Agreement in Israel. In this meeting –attended by US authorities— the two sides discussed necessary measures against potential Syrian and Iranian threats as well as holding joint military exercises and exchanging intelligence. Although Arab states and RP members criticized the meetings, contacts between the two sides continued through the initiatives of the Turkish military, being later turned into a military and economic partnership (Özcan, 1998b: 189-196).

Moreover, to help the TSK in its fight with the PKK, Israel also provided intelligence and ammunition to Turkish military forces on the Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian borders. Turkey and Israel signed military agreements for their navies to conduct joint training activities in the Mediterranean Sea (Inbar, 2001: 28). Military cooperation between the two sides was criticized by Libyan leader Qaddafi, who accused the Turkish military of being ruled by Jews (Milliyet, 1996; Özcan, 2001a: 22). Due to Erbakan's reluctance, the majority of military

agreements signed between Turkey and Israel during the Refahyol government were achieved by bypassing Prime Minister Erbakan and the RP cadre.

2.3. Turkey-EU Relations

Turkey's attempts to become a full EU member intensified in 1987, when Prime Minister Turgut Özal applied for full membership. After Turkey's premature application was rejected in 1989, the EU and Turkey started negotiations for the Customs Union, which came into effect in December 1995. This marked a potential step toward Turkey's full EU membership. However, Erbakan considered Turkey's efforts to join Common Market as a step towards becoming a colony of Europe (Yavuz, 2006: 244). He declared that the West was attempting to prevent Islamic countries unifying by trying to make Turkey dependent on Europe. According to Erbakan, Turkey should cooperate with Muslim countries with whom it could be a leader rather than a servant of the EU. He considered the EU as a "Christian club", arguing that by becoming a member of the EU, Turkey would lose its identity. Erbakan suggested establishing an Islamic Union to include an Islamic United Nations, an Islamic Defence Organization, a common Islamic currency and an Islamic market. During the 1995 election campaign, Erbakan strongly opposed full EU membership for Turkey (Kaarbo, 2012: 203). However, after coming to power, the Refahyol government was forced to accept Turkey's economic partnership with the EU via the Customs Union that had already come into effect in December 1995.

Concerning their foreign policy choices, the Refahyol coalition partners adopted contradictory decisions. While RP attempted to develop good relations with the Middle East, the junior partner, the DYP, focused on developing relations with the West, in particular with the EU. Turkey's long-standing goal to become a full EU member was one of Turkey's pro-Western leading elites' main foreign policy orientations. As part of this power bloc, the military consistently supported this goal, seeing it as protection against Islamist fundamentalism. In an interview in December 1996, Chief of General Staff Karadayı emphasized the significance of Turkey's EU membership for the survival of the secular regime (Milliyet, 1996). Similarly, in a General Staff briefing to Foreign Ministry bureaucrats in June 1997, General Bir criticized Foreign Minister Çiller for her lack of attention to EU-Turkey relations (Özcan, 2001a: 27). Most critically, military-dominated National Security Council in its meeting of February 28, 1997 suggested the government to keep the priority of becoming a full EU member. The meeting also requested all public institutions to contribute to this process (Akpınar, 2001: 206).

Erbakan wanted Turkey to withdraw from the Customs Union because of the effects it could have had on small and medium-sized businesses in Turkey. However, the military and the junior coalition partner DYP's members opposed this idea. In response to the EU's refusal to provide financial assistance to Turkey to overcome the harmful effects of the Customs Union, Erbakan refused to join a dinner reception with EU leaders at the Dublin summit in December 1996 (Çevik, 1996).

In sum, in almost every domain, foreign and military policy consistently continued. The established policies such as the intensification of military cooperation towards Israel, continuation of incursions into northern Iraq and maintenance of Turkey of its diplomatic agenda in relations with Europe and its Arab neighbours were sustained. Moreover, despite Erbakan's opposition, progress towards EU membership was carried on. Although Erbakan attempted to redefine Turkey's security policy, the country's traditional foreign policy did not change, and its secular pro-western stance was even reinforced (Brooks, 2008: 222).

3. Analysis of the Turkish Military's Dominant Role in Foreign Policy in the mid-1990s

Between 1996 and 1997, the TSK tremendously increased its involvement in foreign policy decision-making. To analyse this rise, the following sections draw on three different theoretical approaches within comparative politics and international relations: military control with partners, increasing internal and external threats and fragmented regime analysis.

3.1. Military Control with Partners

For civilian control to be complete in a democratic system, all decisions concerning the country's defence must be under the control of the civilians. As Claude Welch argues, such control cannot usually be fully realized when the armed forces involve themselves in politics at various levels. Welch points out that civilian control of the military is a matter of degree that varies from country to country (Welch, 1976: 2), depending on the balance between the relative institutional power of the military and the civilians. Table 1 presents these degrees schematically.

Table 1: Welch's Categorization of Degrees of Military Involvement in Politics

Military influence (civilian control)	Military Participation	Military Control (with partners)	Military Control (without partners)
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Source: Welch, 1976: p. 2

Under 'military influence', the military has a significant degree of political involvement. Military leaders give advice on strategic decisions, provide intelligence by using their specialized knowledge and lobby the government regarding the budget. Military influence is usually carried through standard channels such as contacts between military and political leaders rather than the military's direct involvement in politics. Under 'military participation', legislation provides the armed forces with an extensive secure area of policy autonomy. Under 'military control', despite opposition from civilians, the military makes decisions on crucial issues, considering them as its prerogative. Under 'military control with partners', the military draws on support from civilians who agree with its interference in politics whereas 'military control without partners' means that the military intervenes politically without the backing of any non-military groups (Welch, 1976: 2-5).

The TSK's expanded role in Turkish foreign policy during the 1996-1997 period can be analysed as an example of military control with partners. During this period, the TSK increased its political dominance over foreign policy through institutional powers, such as the MGK Secretariat, various working groups and centres, official documents and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was run by the DYP, as well as opposition parties, the media, civil society organizations and business groups. In addition, the TSK became an effective foreign policy player through the use of informal mechanisms, such as high-ranking military officers' foreign visits, and public statements and briefings. The TSK itself also negotiated military training and intelligence agreements with other states, including Israel (Özcan, 1998b: 189-191).

The TSK's most significant means of political influence, the MGK, was established under the 1961 Constitution as a formal platform for the military to submit its views on national security matters to the Council of Ministers. Amendments in 1973 and 1982, following the 1971 and 1980 coups respectively, the MGK became an institution through which the military members were able to dictate their demands to the politicians. Article 118 of the 1982 Constitution, for example, stipulates that "the decisions of the MGK concerning the national security have been taken into consideration with

priority”, which has enabled the military to get involved in foreign policy matters (Özbudun, 2000: 107).

During the Refahiyol government, the military frequently used the MGK to interfere in foreign policy decision-making. In particular, the MGK set guidelines for national security policies and directly determined relations with foreign states by labelling some (including Iran, Syria and Iraq) as national security threats. Moreover, the MGK established working groups, such as the European Union Working Group, which aimed at monitoring Turkey’s EU candidacy process.⁵ The Prime Ministerial Crisis Management Centre (*Başbakanlık Kriz Yönetim Merkezi*) was also formed within the MGK secretariat in January 1997 to observe and report on crises created by reactionary Islamic movements.⁶ The MGK also dominated foreign policies through the National Security Policy Document, (*Milli Güvenlik Siyaset Belgesi* – MGSB), which listed national threat perceptions and suggested methods to deal with them. During the Refahiyol government, the MGSB focused on the rise of PKK violence and reactionary Islam as two significant internal threats while warning the government to take precautions (Aknur, 2012: 217-218).

Besides these prerogatives and institutional mechanisms, the TSK also increased its political involvement through civilian groups – its so-called partners, of which the most significant were the pro-Kemalist Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by a minister from the DYP, the pro-secular mainstream media, opposition parties, particularly the Kemalist Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – CHP), and pro-secular business organizations like TÜSİAD. Following the 1995 elections, TÜSİAD ran a newspaper advertisement declaring that “the electorate chose centre-right”, thereby showing its preference for a DYP-ANAP coalition (Milliyet, 1995). Both TÜSİAD and TSK belonged to the same bloc seeking to maintain a pro-secular domestic and foreign policy orientation to counter the Refahiyol government’s anti-secularist policies.

5 In addition to the European Union Working Group, following the military’s overthrow of Erbakan’s coalition government in the aftermath of the 28 February (1997) Process, the MGK also established the Western Working Group (*Batı Çalışma Grubu*) to fight the rise of political Islam and the Eastern Working Group (*Doğu Çalışma Grubu*) to cope with the rise of Kurdish nationalism.

6 For a comprehensive analysis of the institutional mechanisms through which the military exerted its power in politics, see (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1997: 151-166). For an in-depth analysis of these departments, groups and centers, and their impact on Turkish politics, see (Özcan, 2004d: 845, 854-856; Uzel, 2004: 87-88).

Throughout the Refahyol government's term, the military notified its civilian allies about the Islamist threat and explained its concerns regarding Erbakan's premiership of by giving briefings to high level bureaucrats in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice, and to academics and leading journalists. The TSK also made public statements about Islamist threats and released sensitive information to the press (Sarigil, 2013: 286). By resorting to these mechanisms, the TSK was able to involve itself in foreign politics by bypassing the Refahyol government.

The mainstream media was an important and consistent ally of the TSK throughout their criticisms of the government. The media continuously published news about radical Islamist groups and *tarikats*, such as the *Aczmenidis*, as well as the threat of fundamentalism. They heavily criticized Erbakan's trips to Iran and Libya. Meanwhile, civil society organizations, major trade unions and constituents of the opposition parties protested against the Erbakan government by attending public demonstrations against the government's anti-secular political practices, chanting slogans like "Protect the Republic" (Sabah, 1997).

3.2. The Rise of Internal and External Threats

Another approach that can help explain the Turkish military's increasing role in foreign policy in 1996-1997 is Michael Desch's framework (see Table 2), which measures the level of civilian control in politics by looking at the intensity of internal and external threats. Desch concentrates on the security environment to evaluate the level of military's political interference (Desch, 1999: 11).

Table 2: Desch's Model of Civilian Control versus Intensity of Threat

		External Threats	
		High	Low
Internal Threats	High	(Q3) Poor	(Q4) Worst
	Low	(Q1) Good	(Q2) Mixed

Source: Desch, 1999: p.14

Desch postulates four different hypotheses regarding the strength of civilian control of the military in different security environments. In the first quadrant (Q1), it is assumed that the armed forces will not interfere so much in domestic foreign policies since they will be involved in countering external threats, thereby giving more chance for civilian control. In Q2, however, is hard

to predict the level of civilian control when both external and internal threats are low. In Q3, there is a reduced likelihood of civilian control while the worst situation for civilian control is Q4 because the military is very likely to interfere in both domestic and foreign policies since it is not busy with any external threat (Desch, 1999: 11-17).

Q3, in which both internal and external threats are high, can help explain why the Turkish military's power in foreign policy increased in 1996 and 1997. During the Refahiyol government, the existence of both high external and internal threats led to poor civilian control, or rather, strong military control, particularly over foreign policies. During this period, internal threats, namely political Islam that threatened secularism and PKK attacks that threatened the country's territorial integrity, dramatically increased. Simultaneously, external threats due to Turkey's conflicts with its neighbours, including Iraq, Iran, Syria and Greece, also grew significantly. In fact, internal threats sometimes overlapped with external threats since Iraq and Syria were contributing to Turkey's PKK problem.

Despite Atatürk's secularizing reforms, Islam has always been influential in society, daily life and politics; given that Turkey is an overwhelmingly Muslim society. Following the transition to multi-party politics, Islamic sentiments were initially expressed through right-wing political parties, such as the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*) and its successor, the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*). Then, under the liberal atmosphere of the 1961 Constitution, Islam became more visible socially, culturally and politically. Erbakan first established the pro-Islamist National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*) and then the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*), which served as the junior partner of right-wing coalition governments throughout the 1970s. The 1979 Islamist revolution in Iran had a significant impact on Turkish society. Then, after 1980, the coup administration attempted to protect youth from the threats of communism by encouraging religious education in schools (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008: 37). In addition, Islamic brotherhoods, such as *Nurcu*, *Nakşibendi* and *Süleymancı*, were becoming more ideologically, financially and organizationally effective in Turkish political life (Eligür, 2010: 2010). The emergence of Green Capital represented by the newly formed Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (*Müstakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği*) also strengthened Islamic movements through their financial support (Oran, 2009: 219). Radical Islamist groups, such as Raiders of the Islamic Great East (*İslami Büyük Doğu Akıncıları*) and Hezbollah (Party of God), intensified their terrorist activities, while the Fettullah Gülen movement grew quickly throughout the 1990s (Zürcher, 2005: 290-291). Moreover, as an observant Muslim, Prime Minister and then President Özal opened the way for the rise of political Islam. Erbakan's coming to power in the mid-1990s led to public

discussions about the ban on headscarves, the increase in the intensification of Hezbollah's terrorist activities in south eastern Turkey and the activities of other Islamist groups like Aczmenidis. The TSK considered the growing activities of reactionary groups as a serious national threat.

The Kurdish problem which was developed as part of Turkish socialist movements during the 1960s focused on the economic exploitation of Kurds by feudal structures as well as the civic and social rights, rather than on the recognition of specific national identity. Acting under the Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Centers (*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* - DDKO) during the 1970s, the movement transformed itself into a nationalist one by conceiving Kurdistan as a 'colony' and Kurds as a 'colonized people'. The PKK that was established by Abdullah Öcalan in 1978 started a violent struggle with the Turkish state in order to initiate its national liberation movement with the purpose of establishing an independent Kurdistan. (Saylan, 2012: 393-394). PKK violence that started in 1970s, continued in 1980s and increased dramatically throughout the 1990s. After attempting to resolve the problem peacefully, Prime Minister Çiller soon left the Kurdish issue to the military, which tried to sort out the crisis militaristically by evacuating Kurdish villages, initiating cross-border operations and strengthening the special teams and intelligence arm of the gendarmerie. However, such methods led the PKK to increase its own attacks, which peaked with large numbers of civilian casualties in the mid-1990s during the Refahiyol government.

Besides these internal threats, the MGK's national security reports also reported rising external threats during the 1990s, particularly from four of Turkey's neighbours, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Greece. In fact, at different times and to varying degrees, these neighbours had supported PKK attacks in Turkey. Although Turkey and Iran signed a security protocol in 1993, PKK attacks from across the Iranian border continued in the mid-1990s (Hale, 2000b: 312). Moreover, its sponsorship of various fundamentalist-Islamist and terrorist groups made Iran the main provoker of rising Islamic fundamentalism in Turkey (Larrabee and Nader, 2013: 1). Concerning Iraq, Turkey's alliance with the West during the first Gulf War, when it closed Iraq's oil pipelines, led Saddam to support the PKK. Following the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein's suppression of Kurds, led thousands of Iraqi Kurds, most probably including PKK members, to flee to Turkey. By ending all regular trade with Iraq, this move led Turkey to lose \$20 billion (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008: 130). Moreover, the establishment of a no-fly zone in Northern Iraq on the 36th parallel allowed de facto Kurdish autonomy to emerge, which concerned Turkey because it could lead to the establishment of an independent Kurdistan.

The chequered Turkish Syrian relations starting in the early years of the Republic of Turkey continued throughout the Cold War period when Turkey

and Syria allied with the United States and the Soviet Union respectively. Annexation of Hatay (Alexandretta) to Turkey, illegal border crossing and smuggling and the mutual restrictions on the property of citizens of the other country increased the tension between the two sides. Moreover, the conflicts on the usage of water from the Asi (Orontes), Dicle (Tigris) and Fırat (Euphrates) Rivers, and Syria's support for Armenians, Kurds and leftists that are regarded by Turkey as terrorists have further facilitated the deterioration of relations between Turkey and Syria.

After a massive Turkish dam project was initiated in the late-1970s in south eastern Turkey, Syria became the PKK's main supporter by training PKK militants in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon and accommodating its leader Abdullah Öcalan in Damascus. Mutual threat perceptions between the two countries led Syria to develop close relations with Armenia, Greece and Iran to encircle Turkey. In response, Turkey focused on implementing its 1996 Turkish-Israeli Strategic and Military Agreement (Demirtaş, 2013: 113). Turkey's main problems with Greece concerned the Aegean islands, the continental shelf and Cyprus. The two countries even came to the brink of war in January 1996 – prior to Refahiyol coming to power – due to a dispute over the sovereignty of a tiny Aegean island, Kardak island (Imia Rocks).

Using Desch's perspective, it can therefore be argued that both high internal and external threats during the Refahiyol government led to poor civilian control of the military. That is, it enabled the military to gain supremacy in both foreign and domestic politics.⁷

3.3. Fragmented Regime Analysis

Another analytical approach to the rise in the Turkish military's power in foreign policy during the period under examination is a structural analysis that concentrates on the vulnerability of the government in power. Joe Hagan's fragmented regime analysis argues that power being shared between weak political parties leads to the other societal actors intervene in domestic and foreign policies “in the form of competing personalities, institutions, bureaucracies, factions, or competing parties or other such political groups” (Hagan, 1987: 344).

7 While the MGSBs written during the Cold War period concentrated on Communist threat created by the USSR, its focus switched to separatist terror of PKK as the main internal threat in 1992 and the rise of reactionary Islam in 1997. Moreover, in 1992 MGSB the sources of separatist PKK terror were shown as Syria, Iraq and Iran. See (Özcan, 2004d: 855-856; Gürpınar, 2013: 88).

Hagan identifies four types of fragmented regimes: “regimes dominated by a single, individual leader”, “regimes dominated by a single, cohesive party/group” in which autonomous bureaucracies and institutions exist, “regimes dominated by a single party/group” that is itself internally divided by established political factions, and finally “regimes in which the ruling party/group shares power with one or more minor parties/groups.” The final category is most relevant for the present study in that it suggests that such fragmented regimes are expected to emerge when there is no dominant party with an absolute parliamentary majority so that one or more minor parties or groups may also share authority with the ruling group (Hagan, 1987: 345).

Coalition governments are usually formed by ideologically similar political parties because those established with ideologically different or opposing parties usually turn into unstable governments, as seen in Refahyol’s case. The two political parties that established the vulnerable Refahyol government did not have much in common, and this enabled the military to significantly involve itself in foreign policy. Although both parties were on the right-hand side of the ideological spectrum, there were dramatic differences between their principles. While DYP was a moderate-right, pro-secular party, RP represented Islamist right-wing ideology, which approved of religiously extremist discourses. The DYP’s economic program could be considered as purely liberal in supporting a free market economy while the RP’s economic program supported a ‘just order’, defined as a third way between communism and capitalism according to the party manifesto. While DYP under Çiller’s leadership had very close relations with the military, the RP’s elite preferred to keep its distance since they had suffered persecution due to military intervention throughout the 1970s and 1980s. DYP’s ruling elite preferred a military resolution to the violent Kurdish separatist movement. However, RP hoped to resolve the Kurdish question through common culture and religion (Hale, 1999c: 28).

One can also see ideological cleavages between the two parties in their foreign policies. The RP’s approach was based on the National Outlook tradition, which advocated the development of close relations with the Muslim world and the establishment of an Islamic brotherhood rather than establishing close relations with the West. RP strongly criticized Turkey’s EU membership bid, its involvement in other Western institutions, its warm relations with the US and Israel and the extension of the OPC. In contrast, DYP adhered strictly to Turkey’s traditional pro-Western foreign policy orientation, advocating full EU membership, good relations with the US and Israel as well as participation in OPC missions. These important controversies surfaced in the contradictory discourses of Çiller and Erbakan during the 1995 general election campaign.

While the two parties lacked much in common ideologically, their shared need to prevent the investigation of corruption allegations forced them to establish their vulnerable coalition (Tür, 2003: 211). However, their coalition government immediately faced rapid devaluation of the Turkish lira, growing unemployment, rising PKK violence, hostile neighbouring countries, cross-border military operations and problems created by the OPC. The partners' ideological differences made the government fragmented and vulnerable, which in turn enabled the military's involvement in both domestic and foreign politics. Their differences of opinion were manifested in the harsh reaction of DYP deputies towards RP deputies' anti-secular and anti-systemic policies and discourses, such as rescinding the headscarf ban, plans to construct a mosque in Taksim Square in Istanbul, state provision of land transport for pilgrims to Mecca and rescheduling official working hours to fit with Friday prayers.

The Refahyol government was further delegitimized and the system made more fragile due to revelations of increased organized crime in the Susurluk scandal, growing mafia activities and narcotics smuggling, and the increasingly violent activities of radical Islamists and the PKK. The gap created by this power struggle was filled by the military, which now dominated foreign policy decision-making. In fact, due to Refahyol government's attempts to increase religious observance in public and establish close relations with Islamic countries, TSK intensified its impact in politics through the MGK. Finally, in February 1997, Turkish military sent tanks into the streets of Sincan (suburb of Ankara) following the pro-sharia speeches of the local RP mayor and the Iranian ambassador (Cizre, 2009: 310-311). Thus, as Hagan's analysis predicts, the fragmented and vulnerable governing coalition in Turkey created a gap within politics that other significant groups, particularly the military, were able to fill to their advantage.

Concluding Remarks

Until the 1990s, besides a few exceptions in general, the history of the Turkish Republic was characterised by a harmony between civilian governments and the TSK concerning foreign policy issues.⁸ The Turkish military's interventions in domestic politics were always more visible than its role in foreign policy. During the early years of the Republic, both the TSK and

8 These exceptions were mainly related to the divisions in the military. Particularly in the aftermath of 1960 coup, some pro-Turkish fractions in the military opposed Turkish governments pro-American foreign policies. (For a brief discussion of these conflicts in the military see Akalın, 2000: 226-227)

civilian governments agreed on a neutral foreign policy by signing neutrality and friendship agreements with many neighbouring and European countries. In fact, significant reason for the harmony between the TSK and civilians concerning foreign policy in these years was that the civilian rulers including Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü were originally the military officers. Before coming to power as civilian politicians they were commanders in the Turkish military. Therefore, the military cannot be analyzed as a separate identity since its policy orientation was not completely isolated from the political elite during the single party years. Following the Second World War, the military supported the civilian government in joining the Western bloc by becoming a member of NATO. Apart from a few exceptions the civilian governments and the military continued to align their foreign policies throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Despite a few disagreements between President Özal and the military concerning the first Gulf War, relations with Greece and Cyprus issue this alignment also continued throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Thus, the military's disagreement with the Refahyol government and its involvement in foreign policy between July 1995 and 1996 was not an ordinary course of behaviour for the military.

During this period, the TSK frequently and directly interfered with the Refahyol government's foreign policies by establishing centres and departments under its domain, and by following independent policies and making announcements through its senior members. The two sides failed to agree on many foreign policy issues, including EU membership, fighting the PKK, relations with Middle Eastern countries and Israel, and extending the OPC. Due to these disagreements, the TSK resorted to its prerogatives to put pressure on the Refahyol government to distance itself from Muslim neighbours, improve its strategic and military relations with Israel, and support the continuation of OPC. In this way, the TSK eventually became a significant actor determining foreign policy.

In Welch's terms, the TSK was able to pursue its influential foreign policy by establishing military control with partners. That is, the Turkish military was not alone in making these foreign policy decisions because it was supported by the DYP-controlled Ministry of Foreign Affairs, opposition parties, the media, civil society organizations and business groups. Moreover, the TSK was able to get involved in foreign policy during a period when both internal (increased PKK violence and reactionary Islam) and external threats (from Iraq, Iran, Syria and Greece) were growing. According to Desch, civilian control in such periods is usually poor, which gives the military the space to interfere in both domestic and foreign policies. Finally, the Refahyol government can be classified as a regime where "the ruling party/group shares power with one or more minor parties/groups" in terms of Hagan's fragmented

regime classification. In short, the fragmented Refahiyol coalition government was forced to share power with the military because its vulnerability paved the way for the TSK's intervention in politics during that period.

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