

Role of Military in Turkish Politics

The Turkish military has been pivotal actor in the political life of modern Turkey, both domestically & abroad, but its role in contemporary Turkey have been curbed.

CSSPMS360

Evolution of Role of Turkey Military:

↳ Military began to rise into prominence after the modern re-public was founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923

After Atatürk's death secularism became the dominant ideology & the generals its sole protector. Although civilian ran the govt, the military used to play a leading role in forming the country's FP & security policy.

↳ In Turkish political culture the state has been seen as representing stability & continuity while the govt has been associated with fluctuating political power. The military, has represented the state & perceived by Turkish society as an element & guarantor of stability.

As self-declared guardians of Atatürk's secular legacy, the military remained associated with a tradition of upheaval & history of overthrowing unpopular govt at times of political chaos & economic crisis.

TSK - Turkish Armed Forces

The officers corps staged three coups b/w 1960 & 1980.

In all the three coups, military claimed that Islam was becoming involved in the political sphere.

Military's prestige & status in Turkey have at times reached almost mystical proportions. Rather than being part of politics, the military has positioned itself outside & above the civilian govt, but with a clear stake in outcomes of the political decision-making process.

The TSK has tended to concentrate on security & defense policy & rarely attempted to influence the civilian govt in other areas. However, TSK's security concept, has been broadly defined to include both external & internal threats to the state including perceived threats to Kemalism.

CSSPMS360

Since the first coup in 1960, it act as "guardians". The military has had a powerful position in the affairs of state & been able to decide the fate of govt & politicians.

Political influence of TSK has largely rested on its institutional autonomy within state, support from civilian groups,

and high stand turkish population.

In Turkish protocol the Chief of defense has ranked ^{as} #three - below the president & PM, but abv the minister of defense. Therefore the COD has reported directly to the PM, not to the minister of national Defense.

→ Turkish General has performed some task as defense policy, strategy, & planing. So, competence in defense matters concentrated within the military organization & been lacking in the Ministry of National Defense & bureaucracy.

CSSPMS360

This situation → advantage to TSK vis-a-vis the civilian govt in the handling of military affairs.

Institutional Autonomy: has also been reinforced by absence of real parliamentary oversight of the armed forces & general lack of transparency into military & security matters in Turkey.

Historically, Judiciary, bureaucracy, academia, media, and private business sector support the TSK. this doesn't mean TSK has taken openly partisan positions or allied with political party or societal group. The general rather have changed civilian allies according to their own goal and purposes.

TSK and population

The military has had very high standing in the Turkish population. Until the 2000s it was rare to hear or see any open criticism of the TSK. Previously, the military has been the most trusted institution in Turkey, scoring much better in opinion polls than any civil political organization. Military interventions in politics were largely accepted by the population as a necessity in times of national crisis.

In (1960, 1971, 1980, ~~1997~~) military has intervened to change the govt. After each intervention military leadership strengthened its influence on the political system & to some extent on Judicial System. From 1971 to onward, TSK became a de facto veto power in political system decision-making process.

In 1982 constitution & in other laws passed during the military rule (1980-83) the role of TSK as a veto power. Though its dominance of National Security Council, the Military leadership could in practice instruct the civilian govt & overrule its decision.

CSSPMS360

Years of CHANGE:

It was around the year 2000 that civil-military relations began to change. This development has gone through three main stages.

CSSPMS 360

i) Institutional Reforms:

1st stage consisted of institutional reforms in the early 2000s which removed the military from formal position in govt decision-making.

ii) Sledgehammer & Ergenekon ²⁰⁰⁸
2nd legal process starting in 2008 & 2010 which discredited & pacified the military as a factor in Turkish politics.

iii) 15 July 2016 coup attempt.
3rd & provisionally last stage was coup attempt → which increased civilian control & oversight.

Institutional Reforms: (Political) reforms

↳ For membership of EU → political reforms e.g. establishment of civilian supremacy
TSK considered EU membership necessary for strong economy. For AKP (pol party) EU criteria became an imp tool for reducing the pol influence of the military.

Judicial Reforms:

enacted in 2006 & 2010 made it impossible for civilians to be tried in military courts in peacetime but made it possible to try military officers in civilian courts of law.

These cases developed into largest legal process in recent Turkish History, involving hundreds of people accused of crimes against the state. As a result in 2012 over half of all Turkish admirals & one in 10 generals found themselves behind the bars.

C66PMS360

Ergenekon & Sledgehammer also served to weaken the TSK's position vis-a-vis the civilian govt, & many discharges of officers that followed in their wake made it easier for Erdogan to assert influence on senior promotions in the armed forces.

Resignation of Chief of Defense, General Isik Kosaner in Aug 2011, became an imp symbolic victory for Erdogan

Causes of Weakening of Military

- 1) Strong positional of AKP → supported by Majority in GNA.