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## **A history of the national security state in Turkey**

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## Introduction

This doctoral dissertation questions the validity of the following two universally accepted and often repeated convictions by scholars of Turkish studies: Turkey has been an indispensable ally of the United States ever since its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership in 1952, and the Turkish Republic's national security discourse has always been an obstacle to solving fundamental political and societal issues. The main problem with these two convictions is that they have not been read together, which has resulted in the omission of the significant relationship between them.

I mainly chose to focus on this uncharted territory in my dissertation because the unanswered questions, which formed after finishing my master's thesis in 1995, were still lingering at the back of my mind. For my master's thesis, I explored the similarities and differences in the constitutional processes of three US allies with different geographic locations; one of these partners was Turkey. These countries, Brazil in Latin America, South Korea in Asia, and Turkey in the Middle East were perceived as the legs of a tripod, which was set up as a shield against the communism threat by the US. I thought that by tracing the parallels in the institutionalization processes of the state apparatuses among these three countries, one could write a comparative understanding of military, political and societal transitions. My conclusion was as follows: The timing of the military interventions that interrupted the experiment in democracy in these three countries was pretty close. For South Korea (1961) and Brazil (1964), the military takeovers have been the starting points of repressive, long term military rules which were to last 25 and 27 years, respectively. On the other side, in Turkey, the duration of direct military rule following each intervention (1960-1961, 1971-1973, 1980-1982) was relatively short. Nevertheless, the constitutional structure subsequently established by the military shows a striking similarity to those of Brazil and South Korea. In the first place the junta councils formed for “restoration of democracy” united the legislative and the executive powers in their bodies and have undertaken intense political and legal restructuring which, before long, culminated and were systematized in the post-coup Constitutions. The constitutional restructuring undertaken by the military in all three cases demonstrated a pattern of strengthening powers of the executive in exchange for those of the legislative and the judiciary, along with a step-by-step retrogression in individual and collective rights. The military in all three countries inserted unrepresentative councils, primarily the National Security Council, into the executive structure, which it could thus penetrate. Evaluating the post-coup Constitutions of these countries item by item one can see a repetitive use of “national security” concept as an ideological instrument employed to legitimize the grounds of intervention at all levels of political and social life. The constitutions of the three countries created a system of military justice where the military jurisdiction was extended to civilians in the event of crimes against national security, state security or the military. Executive supremacy made feasible the realization of the governmental supervision of labor and regulation of capital-labor relations in these three countries. The authorization and the negotiation procedures of labor unions were

severely restricted. The constitutional provisions, together with supplementary legislation, established (or fortified) a corporatist control of labor.

In the final analysis, I asked if the role of the military, as well as the civilian-military relations in Turkey, could be seen as part of a broader political phenomenon in the Cold War world. This dissertation began with this follow-up question.

First, this dissertation argues that the Turkish Republic has gradually transformed into a national security state during the Cold War era. In the political literature “National Security State” (NSS) is used to define two distinctive state manifestation. The first one refers to the ideology and institutions established by the National Security Act of 1947 in the United States. The national security state argument for Turkey, which is put forward in this dissertation, does not build itself on a parallel comparison with the development of the national security state in the US. This dissertation employs the second and widely accepted definition of “national security state” developed by Latin Americanists. These scholars have theorized this state model to investigate the common characteristics of the US-backed military regimes in the region under the new ideological umbrella of the Cold War. The national security concept, its new doctrine, and the new apparatuses that were shaped in the US were transformed within the framework of the political histories and dynamics of these ally authoritarian regimes when their militaries transplanted them. Their approaches to finding broader applications and intervention grounds changed because these states did not have the same checks and balance mechanisms as the US did. The application of the new US national security doctrine by the Latin American militarist regimes prepared them for more profound and expansive security apparatuses. The security threat that was initially based on the perceived danger of communism in these countries was expanded to include any dissident movements, groupings, or discussions that the states regarded as flourishing beyond the desired scale. As will be shown in this dissertation, Turkey bears striking resemblances with the NSSs of Latin America, although it is geographically distant and has no evident direct US involvement in its history of military interventions.

The second aim of this dissertation is to explore if Turkey, as a distinct case study, offers a new understanding of a post-Cold War security state. Unlike many ally countries where the national security state structures have dismantled after the Cold War, the central actors of the national security state in Turkey have consolidated their power over the new forms of above-mentioned threat perceptions throughout the 1990s. A significant impetus behind the smooth operation and adoption of the national security doctrine in Turkey is the founding cadres' fears of disintegration and political Islam that formed during the early years of the Republic. The Cold-War security apparatuses of Turkey were explicitly operationalized against the state's two deeply rooted threat perceptions up until early 2000s.

The fear of partition is also known as the Sèvres Syndrome in the political science literature. This name originates from the Treaty of Sèvres, which was signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied Powers on August 10th, 1920, leaving the majority of the Ottoman Empire in the control of different countries. However, this treaty and its contents are not the sole reason for this syndrome. As Zürcher (2009) argued, this fear is the product of a difficult period, marked by the ending of the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans. The Ottoman Empire can also be perceived as a Balkan Empire since the region's

central location in the empire experienced a traumatic withdrawal from the region starting in the 19th century. Zürcher stated that the Republic of Turkey was founded mainly by former military members of the Committee of Union and Progress and administrators from the Balkan provinces, which were no longer Ottoman lands. He further explained the root-cause of the cadre's concerns as related to existence and security:

“In 1912 -1913, all Young Turk officers and civil servants born in the Balkan provinces, just about thirty years before this date, in a way have lost their ancestral homes and homelands. In many cases, their families had to flee and fell into the position of immigrants in various parts of the Ottoman Empire. Surprisingly however, this situation did not provoke revanchist feelings in Young Turks, nor did it lead to a plan to take back these old lands. On the contrary, it made them adopt Anatolia, which they mostly considered a foreign country, as their new homeland. [...] Furthermore, the sentiment of not letting the history repeat itself was getting stronger. Anatolia would not go through what Balkans went through. These lands, in the real sense of the word, were the “last anchor of the Turk.” (pp. 153-154)

When the nationalistic reflexes emerged after the founding of the Republic, the rhetoric of Sèvres Syndrome was synonymously used with primary national security threat. This partition fear was demonstrated by forming enemies with oppositional discourses inside and outside the country, especially with Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds, depending on their population counts and political power. In other words, the historical anxieties of the early years of the Turkish Republic would be facilitating factors in the adoption of national security ideology.

The founding cadres of the Republic perceived political Islam as the second most significant threat. Like nationalism, catching up with "modernity" was a central theme in the program that these cadres developed. This comprehension, which manifested itself in leaning towards the West in the minds of the Kemalists, brought about a radical break from the Ottoman Empire and all the identities and values attributed to it. Unlike the Ottoman Empire, where religion had a complementary role in the state affairs, the Republic of Turkey adopted strict secularism, especially in the first 20 years. While the legal and political realm was redesigned in this direction, the relationship between religion and society, which up until then was experienced in the semi-private domain created by religious sects, was passed onto the control of state bureaucracy. Within the narrative of the Republic's constantly changing political struggles, political Islam continued to be one of the ancient enemies of the "secular" state. This situation only changed in the second half of the 2000s, when the Justice and Development Party eliminated the military's domination over the political life of Turkey.

There is a significant body of scholarly work on civil-military relations in Turkey. Most of this work focuses on the dynamics of the relationship between military power and politics for a specific time period. However, these studies do not explore the impact of the Cold War's national security doctrine on the institutional and ideological transformation of the state. The limited number of studies that defined Turkey as a national security state uses this definition in relation to the decisive role of the National Security Council in political decisions and the

catchphrase quality of this concept in political jargon. In other words, the national security state discourse in these studies is not predicated on a historical and conceptual analysis; it is a name attribution. From this framework, the dissertation aims to fill this fundamental scholarship gap on the regime and military-related studies in Turkey. This research works on the following assumption: The transformation of the military in Turkey, on the axis of the US-centered Cold War national security ideology, and the institutional and political consequences of this process are not uniquely Turkish.

This dissertation draws on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources that went into this research are, previously confidential US documents that have been released to the public domain, official reports, newspaper and journal clippings from the period between 1990 and 2016, oral histories and testimonies from the actors of the period, constitutions, laws, regulations and memoranda, the print decisions and minutes of the National Security Council meetings, the general and local election statistics prepared by the Turkish Statistical Institute, and judicial statistics released by the Ministry of Justice.

## **Chapters**

The first chapter of this dissertation explains and contextualizes the scope of the national security ideology and the two different national security state models shaped by this ideology, the one in the US and the other in Latin America. By reviewing the most widely recognized scholarly works and discussing circulating key arguments in political science literature, the chapter outlines the history of the formation of national security ideology, new institutional structures and the internal consequences of this radical shift of foreign policy in the US. Later, the chapter demonstrates how the US governments promoted and supported the right-wing military regimes to halt the progression of the left-wing movements in allied countries. Finally, this chapter shows how this entire framework, together with its new military doctrine, was adopted and translated by the military governments of US allies in Latin America. It documents the common characteristics of the national security states that were built by Latin American militaries to reveal similarities for the case of Turkey. The retelling of this particular history is an indispensable part of this dissertation mainly because scholars working on civil-military relations in Turkey have never located the development of the Turkish national security state in a global Cold War perspective.

In chapter two, this dissertation investigates how being a close ally of the US during the Cold War transformed the ideological context of the military in Turkey and the mechanisms that supported this transformation. The achievements and programs of the three coup d'états that occurred ten years apart, in 1960, 1971, and 1980, are compared to reveal how the Cold War context impacted the relationships between the army and politics in Turkey. Lastly, this chapter analyzes the new hegemonic discourse of the national security state, which reached its final stage with the 1980 military coup. In this framework, this section investigates the dynamics of the collaboration between the national security ideology, the founding ideology of the Republic and the Turkish – Islamic Synthesis project, identifying the latter as the cultural output of the open support that the US gave to moderate Islam in the Cold War context.

The third chapter describes how the national security concept permeated the institutional structure of the state and the politics, focusing on the national security apparatus. After a brief history of Turkey's transition from the national defense to the national security concept in the Cold War conjuncture, this chapter identifies the role of the national security notion in the legal architecture of this new state mechanism that was institutionalized by the 1980 coup. The following central security actors are addressed under the tutelage of the military authority within their legislative frameworks: The National Security Council (NSC) and the General Secretariat of the National Security Council (GSNSC), the National Intelligence Organization (NIO), and the State Security Courts (SSC). This chapter also demonstrates how the administrative organs that are not under the directives of these actors are put under the centralist apparatus of the security state with the caveat of "compliance with the requirements of national security policy" placed in the laws of September 12th government or later. Moreover, this chapter examines the individual and social fundamental rights and freedoms that are limited by the national security, to demonstrate how the national security phenomenon is instrumentalized not only to control the political sphere, but also the social field. Finally, State Security Courts, the judicial leg of the national security state, and their decisions on freedom of speech and freedom of thought are investigated.

The fourth chapter analyzes how the national security state has developed a strategy of survival after the Cold War by turning its face to "ancient enemies" that are Kurdish separatism and political Islam. The identity claims of these groups, which can remain a subject of political debate in this framework and can be negotiated in civilian terms, evolve into violent conflicts in which they are seen as grounds for creating legitimacy by the national security state. The national security apparatus, to maintain its hegemony over politics has transformed these two different identity claims that emerged into civilian political organizations in the 1990s into threats. This chapter is comprised of four different sub-sections. The first section, after giving historical background on the collapse of the three-party political architecture organized by the coup d'état of September 12, 1980, examines the civil-military relations of the early post-military regime period. The second section investigates how the Kurdish issue under the threat of separatism resonated with the national security state. In this framework, this section analyzes the tensions of the security state between the governments and the political parties of Kurdish origin while examining how the security field was expanded on legal and illegal grounds. The third section repeats a similar analytical reading on the rise of and the fight against the political Islam in Turkey. The introduction of this section gives a historical background of the relationship between the military as the carrier of the founding ideology of Turkey and political parties with Islamic tendencies until the 1980s. Then it examines the rise of Welfare Party as the primary representative of political Islam in Turkey and the reactions it received from the security state. In this context, this section examines the February 28th process, a political term named after the post-modern coup that occurred on February 28, 1997, which indicates a time span starting before 1997 and ending with the dissolution of the national security state. This dissertation concludes with the analysis of the February 28th process. Each political development that has occurred since this time belongs to a different period with unique dynamics and is, therefore, the subject of another study. The fundamental dynamic from this new period is the approval of Turkey's EU candidacy in 1999. After this date, the national

security state entered into a dissolution process through the structural reforms required for this EU candidacy despite the stiff resistance from the military circles. For this reason, these developments that removed the military tutelage from legal and public domains are merely presented on a factual basis without a multilevel analysis of intertwined issues in the final section.

Finally, the conclusion chapter includes additional remarks on the current and future readings of the political developments because this study cannot be entirely removed from current political context of Turkey. The current political administration is utilizing the reshaped reflexes and functions of the historical period that was investigated for this dissertation, though it does not use the ideology or all the institutional structures.