



HISTORY STUDIES

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HISTORY

ISSN: 1309 4173 (Online) 1309 - 4688 (Print)

Volume 10 Issue 4, p. 21-35, June 2018

DOI Number: 10.9737/hist.2018.607

The Turkish Armed Forces on the Eve of 1980 Coup D'etat in the Light of British Documents, January- September 1980

*İngiliz Belgeleri Işığında 1980 Askeri Darbesi Öncesi Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri,
Ocak- Eylül 1980*

Dr. Fırkan AKIR
(ORCID: 0000-0003-3279-3490)
MEB

Abstract: Political, economic and social conditions of Turkey pre 1980 coup period, evolving of ideological polarization to clashes of arms, considered the previous interventions into politic life of Turkish Army as well, brought mind that a possibility of Coup was not improbable. In the Cold War circumstances, as an important part of Western Block, The United Kingdom tried to analyze her NATO ally's conditions by using her rooted diplomacy tradition and the relations with Turkey throughout the centuries. British foreign office asked for help from British missions in Turkey in order to foresee whether exist a coup possibility or not.

The memorandums, as subjects of this study, which was written up by British Embassy to Ankara and British Consulate to İstanbul deal with not only a possibility of a coup but also an exhaustive analyze of Turkish Armed Forces and previous intervention experiences, on the other hand it shows that how politic, economic and social scenes of the country were to be perceived by the High Command. These reports had closely been followed by Foreign and Commonwealth Office, furthermore demanded more information on allegations that there was a sharp ideological polarization among cadets in War Academy in İstanbul. We hope that the thoughts produced by the British diplomats about Turkish army shortly before 1980 coup d'etat, would give a new perspective for works in this field.

Keywords: Turkish Armed Forces, Turkey before 1980 coup d'etat, The United Kingdom, Military Interventions of 1960 and 1971.

Öz: 1980 askeri darbesi öncesi Türkiye'nin içinde bulunduğu siyasi, ekonomik ve sosyal koşullar, geniş bir kitleye yayılmış ideolojik kutuplaşmanın silahlı çatışmalara dönüşmesi, Türk ordusunun geçmişteki müdahaleleri de göz önüne alındığında askeri bir darbe ihtimalininin tamamıyla ihtimal dışı olmadığını akıllara getiriyordu. Soğuk Savaş koşullarında Batı Bloğu'nun önemli parçalarından biri olan Birleşik Krallık, yüzlerce yıllık Türk-İngiliz ilişkilerinin etkisi ve derin diplomasi geleneğiyle NATO müttefikleri Türkiye'nin içinde bulunduğu durumu çözümlenmeye çalışmıştır. Bir darbe ihtimalininin olup olmadığını öngörebilmek isteyen Londra, Türkiye'deki diplomatik misyonlarından yardım almıştır.

Bu çalışmanın konusu olan Birleşik Krallık'ın Ankara Büyükelçiliği ve İstanbul Konsoloslugu tarafından kaleme alınan raporlar sadece darbe ihtimalini değil, Türk Silahlı kuvvetlerinin detaylı bir analizini, geçmiş darbe tecrübelerini ele alırken ülkenin içinde bulunduğu siyasi, ekonomik ve toplumsal krizlerin ordu tarafından nasıl algılandığını da yansıtmaktadır. Bu raporlar Londra tarafından dikkatlice takip edilmiş, özellikle de askeri okullardaki öğrenciler arasında yaşandığı raporlarda iddia edilen kutuplaşmalar hakkında daha geniş bilgiler talep edilmiştir. İngiliz dışişlerinin 1980 askeri darbesinden kısa bir süre önce Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri'yle ilgili yaptığı tespitlerin bu alanda yapılacak çalışmalara yeni bir bakış açısı kazandıracağını umut ediyoruz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri, 1980 Darbesi öncesi Türkiye, Birleşik Krallık, 1960 ve 1971 Müdahaleleri



Volume 10
Issue 4
June
2018

1. INTRODUCTION

It is known that political polarization which dominated the world in the conditions of Cold War caused right-left conflicts in Turkey. Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Islamic revolution in Iran led by Khomeini in 1979 can be considered as major factors why political violence gained momentum and right- left wings conflicts spread to the base by bringing civil war. Apart from aforesaid foreign reasons, it can be said that, some internal politic, social and economic reasons influenced on evolving of right-left wings conflicts in Turkey from a clash of ideas by an intellectual clique, to a clash of arms.

Those what happened in 1980 shed light on Turkey's current politics, people, society and order. It is not possible to make a well case evaluation by ignoring political and social atmosphere of pre-coup period.

As a representative of strong diplomacy tradition, The United Kingdom was one of the most important elements of Western Block during the Cold War. Furthermore, she was trying to keep her influence in Middle East region, so political actions in Turkey had significant connection with British regional interests. Focusing on British Foreign Office assessments and predictions related to Turkish Army which well-known also had impacts on Turkish internal politics would help us analyze how Turkish Army seem from foreign perspective before the coup.

We consider that the United Kingdom kept abreast of all the latest developments in Turkey in order to maintain her regional interests. The Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and the regime change in Iran influenced the Western Block negatively and specifically the United Kingdom in the Middle East region.

It was very important for British Foreign Office to predict which way political polarisation and uncertainty would evolve and how Turkish Army could react in that condition. This would have served Britain to shape her policy in the region.

The documents used in this article were obtained from The National Archives in London. Basically Foreign Office classification of the National Archives has been handled. The papers cover between January – September period in 1980.

Reflecting the background of developments in Turkey, British diplomats tried to provide an appropriate attitude for the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the process. In the documents, it is clear that London focused on details while it was also trying to reach literal, clear and concrete facts. At this point, after the reports from diplomatic representatives in Ankara and Istanbul were evaluated, it was requested that some ideas should be argued and some should be reassessed in a detailed way.

The evaluated documents have been dealt with a chronological order and also the subject integrity has been taken into consideration as well. In the documents, developments in Turkey shortly before the 1980 military coup have been analyzed in order to clarify the attitude of the British Ministry for Foreign Affairs to determine their final attitudes and policies. Therefore, it is thought that the documents do not contain any adverse redirection, manipulation or speculation.

2. Two Short Reports about the Turkish Army by Ankara Embassy and Istanbul Consulate

The first document analyzed was written by Mr. Baunault dated on 22 January 1980, in the name of British Embassy to Ankara. It is underlined in the first paragraph that the report was composed for annual reports for 1979 by “three service attaches in Ankara”. It is known that in this date the British Ambassador to Ankara was Sir Peter Laurence and British Consul to Istanbul was C. Clemens. The writer of the report was probably one of the “three service attaches in Ankara”.

In the beginning of the report, the British diplomat remarked that it was generally accepted both by the Turkish Armed Forces and by the Turkish nation at large that the Armed Forces of the country were guardians of the Constitution as well as defenders of the national frontiers. He claimed that although the Turkish Army’s involvement in internal security throughout 1979 and the problems of maintaining the second largest army in NATO at a time of severe economic difficulty undoubtedly subjected the Armed Forces to strain in 1979, At the end of the year the general perception of the Turkish people was that the Armed Forces remained a factor of stability in the country.¹

It is pointed out that the Turkish Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel indicated that he was prepared to give the Armed Forces a freer hand in the provinces under martial law. While Mr Baunault strongly expressed that he concurred with the Defense Attache’s (the writer of the report) view that the military would wish to stay as far as outside the political area possible, He continued that whether or not they would be able to do so would depend in the last resort on the behaviour of the political parties and their ability to take more effective measures to reduce the level of political violence; It might therefore be that in 1980 the Turkish Armed Forces would conclude that they had no choice but to intervene in the political system, though whether this would take the form of behind –the-scenes pressure or more direct action in the political arena couldn’t be predicted with any confidence.²

It is drawn attention that the economic troubles continued to affect the readiness of the Armed Forces, thus much of the equipment of the Army and Navy was of Korean War vintage and increasingly difficult to keep serviceable condition. Moreover, the oil shortage had persisted throughout most of 1979 and it weekend the Army and Navy. Turkish Authorities signed an agreement with the United States to enhance the Army and Navy. It is envisaged that the agreement would ensure a supply of modern technology to the Turkish Army.³

The diplomats also considered regional issues of Turkey often derived from neighbours. It is remarked that Turkey’s internal problems and their own logistical difficulties had undoubtedly increased by the growing instability in the region. Turkey might prepare not merely to face the possibility of operations on the Soviet, Bulgarian and Greek borders but also might give more prospect of troubles spilling over from Iranian Kurdistan and Azerbaijan. The situation had clearly changed since the days when the Shah's regime had joined hands with Turkey on her eastern frontier and the CENTO alliance provided a defence link between the West, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. At a time of uncertainty and tension there was therefore some satisfaction to be derived from Turkey's reaffirmation of loyalty to NATO and a point

¹Public Record Office (PRO), Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), 9/3064, Turkish Armed Forces, from Ankara Embassy by Baunault to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 22 January 1980.

²FCO 9/3064, Turkish Armed Forces, from Ankara Embassy by Baunault to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 22 January 1980.

³FCO 9/3064, Turkish Armed Forces, from Ankara Embassy by Baunault to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 22 January 1980.

had confirmed in December when the North Atlantic Council had accepted the Turkish invitation to hold the next NATO ministerial meeting in Ankara.⁴

We deal with the another report dated on 30 June 1980, dispatched from British Consulate by C. Clemens to Ankara Embassy, T.N Young. It mainly informs about news that standing instructions for the Armed Forces had been amended to forbid political discussions and attempts to put across political views in service messes, hostels, clubs and so on.⁵This information was based on an informant claimed that there were some sharp political divisions in the army mostly among regular officers below the rank of colonel. According to Informant's son, in the course of his military service, he was an instructor at the Cadet College at Kuleli, Istanbul and had said that at times the divisions among the regular officers were so sharp that they refused even to eat in the same mess. The consul expressed at the end of dispatch that he would had expected political divisions to be more apparent among conscripts, but he gathered that this was not so, most of them concentrated on keeping out of trouble until they can be released. He also added he didn't know how far the information he received was typical; he concluded his letter by writing that they would keep their eyes and ears open for any supplementary evidence, but in the nature of things is hard to come by, and likely at best to be second or third hand.⁶

3. A Comprehensive and Detailed Memorandum by the British Diplomats on the Turkish Armed Forces

The most comprehensive and detailed document in this study is dated on 14 July 1980 from Ankara embassy by Ambassador Laurence to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London; it was prepared by the diplomats, signed and dispatched by Ambassador Laurence's confirmation. It includes extensive and diffusive information about Turkish Army as well as considering Army's attitudes internal and foreign politics, personal backgrounds and labour composition. The Turkish Military education was analyzed to be revealed its pros and cons. On one hand the report focused on military coup experiences and their consequences, on the other hand it shed light on relations between political parties and the Army which made the situation more complicated.⁷

British diplomat wrote that the mind of the Turkish Armed Forces was a closed book to outsiders. He underlined that they kept themselves very much to themselves, discouraging contact with foreigners; The Service Attaches even of Turkey's NATO allies were denied all but the most superficial contact with the Turkish officers. And though the Chief of Staff and Forces' commanders and other officers were frequently met at social functions, they rarely addressed themselves to contentious matters, never to the Armed Forces' capabilities. Nevertheless, the diplomats drawn attention that some insight into the Forces' thinking could be obtained from two sources: first from retired officers and conscript officers who completed their service, from relations of officers, and from civilian lecturers at military schools; and secondly from the historical record. For the closed book opened twice; once on 27 May 1960, when the Armed Forces had overthrown the Menderes government by force and again on 12 March 1971, when they had despatched a memorandum that had toppled Mr Demirel's

⁴ FCO 9/3064, Turkish Armed Forces, from Ankara Embassy by Baunault to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 22 January 1980.

⁵ FCO 9/304, Politics in the Armed Forces, from Istanbul Consulate by Clemens to Ankara Embassy, 30 June 1980.

⁶ FCO 9/304, Politics in the Armed Forces, from Istanbul Consulate by Clemens to Ankara Embassy, 30 June 1980.

⁷ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Poitics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

Government. More recently, on 27 December 1979, the leaves were fluttered once more for the benefit of the politicians.⁸

Ambassador expressed his intention in this despatch to address the question of what their (British) knowledge of the Turkish military and the lessons from past interventions could tell them in present circumstances about the prospects of the book opening for a third time. For finding an appropriate answer He began with a brief analysis of the nature of the Armed Forces themselves. Excluding the 100,000 strong Gendarmerie, the Turkish Armed Forces number 600,000; an Army of 500,000, an Air Forces of 54,000 and a Navy of 46,000. The great majority of these were conscripts serving for 20 months. The proportion of regulars, who were all officers or NCOs (Non- Commissioned Officers), was only % 7 in the Army; in the Navy it was %22, and % 42 in the Air Force. These come from a wide diversity of social backgrounds; of the 3,000 cadets at the Army War School, %11 were the sons of officers, % 20 the sons of NCOs, %20 the sons of working class men, and the remaining %49 from other sectors of society.⁹

The report claims that this diversity and the fundamentally conscript nature of the Services suggested that they sound roots in national life, to this extent the Services as a whole were unlikely to become an instrument of power divorced from the feelings and aspirations of the nation as a whole. It is stated in the report that conscription naturally ensures that all shades of political opinion were represented in the Services. This was true also at officer and NCO level. Some ex-Generals on retirement might join or openly supported political parties but history and the contacts indicated clearly that the average officer was moderate and centrist in viewpoint, although anti-Russian, for historical reasons, and anti-communist. Almost all officers shared a determination to keep Turkey a democratic republic, a desire for a high moral standard of political leadership, and a detestation of corruption. This consensus view arises from their natural gravitation to the ideal of service to their country and a common conception of the national interest, rather than from any conscious imposition of values by the Higher Command. The Diplomats strongly pointed out that when one took into account the strict discipline of the Services and their conscious efforts to canalise the fierce patriotism of most conscripts, it was improbable that political differences could be a serious cause of factionalism within the Services. Against this, there was a small amount of evidence to suggest that there were some instances where sharply divergent political views had been held among junior officers.¹⁰

Military education was evaluated as the other influential factor in the report. Composers wrote that other ranks were taught quite simply to obey orders, which came naturally to them, officers generally learnt by rote rather than by critical analysis. Highly motivated though they were, the resulting state of mind were producing a high degree of rigidity and centralisation. The level of decision making was some grades higher than we would consider normal; authority could not be delegated; and initiative was discouraged. Juniors deferred to seniors to an unusual degree and it was unlikely that they would offer advice unless asked. There was, nevertheless, no sign that this caused a feeling of separatism between different seniority

⁸ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

⁹ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

¹⁰ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

groups. All in all, it would organisationally be very difficult, and out of character, for middle-ranking officers to act except on direction from their seniors.¹¹

Academic and general works on Turkish Armed Academies verify the report. The cadets learn not only discipline and military skills but also they receive training to develop their social life for example how to go to the theatre for the first time, how to dance, how to attend a cocktail, how to communicate effectively. Education contains all life of cadets.¹²

The report handles 1960 coup d'état in this paragraph, after dealing with background of the 1960 coup, they tried to explain its consequence and made predictions about its repercussions towards at the time. It was stated in the report that 1960 Coup had been organised by the middle-ranking officers who were elite staff officers could think for themselves; possibly also the intense loyalty to each other of graduates of the same War College course was strong enough, in the sake of an extremely important cause, to over-ride hierarchical loyalties. In 1960 what was at stake was the continuance of multi-party democracy. Then Prime Minister, Mr. Menderes, had dissolved the National Party in 1954; in the same year head nationalised the assets of the Republican People's Party; in 1957 he had imprisoned the leader of the National and Peasant Republican Party; he had introduced harsh censorship of newspapers; and finally, on 27 April 1960 he had launched a parliamentary committee of investigation into the main opposition Republican People's Party with the clear aim of closing down that party. The Army had other grievances, both selfish (e.g. pay) and idealistic (Mr. Menders's concessions to Islam). The diplomats amazingly commented that it had been the threat to democracy which finally had caused the plotters to move, ironically enough, a supporter of Mr. Menderes claimed that some elements of the Army were talking of a coup as early as 1949, because they had not believe that President İnönü would at that time allow the free elections of 1950 by which Mr Menderes came to power.¹³

The report highlights that the coup had repercussions within the Army, its very success introduced political divisions. Fourteen radical officers in the National Unity Committee – the officers who had carried out the coup- led by Colonel Türkeş, the present leader of the neo-fascist Nationalist Action Part, disagreed with the decision to hand back power to civilian rule within eighteen months and were purged. Another radical officer, Colonel Talat Aydemir, had attempted two ill-fated coups d'état in 1962 and 1963, he was tried by court-martial and He was hanged. Power thus tore apart the cosy consensus within the Services, something which they would not want to happen again. After having made evaluations 1960 coup and Aydemir's coup attempts 1962/1963, Embassy's diplomats didn't consider more likely coup scenario. They wrote that, the improved command and communications systems at that time in existence would make it that much more difficult for a coup to be mounted without the knowledge and support of high ranking officers. The Generals can not in any case relished taking orders from the National Unity Committee, composed largely of officers junior to them, while it was in power.¹⁴

At a sociological aspect, Karpat claims that 1960 coup represented provincial elements of the country that were more religious and felt a stronger sense of continuity with the pre-

¹¹FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

¹² Mehmet Ali Birand, *Emret Komutanım*, (Ankara: Milliyet Yayınları, 1986), 81-86.

¹³ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

¹⁴ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

Republican period than the urban bureaucratic class that had undergone an ideological and cultural transformation and modernization. Therefore, Menderes tried to downgrade the role of the military and the bureaucracy by carrying out an extensive purge of the officer corps in an effort to weed out sympathizers of the RPP. At the same time, he was increasing the power and influence of the entrepreneurial groups, businessmen and countryside merchants-landowners. This policy led to a diminishing prestige and influence of the military-civilian bureaucracy. The RPP saw this policy as unacceptable and a threat to the legacy of Atatürk. They challenged the DP forcefully with mass demonstrations and political speeches. Menderes threatened to close down the RPP, and the RPP president, İsmet İnönü, replied by calling for the intervention of the military to “save democracy”, or rather the RPP, from the DP leadership.¹⁵

Other factors were the developments in socio-economic structure, urbanisation, rising of new social groups such as the working class and the entrepreneurs, increasing communications between the urban areas and the countryside, the rising importance of religion and ethnicity in social and political cleavages, use of violence as a form of political expression, and intensified ideologization.¹⁶

On the following pages of the report, the diplomats dealt with 1971 memorandum. According to their main thoughts it was a “Coup by memorandum” and took place in very different circumstances; It was a reaction not to an over-weening Prime Minister but to governmental deadlock. It was written in the report that the defection in June 1970 of some forty members of Mr Demirel’s Justice Party, in reaction to his appointment of a moderate Cabinet and the introduction of liberalising economic reforms, had left parliament unable to pass any legislation. Mr Demirel had been faced with the threat of direct Army action so by taking hint he resigned, and had been succeeded by two years of martial law and civilian, above-party technocratic governments supported by the Army. The Army Command might also have feared that terrorism would strike deeper roots as the effects of the previous summer’s economic measures began to bite.¹⁷

1971 memorandum coup evaluations confirmed by the Ambassador continued that The Generals had achieved their immediate objective; they were able to end the government by political parties and replace it by technocratic rule so they had also been able to obtain from parliament martial law and other measures which they had thought necessary to combat terrorism, in which they were at the time successful but parliament had been only willing to co-operate to the minimum extent necessary to avert more overt action by the Forces. Between 26 March 1971 and 7 January 1974, there had been four above-party governments. The reforms which they had proposed had not been passed by the Parliament and if the military had hoped to solve the problem of a deadlocked legislature, they would have been disappointed. When the Chief of the General Staff, General Gürler, had stood for presidency in 1973 the Grand National Assembly, even under considerable psychological pressure from the Armed Forces, wouldn’t have elected him. Furthermore, the Forces had gained widespread opprobrium for their methods of fighting terrorism – a number of respected academics were

¹⁵Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin: “Military Interventions: Army-Civilian Relations in Turkey Before and After 1980”, in *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, (Kemal Karpat), Berlin: (Walter De Gruyter, 1988), 137-158; Mihailo Terzic, “Role of the Military in Turkish Politics: Case of the 1980 Military Coup”, *Sabancı Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İstanbul*, (2011), 72.

¹⁶ Sema Binay, “Coming to Terms with the Past: Narrating the 12 September 1980 Military Coup”, *Boğaziçi University Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences, İstanbul*, (2006), 28-29.

¹⁷ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

imprisoned and torture was widespread- and they only regained the national respect in 1974, during their operations in Cyprus, which they had forfeited.¹⁸

The report continued to try revealing 1971 memorandum's outcomes and effects into Turkish politics and Army's links with politics. The diplomats expressed that the 1971 intervention also significantly had given the "coup de grace" to assumptions of identity of views between the Services and the Republican People's Part, summed up in the equation "RPP + Army = Power". In 1971 the RPP had still been led by İsmet İnönü, who had been Atatürk's right-hand during the War of Independence, had negotiated the Treaty of Lausanne, and he was the second President of the Republic. While the 1971 coup might not specifically had been directed against Mr Demirel – indeed there was evidence that some generals sympathised with his position- The Army had retained a nostalgic loyalty towards their old commander. İnönü, for his part, welcomed their intervention of 12 March; It had been for this that he had lost the leadership of the party to Mr Ecevit in 1972. At that time, The RPP shared with the more extreme left a profound detestation of the memory of the 12 March affair.¹⁹

Few Turkish academicians state that Turkish Armed Forces were simmering when possibility of a radical intervention was talked about early 1971.²⁰ However, polarization in the army had risen so much that 160 junta groups who had different ideologies and worldviews in the army had been put into words. After that memorandum some officers were dismissed from the army.²¹

The report made a general assessment about common consequences of 1960 and 1971 coups by claiming Turkish Armed Forces and its Commanders appeared to have learnt two lessons from their interventions. The diplomats wrote that Turkey's problems were too intractable to be solved by a direct military takeover, which was in any case contrary to their underlying democratic principles. Undoubtedly, they were aware that military rule would have made it more difficult for Turkey's Western friends to help her; Secondly, that less overt rule, leaving parliament intact and trying to manipulate technocrat ministers simply did not work. Having completed analysing the coups, the report focused on current situation of Army and possibility of next coup attempt. British diplomats noted that on 27 December 1979 accordingly the Armed Services had tried a different technique with a more limited aim. In the memorandum signed by the Chief of the General Staff and the four Service Commanders, they had criticised all political parties for "uncompromising stances due to sterile political strife", and noted that the contribution had made to political polarisation by their practise of filling civil service posts with their own placement. The memorandum had called for all political parties to join hands to take the necessary measures against terrorism. To the extent that these had been generalities, they had produced no developments apart from a single meeting between Mr Demirel and Mr Ecevit on 12 January.²²

In the background of all three military interventions in the history of Turkey the motives of the military were similar: wish to protect the country from the threats. The coups did not differ only because they all happened at different times and in different circumstances there

¹⁸ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

¹⁹ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

²⁰ Doğan Akyaz, *Askeri Müdahalelerin Orduya Etkisi*, İstanbul: (İletişim, 2002), 91.

²¹ Elif Aktaş, "12 Eylül 1980 Askeri Darbesi ve Tarih Öğretimine Etkileri", *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Erzurum*, (2011), 36.

²² FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

were more essential distinctions between them, mainly in terms of the military's strategy applied each time, and partly also the military's motives in a narrower sense.²³

There had been, however, two novel features in the memorandum, the first had been that it had been not confined to general criticism but specifically called for the enactment of a legislative package, originally had been prepared by the RPP but also been opposed by them on entering opposition. This package, which had been duly passed in February, had contained essentially minor amendments to existing laws, regulating, for example, the activities of professional associations, which had been the focus of much political polarisation and granting governors the power to call in troops to keep order. The second novel feature had been its criticism of the behaviour of the opposition. The memorandum had been called on all parties to co-operate to enable legislation to be passed, and this had been made more explicit by General Evren in a covering letter. He blamed lack of progress on the legislative package on "the sterile behaviour and actions of opposition parties". Both the Armed Forces and Mr. Demirel's government shared the same views on the legislation which Turkey required. But while in 1971 the Armed Forces could demand the resignation of a government without suspending Parliament, it was much more difficult to bring effective pressure on the opposition.²⁴

It has been clearly drawn attention in the report that the Armed Forces saw its previous interventions as their inheritance which must have been added the constitutional role. The diplomats wrote that this might be largely self-proclaimed, but their pride in being the guardians of both the Atatürk tradition and the Constitution was no less for that. The latter in fact implicitly endorsed this role by mentioning in its preamble the legality of the 1960 Revolution. Article 110, which proclaimed that the President in Commander-in-Chief, and that the Chief of the General Staff was responsible to the Prime Minister, made the Armed Forces in theory subordinate to the political authorities. The influence of the Armed Forces, however, had been entrenched in Article 111 of the Constitution; this provided for the Chief of the General Staff and the Service Commanders to sit with the Prime Minister and certain other Ministers on the National Security Council, which met under the chairmanship of the President or the Prime Minister. The National Security Council was responsible for making recommendations to the Council of Ministers in the field of national security and coordination. There was little doubt that it was an effective means of ensuring that the views of the military were known and taken into account.²⁵

Mehmet Ali Birand puts this argument properly in his book "Emret Komutanım" (Shirts of Steel). He writes that Atatürk is everything of an officer. He is a flag, guider, tactician, helper; shortly everything of officer. Cadets have no time without mention Atatürk, We wouldn't make any exaggeration if we say, and they are supposed to devote to Atatürk most of the time.²⁶

The composers of the report re-stresses role of the military as guardians of the Constitution were taken seriously not only by the Army but by the majority of Turks. They recorded that the Turks were proud of their martial past; they were aware of the major role played by the Army in establishing the Turkish Republic in the War of Independence; and all

²³Terzic, "Role of the Military," 71.

²⁴ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

²⁵ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

²⁶ Birand, *Emret Komutanım*, 92.

but one of their Presidents previously had a military career.²⁷ These evaluations showed that the diplomats who composed the report had comprehensive knowledge on background of Turkish military, Turkish history and they successfully kept the pulse of the community.

In a broader socio-cultural sense, military is believed to be inextricably linked to Turkish nationhood and history. The idea that Turkish nation is fundamentally a military nation is shared by Turkish masses and transmitted from parents to children. This idea is illustratively captured in the slogan "every Turk is born a soldier" expressed in daily conversations, educational institutions and used in training military service.²⁸ To majority of Turks, the military and military values lie at heart of what it means to be Turkish; the institution of the Turkish military is seen as embodiment of the highest values of Turkish nation, while military officers enjoy an image of model citizens in the eyes of Turkish public.²⁹

In the final paragraphs of the report, the Ambassador commented possibilities of the Armed Forces' attitudes and made some predictions whether Generals would intervene politics or not by assessing earlier interventions. He also tried to reveal the relation between Turkish officials and civilian actors in the framework of domestic conditions. British Ambassador Mr. Laurence pointed out that he believed that the Turkish Armed Forces were genuinely committed to democracy, and would only be prepared to seize power if in their view democracy itself had been threatened, whether by the assumption by the government of dictatorial powers (as in 1960), by a prolonged failure of the political machinery, by social disintegration, or by a total breakdown of law and order. They would probably also be inclined to see the success of a movement which they considered incompatible with Turkey's traditions (fundamentalist Islam or Communism) as a direct threat to democracy³⁰ It is important that the Ambassador saw the Coup in 1960 as a reaction from the Armed Forces against dictatorial powers by stressing his belief that Turkish Army wouldn't take over until a total social breakdown.

He continued expressed his thoughts that Officials wanted a democracy that works, and were prepared to intervene to this end; in doing so they were prepared to resort to the three classical devices of Turkish mechanical engineering, first the push, then the kick and finally taking to bits and starting again. The Generals' letter of 27 December 1979 presented the first of these methods. The coup by memorandum of 1971 represented the second. The overthrow of the Menderes Government in 1960 was the only example so far of the third. The Ambassador wanted to make his thoughts clear about attitudes of the Generals by debating previous actions and recent (1979 and 1980) developments interior politics. He remained to debate by:

"what then is the likelihood of further recourse to one of these methods in present circumstances since there is no doubt that the High Command is no less concerned with the political health of the nation at that time than it had been earlier?" He replied: " I think we can discount another 1960-style coup. As I have indicated above, it was by no means plain sailing for the Armed Forces at the time. They will not wish to repeat that experience, with the risk of creating divisions within

²⁷FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

²⁸ Ayşe Gül Altınay, *The Myth of the military-nation: militarism, gender and education in Turkey*, New York: (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 13.

²⁹ Terzic, "Role of the Military," 26.

³⁰ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

*the Armed Forces and introducing politics into them, save in extremis. That is not Turkey's present condition. The basic democratic processes continue to function rather vigorously. What dangers threaten democracy in Turkey today come from outside the governmental and constitutional system, compounded by the inability of the government of the day to get legislation through Parliament? Political violence in an ugly feature of present-day Turkey and gets no less. The Generals are certainly concerned that more effective measures should be taken to counter it and eventually suppress it. But the country is a long way from a total breakdown of law and order and social disintegration, despite the sometimes wild words of the leader of the opposition.'*³¹

The Ambassador defined the three methods of Turkish Armed Forces and accomplishedly matched them to the previous examples of interventions. To be honest, his final prediction, emerged from this analyse seems failed, resulting from He did not believe a military intervention like 1960 style. After having mentioned a total breakdown was a slender chance, He underlined that dangers threaten democracy come from interior elements. Mr. Laurence made an analogy between 1971 and 1979 conditions with regard to deadlock of parliament so He thought that this situation might force the Generals to pressure on the politicians. He diffusively wrote that The Armed Forces wanted new legislation, enabling, for example, banks to employ private armed guards, introducing a state of emergency, and setting up State Security Courts. The Chief of the General Staff further suggested that special courts should have been given the power to impose the death penalty without requiring parliamentary ratification. On the other hand, the attitude of the High Command, as shown in both 1971 and 1979, indicated a preference neither to take power themselves, nor to install a government which would be unable to wield effective power. The probability was, therefore, that if parliament continued to show inability to pass legislation, The Generals might try a further and sterner, letter of warning to the political parties, or would bang the political leaders' heads together behind the scenes, or would do both simultaneously; The National Security Council was one forum in which heads could be banged.³²

William Hale tried to compare military interventions in his book ‘‘Turkish Politics and The Military’’. He claimed that the picture seems a good deal clearer than in the case of either of the previous military interventions of 1960 and 1971. Moreover, the basic causes of the coup seem far more obvious than on the two previous occasions, and its legitimacy far less disputed. Initially, the army was held back by its unhappy experiences of 1971-3. Until around 1979, the situation did not seem serious enough to justify an intervention, and the increased prestige which the armed forces had won from Cyprus invasion strengthened their general acceptance of the regime. The economy was in chaos, the civilian government seemed totally incapable of ending the appalling wave of political killings. These would have removed both the necessity and the justification for a coup. But the fact is that they failed to do any of these things. Hence, the eventual military takeover virtually became a foregone conclusion.³³

The Ambassador also considered a new government options. He claimed that The High command tended to prefer a right center rather than the left (RPP) to ensure passage of the necessary legislation through a sufficient majority in parliament. Mr Demirel would like

³¹ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

³² FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

³³ William Hale, *Turkish Politics and The Military, 'Political Collapse and the Third Intervention 1973-80'*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 238-241.

exactly the same and might still prefer elections this autumn than next June. But the election decision could have only brought about by parliament majority. The Justice Party, The National Salvation Party and The Nationalist Action Party had sufficient members to do it but personal interest of the members could prevent to agree leaders of these three parties. The Ambassador underlined that if the parliamentary deadlock continued The High Command might decide that The Country couldn't wait until June 1981 for a more effective government and might intervene with a view to securing an early election.³⁴

The report concluded that the month of Ramadan began and August was traditional holiday and between October and June was very unlikely because of the winter so that no alternative to waiting until June 1981 for elections. If then the elections would produce another unworkable Parliament, The Armed Forces would be more seriously tempted to intervene with a view to changing the system in such a way as to ensure that the popular vote would result in the winning party obtaining a workable majority in Parliament.³⁵

4. The Reaction of Foreign and Commonwealth Office Towards the Memorandum

Mr Daunt, the Chief of Southern European Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who assessed the report of Ankara Embassy named "Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics" dated on 14 July 1980. Mr. Daunt considered the report as optimistic compared to The Financial Times and The Times evaluations. He also indicated to share Mr. Laurence's views that Turkish Army was reluctant to take power or install a puppet government unable to command a parliamentary majority. Laurence's judgement which the department (Southern European Department) was that the Turkish Armed Forces were genuinely committed to democracy and would only be prepared to seize power if democracy were threatened.³⁶ Mr Daunt completed his assessment to Mr Ferguson dated on 28 July 1980 by emphasizing that it was not inconsistent with this judgement, given the parlous state of affairs in Turkey, also to agree with Mr Laurence that, if a more workable Parliament did not emerge from next years' elections, the High Command might then intervene and change the system.³⁷

Mr. Daunt also gave an answer to Mr Laurence's telegram that he strongly underlined sharing Laurence's thoughts and assessments about current situation in Turkey. He considered Laurence's report as "sober and most timely by saying that it was not possible to have a reasonable point of view as sitting in London. He added that contemplating the casualty statistics and hearing no-go areas and what seemed to be the start to systematic killing of people prominent in public life, we were apt to take a more alarmist view than those on the spot."³⁸

In his reply to Daunt's telegram, Ferguson wrote that he and his department mostly agrees Laurence's points which were relatively assuring than more alarmist reports in the newspapers. He added that Greek Chief of Staff seemed considerably more anxious about developments in Turkey than is Ankara Embassy of the UK. Secondly, He remarked that there was a tendency

³⁴ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

³⁵ FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.

³⁶ FCO 9/3064, WST 062/2 Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Southern European Department by Daunt to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 28 July 1980.

³⁷ FCO 9/3064, WST 062/2 Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Southern European Department by Daunt to Ferguson, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 28 July 1980.

³⁸ FCO 9/3064, WST 062/3 Turkey: The Armed Forces and Politics, from Foreign & Commonwealth Office by Daunt to Ankara Embassy, 29 July 1980.

for the man on the spot to extrapolate forward from the status quo and to be consistently surprised by cataclysmic change when it comes (Baghdad in 1958, Paris in 1968 and Tehran 1978!). He cited that one of his Greek interlocutors suggested there were signs of a greater desire for major change among the younger junior to middle ranking officers in Turkey. The British diplomat replied that Chaos in Turkey wouldn't serve Greek interests. However, Daunt demanded Laurence to explain what he meant in his report "There was a small amount of evidence to suggest that there have been some instances where sharply divergent political views had been held among junior officers".³⁹

On 30 July, Mr. Caie, one of other diplomats of Southern European Department informed Ankara Embassy about department's views and expectations. He reminded Ankara Embassy's despatch of 14 July in paragraph 4 as well as Mr. Daunt did. Furthermore, Mr. Caire shared Mr. Ferguson's refusal about comments of Greek Chief of Staff on Turkey.⁴⁰

Mr. Daunt wrote that many officers in the Turkish Armed Forces along with a great many other moderate, thinking people, believed that the time had come for a change in the constitution and/or the electoral law having expressed that no additional evidence to support the belief that there was as yet any considerable pressure for military intervention to secure such change. While He was reporting Turkish Journalist's pros and cons comments about political polarisation in Turkish Army, he underlined that whether the academies succeeded in purifying cadets of politics is a question they were as yet unable to answer.⁴¹

5. CONCLUSION

It can be considered that British missions in Turkey made precious assessments regarding the Turkish Armed Forces; Those furthermore were carefully followed by Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The elaborated reports contained detailed information such as perception of the Turkish Armed Forces in Turkish society, the structure of staff, how economic troubles and political turbulences affected the Turkish Army and also education in military schools and Conscripts' views on military service. Eventhough the intelligence that a sharp polarisation among cadets draw the attention of London but Ankara embassy couldn't provide more detailed and supportive information related it.

The report has also specific evaluation for example the closed structure and the firm-hierarchical attitude of the Turkish Armed Forces prevented themselves from taking initiative of the officers. It is seen in the documents that eventhough the British diplomats had some concerns over the fact that Turkey might turn into a Latin American junta dictatorship they believed that the Turkish Armed Forces, under the influence of Western Bloc and NATO, would keep Turkey in a democratic line.

The correspondences comparatively dealt with the causes and the consequences of the 1960 coup d'état and the 1971 coup by memorandum. The Diplomats evaluated 27 December 1979 memorandum issued by Chief of Staff by making correct points but they failed to predict the process would result in a 1971 style intervention.

From the documents, it should also be noted that the British Diplomats had good knowledge the coup history of Turkey. It can be said that this enabled them to make good

³⁹ FCO 9/3064, WST 062/3 Turkey: The Armed Forces and Politics, from Foreign & Commonwealth Office by Daunt to Ankara Embassy, 29 July 1980.

⁴⁰ FCO 9/3064, WST 062/2 Turkey: The Armed Forces and Politics, from Foreign & Commonwealth Office by Caie to Ankara Embassy, 30 July 1980.

⁴¹ FCO 9/3064, WST 062/3/8 Turkey: The Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Young to Southern European Department, Caie, 11 August 1980.

predictions regarding the political and social condition just before the 1980 coup. Furthermore, the documents show that the polarization in Arms schools pointed out by the British diplomats indicate how they had the good command of the process.

The reports written by British diplomats showed that which social classes The Cadets came from, the percentage distribution sons of officers and non-commissioned officers and how deep and wide information network the British missions had in Turkey. In the reports, the correspondence tried to reveal an evaluation that the army had developed an attitude towards not only political and military polarization to but also potential economic - social reasons and results.

It is remarkable both comparing 1960 and 1970 military interventions and the evaluations (even though the results were not accurate) regarding to which intervention would be preferred by Turkish Army.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. ARCHIVES

- The National Archives, Public Record Office, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
FCO, 9/3064, Turkish Armed Forces, from Ankara Embassy by Baunault to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 22 January 1980.
- FCO 9/304, Politics in the Armed Forces, from Istanbul Consulate by Clemens to Ankara Embassy, 30 June 1980.
- FCO 9/3064, Turkey: Armed Forces and Poitics, from Ankara Embassy by Laurence to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 14 July 1980.
- FCO 9/3064, WST 062/2 Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Southern European Department by Daunt to Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 28 July 1980.
- FCO 9/3064, WST 062/2 Turkey: Armed Forces and Politics, from Southern European Department by Daunt to Ferguson, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 28 July 1980.
- FCO 9/3064, WST 062/3 Turkey: The Armed Forces and Politics, from Foreign & Commonwealth Office by Daunt to Ankara Embassy, 29 July 1980.
- FCO 9/3064, WST 062/2 Turkey: The Armed Forces and Politics, from Foreign & Commonwealth Office by Caie to Ankara Embassy, 30 July 1980.
- FCO 9/3064, WST 062/3/8 Turkey: The Armed Forces and Politics, from Ankara Embassy by Young to Southern European Department, Caie, 11 August 1980.

II. BOOKS

- Akyaz, Doğan. *Askeri Müdahalelerin Orduya Etkisi*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2002.
- Altınay, Ayşe Gül. *The Myth of the military-nation: militarism, gender and education in Turkey*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2004.
- Birand, Mehmet Ali. *Emret Komutanım*. Ankara: Milliyet Yayınları, 1986.
- Hale, William. *Turkish Politics and The Military, 'Political Collapse and the Third Intervention 1973-80'*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

III. ARTICLES AND THESIS

- Aktaş, Elif. “12 Eylül 1980 Askeri Darbesi ve Tarih Öğretimine Etkileri”, *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Erzurum*, (2011).
- Binay,Sema. “Coming to Terms with the Past: Narrating the 12 September 1980 Military Coup”, *Boğaziçi University Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences, İstanbul*, (2006).
- Evin, Ahmet and Heper , Metin.“Military Interventions: Army-Civilian Relations in Turkey Before and After 1980”, ‘in *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, (Kemal Karpat)’, Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, (1988): 137-158.
- Terzic, Mihailo. “Role of the Military in Turkish Politics: Case of the 1980 Military Coup”, *Sabancı Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İstanbul*,(2011).