

Security Matters

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Starlink & CESS

CESS is deeply involved in developing and delivering training courses for Security Sector Reform (SSR). In this issue, we will report on our Starlink programme for training development, which has completed its activities in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Starlink is now being introduced in Kazakhstan, and plans are underway to take it to the Western Balkans. Starlink is supported by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the OSCE. We will also discuss the work CESS has been doing to teach the OECD DAC approach to SSR. In a thought-provoking commentary article Kars de Bruyne questions the conventional interpretation of the spring 2007 crisis in Turkey.



Jacques Wallage, the mayor of Groningen, addresses Starlink partners

Partners Evaluate Starlink

As a small think tank without institutional funding, CESS cannot train large numbers of people. Therefore it develops training programmes and tries them out in various countries, serving various audiences. It also produces self-contained teaching modules for SSR training, and encourages local organisations to adapt and use these modules for their own training activities. This effort began in five former Soviet republics in Europe and the Caucasus, and it is now focussing on Kazakhstan and the Western Balkans.

In December 2005, colleagues from Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine came to Groningen to discuss and plan the Starlink programme, which organised training courses in their countries in 2006 and 2007. Two years later, they were back, joined by partners from Armenia, Azerbaijan and the OSCE, to evaluate the programme. This gave CESS the opportunity to thank our partner NGO representatives and Starlink instructors for their excellent work over the last two years. During the evaluation, we reviewed the content of the modules and the training courses in more depth, respectively from the perspective of CESS, the instructors and the beneficiary countries. At the end of the day Sami Faltas, act-



Starlink conference at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ing as rapporteur, wrapped up discussions by formulating options for a way forward for future Starlink programmes. He stressed that such efforts should include a strategy that establishes and assures local ownership in the beneficiary countries. Academies, universities and other teaching institutions should be supported properly so that they can include our material in their curricula. We could teach the first courses at such institutes. Another element lacking in the first Starlink programme was an effort to train trainers. We will include this element in future programmes, also for potential trainers from the original Starlink countries.

Starlink Conference at Foreign Ministry

The second event that concluded Starlink was an international conference on 13 December 2007 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague. It served as a showcase for a programme that for two years provided transitional countries with training programmes for democratic reform in their security sector. About 100 CESS partners, CESS trainees and other SSR experts gathered in the main hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague. They came from the Starlink beneficiary countries, neighbouring countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, international organisations like the OSCE, and government departments and research institutes in the Netherlands.

page 2

News: Starlink

page 3

News: Starlink, Belgrade

page 4

News: Moldova

page 5

News: Turkey

page 6

OECD SSR

page 8

Editorial: Sami Faltas, People

page 9

Commentary: Kars de Bruijne

The morning sessions focussed on the Starlink programme itself, its contents and its achievements. Robert de Groot, the director for security policy at the Foreign Ministry said that his ministry was very pleased with CESS and the Starlink programme. Our partner organisations used the opportunity to explain to the plenary how Starlink operated in their countries, and how cooperation between their institutes and CESS has developed. In the afternoon, three working groups dealt with specific obstacles to democratic governance in the security sector. The principles of democratic governance are the same for all areas of policy—transparency, accountability and the rule of law. Unfortunately, these are most difficult to apply where they are most needed, namely in the security sector. The military, the intelligence services and law enforcement agencies are always to some extent separated from society by the specialised, sensitive and confidential nature of their work. It is never easy to make them transparent and accountable, but it is especially difficult when a country is facing security threats, lacks an independent and informed civil society at large and has to deal with unbalanced security priorities. The working groups discussed the challenges of security sector reform under such conditions, and asked itself whether a programme like Starlink could provide useful assistance.



Our Serbian partner listens attentively at the Starlink conference

During the final session the floor was again given to Starlink partners and the sponsors of the programme, namely the Netherlands Foreign Ministry and the OSCE offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan. They reflected on the potential for further development and wider use of the Starlink modules and training courses. The message of our partners was constructive and hopeful: Starlink was received well in the beneficiary countries and there is a need for the programme to be continued in the 'old' Starlink countries, and extended to new ones. Serbian and Bosnian experts called for Starlink courses in their countries.

Starlink Training Modules

One of the most important outcomes of the Starlink programme is a series of self-contained training modules. These were commissioned by CESS and written by leading international authorities on the subject. They can serve as a brief or more extensive introduction to the subject for any audience anywhere in the world. Of course, being generic tools, they must always be adapted to the needs of the intended audience.

Any bona fide user can apply for these tools from info@cess.org. We will ask for information on their intended use, make recommendations and provide the material for free.

The modules are available in English, provide suggested texts and Power Point presentations for classroom use, include suggestions for further reading, and comprise didactical pointers for the trainer. As they provide a lot of information on the subject in an easily digestible form, they make it possible for a good trainer with only a basic knowledge of the subject to guide a group through a training session.

The intended users are especially trainers and teachers in transitional and developing countries, but they can be used in other parts of the world as well. The list below is organised by course and mentions some modules in several courses.

Defence course modules

- Introduction to Democratic Governance
- Parliament and Defence
- Role-Play: Purchasing Uniforms in Croatia
- Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Military Personnel
- Developing Defence Policy Documents

Law enforcement course modules

- Introduction to Democratic Governance
- Police, State and Community
- Role-Play: Immigrants in Croatia
- Integrated Border Management
- Combating Organised Crime

Intelligence course modules

- Introduction to Democratic Governance
- Parliament and Intelligence
- Role-Play: Sending Peacekeepers to Kushdara
- Counterterrorism
- Combating Organised Crime

For more information write to merijnhartog@cess.org

The Road to Almaty

It seems a big leap from the former communist countries in Europe to Kazakhstan. Indeed this large Central Asian country is unique in several respects. However, in 2007 the Netherlands took its turn as NATO Contact Point Embassy in Kazakhstan. This means that the Netherlands embassy, with sections in the capital Astana and the largest city Almaty, will serve as the diplomatic point of contact for NATO in 2007 and 2008. So when CESS proposed to the Foreign Ministry that the Starlink programme be introduced in the largest former Soviet republic in Central Asia, this was seen as a welcome addition to the work of the Netherlands as NATO contact point embassy. In November 2007, Sami Faltas and Erik Sportel travelled to Astana and Almaty to explore possibilities for Starlink in Kazakhstan, established contacts at many of the relevant government organizations and met representatives of several NGOs and think tanks, as well as the Al Farabi University in Almaty.

As the Dutch embassy in Kazakhstan has only a very small staff, it needed assistance from a special adviser for activities related to its role as NATO contact point. Colonel (Royal Netherlands Army, retired) Cornelis Ros assumed this task in February 2008, and the Foreign Ministry approved funding for Starlink in Kazakhstan as of March 2008.



The Bayterek tower in Astana

In April 2008, CESS returned to Kazakhstan to discuss its Starlink plans in a more concrete fashion with government organisations and NGOs. Merijn Hartog, who is responsible for the Starlink programme, and Sami Faltas were joined by Kees Ros, whose knowledge of Russian, the former USSR, government bureaucracy and the military proved invaluable. CESS's partners will be the Astana-based Civil Alliance of Kazakhstan, and in Almaty the Al-Farabi

Kazakh National University and the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law.

The Starlink programme in Kazakhstan will begin with a high-level meeting to be held in the capital Astana. Kazakhstan authorities, the Netherlands ambassador and independent experts will discuss the importance of capacity-building for successful government reform in Kazakhstan. We will then move to Almaty, where the al-Farabi university will host a try-out training course for students and members of civil society. After the summer break, we will carry out three trips



Sight over Astana

to Astana and Almaty, and each time teach a course in both cities, in close co-operation with our local partners. We will also host interns from Kazakhstan, who will help us plan the courses. In 2009, the programme will be concluded with a regional conference, and we plan to publish its proceedings as a Harmonie Paper.

We have suggested that the Starlink be included as a contribution of the Netherlands to the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) for Kazakhstan's co-operation with the Partnership for Peace.

Other plans for Starlink include a programme that will hold courses in the Western Balkans, in several countries and at the regional centre for arms control RACVIAC, based near Zagreb in Croatia.

Winter Course in Belgrade

The first event of the year took us to Serbia at a very interesting time. From 21 January till 1 February, CESS was one of the organizers of the Winter Course "New Challenges in Security, Trends, Lessons and Developments". The Winter Course was the first endeavour in the cooperation between Groningen University and the University of Belgrade, made possible by the support of the Netherlands Embassy to Serbia. During this two-week Winter Course, lecturers from Groningen University, the Netherlands Institute for International Relations 'Clingendael', the Netherlands Military Academy and CESS gave lectures on security-related subjects to a mixed group of students from the Faculty for Security Studies at Belgrade University and cadets from the Military Academy. Topics included conflict management, international military cooperation, humanitarian intervention, civil-military relations, the European Defence and Security Policy and NATO. For CESS, Sami Faltas and Erik Sportel contributed to the course.



Faltas teaching in Belgrade

As the course was running, Serbia was preoccupied with the Presidential elections, with the run-off to be held on the Sunday after the course. It promised to be a close call. The discussions during the two weeks were clearly influenced by these elections, with strong debates on Serbia's future and the role of the military in this future. The status of Kosovo was also extensively debated. At the end of the course there were happy faces all around. The students told us they were very satisfied with the course and enjoyed the opportunity that a mixed group of civilian and military students provides in the sense of direct communication between the two groups, something they had not experienced before. The organizers were also satisfied, mainly because the course was a success but also because of the successful cooperation between the various organizations involved. Moreover, the responses we got from the guest lecturers were very positive. They all enjoyed their stay in Belgrade and the participation of the students. A special word of thanks goes out to Sipke de Hoop (director of the Winter Course), representing Groningen University, Anouk Vos and Roeleke Seinstra, two students from Groningen University who took part in the course and took care of local logistics, and last but not least Ivan Dimitrijevic, who was our local partner, besides being a student at the University of Belgrade.

The positive feedback of all parties involved proved a good incentive to follow up this Winter Course and try to make it a regular event. The first basis for cooperation between the universities of Groningen and Belgrade has been laid. Four Serbian students who participated in the Winter Course will be coming to a Summer School organized by Groningen University and called "Transatlantic perspectives."

Moldova Parliamentary Programme

The first phase of the Moldova Parliamentary Programme is approaching its end with the upcoming seminar in The Hague, which is the last in a series of six seminars. In these we have tried, in a dialogue with Moldovan parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, civil society and representatives of the relevant ministries, to assess the needs for strengthening capacity in the field of parliamentary oversight of the security sector. An important tool is the Expert Report, which will be discussed with a group of Moldovan parliamentarians during their three-day visit to The Hague, from 19-21 May. Apart from a one-day seminar, the representatives will also pay visits to the Netherlands Court of Audit, an international think-tank and their Dutch colleagues of the parliamentary committee for Defence. The report was compiled by Moldovan experts and thus provides an insider's view of the challenges facing Moldova regarding the oversight of the security sector. We intend to discuss the first draft of the report with the delegation coming to the Netherlands and use their comments and recommendations in the editing phase. We expect to publish the final Expert Report in September.



The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova

In December 2007 and February 2008 CESS and its Moldovan partners, the European Institute for Political Studies and the Institute for Public Policy organized the last two Chisinau-based seminars. The December seminar was on the implementation of (international) policy. Main points of discussion were the implementation of the EU-Moldova Action Plan and the NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan. Our February seminar was entitled Human Rights and International Obligations. This seminar was a good example of our cooperation with our colleagues of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) in this project. An expert from DCAF gave a presentation and the Deputy Director of DCAF chaired a session. Both seminars took place in the chamber of the parliamentary committee for National Security, Defence and Public Order, which demonstrates the good cooperation established with the parliament of the Republic of Moldova and, more specifically, the committee.

As mentioned, the seminar in The Hague will mark the end of the first phase of assessment of the needs for capacity building of the programme. In the second phase, which will start in September, we will try to address these needs by providing focussed three-day training courses for parliamentary staff, civil society and representatives of the relevant ministries. We hope we can also draw from the experience of the MPs in this phase.



Our partner Viorel Cibotaru introduces DCAF's Alex Dowling

Ankara Conference on Peace Support Operations

As promised in the December issue of *Security Matters*, we will now report on the conference on peace support operations (PSO) held in Ankara. The conference was held in the framework of CESS's Turkey programme. In organising it, we not only wanted to shed light on the subject, but also to cement our good relations with the Turkish authorities, especially with the General Staff and the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, new conflicts erupted, largely with ethnic and religious backgrounds. While in the past attention was focused on conflicts between states, today we are confronted with internal violence and fragile states.

From interventions in these new types of conflicts difficult issues of morality and legitimacy arise. Clearer mandates from the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) would provide a base for such interventions, but they do not solve the problem if the UNSC is unable to act. Simultaneously traditional war tactics are inadequate in dealing with asymmetrical warfare.

During the last few years we have seen the necessity of operating multinational forces in a more robust way. Therefore all major international organizations are undergoing a number of significant changes in the way they operate. In order to promote a better understanding of these complex phenomena the following key questions were addressed:

- 1 Is there a common understanding of Peace Support Operations and the way they should be prepared and organized?
- 2 What are the current approaches of the UN, NATO and the EU towards Peace Operations?
- 3 Do various countries approach Peace Support Operations differently? If so, what are the consequences for Command and Control?
- 4 What is the relationship between Security and Development?

The conference was organised in cooperation with the Department of International Relations of Bilkent University in Ankara. The chairman of the International Relations Department of Bilkent University, associate prof. Ersel Aydınlı, worked very closely with CESS in facilitating the conference at the Bilkent Hotel under the aegis of Bilkent University.



LGEN Zorlu delivers the keynote speech

The conference comprised three sessions. During the first, the formal framework of international organisations was laid out. During the introductions the perspectives of the United Nations, NATO and the EU were painted by their respective representatives. During session two the reality on the ground was explained by generals with PSO experience. The second day during the third session an attempt was made to identify the relation between Security and Development. Based on the first two sessions and the new input of experts from the development world, this became a very rewarding experience. The main conclusions were that international organisations could cooperate better and that the experiences from the past needed more focusing in order to implement the lessons learned, although in recent years much progress has been made especially in the field of development.

The world has learned from serious mistakes such as those made in Somalia and now realizes better the need for integrated policy-making. The creation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the United Nations has been a step in the right direction. All in all, the conclusion can be that the international community has improved its capability to act in PSOs.

The support of the rector of Bilkent University, prof. Ali Dođramacı, in hosting this conference was highly appreciated. CESS also thanks Ambassador Hasan Gögüs, Director General for Multilateral Affairs at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for giving his introductory remarks at the conference. Furthermore, CESS is grateful to Lt.Gen. Hilmi Akin Zorlu, Chief of General Planning and Principals at the Turkish General Staff and former ISAF-II Commander, for delivering the keynote speech. In this speech, he made clear that peace support operations can only be successful if the leadership on the ground realizes from the first moment onwards that good relations with the civil population are paramount.

In June 2008 a conference will be held in the Netherlands with scholars from Turkey and elsewhere in the European Union to discuss obstacles to Turkey's EU accession. More importantly, there will be a search to identify the perceptions and misperceptions of the two sides. Distinguished scholars from universities in Ankara and Istanbul will attend the Round Table in order to study the stumbling blocks and suggest ways of getting around them.

This summer CESS will also publish a book on European policies and standards regarding civil-military relations. The aim of the book is to stimulate the debate inside and outside the Union about this important topic.



BGEN Vleugels during his speech

OECD and UN Engage in SSR Training

Reforming military and police forces to make them more effective and democratic is a national responsibility. But more and more, governments are asking overseas donors to support such efforts. And these days, donor governments want to help other countries to provide a safe environment for development. Especially countries emerging from poverty, war or authoritarian rule.



Discussing the relationship between security and development

Twenty years ago, the notion of Security Sector Reform (SSR) was not so widely supported. The development community was suspicious of the military and the police, hostile to the idea of making them stronger and sceptical about efforts to make them more accountable. For their part, the people in charge of defence and law enforcement were suspicious of efforts by the development community to empower vulnerable groups and challenge the power of state agencies. Anyone suggesting that the two communities needed a common approach to ensure human security would have been dismissed as a dreamer.

However, in 2007, the world's main donors of development aid adopted exactly that position. The Development Assistance Committee at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a policy report called the Handbook on Security System Reform (SSR): Supporting Security and Justice. This reflects the joint approach of the OECD members, that is to say, the world's leading industrial countries. At the request of the OECD, CESS and other think tanks have developed training material and training courses, including courses that train trainers. The first regular courses were held at the European Commission in Brussels and the Folke Bernadotte Academy and National Defence College in Sweden. InWEnt in Germany is organising train-the-trainer programmes. CESS is a major contributor to all these training efforts.

In March 2008, CESS also joined several other SSR training groups at the Folke Bernadotte Academy's complex in Sandö, middle Sweden, to establish the Association for SSR Education and Training (ASSET). The members of ASSET will develop SSR training material and programmes on the basis of internationally agreed norms, share their knowledge, and co-ordinate their activities.



SSR Meeting in Sandö, Sweden

Currently, CESS is also talking to the National Defence College in the Netherlands about a Dutch-French training course on SSR in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy, to be held in The Hague in October 2008. It is also helping the Department on Human Rights and Peace Building at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs to organize an SSR programme for high officials from Burundi who will visit The Hague in June 2008. These small-scale activities are important to CESS because so far, we have not done much work for the Ministry of Defence and the development side of the Foreign Ministry in the Netherlands.

So far, the OECD has taken the lead on SSR, which is remarkable considering that it is a development-oriented organization. It is also a club of rich countries. Its ideas on SSR are widely shared in the international community, but that is not to say that the developing countries subscribe to everything the OECD says. It is therefore important that

the United Nations are also taking action. In January 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon published a report on SSR support programmes, which is likely to be adopted by the General Assembly as a UN policy document. The UN also plans to develop training programmes to familiarize its staff with SSR.



Train the Trainers session at Bad Honnef

I Support Our Troops

Since the summer of 2006, the Netherlands armed forces have been fighting the Taliban in the unstable south of Afghanistan, as part of the ISAF mission, along with British, Canadian and American troops. By most accounts, they are doing a good job, but progress is slow and it is impossible to tell whether they will achieve their main objective.

The Dutch are not used to being at war. They like the idea of peacekeeping, preventing violent conflict and helping children to go to school. But suggesting that we should wage war, even if it is necessary to restore peace and security, is not a way to win elections in the Netherlands. So it was not surprising that the Dutch government has emphasised the reconstruction work done by Dutch peacekeepers in Uruzgan, and talked as little as possible about their role in combat. In his public statements as Commander of the Forces, General Dick Berlijn much preferred to talk about peace-building than about fighting.

Last summer I was on vacation in Canada. This is another country that believes in soft power, dislikes militarism, and attaches great importance to peacekeeping. But unlike the Dutch, the Canadians seemed keenly aware of their country being at war in southern Afghanistan. Some of them disapproved, but others were wearing T-shirts that read "I support our troops." On the roads, I saw many bumper stickers with the same message. And I wondered why I had never seen such slogans in the Netherlands.

Of course, it was no secret that the Dutch were losing soldiers in Uruzgan. But these losses were treated as sad incidents, not as the unavoidable consequence of war. Now this may be changing. On 18 April 2008, a roadside bomb placed by the Taliban killed two Dutch soldiers and wounded another. The death of Lieutenant Dennis van Uhm, 23, drew a lot of media attention, because he was the son of General Peter van Uhm, who one day earlier had taken over from General Berlijn as Commander of the Forces. There is no difference between the suffering of the Van Uhm family and the pain of the other Dutch families that have lost a loved one in Uruzgan. But the unusual story of Dennis and his father seems to have changed the public mood about the role of the Netherlands in Afghanistan.

So far, voices that oppose the mission in Uruzgan have been heard more often and more loudly in the Netherlands than the voices of those that support the mission. Now the supporters are beginning to speak out. T-shirts and bumper stickers reading "I support our troops" are beginning to appear. They seem to be saying: "We are at war. It is a painful and costly effort, but necessary. We must stop the people who treat women like slaves from returning to power. The people who bombed New York, London, Casablanca, Bali and Madrid must not be allowed to regain a base for their operations."

The Dutch, it seems, have awakened to the fact that they are at war. It was high time.

Sami Faltas

People

Natalia Spinu from the Republic of Moldova was an intern at CESS in the spring of 2008. As a staff member of the European Institute for Political Studies in Moldova, she had previously worked with Erik Sportel and Sami Faltas in the framework of the Moldova Parliamentary Programme. During Natalia's stay in the Netherlands, she was in close contact with the local culture, customs and people. She says: "The people here in the Netherlands are very friendly. If you get lost in the city, the people are very eager to help you find the way." Natalia learned some phrases in Dutch to thank people for their assistance. "Imagine my surprise when I saw the people riding bicycles on the streets. There were so many of them. At first I was afraid to ride a bicycle, but after some time it proved to be very exciting. I had an opportunity to attend meetings with foreign students." The Netherlands is supposed to be a freedom-loving country, and Natalia found this to be true. "Employers do not try to dominate their employees. Look at how everyone makes coffee," she remarks.

Natalia's research and professional interests also include communication sciences, journalism, national and international security and even business management. She considers such a combination of experience and skills necessary and promising in this century of exploding phenomena of globalization and integration. The new experience gained and lessons learned at CESS during her stay in Groningen will surely help Natalia in the future. Thanks, Natalia, and *la revedere*.



Natalia in front of Groningen Central Station



Mariana (left) and Natalia became close friends

Mariana Pinheiro da Conceição is from Brazil. She came to Groningen for a Master course in International Relations and International Organizations. Her internship at CESS began in February 2008.

It allowed her to improve her knowledge of security issues. She says she enjoyed working together with her kind supervisor (Merijn Hartog) and the interaction with all the other friendly staff at CESS. It gave her a better understanding of the significance of an organization like CESS for the international environment and allowed her to connect her experience at CESS with her studies. It was the first time she worked outside her country and it proved to be a great opportunity for broadening her ideas about the Netherlands, a country she finds wonderful. Moreover, she had fun during coffee break discussions, learning about Dutch customs and practices that are sometimes very different from Brazilian habit. The coffee break itself is a good example. "The experience I gained will for sure help in my future career," she adds.

Turkey's 2007 Crisis: Who Won?

Kars de Bruijze

It was a show-down, and everyone had seen it coming. Ever since the Muslim-inspired Justice and Development Party (AKP: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) had come to power in 2002, it was obvious that electing a new president would be a titanic struggle. The seven-year term of President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, a secular former judge, would come to an end in 2007 and parliament would elect a successor proposed by its AKP majority. This smouldering conflict flared up in the spring of 2007, and it resulted in the worst political crisis Turkey had seen in a decade.

At first sight, the story of the disputed 2007 presidential election does not seem very complex. The AKP nominated Abdullah Gül, causing massive opposition among the secular elite, the people and above all the military, which acts as the guardian of the secular republic. On the date of the crucial elections in parliament, the opposition boycotted the session, thereby causing a legal problem, which was referred to the Higher Constitutional Court. The military issued a warning on its internet site (sometimes called an e-coup) just before the ruling, and the Higher Constitutional Court decided a few days later that Mr Gül could not be validly elected. In response, the government advanced the parliamentary elections, which in July gave the AKP a sweeping victory, enabling it to elect Abdullah Gül as the new president of Turkey.

The presidential crisis was, among other things, a crisis in civil-military relations. In late 2006, the Chief of General Staff (CGS) General Yasar Büyükanıt began issuing numerous statements on the issue and a very serious warning appeared on the website of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) on 27 April 2007 which fuelled speculation that the military would once again intervene directly in the political process, as they had in 1960-1963, 1971-1973, 1980-1983 and 1997. Civil-military relations can be conceptualized as power relations. The main issue is who will have the upper hand when it comes to contentious issues, the military leadership or elected civilian politicians. Now that the AKP government had successfully and lawfully imposed its will regarding the presidency on the Turkish military, some observers (especially in the West) came to the conclusion that the struggle between the secular military and the government was over. The government had won.

Indeed, Prime Minister Erdoğan and his government seemed to have won. But had they really? And if so, what was the extent and significance of their victory?

Victory for the AKP?

There is some evidence to support the claim that in the summer of 2007, Turkey's civilian rulers relegated the military to the sidelines of Turkish politics. The government was able to assert its position at the top of Turkish politics. According to Metin Heper, a professor of politics at Bilkent University, the Turkish constitutional regime is divided into a short-term political elite (represented by parliament and

government) and a long-term statist elite protecting the constitutional and Kemalist order. The Presidency is the most important position for the long-term interests of the statist elite, enabling it to appoint members of state institutions (above all the judiciary and the military) that protect the fundamentally Kemalist character of Turkey. Although the AKP government significantly enhanced its power in the 2007 crisis, the real test for civil-military relations will be the use that Mr Gül makes of his presidential powers, and how the military responds. This conflict may emerge in two fields. The AKP may pose a real or imagined threat to the secular character of the state. Based on the behaviour of the AKP and the president in the row about the head-scarf ban, I would argue that the party intends to make use of the president's powers. Moreover, conflict between the AKP and the TAF could arise from attempts by the AKP to limit the role of the TAF, both in security policy and society. However, so far there are no indications that the AKP is willing to use its newly-won powers for this purpose.



Turkey's Chief of Staff General Büyükanıt listens to an officer during the Efes-2007 Military Exercise in Izmir.

Reviewing the Process

Looking back on the crisis, we tend to focus on its outcome, but to look at the process instead is more revealing; it highlights civilian and military power-play in practice. If we look at the process superficially, it would again seem that the AKP government won the confrontation. For the first time in the political history of the Turkish Republic, characterized by many confrontations between the military and civilian elites, the government did not back down after clear indications of military discontent. For instance, after the memorandum the government stated that the TAF were subordinated to the Prime Minister. Moreover, the government tried to change the constitutional procedure for electing the President, allowing society to elect the President directly.

The confrontation between the military and the civilian elite was a power struggle fought on the battlefield of public opinion. This confrontation can be divided into three stages. Phase I focused on the demonstrations from April until May 2007. Phase II was June and July 2007, the march to elections. Phase III focused on the post-parliamentary election period in July and August 2007. During phase I, the military and military circles active in the civil defence corps were able to rally massive opposition against the AKP. However, this opposition was not as massive as the military may have hoped. Opinions polls showed that more than half the population was not convinced of the danger posed to secularism by the AKP, only about one-third of the population welcomed the involvement of the TAF in the presidential process while nearly half disapproved of a military role in the process.



Military exercise of the Turkish Army

During Phase II the AKP remained silent on the topic of civil-military relations and tried to deflect the Secularism-Islam debate by refuting claims of being anti-secular and covertly Islamic, by remaining vague on whom it would nominate for the presidency, claiming they would 'reconcile' and 'seek approval', and by replacing more than 160 parliamentarians who had been criticized of being too Islamic.

Some opinion analysts underscored the success of this manoeuvre. In July, only one-tenth of the voters considered secularism when making their choice compared with nearly half of the voters in May. This was a steep drop. Besides the redirection of the secularism-Islam debate, the AKP effectively introduced the theme of economy into public debate, stressing for instance that the e-memorandum caused a decline in Turkey's stock exchange by 12 percent. Although some journalists considered the sweeping AKP victory a reaction to the presidential troubles, most sociologists and political scientists stressed the economic concerns of the electorate. 78.3% of the voters cited the economy as the primary reason for their vote. The AKP was able to cast the elections in economic terms and effectively shaped public debate in its favour.

Phase III, the time after the July elections, revealed a political trick performed by the AKP leadership. The interpretation of the parliamentary elections was difficult. After Mr Erdoğan's victory speech thousands of AKP supporters chanted, "the president is Abdullah Gül" but the prime minister refused to comment on these clear signals' coming from the street. Instead, he went on a short holiday. Meanwhile, other AKP officials tried to translate their victory into political currency. Some AKP officials interpreted the results as a 'memorandum' of the people, a reference to the military's e-memorandum, saying they seriously considered the nomination of

Mr Gül because "the will of the people cannot be ignored." In the end, Mr Gül was elected as President, showing that somehow, the AKP managed to translate the economic support it acquired into support for their candidate's election.

So the analysis made by the Western media seems to be supported by the evidence presented. In its power struggle with the military, the civilian elite have secured the important position of the Presidency. Moreover, the process indicates that an unprecedented assertive and self-confident AKP was able to shape political discourse and define the agenda of the elections to rally public support. The TAF could not gain enough for their aims and lost the centre of Turkish politics.

But notwithstanding the strong evidence, one can doubt whether civil-military relations in Turkey have really changed. At least the European Commission is not convinced. In its progress report of 2007, the Commission stated, "overall no progress has been made in ensuring full civilian supervisory functions over the military [...]. On the contrary, the tendency for the military to make public comments on issues going beyond its remit [...] has increased." There are two arguments that cast severe doubts on the popular assessments in the media. First, the TAF succeeded in setting the agenda for the elections in a way that suits the military. Second, their sources of power do not appear to have been weakened.

A critical analysis of the conventional wisdom that the AKP won the confrontation starts by clarifying what the TAF aimed for. The military were not opposed to an AKP president per se. Rather, they tried to defend the fundamental Kemalist principles of the Turkish nation, in particular the secular character of the state. This defence is completely in line with the perceived role of the TAF, protecting the secular legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk by guarding the Turkish Republic from internal and external threats. Therefore, I propose to take the secular character of the state as the fundamental benchmark for an assessment of the position of the TAF. Judged against this benchmark the TAF did a good job.

Guarding the Republic

During the process the TAF were able to influence the process in a way that suited their secularist agenda. They did so in three different ways. First, they influenced the process in a direct way. Initially, the TAF successfully blocked the election of Mr Gül and countered the threat that he allegedly posed to the secular character of the state. Moreover, if one accepts secular premise that the AKP is not a Kemalist party at heart, it might be argued that Kemalist ideology is better represented in parliament now than before the presidential crisis. Although the AKP won 46 per cent of the votes in 2007 compared to 34 per cent in 2002, this gain could not be translated into seats in parliament due to peculiarities in the Turkish election system. Instead, they lost 22 seats while the nationalist party (MHP) – a party with close historical ties to the military – entered parliament. However, there are more compelling arguments that the military not only influenced the process but also achieved their aims.

During the crisis, the media mostly failed to report that the AKP was forced to redirect the debate and introduce economic themes. This indicates the indirect and social powers of the Turkish Armed Forces. The TAF forced the AKP to redefine itself as a centrist party devoted to secularism and democracy. Prime Minister Erdoğan had to replace more than 160 conservative and Islamist candidates by candidates with a less suspect background, while Mr Gül continuously stated: "protection of secularism is one of my basic principles. Nobody should worry about that." This commitment of the AKP to uphold the secularist ideology proves that the military have been able to secure the Kemalist character of the state by being able to define the preferences of the actors involved. Still, one might argue that the AKP can now act in a way contrary to the secularist principles of the state. This line of reasoning does largely explain the opposition of the armed forces to Mr Gül's election. They fear that the AKP leadership are covert Islamists trying to overthrow the state. However, the real threat is – of course - not the presidency itself, but the actually policy of the government. This might explain why the TAF remained committed to upholding the principle of secularism, as recent public statements of the Turkish General Staff indicate. Thus, the pressure and threat posed by the military have kept and will keep the AKP in line.



Turkey's Prime Minister Erdoğan is accompanied by members of the High Military Council in Ankara

The third way in which the military were able to shape the process is social. The TAF have been able to shape the political discourse in a Foucaultian way. It can be argued that the TAF have been able to define what is considered 'normal' and 'possible' in Turkish politics. The most significant proof is the mere existence of an Islam-based party upholding secular principles. This is largely the work of the Turkish Armed Forces. They toppled four governments with an Islamic background, and with the help of the judiciary forbade all Islamist parties. The TAF rendered the existence of a party not upholding the

Kemalist character of the state impossible. The very clever political moves made by the AKP leadership during the presidential crisis needs to be seen in this light. The party could not campaign against the involvement of the military, nor could it argue that secularism does not mean the same thing today as under Atatürk. Instead, Mr Erdoğan and his friends had to keep quiet on this issue. They had to redirect the Secularism-Islam debate, and were forced to introduce the theme of economy. Instead of using discursive power to shape the political discussion – as the AKP was forced to do -

the military more fundamentally defined the playground and forced the actors involved to comply. They did this not only during the crisis of 2007. They have done so throughout the political history of the Turkish Republic.

Sources of Power

A second argument casting doubts on the popular assessment of the 'AKP win' is that the Turkish Armed Forces continue to hold significant sources of political power. One of the most important sources has been the military's self-image. They are the guardians of the Kemalist character of the state. A close reading of the statements issued by the Turkish Armed Forces underscores this self-perception. They constantly referred to 'constitutional requirements' which require them to protect the secular character of the state. It is important to note that the military elite have not changed this self-image since the presidential crisis. Instead, they expressed an 'absolute' commitment to uphold the Kemalist character of the state even after the elections. The 2007 crisis may have even underscored the military's determination to guard Turkey's democracy.

Another important source of power is the support of society for the Turkish Armed Forces in general and for its guardian role in particular. In a survey conducted just after the presidential elections almost 84 per cent of the Turkish population named the military as the most trusted institution in the country, suggesting that the presidential turmoil did not significantly diminish the popularity of the TAF. However, does the public also support the guardian role of the Turkish Armed Forces? Surprisingly, this role has not been significantly questioned during the presidential elections. Instead, Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Şahin responded to the first military warning after the parliamentary elections: "I can only praise such words emphasizing the protection of our republic. Some journalists argued that signs appeared during the rallies, indicating that society did not want the military to intervene in politics. One of them read: No Sharia, No Coup. Could these signs point to a decline in societal support for the political role of the military? Admittedly, these signs may have weakened popular support for the guardian role of the military. However, many observers noted that only modern civil society organizations in the Istanbul demonstration carried these sign, while the signs did not figure so prominently in subsequent meetings. Generally, it might be argued that the societal support for the military role has not changed much since the start of the crisis. What it does show is that society was not convinced of the danger to the secular character of the state during the Presidential crisis. The really important question is: What happens if society is in fact convinced of a threat against the secular character of the state?

A third source of military power is the civil defence corps. These informal powers are still vibrant as the demonstrations in April and May indicate. The 'Society for Kemalist Thought' (ADD) headed by retired General Şener Eryugur was able to organize massive demonstrations, which brought millions of Turks onto the streets protesting against the AKP.

Commentary

The crisis over the presidency shows that the military elite are still able to create an uproar using informal channels, and that they use these powers quite frequently and effectively.



EU commission President Barroso and Turkey's Prime Minister Erdoğan review a guard of honour during a welcoming ceremony

Finally, military capabilities like tanks and airplanes at the disposal of the TAF are always looming on the horizon of discussions on the guardianship of the military. Naturally, they are a significant source of power. The military elite always have the option to use these capabilities to impose their will either by threatening to use force or through the actual use of military force. Of course, society will disapprove. Especially the element of threat may be important. During the last 'post-modern' coup in 1997, the TAF presented on 28 February a long list 'recommendations' to the Islamist government of Mr Erbakan. However, on 4 February, just before the coup, the TAF drove a long line of armed vehicles through the city clearly meant to intimidate the government. Does the 2007 crisis indicate that the military will never again use their weapons to threaten the government? There is no way of telling. It is worth noting that the TAF did not use intimidating military actions to impose

their will either in April or in August to prevent the AKP from electing Mr Gül. This might mean that they have finally renounced the use of the threat of military force to influence domestic politics. But although the AKP is a suspect party in the eyes of the military elite, it has not (not yet, one should perhaps say) adopted many controversial policies that undermine the Kemalist nature of the state. Could it be that the military did not consider the issue of the presidency important enough to justify a coup d'état? And what will happen if an issue arises that they do consider existential? We do not know.

Conclusion

One swallow does not make a summer. While the civilian rulers of the AKP have won the battle over the Presidency, they have not yet achieved full supremacy in Turkish politics. On the contrary, Turkey still bears characteristics of a guided democracy. The presidential crisis has not fundamentally changed this. The Turkish Armed Forces can still define the playing field of Turkish politics using threats as their means. In sharp contrast with the past, the TAF does not intervene using hard military power, but they set the agenda, and if necessary force the actors to comply with Kemalist principles as interpreted by the TAF. Thus while numerous observers have claimed that civil-military relations have changed during the Presidential crisis in Turkey, this conventional wisdom can be contested from different angles.

While the conventional wisdom spread by the Western media is clearly superficial and shortsighted, the other thesis – civil-military relations have not changed very much – requires extensive research. Some academics have argued that the relationship between Turkish society and the Turkish Armed Forces is changing in directions currently unknown. We need answers to three basic questions if we are to really understand civil-military relations in Turkey today. First, what does Kemalism mean to Turkish society today? Second, to what extent does society find the guardianship role of the military acceptable? Third, how do the TAF manage to shape political discourse so fundamentally and so consistently?

Colophon

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