

The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 30
Number 2 *Parameters Summer 2000*

Article 8

5-10-2000

Hegemon Rising: The Gap Between Turkish Strategy and Military Modernization

Michael Robert Hickok

Follow this and additional works at: <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters>

Recommended Citation

Michael R. Hickok, "Hegemon Rising: The Gap Between Turkish Strategy and Military Modernization," *Parameters* 30, no. 2 (2000), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.1979.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by USAWC Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters by an authorized editor of USAWC Press.

Hegemon Rising: The Gap Between Turkish Strategy and Military Modernization

MICHAEL ROBERT HICKOK

© 2000 Michael Robert Hickok

From *Parameters*, Summer 2000, pp. 105-19.

"All described for me the Turks as an invincible nation," begins Marsigli in his eighteenth-century study of the Ottoman military, "and this uniformity of sentiments concerning their military capabilities excited in me the desire to judge for myself." [1]

Turkey finds itself caught at the intersection of three points of regional instability formed by the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. Whereas Turkish strategists once saw themselves living in a bad neighborhood surrounded by a ring of fire with only NATO guarantees to deter Soviet adventurism, they now find their country encircled by the ashes of failed or failing states. From being on the strategic defensive since the 1940s, decisionmakers in Ankara now grapple with more assertive security policies as they seek to take advantage of new opportunities and preserve Turkish interests in the face of an uncertain future.

The rise of Turkey as an independent security actor in this region has not gone unnoticed by its neighbors. Ankara's experiment with post-Kemalist [2] foreign policies comes at a time when Turkish military modernization is on the cusp of giving Turkey capabilities that far outstrip those of any single neighbor. The Turkish armed forces are enjoying the fruition of a defense modernization program laid out in the final years of the Cold War to develop a force capable of integrated airland battle as part of the NATO alliance. As the rest of NATO took the peace dividend and downsized military establishments, Ankara continued to increase defense spending on major systems with proposals to continue the pace of spending into the next two decades. None of Turkey's neighbors--including perhaps Russia in a localized conventional sense--are likely alone to match Turkish military capabilities in the near to medium term.

The growing unpredictability of Turkish security policy, coupled with Ankara's increased military strength relative to its neighbors, contributes to regional instability. Moreover, the Turkish General Staff is now in command of a military force structure that was created to counter Soviet-era threats in the context of a wider NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict. Whether these military capabilities and organizational structures will prove flexible enough to respond to the asymmetric risks of the next century is uncertain. The gap between Turkey's ambiguous national security strategy and its proven military abilities is forcing geopolitical restructuring throughout the region.

For the West, Turkey's potential emergence as a regional hegemon is a mixed blessing. Washington has long been Ankara's most reliable international ally, but American policymakers are ill prepared to manage Turkey's growing assertiveness in foreign policy and security affairs. The tradition of military cooperation is coming into increasing conflict with the broader themes of democratization, human rights, and economic considerations that define the West's post-Cold War interests. The public rift in October 1999 within Germany's governing coalition over the decision to pursue the sale of modern battle tanks to Ankara shows that Turkey's place in Europe's future security architecture remains uncertain as part of a broader European integration. Ankara has become a less-reliable security partner at a time when Turkey's actual value as an ally is ascending.

Turkey's Uncertain Future

Much has been written about Turkey's new security environment and the obvious changes that resulted from the

disintegration of the Soviet Union. The initial thinking was far from positive. Many in Turkey, including now Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, fretted over the still-warm Soviet corpse, worrying that Turkey's strategic importance to the West had diminished with NATO's victory over the Warsaw Pact. The collapse of Yugoslavia and the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces quickly forced Turkish planners to revise their estimates, however. Their country's position as a frontline state amidst areas of instability created the impression of Turkey's growing importance to America and to Europe, erasing the brief self-doubt that troubled policymakers in Ankara.

Nevertheless, Turkish leaders have been unable to translate their new sense of strategic importance into a clear formula for improved partnership with the West. Difficulties with Greece, continued tensions over Cyprus, and the European Union's indifferent response to Turkey's bid for membership have coincided with Ankara's call for a new European security architecture which recognizes the critical role played by Turkey. Washington has also proven to be a more complex partner, as common regional security interests seem to fall apart over disagreements on arms transfers, Kurdish policies, and democratization. This paradox has encouraged civilian and military leaders from across the political spectrum to experiment with new policies, suggesting Ankara's willingness to take greater unilateral risks with international relations.

Turkey's national security strategy for the next century is still a work in progress. The broad outlines of the policy are only now becoming clear. Consensus between the Turkish General Staff and the dominant political classes is still being forged. Indications suggest that Ankara is looking to move beyond the traditional Kemalist parameters of pseudo-isolationism and collective security to create a more dynamic role for Turkey in the region. The end result, however, looks to be a less-predictable actor seeking to assert greater influence over its immediate neighbors.



Figure 1. Turkey and the surrounding region.

As late as 1997, military planners in the Turkish General Staff were still working off the National Military Strategy Concept developed in 1985 to evaluate threats to Turkey. The underlying framework of the concept was inherently defensive in its outlook, based on conventional force-on-force calculations with nuclear considerations relegated to broader NATO or American spheres.

During the Cold War, a critical debate within NATO circles was how far Turkish forces were prepared to withdraw before an allied counteroffensive could be mounted to push back Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces. Turkish planners hoped to meet the enemy at the border and fight a structured retreat from the frontier. American planners were less hopeful, and initial estimates in the late 1950s projected a drawback into a corner of the Turkish southwest, the Iskenderun Pocket. Although the plans were modified repeatedly over time, in 1990 the General Staff still saw a multi-front defense of sovereign territory as the primary security task.

This picture did not change in the early 1990s. As late as 1997, Turkish military briefers ranked Russia, Greece, Iraq, Iran, and Syria as the top threats to security based on their perceived claims on Turkish territory and ability to project conventional forces.[3] The former Deputy Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry and ambassador to Washington, Sükrü Elekdag, gave a broader policy spin to these briefings when he argued for Turkey's continued need to plan on "two-and-a-half campaigns, e.g., conducting two full scale operations simultaneously . . . while being prepared for a 'half war' that might be instigated from within the country." [4] He argued further that interior lines of defense were no longer sufficient to allow Turkey to concentrate on one front at a time. The pace of conflict had increased to the point where the military must have the force structure to fight on at least two fronts simultaneously.[5]

Turkish policymakers saw the main threat as the disruption of territorial integrity by conventional forces projected across Turkey's borders or by terrorist forces operating in Turkey with direct support from hostile governments. Therefore, the military needed to be organized, trained, and equipped for two primary objectives. First, Turkish land and air forces were expected to blunt an armor-heavy invasion and then conduct a defense in depth in the east and the south. Second, army and gendarme troops needed to be prepared to fight a counterinsurgency with static defense and mobile reaction forces. In this strategic vision, the navy was left to coastal patrolling and initial defense of the Bosphorus Strait. Although tactical mobility was clearly required, strategic mobility and deep strike capability were less critical. The conflict would be fought on Turkish soil.

Changes in Turkish foreign policy and the publication of a new defense strategy suggest that the old vision has been revised. Without repudiating its primary ties to the West and to NATO, Turkish policymakers have been softening Atatürk's claim that Turkey's future lies solely with the West. For generations of Turks, Turkey's position as a European country free from its historic baggage in the Ottoman east has been the keystone of the republic's identity. Secularist leaders, particularly in the military, had dismissed attempts to increase Turkey's role in the Muslim east as unacceptable moves by Islamist reactionaries to undermine Atatürk's pro-Western legacy. Yet, official military documents now talk of Turkey as a "country of Eurasia" obligated "to retain and enhance the ties with both the West and the East." [6] This deviation from seven decades of orthodoxy is a significant watershed in Turkish strategic thinking.

Turkish analysts argue that the change in foreign policy is a struggle between "the proponents of boldness and the advocates of caution, and that the military and the civilian bureaucrats tend to fall in the latter camp." [7] This position posits a tension over Turkey's international orientation as a European or an Islamic state, with the establishment defending the secular Western tradition and Islamic fundamentalists and Kurdish separatists advocating more fluid perspectives.

Yet, the push toward a more activist policy has come largely from the military and is centered on the former Ottoman lands. Throughout the Cold War period Turkey maintained distant though cordial relations with its Arab and Persian neighbors. Ankara sought to distance itself from the Arab-Israeli peace process despite some affinity for Tel Aviv. In February 1996, Ankara unexpectedly signed a military training and education agreement with Israel that changed the strategic calculus in the region. The push in Turkey for this change came from Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry Onur Öymen and the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Çevik Bir. Although the official position in Ankara is that cooperation with Israel is in no way aimed against another country, Bir and other senior Turkish officers have publicly asserted that these two "secular, democratic countries" alone face the same strategic threats.[8] The strategic threats enumerated by Bir, however, are not the same ones considered by Cold War planners. They drive Turkish leaders to advocate greater participation in crises in the Balkans and the Caucasus in addition to the Middle East.

Before his appointment as Chief of the General Staff in August 1998, then Land Forces Commander General Hüseyin Kivrikoglu listed these new threats to Turkey as regional and ethnic conflicts, the spread of weapons of mass

destruction, religious fanaticism, drug trafficking, and international terrorism. He refrained from identifying specific countries as the origins of these threats--a noted departure from previous Turkish strategy documents--and focused instead on the effects of these challenges on the Turkish military. He argued that the military must become a "force primarily used against external and internal threats that target Turkey's territorial integrity and the republic regime." Though this does not sound different from his predecessors' call for protection of Turkey's national borders, Kivrikoglu moved beyond a mission of deterrence and strategic defense to say that the "rapid deployment of the military in distant places is of vital importance in view of the threats we face and the risks and responsibilities that we may assume." He finished by outlining a modernization program to provide strategic mobility for joint operations to strike beyond Turkey's borders.[9]

After his promotion to chief of the General Staff, Kivrikoglu told reporters that in addition to deterrence and collective security Turkey needed to develop operational capabilities for "forward engagement" and "forward defense." [10] The military must, in his opinion, be prepared to preempt threats to Turkish interests before they cross onto Turkish territory.

The publication of the Ministry of National Defense's *White Paper-Defense 1998* demonstrates how these and other positions have been distilled into a roadmap for change in the Turkish military and in Turkey's foreign policy. According to this document, Turkey's military strategy rests on four distinct points. The General Staff maintained deterrence and collective security as the first two points to highlight the continuity in national defense policy. The last two points--forward defense and military contribution to crisis management and intervention during crisis--reflect a departure from previous strategies. The crux of the latter points is for the Turkish military to identify the content of a possible conflict as soon as possible and take steps to resolve the conflict prior to its emergence as a threat to Turkey proper. Although the document softens Kivrikoglu's more troubling language of "forward engagement," it goes on to state:

The general operation concept of the 2000s stipulates the creation of a sensor region where the aggressor is . . . and defeating him beyond and in the depths of the theater. Therefore, possession of troops with overwhelming fire power and maneuver capability and . . . the coordinated and efficient use of target identification, detection, and warning systems as well as . . . command [and] control, electronic warfare, and communication information systems are important assets to this end.[11]

Ankara has adopted a set of operational concepts wherein the military will seek to meet threats to Turkey beyond its sovereign territories. The Turkish military is not only capable, but also willing to operate outside its borders.

Mismatch of Ambition and Capabilities

The alleged confrontation between President Turgut Özal and Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Necip Torumtay over Turkey's participation in the Gulf War has served as a pivot for debate over the orientation of Turkish foreign policy. Torumtay's resignation on 3 December 1990 and the allies' use of Turkish military facilities in the war against Iraq are seen as proof that a more activist approach to regional relations had overthrown the traditionalist school of Kemalist neo-isolationism embodied by the military. Analysts argued that the decision also marked the ascendance of civilian policymakers over their military counterparts in the realm of international relations. Subsequent events encouraged a rethinking of the decline of military prerogatives, but the Gulf War nevertheless exemplified a fundamental turn in Turkish regional ambitions.

Interestingly, Torumtay suggests in his memoirs a slightly different interpretation of his dispute with Özal. The question was not, in his opinion, whether Turkey needed to revise its strategic vision to take into account the opportunities presented by changes in the Middle East and Eastern Europe and by growing internal disruptions within the Soviet Union. In the view of many senior officers, Turkey lacked the indigenous military capability to sustain an independent foreign policy that risked a prolonged confrontation with its neighbors. Diplomatic adventurism in the Middle East, Caucasus, and Balkans was considered perilous without significant upgrades in the Turkish military because the country's collective security agreement with NATO was unlikely to apply in these situations. This lesson had been driven home to the Turkish military during the various Cyprus crises, and senior leaders like Elekdag imagined it would apply in the future:

Let us assume for a moment that Russia has embarked upon a massive attack against Turkey. In such an eventuality Turkey can no longer rely on NATO. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, NATO has totally lost its function of providing support for Turkey's defense.[12]

A military whose forces and capabilities had been constructed on the principles of deterrence and collective territorial defense was ill prepared to project power credibly in 1990. Torumtay resigned in part because the shadow of General Kenan Evren stood behind Özal, suggesting that the retired leader of the 1980 military coup supported the president's decision and believed that the senior military officers needed to change their position.[13]

Torumtay appears to have been accurate in his assessment about the mismatch of Turkish ambitions and capabilities. For example, the failure of Ankara to achieve its initial attempts to assert influence in the Caucasus in 1991-93 resulted from an inability to offer a credible security alternative to residual Russian power.[14] Within the foreign ministry, senior officials echoed this concern, saying that "no matter how capable a foreign policy might be, it cannot be stronger than the military it relies on." [15] The need to restructure the military in both doctrine and equipment to bolster the growing policy objectives is the underlying theme of the military modernization program now under way.

Defense Procurement Process

The release in early 1999 of the defense white paper began to answer public speculation on the changing nature of the Turkish armed forces and how they would seek to provide the capabilities Torumtay believed Turkey lacked in 1990. Quoting from the report, local analysts argued that modernization would be linked to the four elements of Turkey's military strategy:

- (1) Deterrence: The maintenance of military force that would act as deterrence against internal and external sources of threat in view of instability and uncertainty around Turkey.
- (2) Collective Security: Active participation in international and regional alliances/ organizations, particularly NATO and WEU.
- (3) Advanced Defense: Detection of the scope of a possible aggression as early as possible and halting an actual aggression from without.
- (4) Military Assistance in Crisis Management.[16]

These principles, according to the analysts, would require such operational concepts as "sustained deterrent power, superior mobility and firepower, deep penetration capability, and acquisition of modern weapons." In a public interview, General Kivrikoglu elaborated on this interpretation, adding "forward engagement" and "restructuring and projection of forces" to those four elements of military strategy set out in the white paper.[17]

The roots of Turkey's modernization program go back to the reorganization of the defense industry ordered by Act No. 3238 in November 1985. The act was designed to help Turkey respond better to the rapid technological changes in the defense industry and provide its armed forces with modern defense equipment. The act created a three-level system to make procurement decisions based on national strategy. It called for a Defense Industry Supreme Coordination Board chaired jointly by the Prime Minister and the Chief of the General Staff. The board was made responsible for coordinating the macroeconomic components of the defense policy, in particular relating to large-scale procurement programs. Second, the board in its role as Defense Industry Executive Committee supervised the activities of the Defense Industry Development and Support Administration, which was organized to oversee projects from the point where the military requirements were determined until the point where the system was delivered. Money for these activities was to be controlled by a state-owned investment company known as the Defense Industry Support Fund. The fund's revenues were to be drawn largely from taxes on luxury goods, petroleum products, and lotteries. Moreover, the revenue stream was, in theory, to be removed from the annual budgeting process by setting the appropriations aside as an "entitlement program."

Turkey's objective in the act "was to bring her domestic industry to a level which will produce economically feasible military products necessary for the modernization of the Turkish armed forces, with the ability to follow and easily adapt to the latest technological changes. This will provide deterrence." [18] Centralized planning for military modernization and the establishment of indigenous defense industries has had a mixed success, but the act did provide

a systematic process for linking Turkish national strategy to defense acquisition.[19]

The National Security Council drew up the 1985 National Military Strategic Concept as the original planning document for the first ten-year plan, following the passage of the defense industry act. The result of the system put in place was the development of a threat-driven defense programming process, which called for a fundamental reassessment of the underlying justification for acquiring military equipment only once every decade. Although most of the Turkish defense budget is classified and unavailable in detail even to the legislators who appropriate the money, there is reason to believe that this decade-long planning cycle has contributed to the difficulties Ankara has experienced in aligning its defense spending with the new strategic environment.

Unquestionably, the Turkish General Staff has shifted funding priorities within the original plan to meet the unforeseen needs that arose after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War. Nevertheless, the National Security Council was still using the 1985-era threat assessments regarding the forces and capabilities of Turkey's neighbors as late as 1994-95 to estimate the modernization needs of Turkish forces, according to planners familiar with the project.[20]

The presentation of the Defense Industries Executive Board recommendations for new defense programs to Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan in October 1996 represented projects that had been on hold for over two years due to political and economic disruptions.[21] These proposed defense systems were the final series of programs designed within context of the Cold War threat assessment, and they marked the transition forward into the new national strategic concept and the updated ten-year procurement plan embodied by *White Paper-Defense 1998*.

System Upgrades

The main programs covered in the 1996 briefing to the Prime Minister focused on the development of advanced weapon platforms, missiles, and aerospace capabilities required by the NATO airland battle doctrine. The Turkish land forces had slowly been transitioning from division and regimental command structures to the American-style brigade organization. The proposed systems would have augmented the development of assets necessary to complete this shift. Ankara decided to move forward on the coproduction of main battle tanks to replace outdated vehicles scheduled to be phased out of service in 2000 and of attack helicopters to provide greater mobility and organic air support. Plans also called for the upgrading of F-5, F-4, and F-16 aircraft in electronics and avionics to give the Turkish air force nighttime and all-weather capability.

Defense contractors at the American-Turkish Council's annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in 1997 were pleased when representatives from the Turkish General Staff confirmed that over \$150 billion was to be spent over the next 30 years as part of the modernization plans detailed in the newly published *Turkish National Strategy Plan* and *Defense Strategy Documents*. In the 1980s, modernization had revolved around the creation of an indigenous aerospace industry through coproduction of the F-16 fighter. Although the detailed modernization plans called for the addition of KC-135 tanker aircraft and augmented command and control through the acquisition of an AWACS-type platform, the focus of Turkey's next modernization program was clearly to be its land forces.

The single most expensive and ambitious project was the proposed coproduction of 1,000 to 3,000 NATO-standard main battle tanks over the next ten years. The Ministry of National Defense moved quickly to begin this program following Prime Minister Erbakan's review of the defense industry board's recommendations. The ministry sent requests for information to foreign and domestic companies asking for initial information by 1 June 1997.[22] Nine foreign and over 20 Turkish firms expressed interest in the project and asked for further specification details.

By the fall of 1997, the outlines of the tank project were becoming clearer. The defense ministry approved a \$350 million proposal by Koç Holding's Otokar company to form the initial infrastructure for the coproduction. Otokar was to build the necessary facilities to begin refurbishing those tanks scheduled for removal from the army's inventory after 2000. The transfer of technology and the construction of a plant in Adapazari would then serve as the foundation for production of new main battle tanks and repair parts once a foreign partner was chosen.[23] Defense officials had reportedly reduced the contenders to General Dynamics' M1A2 Abrams, Giat Industries' Leclerc, Krauss-Maffei's Leopard 2A5, Vickers Defense Systems' Challenger 2, and SIBAT's Merkavava III. Turkish industries already had experience upgrading M48 series tanks with a larger gun, thermal sights, gun control and stabilization systems, and advanced fire-control computers. The transition from tank refurbishment to coproduction of first-generation main

battle tanks would copy the method used in the F-16 program. The first tanks would be assembled in Turkey from largely imported components, but gradually technology transfers would enable Turkish suppliers to build a greater percentage of the parts indigenously.

The production of main battle tanks was not the only program announced by the ministry. Decisionmakers had concluded that the reorganization of the land forces to meet the new operational concepts being considered by the planning staff required additional systems to complement the tank units. Bids went out for various wheeled armored personnel carriers for testing. Lacking up-to-date self-propelled 155mm artillery, the military experimented with using the tank-refurbishing program to upgrade older artillery systems--M52 and M44--primarily to provide greater mobility and firepower.

The defense ministry also sent requests for information to three companies for quotes on advanced anti-aircraft guns with modern radar to provide mobile air defense. The specifications required that the guns use munitions manufactured in Turkey. Along the same line of thinking, Turkish officials wanted to use part of the locally produced Stinger man-portable missiles in a pedestal-mounted air defense system, attached to modified 4x4 chassis built in Turkey. In the same 1997 procurement plan, the military also considered a requirement for a tracked surface-to-air missile system and towed 20mm or 35mm antiaircraft systems with multiple computerized fire control, though orders were not placed.

Previously army aviation had been used primarily for tactical mobility, as practiced in the early 1990s in the counterinsurgency campaigns throughout Turkey's southeast. The evolving operational concept of forward defense, however, required that the branch take on additional missions and new aircraft. To add the deep strike and reconnaissance capabilities practiced by the American Army, the Turkish General Staff asked for additional utility helicopters and attack helicopters to complement the transfer of tactical missile systems (ATACMS) already underway.

In essence, the military planners envisioned a land force anchored by heavy armor and mechanized infantry that could move quickly by road or across open country with organic air defense. In place of static defense relying on overwhelming numbers of older weapon systems--as demonstrated in the Soviet-style Iraqi military--the Turkish officers had decided to create a highly mobile maneuver force along the American model. The air forces and navy were to play a secondary and supporting role in this military strategy. The defense shopping list advanced in 1997 reflected the apex of all the Cold War, threat-based strategies that had guided modernization for four decades.

The size and scope of the proposed coproduction and procurement programs, however, overwhelmed the system established in 1985. The National Security Council and the General Staff embarked on simultaneous reviews of the national defense strategy in 1997. The release of the tentative results of these studies coincided with continued domestic political instability. In an attempt to restore some independent stability to the modernization program, the Council of Ministers--at the advice of the General Staff--approved in early 1998 the defense policy document *Turkish Defense Industry Policy and Strategy*. This document modified some of the earlier guidelines for defense acquisition. In particular, the policy established the principles for foreign participation in the new modernization programs.

Foreign companies would be allowed to bid for Turkish projects as long as the contracts were unlikely to be affected by shifting political circumstances and any coproduction would be marketed for both internal Turkish markets and export. These attitudes were indicative of the suspicions and frustrations felt by Turkish officials over the restrictions previously placed on importation of American and European weapons. Their concerns were given substance when Ankara's request to acquire a Leopard II tank from Germany split the ruling coalition in October 1999 and led to a serious political crisis in Berlin. A majority of Germans polled at the time, 62 percent, opposed supplying a NATO ally with weapon systems.[24] The parliamentary state secretary in the Ministry of Development Aid, Uschi Eid, claimed that Germany would not sell tanks to Turkey in the future because the country's human rights record was unlikely to change.[25] Yet more than political concerns guided Ankara's policy revision; the government indicated that bids from local manufacturers would be given preferential treatment unless foreign bidders also agreed to generous offsets and technology transfers, even if the Turkish bids were substantially higher. Where the old process had worked to supervise a small number of large-scale projects, the purpose of the new act was to provide a more systematic and coordinated approach to the quickly expanding list of programs.

Foreign military analysts believed Turkish capabilities in high technology fields were insufficient to achieve the expanded objectives as outlined in the drafts of the long-range plan. For example, Turkish military officers predicted that space-based target location and observation systems could be integrated with advanced weapon platforms to provide continuous monitoring of battlefields within Turkey's immediate region.[26] Operating within NATO and relying on mostly American information technology, Turkish commanders had already experienced these capabilities.

Most skeptics argued that unilaterally Turkey was unlikely to achieve these technological abilities. Yet remote-sensing experts at Istanbul Technical University had already shown in 1996 that the addition of a Turkish geosynchronous weather monitoring satellite to the extant Turksat 1b communication satellite would--with the help of commercial satellite imagery--begin to provide the government and military with localized information superiority relative to its immediate neighbors.[27] Turkish industries were in the process of giving the military the technology to make the leap to the 21st century, although those capabilities were limited in their geographic application. Though local companies lacked the research and development resources to create original defense technologies like stealth aircraft, advances specifically in the defense industries have allowed Turkish manufacturers to adapt commercial off-the-shelf products to military uses, offering the Turkish armed forces unexpected advantages over regional rivals.

Some of the modernization programs proposed during the rumor-filled years of 1996 and 1997 have failed to materialize, but the attempt by the Ministry of National Defense to create a more rigorous procurement process for supervising the various projects did bring results. Political difficulties with the European Union and America relating to the Turkish-Greek disputes, Cyprus negotiations, and the Kurdish issue slowed progress on such systems as attack helicopters and missiles. Yet in other areas, the pieces of the military's plan proceeded as planned. The navy and air force pushed their programs forward to complement the changes in the land forces.

The navy had arranged its procurement schedule to develop a force able to conduct "littoral warfare and open seas operations aimed at sustained control of open seas." At the completion of the modernization program, senior commanders envision a navy transformed from a Cold War coastal defense force to an open-water force capable of projecting and establishing Turkish power in the surrounding seas.

The steps in their plan have become clearer. In July 1998, German firms signed contracts to supervise the construction of four new patrol submarines at the Turkish shipyard in Gölcük.[28] These submarines were scheduled to enter service between 2003 and 2006, although the August 1999 earthquake damaged the shipyard and harbor facilities to the point where construction will be postponed. Efforts are likely to shift to the new logistics base in Aksaz along the Aegean coast until Gölcük can be rebuilt. In the meantime, the navy will soon take delivery of two new MEKO-class frigates constructed under contract in Germany.

Washington has indicated that Ankara can also expect a transfer of 11 American frigates, both Knox and Perry-class. These frigates will be equipped with surface-to-air missiles and ship self-defense missiles to provide localized air defense and command and control elements for navy task forces. Turkey's anti-submarine and coastal patrol capabilities are being enhanced to complement these initiatives, and new minesweepers are being considered as well. In total, the navy has moved to match the procurement plans to the operational concepts and role requirements defined in the *White Paper-Defense 1998*.

The air force also has prioritized its modernization requirements to fit the roles and missions described in the strategic documents. By the end of 1998, the Turkish air force began to take delivery of the KC-135R tankers, finished 54 of the 165 F-4 upgrades in the \$600 million contract with Israeli Aircraft Industries, acquired new Popeye air-to-air missiles from Israel, and signed contracts for the F-5 and F-16 upgrades and maintenance. In air defense requirements, the air force continued to augment its Rapier system, and has opened negotiations to retain the American Patriot batteries deployed to Turkey as part of Operation Desert Fox. Looking ahead, the defense ministry has issued requests for proposals for four AWACS-type early warning and control aircraft to be delivered by 2003.

The air force has also encouraged Turkish Aerospace Industries to develop large transport aircraft in cooperation with a European consortium, promising to buy at least 26 planes within the next decade. The air force is likely to achieve its strategic goal of being able to establish and sustain air superiority over Turkey while providing deep-strike capability against neighboring countries using F-16s supported by tankers and advanced reconnaissance systems.

At the heart of these new navy and air force capabilities, General Kivrikoglu envisions Turkey's modern army:

[The army would have] weapons systems that would establish preponderance over the enemy deep inside his territory, fire smart ammunition including long-range ground-to-ground missiles, and provide a continuous and sound fire cover. [The army also would have] modern tanks with advanced armor and effective anti-tank weapons systems with organic air defense and helicopters for air assault troops. Machinery would rapidly erect hurdles to the enemy's mobility and open passages to enhance the mobility of the friendly units. Intelligence gathering systems would enable units at every level to detect, pinpoint, and recognize the enemy within the range of their capability.[29]

Conclusions

The military leadership is asking the people of Turkey to make significant sacrifices to allocate the necessary resources for the military modernization planned for the next century. These programs are likely to face increased domestic opposition as the military circumscribes debate over the costs and benefits by labeling any critics of the defense plan enemies of the state or reactionary elements in society. These concerns will gain a wider audience as more people realize the degree to which the military is asking for resources which could be used to rebuild after the earthquake or to strengthen the economy as a step toward greater European integration. The military is asking the people of Turkey to trust its vision of the country's national interests and future security needs while at the same time indicating that it does not trust significant elements of the Turkish populace or the leaders they elect. Without regaining the confidence of the people, the modernization program is likely to contribute to domestic unrest and the possibility of a military takeover of the government in the medium term.

There are civilian leaders in Turkey, however, who are not troubled by the military's agenda. One such political activist and journalist argues that "a strong military is necessary for Turkey to take the lead in creating a political and economic integration of countries in the region like Bulgaria and Romania." [30] In his opinion, "only the stupidity of the current leaders" will keep Turkey from realizing its more activist foreign policy goals.

These attitudes can also be seen in the writings of military officers. Retired General Sadi Ergüvenç asserts that "geographic disposition and military power constitute the essential elements of a country's military strategic value [S]uch geography might be considered a privilege were it not to create a reciprocal sensitivity which in turn necessitates vigilance and obliges Turkey to keep a strong defense." [31] In other words, civilian leaders must consider that a greater military role in government and society as part of the modernization is not only inevitable but also desirable. Turkey's unique geographic position requires, by this analysis, that its military have the capability and freedom to meet the regional leadership responsibilities thrust on it by historical accident. The Turkish military should be able to expand its paternalistic oversight beyond Turkish society to shape the development of its less advantaged neighbors. Although these attitudes are extreme characterizations, the underlying beliefs about the centrality of the military to the proper functioning of society and to the relationship between Turkey and its neighbors reflect older pre-republican ideas seen during the Ottoman period.

Some scholars have begun to describe the choices that Ankara will face in its foreign policy as either a return to the Kemalist isolationist model of "fortress Turkey" or an evolution toward leadership of a neo-Ottoman empire. [32] In response to Turkey's touchy relationship with the European Union, strategists have been developing alternative arguments for the necessity of Ankara's participation as a leading state in the region, despite the economic and political instabilities slowing its integration into Western Europe.

Drawing on images of the Ottoman past, the Turkish military has embraced the idea of becoming a "security provider" for a broader economic and political architecture of states stretching from Central Asia to the Balkans. The new foreign policy initiatives and the operational concepts discussed in the *White Paper-Defense 1998* indicate that Turkish strategists have rejected a return to isolationism and a defensive position within the wider region. However, the secondary implications of the ambitious military modernization program undertaken to provide Ankara with the means to pursue this 'neo-Ottoman' agenda have yet to be fully understood.

The lack of coordination between the strategic vision and military reforms is creating questions about the military's

ultimate motives. These concerns are amplified when senior officers publicly disregard civilian leadership and discuss the need to stabilize the region through military dominance. The very means necessary for achieving the national objectives contained within the modernization programs may in the end be responsible for making those goals illusory. Without significant changes in its internal cultural and in its constitutional powers, a Turkish military with modern weapons and enhanced capabilities is unlikely to be comforting either to its neighbors in the short-term or to the people of Turkey itself over the long-term.

NOTES

1. L. F. Marsigli, *L'État militaire de l'empire ottoman* (La Haye and Amsterdam, 1732), p. I.
2. Kemal Atatürk was the founder of modern Turkey. He organized the Turkish Nationalist Party in 1919 and served as President of the Turkish Republic from 1923 to 1938.
3. Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, 52 (Winter 1998), 34-40. Although the author suggests that policymakers in Ankara were attempting by this time to distinguish between outright enemies and states with competing interests, he still argues that the threats stemmed from the potential loss of Turkish territory or to the isolation of Turkey by an alliance of neighboring states that could surround it with a "ring of evil."
4. As quoted in Lale Sariibrahimoglu, "Arming for Peace," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 19 August 1998, p. 25.
5. Sükrü Elekdag, "2½ War Strategy," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, 1 (March-May 1996), 57.
6. Ministry of National Defense (Turkey), *White Paper-Defense 1998* (Ankara: Ministry of National Defense, 1998), p. 5.
7. Mufti, p. 48.
8. Çevik Bir, "Turkey's Role in the New World Order: New Challenges," *Strategic Forum*, No. 135 (Washington: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998), p. 4.
9. Hüseyin Kivrikoglu, "Land Forces Organization," *Ankara Savunma ve Havacilik* (September-October 1998), pp. 10-11.
10. *Ulusal Strateji* (March-April 1999), pp. 68-73.
11. *White Paper-Defense 1998*, p. 19.
12. Elekdag, p. 54.
13. Necip Torumtay, *Org. Torumtay'in Anilari* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayinlari, 1994), pp. 121-25.
14. Ekavi Athanassopoulou, "Ankara's foreign policy objectives after the end of the Cold War: Making policy in a changing environment," *Orient*, 36 (1995), 279-85.
15. Elekdag, p. 57.
16. *Milliyet*, 22 January 1999, p. 10.
17. *Ulusal Strateji* (March-April 1999), pp. 68-73.
18. Vahit Erdem, "Defense Industry and Investment Projects," *Turkish Review Quarterly Digest* (Spring 1988), p. 18.
19. For a case study of this process see Michael Robert Hickok, "Peace Onyx: A Story of Turkish F-16 Coproduction," in *International Military Aerospace Collaboration*, ed. Pia Christina Wood and David S. Sorenson (Aldershot, U.K.:

Ashgate Press, 1999), pp. 153-81.

20. Author's interviews October-December 1997, Istanbul and Ankara.

21. Lale Sariibrahimoglu, "Turkey Reveals New Defence Programmes," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 16 October 1996, p. 3.

22. *Sabah*, 4 October 1997, p. 1.

23. *Cümiyyet*, 3 October 1997, p. 7.

24. *Hamburg Bild*, 30 October 1999, p. 2.

25. *Berlin Die Tageszeitung*, 27 October 1999.

26. *Türkiye*, 17 August 1998, p. 18.

27. *Istanbul Technical University's Conference on Remote Sensing Satellites and Their Application*, Space Research Technology Centre, Istanbul, 11-13 March 1996. See Mesut Çiçeker's comments for greater details.

28. *Ankara Anatolia*, 22 July 1998.

29. *Savunma ve Havacilik* (September-October 1998), p. 18

30. Author's interviews with Turkish journalists, April 1999, Washington, D.C.

31. Sadi Ergüvenç, "Turkey's Security Perceptions," *Perceptions* (June-August 1998), p. 35.

32. Ola Tunander, "A New Ottoman Empire? The Choice for Turkey: Euro-Asian Centre vs National Fortress," *Security Dialogue*, 26 (December 1995), 413-26.

Dr. Michael Robert Hickok is assistant professor of Turkish and Central Asian Studies at the Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. He received his Ph.D. in Ottoman history from the University of Michigan. He has been a Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow in Japan and a Fulbright-Hays Fellow in Turkey. His previous work includes *Ottoman Military Administration in Eighteenth-Century Bosnia* and articles on modern Turkish military affairs.

Reviewed 10 May 2000. Please send comments or corrections to carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil