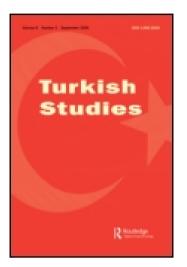
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Civil-Military Relations Beyond Dichotomy: With Special Reference to Turkey

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ABSTRACT For a better grasp of the role of militaries in political systems one should get beyond dichotomous approaches. This study identifies three distinct but interpenetrating realms in a polity: social, political and military. Based on the nature of the military's relations with social and political spheres and actors, it delineates four types of militaries: professional, nation's army, predatory praetorian and popular praetorian. This article also shows that the Turkish military constitutes one of the rare epitomes of popular praetorian military and discusses the current state and prospects of civil-military relations in Turkey.

In social sciences, typologies are criticized for being descriptive, nonexplanatory and static. Beyond description, however, typologies also have significant functions such as the reduction of complexity, identification of differences and similarities. A well-designed typology would contribute to theoretical improvement by helping with the formulation and testing of explanatory assertions and therefore enhancing our understanding of the complex social and political world. By providing a new military typology, this study aims to enhance our grasp of civil-military relations across various settings.

Most approaches on civil-military relations remain dichotomous and therefore limited. For instance Bebler, who employs the civil-military dichotomy, states:

I can conceptualize all contemporary political systems under consideration as on a continuum with a cut-off point in the middle. Political systems dominated by civilians will be to the left of the dividing point and those dominated by the military to the right. The two opposing extremes (poles) will be called civilocracy and militocracy.¹

In a very similar fashion, Welch also treats civilian rule and military rule as the two opposite ends of the spectrum of civil-military relations.² One final example of the

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dichotomous approach would be Luckham's typology of civil-military relations, which is also based on the strength and weaknesses of civilian and military actors and the nature of the boundaries between the military realm and its environment.³

Since the dichotomous approaches incorporate the societal actors and the political elite into the same camp (i.e. civilian side) vis-à-vis the military, these approaches actually hide more than they reveal about civil-military relations. One major shortcoming is the assumption of congruous relations between societal and political realms. However, numerous cases can be found of major differences or even severe cleavages between these two domains, which might foster the role of the military in politics. One vivid example of such a conflict, which empowered the military substantially in its efforts to shape civilian politics, was the notorious February 28 Process in Turkey. The staunchly secular generals believed that the coalition government headed by pro-Islamic Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the Welfare Party (RP) was using religion for political gains and undermining the secular nature of the Republic. The generals, as a result, requested that the government implement several specific, concrete measures against rising political Islam. Other than military reaction, the government also faced increasing criticism and pressures from bureaucracy, universities, civil society institutions and the media. Facing increasing objections and protests from both the military and social actors, the government had to resign in June 1997. This engrossing case poses that it is misleading to assume a concordant relationship between the political and social spheres vis-à-vis the military. It is because limited legitimacy or popularity of political actors and institutions in the eyes of the people or societal sympathy and support for the military compared to politicians might encourage or facilitate the military's intrusions into civilian politics.⁴

Thus, this study identifies three distinct, intersecting realms in a political system: military, political and social. Based on the nature of the military's relations with political and social spheres and actors, the article distinguishes four types of militaries: professional, nation's army, predatory praetorian and popular praetorian. The typology suggests that the Turkish military constitutes the paragon of a popular praetorian military.

A Military Typology

Figure 1 demonstrates the relations among the military, political and social spheres. The military domain refers to matters related to the military establishment (e.g. the recruitment, training and promotion of the officer corps and arms procurement), national security and defense issues. The political domain involves the state and governmental affairs. Finally, the social realm is constituted by socio-economic processes and actors such as the people, civil society and the market. These three spheres should be understood as distinct but not necessarily as mutually exclusive. Instead, they exist as interpenetrated or intersected.⁵ A military realm, for instance, might have both political and social aspects. As a case in point, military spending or military budget is not only an important matter in the military sphere but also a major political issue (i.e. a matter of allocation of national resources). National security and defense

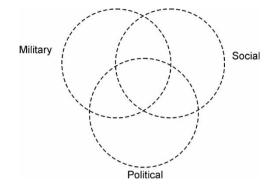


Figure 1. The three intersecting spheres in a polity.

issues also have political aspects. Likewise, military service or the enlisting of citizens into the armed forces crosscuts both the military and social realms.

The literature on civil-military relations, dominated by dichotomous approaches, often neglects the autonomous role of the social realm in civil-military relations. In the words of Schiff,

The current civil-military relations literature does not consider the citizenry [people], but instead relies on political institutions as the main "civil" component of analysis. While the relationship of civil institutions to the military is indeed important, it reflects only a partial story of civil-military relations.⁶

Huntington, similarly, concludes that "the standing of the officer corps and its leaders with public opinion and the attitudes of broad section or categoric groups in society toward the military are key elements in determining military influence."⁷

If a polity has these three intersecting realms, then, one way of approaching militaries should be to look at the nature of their relations with the social and political domains: To what degree are the militaries involved in political issues? To what extent are they integrated with society and how popular or prestigious are they in their respective countries? How permeable or pervious are the political and social ambits? Ergo, classificatory principles (*fundamentum divisionis*) are the degree of militaries' societal integration and involvement in political matters. Table 1 shows that the interaction between these two variables creates a fourfold typology: professional, nation's army, predatory praetorian and popular praetorian.

Professional: One of the defining features of a professional military is its commitment to the omnipotence of civilians in policy decisions. Believing that politics are not really for soldiers, a professional army distances itself from the political arena. A professional military is highly specialized in military issues; political issues are simply considered incompatible with military expertise. As Huntington suggests, "the vocation of officership absorbs all their energies and furnishes them with all their occupational satisfaction. Officership, in short, is an exclusive role,

| | Societal Integration | | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| | Low | High | | | | | |
| | Q1 | Q2 | | | | | |
| Political Role | Professional | Nation's Army | | | | | |
| High | Predatory Praetorian | Popular Praetorian | | | | | |
| | Q3 | Q4 | | | | | |

Table 1. A fourfold military typology

incompatible with any other significant social or political roles."⁸ Even in cases of major conflicts between the military and the government or of civilian incompetence, the soldiers generally maintain their neutral and depoliticized attitude and respect the norm of civilian supremacy.⁹ Therefore, a professional army acts in a subservient manner vis-à-vis the civilian authorities. With respect to relations with society, professional soldiers similarly maintain a clear distance from the social sphere in the sense that integration with society remains relatively limited. The West European and North American militaries on the whole provide representative examples of this type.

Nation's army: A political system with a nation's army is characterized by a high degree of fusion or permeability between the military on the one hand, and political and social realms on the other. Unlike the professional model, in which the military sphere is segregated from the political and social realms, these spheres might sometimes overlap. For instance, political actors could frequently intrude into military matters, violating the military's professionalism and autonomy¹⁰ or military officers could be represented in the political decision-making bodies, sometimes occupying key posts in the high level decision-making bodies such as the party and the government.¹¹ Concerning relations with the social realm, a nation's army is also more likely to have stronger ties with social actors and enjoy a higher degree of societal popularity and support.

The Communist regimes (e.g. Communist China and Soviet Russia) constituted illustrative cases of such militaries. The military was regarded as an instrument or the agency of the hegemonic Communist party and the ideological movement.¹² The officers had been generally loyal and servile to the party and ideology. Thus, the political system did not really allow for an autonomous role of the military. As Mao Tse-tung indicated, "Power grows out of the barrel of the gun. Our principle is that the party commands the gun and the gun shall never be allowed to command the party."¹³ The military and societal realms are also enmeshed or entangled to a substantial degree. Concerning the Soviet case, Kolkowicz has

observed that "... the military has become a visible and pervasive presence in society through its control of a network of mass-voluntary, para-military youth organizations, and military preparedness and civil-defense activities."¹⁴

Predatory praetorian: The term "praetorian" comes from a special military unit in the Imperial capital of Rome—the Roman Praetorian Guard. Its main duty was to defend and protect the Senate and the emperor against any transgression by rebellious military garrisons. On the other hand, they themselves were able to impose their candidate upon the Senate.¹⁵ In modern times, a praetorian military refers to the one which tends to intervene in and dominate the political system. Perlmutter has defined a state structure with a praetorian military as follows:

The political processes ... favor the development of the military as the core group and the growth of its expectations as a ruling class; its political leadership) (as distinguished from bureaucratic, administrative, and managerial leadership) is chiefly recruited from the military, or from groups sympathetic, or at least not antagonistic, to the military. Constitutional changes are effected and sustained by the military, and the army frequently intervenes in the government. In a praetorian state, therefore, the military plays a dominant role in political structures and institutions.¹⁶

Praetorian militaries with a predatory nature have limited confidence in civilian institutions and regimes. They are strongly concerned with military's corporate interests. As a result, they have a constant propensity and ambition to intervene and stay in power for longer periods of time. Furthermore, such militaries are more likely to be suppressive and violent, and get involved in major human rights violations and wide-spread terror. As a result, they have limited popularity and prestige in society. This implies that such militaries are more likely to face legitimacy problems in their respective societies.

One can find various examples from the Latin American context, where military rule was the dominant form of governance in the 1970s. Especially in Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Chile, the militaries showed strong "predatory praetorian" characteristics. These militaries not only set up enduring military-dominated executives or dictatorships, but were also involved in relatively high levels of human rights violations, coercion and political repression, which led to severe legitimacy crises and major intra-military splits.¹⁷

Popular praetorian: Like the predatory praetorian militaries, popular praetorian militaries also involve in civilian politics to a great extent. However, these militaries act as the guardian of the survival and stability of the political regime. Thus, the main motivation behind the military's encroachments upon the political arena is to solve the political problems or settle political disputes rather than to set up an abiding military regime. As a result, the military regimes by popular praetorian militaries are characterized by a lower degree of penetration, political control, and of repression.¹⁸ They opt for acting behind the scenes rather than directly assuming political power. Another major difference from the predatory praetorians is that the popular

praetorians, who are better integrated with the social sphere, enjoy a higher level of societal trust and support. Large sections of society might even encourage or welcome the military's trespassing in the political arena.

The Turkish military constitutes an archetype of such militaries. The praetorian characteristic of the Turkish military is already an established fact in the literature.¹⁹ The military has been not only a security institution but also a core element within the political system.²⁰ Other than various indirect incursions into the political arena, the Turkish military has directly interrupted the democratic processes four times in the Republican era (i.e. 1960–61, 1971, 1980–83 and 1997). However, the military has never questioned the legitimacy of civilian rule and of democracy and has returned power to the civilians relatively quickly. The students of Turkish civil-military relations suggest that the primary motivation of these intrusions was to restore democratic, secular order, and to save the state apparatus rather than to establish a longlasting military regime.²¹

Despite its praetorian savors, the Turkish military strikingly enjoys a relatively high level of societal popularity and legitimacy. According to the data provided by the World Values Survey, compared to several other militaries, the Turkish military boasts a higher degree of societal trust. As Table 2 shows, with respect to "a great deal of confidence in armed forces," the Turkish military is one of the three most popular militaries. One might, however, object that the confidence in the military should be contingent on security conditions such as the struggle against the PKK or conflicts in neighboring regions (e.g. the Middle East and Caucasus) and therefore may not necessarily mirror cultural characteristics of societal trust in the military (also known as the "rally round the flag" effect of external threats). However, Table 2 shows an interesting situation in that a relatively higher level of societal confidence in Turkish military does persist across time. This pattern does suggest that rather than being a result of mere contingent factors, the Turkish military's popularity appears to have structural or cultural aspects as well.²³

The majority of Turkish society views the military as the most trustworthy and prestigious institution in the country.²⁴ Even more strikingly, a substantial part of society views the military's interventions into politics positively. Using the words of Demirel, "The military regimes in Turkey were not perceived as utterly repressive by political actors, nor were they regarded as complete failures in the political, economic, or military realms."²⁵ The nationalist and secularist circles, in particular, view the staunchly secular military as the major safety valve against certain internal threats such as political Islam and Kurdish ethnonationalism or separatism.

New Times for Turkish Civil-Military Relations

That being said, Turkish civil-military relations have entered into a new era in the last decade. Major reforms in civil-military relations have taken place since the early 2000s, impelled by the European Union (EU) requirements.²⁶ After the EU recognized Turkey as a candidate country for EU membership in December 1999,

| Countries | Four wave integrated (1981–82, 1990–91, 1995–98, 1999–2000) | | | | The fifth wave (2005–2008) | | | |
|-----------|---|-------------|---------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| | A great deal | Quite a lot | Not very much | None at all | A great deal | Quite a lot | Not very much | None at all |
| India | 53.5 | 36.6 | 8.1 | 1.8 | 50.2 | 33.1 | 12.5 | 4.2 |
| Jordan | 63.5 | 28.9 | 6.6 | 1 | 69.6 | 27 | 2.6 | 0.8 |
| Turkey | 63.3 | 25.4 | 5.8 | 5.6 | 66.6 | 19.8 | 8.3 | 5.4 |
| Vietnam | | | | | 81.4 | 16.3 | 2.2 | 0.1 |

 Table 2. Confidence in armed forces (%)

Source: World Values Survey (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/)

Turkish governments initiated a massive reform process in several issue areas in the early 2000s in order to start accession negotiations. One of the thorny issues in Turkey's Europeanization process has been curbing the political powers of the popular praetorian military and making it subordinate to democratic control. The Turkish governments have achieved significant constitutional and legislative changes in order to align civil-military relations with practice in the EU.

Despite these unprecedented and momentous changes, the Turkish military still plays some role in civilian politics (e.g. the attempt to intervene into the 2007 presidential elections). Several studies, therefore, conclude that the EU reforms did not really have much impact on Turkish civil-military relations. Bilgiç, for instance, contends "The civil-military reforms implanted since 2001, albeit impressive given the previous Turkish record, have not produced a similarly impressive decrease in the military's political influence."²⁷ Some even argue that the EU reforms remain more cosmetic than real.²⁸

There are, however, some difficulties with such interpretations. First of all, these arguments reflect a teleological approach in the sense that changes are assessed according to distance to a *telos* (i.e. the predominance of liberal democratic norms in civil-military relations). A more evenhanded treatment, however, should be looking at the degree of shift from the status quo. If the issue is approached from this perspective, it would be fair to suggest that these unprecedented changes mark a major step forward in Turkish civil-military relations and democratic development in the country in the last decade. The civilian control of the military in Turkey is, of course, not a completely resolved issue. However, given the past military-dominated trajectory, the recent institutional and legal changes curbing military's political power, greater judicial scrutiny over the military, and increasing vocal criticisms of the military's direct or indirect role in civilian politics mark a novel, major transformation in the country. Especially, the recent detentions and trials of several highranking military officers by the civilian courts, who were accused of being involved in various coup plots to overthrow the conservative AKP governments since 2002, constitute an unprecedented development in the Republican history. Dozens of serving or retired generals, including former heads of air force, navy and Deputy Chief of the General Staff, admirals, colonels, and lower-ranking officers have been arrested since 2007. It is difficult to predict the outcome of these trials of suspected coup plots but it is certain that the generals no longer constitute an untouchable class.

Second, the continuation of the political role of the military should not be interpreted as a failure of the Europeanization process. The EU reforms have so far targeted some of the military's formal institutional and legal prerogatives such as amending the duties and composition of the National Security Council (MGK) and the removal of military members or representatives from several civilian bodies such as the High Education Board (YÖK) and the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK). It is, however, a widely acknowledged fact that the Turkish military's praetorian tendencies is an outcome or function of various other factors and dynamics such as history (i.e. the Ottoman legacy,²⁹ the army's leading role in the Independence War³⁰); political culture and national identity (i.e. the prevalence of the notion of "military nation" in Turkish society, high level of confidence in the military³¹); political (i.e. intolerant partisanship, civilian incompetence, or civilian calls for the military to involve in political matters³²); and the military's organizational culture (i.e. the self-appointed and legally recognized guardianship role; the sense of superiority as regards the social and political spheres). Therefore, as Cizre also suggests, "… mere institutional reform of civil-military relations will often fail to identify and respond to an underlying web of unspoken and maybe invisible system of sustenance that legitimize the military's ability to influence."³³ In case of a predatory praetorian military, the legal changes might be a rather effective strategy for installing civilian supremacy, but if it is a popular praetorian military, as it is in the Turkish case, constitutional or legal changes become *a necessary but not a sufficient condition* for further civilianization. The relationship between the military and society and the military's organizational features should also be taken into account.

The Military's Organizational Culture

It is quite plausible that the variables and factors such as the civilian incompetence and civilians' call for the military to be involved in politics, the pro-military social attitudes and values and legal prerogatives, might facilitate or even promote the military's political role. However, these exogenous factors (i.e. legal, political and social factors) can not really account for the military's disposition or propensity to be involved in civilian politics in the first place. Thus, contrary to Huntington's claim that military explanations do not explain military interventions,³⁴ organizational attributes and dynamics within the military emerge as crucial variables. Despite this, most approaches treat militaries as black boxes, paying scant attention to their organizational culture. The above typology also remains limited in that sense. The typology, which is primarily concerned with the military's relations with the social and political spheres and actors, does not really allow for its organizational characteristics. However, further progress in establishing civilian supremacy in the Turkish context requires paying much more attention to the military's organizational culture, which appears to be an important source of praetorianism.

Organizational culture simply refers to collectively held beliefs, norms and ideas that prescribe how an organization should adapt to its external environment and administer its internal functioning and structure.³⁵ Organizational culture should be taken more seriously in the analyses of civil-military relations because it defines the military's collective identity, which in turn shapes the military's corporate interests and behavior within the political system. As Karpat convincingly states

The identification of the Turkish revolutionary officers with the traditions and values of the military establishment as shaped by the history and the social-political mores of the army, as well as *their views on social ranking, duty toward the nation and the state, reform and modernity, had profound effects upon their political attitudes and actions* (emphasis by author).³⁶

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From this perspective, two endogenous elements emerge as critical: ideology and attitude toward politicians. Regarding ideology, the Turkish military appears to have relatively stronger ideological tendencies than several other militaries. Kemalism, which is regarded almost as a religion among the military officers,³⁷ constitutes the foundation of the Turkish military's ideological outlook. In his address to the cadets, one Commander, for instance, stated that "Your flag will be the great Atatürk. Your ideology will be his principles; your aim will be the direction he showed us. You will follow unswervingly in Atatürk's footsteps."³⁸ Does this ideological orientation matter in civil-military relations? It does because Kemalist principles attribute a major role for the military in the political system. During his Konya speech (February 1931), for instance, Mustafa Kemal stated:

Whenever the Turkish nation has wanted to take a step up, it has always looked to the army ... as the leader of movements to achieve lofty national ideals ... When speaking of the army, I am speaking of the intelligentsia of the Turkish nation who are *the true owners of this country* ... *The Turkish nation* ... *considers its army the guardian of its ideals* (emphasis by author).³⁹

The military strongly embraces this role of *guardianship* of the Kemalist principles (in particular the principles of secularism and nationalism) and the Republic against both internal and external threats.⁴⁰ One cadet, for instance, stated that:

We are opposed to anybody, no matter whether they are there by the grace of the ballot box or the votes of the National Assembly, who attempts to violate Atatürk's principles. We have a right to act to this end in the interests of our people, and for their protection.⁴¹

Beyond embracing it, the high command frequently emphasizes the military's safeguarding role within the political system. For instance, during the August 2008 inauguration ceremony, the incoming Chief of General Staff İlker Başbuğ stated that "The notions of unitary nation state and secularism were defined as the founding principles of the Turkish Republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The Turkish Armed Forces is always responsible for protecting and preserving these principles."⁴² Thus, unlike its Western counterparts, the Turkish military is more ideological and internally oriented, which complicates civil-military relations in the country.

Furthermore, the Turkish military strongly identifies itself with the nation and state. During the same ceremony, for example, Başbuğ declared "The fundamental source of power for a military is the gun. For the Turkish military, however, *it is the nation's trust and love for the military* (emphasis by author)." Even more interestingly, the message at the gate of the Turkish General Staff reads, "A strong army means a strong Turkey." The direct result of such an understanding is that the military considers itself as a legitimate actor within the political system who knows best what the national interests are and how and through what policies and actions they should be achieved. The problem with such an ideological outlook or understanding, however, is that it undermines the norm of civilian supremacy. As Demirel also notes, "... the Turkish army's perception of itself as the ultimate guardian of the state renders it difficult for soldiers to fully accept the principle of civilian supremacy."⁴³

With respect to the military's attitude vis-à-vis politicians, Birand, who provided the first systematic study of Turkish military's organizational culture, concludes that the Turkish military has a strong sense of superiority over political actors. As the commander of the army Military College states in a speech to the cadets:

Always bear in mind that you are superior to everyone and everything and that you are trained here to have superior knowledge and superior qualities. You have dedicated your life to country without reservations, you are selfless and honest. As officers of the army which has inscribed the most glorious pages of Turkish history, you are different from your contemporaries outside, and from other officers elsewhere in the world.⁴⁴

Probably because of this sense of superiority, the military officials also tend to have a strong disdain and distrust toward the politicians and politics. Such an attitude, however, generates a major hurdle for the civilian control of the armed forces. As Bland convincingly propounds, the democratic control of the armed forces should be "managed and maintained through the sharing of responsibility for control between civilian leaders and military officers."⁴⁵ Thus, while the political elite and social actors should respect the military's professional autonomy and expertise, the officer corps in turn should also esteem political processes and actors, which is not necessarily the case in the Turkish context.

Conclusion

It is beyond doubt that civil-military relations in Turkey have been undergoing a major transformation in the last decade. This process has been neither complete nor free from any backlash or tension. Then, how might Turkish civil-military relations unfold in the future? It appears that there are three possibilities for the military:

- (1) The continuation of both praetorian tendencies and societal popularity;
- (2) Maintaining praetorian tendencies at the cost of declining popularity and legitimacy in society; and
- (3) Withdrawing from politics while keeping a prestigious and trustworthy position in the country.

It should be acknowledged that Turkish society has been undergoing a major socio-economic change in the post-1980 period. Social and economic actors have been gradually integrating with the global world and embracing democratic norms and practices in the last two or three decades. Thus, despite lingering problems, one can see a major improvement in Turkish democracy in the last decades, which was also abetted by the globalization and Europeanization processes. The maturation of Turkish democracy dictates the military's withdrawal from politics even more strongly in the 21st century. For instance, according to the findings of a recent poll, despite the high level of societal confidence in the armed forces, the majority of Turkish respondents (65 percent) also think that the military should not express its opinions on political matters.⁴⁶ Given all these, praetorian tendencies have become more and more untenable in the country.⁴⁷ Then, the first scenario (i.e., the continuation of both praetorian tendencies and societal popularity) becomes the least likely outcome in the future. Since the second option (i.e. maintaining praetorian tendencies at the cost of declining popularity and legitimacy in society) would eventually result in a downward change in the military's status, it would be increasingly costly for the military. Therefore, the third option (i.e., withdrawing from politics while keeping a prestigious and trustworthy position in the country) appears to be more acceptable or even desirable.

Such a retreat from politics would not only prolong the military's already prestigious and trustworthy status in society, but would also reduce friction and tension between the officer corps and political actors. The normalization of civil-military relations in the country would also have a major geopolitical importance in the sense that the establishment of more democratic and stable civil-military relations in the Turkish domestic sphere would enhance Turkey's effectiveness in external relations, substantially contributing to peace and stability in the Middle East, Caucasus and the Balkans.

Since mere institutional or legal reforms would not be sufficient to install civilian supremacy in a political system with a popular praetorian military, adjusting the military's mentality or organizational culture through reforming military education emerges as a crucial step to be taken in normalizing civil-military relations. Interestingly, some members of the High Command have already expressed such ideas. For instance, the former Chief of the General Staff, Ret. Gn. Hilmi Özkök (2002–6), once stated that Kemalism should be reinterpreted and the military should have greater confidence in politicians and people.⁴⁸ Although it is important that a high-ranking officer from a popular praetorian military entertains such ideas (i.e. increasing soldiers' respect for the rule of law, civilian supremacy and democracy), such apertures should take place at the organizational level for further progress in making the politicians and societal actors the real masters in Turkish politics.

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- 18. This type is similar to Perlmutter's "arbitrator-type army" (see Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times*, pp. 104–7). However, Perlmutter's typology also rests on the same civilian-military dichotomy and therefore fails to take into account the military's relations with the social realm.
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