The Socialisation of Those Called up for “Training in the Love of the Motherland” as Part of Military Service in Turkey

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From the Coup d’Etat in 1980 up until 2002, the Turkish Army played a central role in the internal politics of the country, benefitting from a large degree of autonomy and casting itself in the role of the gardian and proprietor of the state.1 According to Dorronsoro, the concept of ‘national security’ became the “founding ideology of the regime after the 1980 Coup d’Etat,” such that the regime “justified the intervention of security institutions in practically every area of social activity.”2 The Army dominated all spheres of society and as Ahmet İnsel, Ömer Laçiner and Ali Bayramoğlu describe, it saw itself as responsible for “establishing and determining what is good for society.”3 Thus the military institution long behaved as a “quasi political party”4 or even as a meta-political actor. Its interventions in the political domain took several forms (coup d’Etat, recommendations to the government, political discourses,)5 even though the Army’s rules of procedure state that Turkish armed forces must be “above and beyond all political influence and ideas.”6 Since the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) arrived in government in 2002, the Army has lost much of its influence in the political arena, particularly due to the numerous reforms aiming to de-militarise the institutions. These include the removal of the National Security Council’s (Milli Güvenlik Kurumu, 

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5 See the list by Ahmet İnsel, ibid., p. 151.
6 Article 43 of the regulations of the Turkish armed forces.
MGK)\(^7\) ability to impose its decisions on the cabinet, limits to the secretary general's room for manoeuvre,\(^8\) the end of military representatives' ability to hold office in certain institutions,\(^9\) an end to the authority of military courts civilian trials.\(^10\)

The Army was also weakened by the implication of several officers in the Ergenekon\(^11\) and Balyoz\(^12\) trials, as well as in the April 2012 trial of two officers responsible for the military coup of September 12, 1980. As though to slow its loss of control, the Army formalised and reinforced the “training in the love for the motherland” (Yurt Sevgisi Eğitimi), a programme which is delivered to all conscripts as part of military service. This research aims to study this training programme, which we consider to be a non-coercive way of perpetuating military hegemony.

Here we consider this training programme as a framework for socialisation, and more specifically political socialisation. Borrowing Darmon's definition,\(^13\) political socialisation is understood here as the range of formal or informal processes by which individuals are educated to politics. Here we adopt a broad vision of politics, because in this research we do not focus on “institutional politics”\(^14\)—principally centred on learning elements of representative

\(^7\) Because of the adoption of the 7th round of harmonisation reforms to conform with European norms in August 2003, the law on the National Security Council and its General Secretariat of November 9, 1983 was modified. The recommendations of the mgk concerning national security policy can no longer be imposed on the executive. Moreover, following the proposition of the Prime Minister and after confirmation by the President, a civilian can be named as the Secretary General of the mgk.

\(^8\) The Secretary General of the mgk can no longer request studies of national security with the abrogation of the ‘top secret’ clause, applicable to decrees. Law number no 5017, December 10, 2003.

\(^9\) Since 2004, military representatives can no longer sit on the High Council of Education (yök) or in the Radio and Television Supreme Council (rtük).

\(^10\) Civilians can no longer be brought before military tribunals for having criticised military service or encouraged rebellion or military disobedience. Modification of Article 11 of the law on the competence and creation of military tribunals in the context of the 7th round of harmonisation reforms.

\(^11\) According to the accusations Ergenekon is considered a criminal network whose principal objective is to overthrow the AKP government; it is made up of Army officers but also journalists, activists on the extreme-right and the republican left.

\(^12\) In which the generals are accused of having prepared attacks requiring the intervention of the Army.


\(^14\) Arnaud and Guionnet define “institutional” politics in a broad sense, corresponding to the “institutions” defined by the constitutions or other normative texts—around the