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## **ANALYSING NORMATIVE AND TECHNICAL ELEMENTS OF MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM**

*Askeri Profesyonellik Kavramının Normatif ve Teknik Yönden Bir Deęerlendirmesi*

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**Abstract:** In democratic regimes, military subordination to civilian rule is a vital requirement. The civil-military relations (CMR) field of political science has been created to achieve and maintain that purpose. Yet the question of what military professionalism is still does not have a universally accepted answer. After Samuel Huntington published his highly inspirational landmark work *The Soldier and the State* (Huntington, 1957), CMR scholars started heated debates to create a certain and comprehensive theory of professionalism that would be eligible for all case studies, but none of these attempts has been completely successful. In his influential theory, Huntington (1957) defined military professionalism as a moral code which would prevent officers from pursuing political interests and oblige them to obey civilian rule (p. 158). That approach has been a criterion and a so-called goal for the Western militaries to reach since the Cold War. Having said that, in several cases, professionalism could not deter militaries from praetorian acts (Huntington, 1957, pp. 60–61). Hence, this paper will make a general analysis of military professionalism in the CMR literature. While doing this analysis, the paper will look for the answers to certain questions. What is the relationship between military culture and military professionalism? What are the normative and technical dimensions of military professionalism?

**Keywords :** Technical Professionalism, Normative Professionalism, Military Culture, Civil-Military Relations

**Öz:** Demokratik rejimlerde, askerlerin sivil yönetime itaat etmesi bir gerekliliktir. Siyaset Biliminin bir alt dalı olan sivil-asker ilişkileri çalışmaları bu amacı başarmak ve sürdürmek amaçındadır. Yine de 'askeri profesyonellik nedir?' sorununun evrensel olarak kabul edilmiş bir tanımı yoktur. Samuel Huntington son derece ses getiren *Asker ve Devlet* kitabını 1957'de yazdıktan hemen sonra, sivil-asker arařtırmacıları, bütün alan çalışmalarında uygulanması mümkün kapsayıcı bir profesyonellik tanımı getirmeye çalıştılar. Ne var ki bu çalışmaların hiçbiri çok başarılı olmuřtur denilemez. Ünlü yaklaşımında Huntington, askeri profesyonellięi subayları siyasal meselelerin içine girmekten koruyacak ve onları sivil otoritelere itaate zorlayacak bir ahlaki koddan bahsetmiştir. Bu yaklaşım özellikle İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra Batı bloęundaki devletlerin ulaşmak istedięi nihai bir hedef olarak görülmüřtür. Ne var ki artan profesyonelleřme orduları askeri müdahalelerden uzak tutamamıştır. Bu noktada bu makalenin amacı da öncelikle sivil-asker ilişkileri bağlamında profesyonellięin kapsamlı bir tanımını yapmaktır. İkinci olarak makale bazı sorulara

cevap arayacaktır. Mevzu bahis sorular: Askeri kültür ile askeri profesyonellik arasındaki fark nedir? Askeri profesyonelliğin normatif ve teknik boyutları nelerdir ve nasıl birbirinden ayırt edilebilir? Eğer bir ordu bu iki profesyonellik türüne de sahip olmazsa ne olur? Bu soruların cevaplanması için makale giriş, tartışma ve sonuç olarak üç bölüme ayrılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler :** Teknik profesyonelizm, Normatif Profesyonelizm, Askeri Kültür, Sivil-Asker İlişkileri

## INTRODUCTION

Once, a senior Marine, Paul Van Riper, compared military cultures to huge machines that need enormous human effort to change direction (Gray, 2007) Indeed, militaries are infamous for their resistant nature against changes. Notions such as hierarchy, the chain of command, altruism, and unconditional obedience make it harder for military cultures to adapt themselves to global innovations and developing life standards (Desch, 1999, p.5) . Related to this, it can be challenging to reconcile democratic principles, such as liberalism, equality, and individualism, with the aforementioned ethos of militaries (Akyürek et al., 2014, pp. 18–19). As a result, conservatism tends to be the dominant ideology within militaries. Yet, in some cases, we may see revolutionary armies that made an effort to create a democratic and liberal regime by being involved in politics. That is to say, praetorian behaviours by militaries do not always have to be against democratic principles; instead, as happened during the foundational years of Turkey, an army can culturally adopt liberal, progressive, and democratic principles to integrate them into national policies (Turfan, 2000, p. 288). That fact obliges us to separate praetorian militaries into two groups: revolutionary and guardian armies. The first refers to those who create a new regime mostly within a democratic and liberal rhetoric. The second, on the other hand, refers to armies that are involved in politics to preserve an existing regime and status quo. In other words, revolutionary armies are ‘regime constructors’, and guardian armies are ‘regime protectors’.

Apart from revolutionary and guardian armies, military cultures allow us to indicate a third type of military: professional armies, which indeed should be the ultimate goal of each democratic regime. Although there is not a certain universally accepted definition of a professional military, Samuel Huntington’s conception in his landmark work *The Soldier and the State* (1957) has been the most influential depiction of military professionalism to the present day. According to Huntington (1957), professionalism should accompany a moral code defined as a professional military ethic, which requires the adoption of political neutrality and passivism. To achieve this purpose, Huntington (1957) offered an objective civilian control, by which the civilians create an autonomous sphere for the military, separate from the civilian world, and enable it to focus on its own technical responsibilities, including military training, campaigns, combat techniques, and the art of war (p. 83). In this way, it is assumed that the military would increase its technical expertise and rapidly lose interest in politics. The main interaction between civilian rulers and the military would continue in security matters with the condition of leaving the last word to the civilians. The theories of a professional military ethic and objective control generated the core of subsequent scholarly debate. Successive scholars made their own contributions, mostly putting Huntington’s work into the centre by either defending or criticising it. Huntington’s main weakness appeared to be that he took the American case as a blueprint and applied it to the other cases as a universal theory (Schiff, 2012, p. 321). Indeed, several cases specifically challenged Huntington’s thesis. In some countries, including the NATO armies of Turkey and Greece, professionalism in technical terms did not prevent those armies from having political interests. Instead, the Turkish and Greek armies staged coups d’état (Duman & Tsarouhas, 2006). At this point, how can we understand this dilemma? Why did those armies continue to preserve their praetorian tradition despite technically having a professional character? As a solution, this paper suggests an alternative approach to the case by separating military professionalism into two categories, namely normative and technical professionalism. Normative professionalism includes ethical codes, such as political neutrality, political passivism, and the principle of civilian supremacy,

which oblige military members to adopt the Huntington line of depoliticisation. Technical professionalism, on the other hand, refers to an advanced level of combat power, technological eligibility, and improved training methods.

At this point, Turkey stands out as a valuable case, with its rich examples regarding civil–military relations (CMR). That is to say, the Turkish military presents us with various case studies within which to analyse and compare the interactions between military culture and three different military models, namely revolutionary, guardian, and professional. Indeed, one may notice a strong interaction between Turkish military culture and Turkish politics, in which the two variables were strongly intertwined, and the limits between them sometimes became blurred (Tachau & Heper, 1983, p. 20). After the foundation of modern military academies and secularisation in military culture, Turkish officers were actively involved in politics against the monarchy. From the 1908 Young Turk Revolution to the early Cold War years, the Turkish military became a typical revolutionary army, wherein the officer class played a principal role in the foundation of a secular Turkish Republic (Turfan, 2000, p. 509). In the second half of the twentieth century, the military preserved its political character as being the ‘guardian of the regime’, intervening in the democracy four times, in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997. Now, starting from the following section, this paper will investigate the relationship between military culture, praetorianism, and professionalism, with special reference to the Turkish case. While doing this, the paper will also seek the answers to several questions. What is the relationship between military culture and military professionalism? What are the normative and technical dimensions of military professionalism? And to what extent has the Turkish military culture adopted the normative and technical features of a professional military culture?

### **Scholarly Debate on Professionalism and Alternative Suggestions**

Before starting a theoretical debate, it may be helpful to understand how the term ‘professionalism’ is understood by an ordinary person. The interviews that have been carried out for the purpose of this paper with senior officers, leading politicians, and academics<sup>1</sup> indicated that the term is understood in two different ways:

- The soldier who does his job just as others in other professions do. He/She is paid and maintains his/her job permanently, until retirement age. After retirement, he/she also has a retirement salary (technical definition).
- The soldier who just focuses on completing the tasks that are given to him, such as combat and training. He/She does not interfere in civilian spheres, which are defined in the legal procedures, and he/she remains politically neutral. He/She can give advice only when required by the civilians (normative definition).

The third option can be a mixture of these two. In other words, a professional salaried soldier avoids involvement in political interests. Indeed, Samuel Huntington’s aforementioned landmark work *The Soldier and the State* also takes professionalism as a mixture of both of the above understandings. Nevertheless, he gives more importance to the normative side of the definition. According to Huntington (1957), a professional man ‘is [an] expert with specialised knowledge and skill in a significant field of human behaviour’ (p. 8). Just as with other professions, officership has its own technical specialities. Hence, Huntington argues that military subordination can be maintainable by professionalising it within its own autonomous area. In other words, civilian control can be achieved by separating the civilian and military spheres. Civilians will enable military subordination by professionalising the military. That does not

<sup>1</sup> The interviews have been done with some leading people, including the president of the Turkish Retired Officers’ Institution (TUSED) Erdoğan Karakuş, AKP founding member and former Deputy Prime Minister Abdüllatif Şener, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former Deputy Prime Minister Murat Karayalçın, and several other key figures. The main question that was asked to the interviewed people was ‘What is military professionalism? What do you understand from the concept of the “professional soldier”?’

necessarily mean the military should be entirely apolitical. It can give advice, especially in matters of security, but only when required to do so by civilians (Huntington, 1957, p. 11). In this regard, Huntington suggested that there are two possible forms of civilian control over militaries: subjective and objective civilian control models. Subjective control refers to the case in which the civilians control the army by penetrating its private sphere to indoctrinate their own civilian ideals. In other words, in the subjective model, the military becomes the ‘mirror of the state’ (or the ruling party) by being civilianised (Huntington, 1957, pp. 80–81). Conversely, objective control occurs when the civilians create an autonomous and isolated area for the military, away from the civilian world. In this way, the military technically improves its combat power and gradually loses its interest in political matters. Eventually, in this way, both technical and normative professionalism become complete. To put it simply, the objective control achieves military depoliticisation by professionalising the military and by making it ‘the tool of the state’ (Huntington, 1957, p. 83). According to Huntington, the main purpose of a democratic regime should be objective control by preventing possible abuse by political parties. Indeed, Huntington himself stated the difficulty of achieving the objective model by arguing that even the most liberal democracies sometimes have problems maintaining objective control because governments try to pull militaries to their own side to remain in power.

Despite its defects, Huntington’s theory became very influential. Indeed, it is safe to argue that only after Huntington were civil–military studies and military professionalism rooted in a theoretical basis. Subsequent scholars have frequently referred to him while developing alternative theories (Feaver, 1996, pp. 149–178; Koonings & Kruijtit, 2002, p. 17; Nielsen, 2012, p. 369; Perlmutter, 1977, p. ix). After Huntington, scholars were divided into two groups. One group focused on institutional and rational factors, such as laws, legislative implementations, and sanctions, to prevent military intervention in politics. The other group focused on normative factors, such as the ethical adoption of several martial principles, to maintain political supremacy. Yet most scholars gave more importance to the ethical factors, just as Huntington did, because militaries have weaponry power, and any legislative/institutional measure can prevent militaries from applying force despite them not adopting political neutrality as a normative principle. At this point, the variable of the military culture should certainly be considered to achieve and maintain military professionalism because, as mentioned earlier, the ethical adoption of the political neutrality principle is a cultural matter rather than a legislative one. In other words, the institutional cultures of militaries should irreversibly adopt a professional ethos to maintain depoliticisation. Perhaps the most effective way of injecting the professional ethos into military cultures can be the encapsulation of military curriculums in accordance with liberal and democratic principles. Naturally, in experienced democracies, the injection of a professional ethos into military cultures can be easier than in authoritarian or post-authoritarian regimes.

On the other hand, despite its success and legacy, Huntington’s theory has had important critics throughout history. In particular, the end of the Cold War and the changing international structure accelerated the number of his critics. First, Huntington suggested that the Cold War and Soviet threat would necessarily push American politicians to adopt a more conservative and anti-liberal policy, given security reasons, such as the requirement of a large and stronger army. Yet the subsequent process disproved Huntington, in that the US government continued to promote liberal and democratic values and eventually became the winning side, given the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Huntington, 1957, pp. 456–467).

Second, in contrast to what Huntington said, in a number of cases, the professionalism of militaries did not prevent them from making political moves. For instance, the ostensible ‘professionalisation’ of the Turkish and Greek armies following NATO membership made them more political. Indeed, these two armies staged coups d’état: Turkey in 1960 and Greece in 1967 (Duman & Tsarouhas, 2006). Likewise, the professionalisation and modernisation of the Chilean Army at the end of the nineteenth century caused it to be more politically active in the following century (Koonings & Kruijtit, 2002, p. 114). A similar case is the Indonesian Army during the

1950s (Koonings & Kruijtt, 2002, p. 137). More interestingly, the Prussian Army was regarded as a model professional army during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to its discipline and technical capabilities. But the same army was not associated with political neutrality and passivism. Rather, the German Army, as the successor of the Prussian Army, was also associated with a strong level of political power (Huntington, 1957, pp. 96–97)<sup>2</sup>.

At this point, how can we explain this paradox? Do these examples make Huntington's theory completely invalid? Indeed, by considering the subsequent theories as well as the relevant cases to the present time, it will be misleading to assume that Huntington's theory is completely invalid and wrong. If one observes the alternative theories in the literature, one may see that most scholars considered military professionalism as the adoption of an ethical ethos that prevents officers from making arbitrary political moves. For instance, the second influential work after Huntington, *The Professional Soldier* by Morris Janowitz (1960), explained the case with the adoption of a code of 'professional military honour'. Similarly, Finer (1962) argued that military subordination is possible with the adoption of 'the principle of supremacy of civil power'. Again, a recent and influential work, *The Combat Soldier* by Anthony King (2013), defines political neutrality as the adoption of 'professional military pride'. Indeed, these influential works more or less have similarities with Huntington in that they all deem the adoption of some ethical codes as a necessity for maintaining civilian supremacy. As a result, Huntington's approach to professionalism is not wrong but perhaps is limited and somewhat vague. That is to say, it should be clarified: what do we mean by professionalism and political neutrality?

I argue that there should be two different definitions of professionalism: normative and technical. Normative professionalism refers to an ethical discipline that restrains officers from making arbitrary political moves. Technical professionalism, on the other hand, refers to an advancement in the art of war, technological awareness, effective military trainings, campaigns, and tactics. Sometimes, militaries cannot exhibit technical and normative professionalism simultaneously. Perhaps, for instance, the politicisation of the Turkish and Greek armies after benefitting from the technical expertise of the NATO armies can be explained by this reality. Despite these two armies having experienced a sudden improvement technically, perhaps they could not completely adopt a normative kind professionalism as depicted by Huntington. In the literature, despite some authors, such as Anthony King and Morris Janowitz, stressing the normative and technical sides of professionalism, there is still not a distinct conceptual separation of these two elements (King, 2013, pp. 342–343).

### **Case Study: Turkish Example**

Turkey is a rich case in terms of CMR, military politicisation, and professionalism. The origins of military politicisation date back to the declining years of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman rulers believed that military reform was required to prevent the empire from collapsing. To achieve this purpose, a number of military forms were attempted, especially through the end of the eighteenth century. The foundation in 1773 of the first naval engineering school, *Mühendisanevi Bahri Hümayun*, can be seen as a milestone event regarding military reforms (Lewis, 1961, pp. 48–49, 83). Following this date, all the attempts to modernise the military were implemented by using the Western military system as a blueprint. French, German, and English officers and generals were invited to Turkey to train Turkish officers in the academies. Turkish officers were also sent to Europe to more closely observe the Western system (Cevizoğlu, 2009, p. 99).

The first modern military institution, *Nizamı Cedit* (New Order Army), was founded by Sultan Selim III (1789–1807). However, this first institution did not last long because the Jannisaries

<sup>2</sup> According to Huntington, the Prussian military always had strong political power, but objective military control was still successfully practiced until WWI. Yet, during WWI, the German military was deeply involved in politics. For the politicisation of the German and also the Japanese armies, despite their professional nature, see Finer (1962), the revised 2002 version, pp. 25, 146. For the German army, also see Janowitz (1960), p. 14.

mutinied and massacred the members of Nizami Cedit Army under the leadership of Kabakçı Mustafa in 1807 (Özkaya, 2001, p. 8). Indeed, the Jannisaries were the strongest and most disciplined army in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (İnalçık, 1973, p. 11). But while the empire began to dissolve, this time, the same army became a place of backwardness and corruption. Combining their powers with the ulama class (religious authorities), the Jannisaries committed periodic mutinies to resist modernisation movements (Quataert, 2000, p. 4). For this reason, Sultan Mahmut II (1808–1839) finally dissolved the Jannisaries in 1826. The event, later called the Auspicious Event, was seen as a new beginning for military modernisation (Goodwin, 1998, pp. 289–300).

After the dissolution of the Jannisaries, modern military schools were opened. In these new schools, the officer candidates were educated within a more rational and scientific atmosphere. As a result, a mental transformation occurred among the officer candidates, who adopted worldviews that were positivist, rational, and scientific (Turfan, 2000, pp. 137–138). The graduates of these modern military schools showed an increasing interest in political developments and began to question the reasons for the Empire's backwardness (Özbey, 2001, p. 341). Therefore, the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed an increasing politicisation of the military, especially among younger officers. The young officers considered the incumbent monarchist regime and the impact of Sharia (religious law) to be the main reasons for the current backwardness. With the support of the military, civilian intellectuals forced the Sultan to accept a constitutional regime in 1876. This first constitutional regime lasted only two years, until 1878 (Karabelias, 1999, p. 131). Yet in the following period, young officers established a secret committee, known as the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki), to bring back the constitutional regime. Finally, in 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress obliged the Sultan to declare the Second Constitutional Monarchy (Haslip, 1958, pp. 259–268).

The years between 1908 and 1913 saw a struggle for power between the radical Union and Progress Party and the moderate Freedom and Accord Party (Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası). Both parties were backed by politicised officers (İnalçık & Quataert, 1994, pp. 766–772). For that reason, the period from 1877 to 1913 cannot be associated with any form of normative professionalism. However, the process from 1913 to 1918 demonstrates an increase in the level of technical professionalism because the military was renewed under the guidance of German generals and adopted the professional understanding of German military culture by technical means (Von Sanders, 2005, p. 3). Yet the military was highly political and was acting as a tool of the Union and Progress Party (Ahmad, 2010, pp. 477–478). For that reason, those years can be considered a clear example of a separation of normative and technical professionalism. The military was technically professional, but at the same time, it was highly political because of an insufficient level of normative professionalism.

After the foundation of the Republic in 1923, the military stayed apolitical for several decades (Harris, 1965, p. 58). However, with the 1960 intervention, the military once again became politicised. The 1960 intervention was followed by military interventions in 1971, 1980, and 1997. The process after Turkey joined NATO in 1952 is particularly important for understanding the separation of normative and technical professionalism. With NATO membership, the Turkish Army had a significant opportunity to observe the professionalism of Western militaries (Karaosmanoğlu, 2000, p. 209). However, it did not prevent the Turkish army's politicisation because the military staged a coup d'état in 1960 (Karpas, 1970, p. 1664). This shows that the Turkish Army adopted technical professionalism to a certain extent. Yet, it did not lead to an increase in normative professionalism. Normative and technical professionalism remained separate for the following decades because the Turkish Army's close interaction with the Western armies continued. This situation brought a remarkable increase in the level of technical professionalism. However, the deficiency in the level of normative professionalism remained unchanged because the Army continued its political interventions into civilian regimes.

## CONCLUSION

As has been discussed previously, there is a close connection between military cultures and their general attitude toward political incidents. Indeed, military culture can be considered a combination of norms, rules, principalities, worldviews, ideals, and ideologies that are embedded in a military institution and also determine its reaction to political developments. Our investigations show that there are three different versions of military culture. A revolutionary army is actively involved in politics and plays a pioneering role in the foundation of a nation. A guardian army aims to preserve the current regime or status quo through active involvement in politics. Lastly, a professional army isolates itself from politics and tries to remain impartial and objective.

Nevertheless, the concept of professionalism has received many different criticisms from political experts, in that several armies, such as those of Turkey and Greece, continued to be involved in politics even after receiving professional discipline during their NATO membership. Regarding this point, this paper argued that professionalism should be classified into two types and analysed separately: technical professionalism and normative professionalism. Technical professionalism refers to a situation in which an army is trained with high-level combat skills, such as using modern weapons, improved combat tactics, strategic innovations, a high level of military technology, and strict discipline. On the other hand, normative professionalism refers to the principle of supremacy of civilian power, subordination to civilians, impartiality, objectivity, and remaining uninvolved in all types of political debate.

An army cannot always exhibit both types of professionalism at once, as in the Turkish case. Although this army received major professional education, it did not accept the principle of supremacy of civilian power and staged coups d'état in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997. Indeed, the Turkish Army occasionally adopted professional standards by technical means. After 1913, German officers were invited to Turkey to train Turkish officers according to Western standards. Therefore, the military experienced a remarkable increase in the level of technical professionalism. Nevertheless, the military served as a tool of the Union and Progress Party by preserving its political orientation. A similar instance occurred after Turkey joined NATO in 1952. The military observed Western armies closely during its NATO membership and experienced an increase in the level of technical professionalism, but the increase in technical professionalism did not improve the level of normative professionalism. As a result, the military staged coups d'état.

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