

MA Thesis International Studies

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Map of Turkey

Source: US State Department (https://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/tu/)
**Acronyms**

**AKP:** The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) is a moderate conservative-Islamic political party. The party has been in power since 2002.

**CHP:** The Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) is the oldest political party in Turkey. It was founded by Atatürk and is devoted to the 6 Kemalist principles, most notably secularism.

**HDP:** The People’s Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*) is a left-wing Kurdish political party. The party first entered the General Assembly in 2015.

**HSYK:** The High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (*Hâkimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu*) is responsible for the appointment of judges and public prosecutors.

**MGK:** The National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*) is responsible for the national security policy. The military used the MGK to direct domestic and foreign policies.

**PKK:** The Kurdish Workers Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*) is an armed separatist group. It has been classed as a terrorist organization by several countries and international organizations, including the Turkish government, the United States and NATO.

**YAŞ:** The Supreme Military Council (*Yüksek Askerî Şûra*) is responsible for the promotion, assignments and dismissal of high ranking military officers.
Changes in Civil-Military Relations in Turkey and growing civil Authoritarianism  

Introduction

On the night of the 15th July 2016 Turkey was rocked by an attempted coup d’État by a fraction of the Turkish Armed Forces. Throughout the night rebellious armed forces battled government loyal security forces and thousands of protestors. By the morning of the 16th July the coup d’État had failed and hundreds of security forces and civilians had been killed and thousands had been wounded. Immediately after the failed coup, purges unseen in Turkish history ensued. The attempted coup d’État, the following widespread purges, alleged human rights abuses and the extensive state of emergency are the latest chapter in the increased instability of Turkey and the growing authoritarianism by the AKP government under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The growing instability is particularly troubling as Turkey is a key NATO ally and located in an unstable region, bordering Syria and Iraq. It has also taken a leading role countering the refugee crisis which has engulfed Europe over the last two years.

Political instability and military interventions are not uncommon in Turkey. Throughout its young history Turkey has experienced several military interventions in which its military ousted elected governments. The military interventions were staged in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997. However, it has to be stated that in all four cases the military intervened as it referred to “to save the democracy from itself” or to protect Turkey from a perceived threat to its state ideology “Kemalism”, most notably secularism. It further has to be noted that the military never intended to set up a long term military government (Heper, 2005; 216). After each intervention the military adopted new constitutions or made amendments to the existing constitutions in order to strengthen the military’s influence in politics thus favouring the military in Turkish civil-military relations turning the military into the hegemonic institution. However, the latest attempted coup d’état came to a surprise to many observers and political analysts. This is partly due to the recent shift in civil-military relations and the government’s subordination of the Turkish Armed Forces. The civil military relations are an integral part of a modern liberal democracy. However, unlike modern liberal democracies Turkey did not fully democratise but instead critics and certain scholars claim Turkey has turned more authoritarian than it was under its previous military tutelage.
The paper will further examine the link of the changing civil-military relations and the effect it had on democracy and authoritarianism in Turkey. The research question for this paper is: *How has the shift in civil-military relations affected authoritarianism in Turkey (2007-2017)?*

The paper will add to the existing literature on civil-military relations in Turkey and the growing authoritarian trend by the civil government. It will assess the link between the recent shift of the civil-military relations and to what extent it has influenced the governments increasing authoritarian trend. Even though the paper focuses on events after 2007 it will examine important developments prior to 2007 as it is important to comprehend the Turkish military and its history of unstable coalition governments and continuing coups in which the military strengthened its influence in politics. The paper will include the recent attempted coup d’État on July, 16 2016 and the referendum on the constitutional change on April, 16 2017 as both had a significant impact on the Turkish military and politics.

Process tracing will be used to answer the thesis question. By using process tracing it is possible to assess sequential events which affected and gradually changed the civil-military relations in Turkey between 2007 and 2017 and how it is connected to the increasing authoritarianism of the AKP government. Firstly, it is necessary to comprehend the Turkish military and its role in society and politics and the reasons for its importance. The second chapter will analyse the events which altered the civil-military relations and weakened the military’s position domestically. The events include fabricated coup plots, attempted coups (2016) and subsequent arrests, legislative changes, constitutional amendments, but also changes in public opinion on the military. As the military weakened the government strengthened its control over the military thus shifting the civil-military relations. The second chapter will also examine the AKP government replacing the military as the hegemonic institution, as there was no longer any authority above the civil government. The third chapter further analyses the growing authoritarian trend, most particularly in the years since 2013.

Two theoretical frameworks will be adopted in this thesis. First, Samuel Huntington on civil-military relations as it sets out main features on civil-military relations in liberal democracies and therefore it is possible to analyse Turkey’s shortcomings. Huntington’s article “Reforming Civil-Military Relations” focuses on the ‘new’ democracies transition of civil-military relations in the 1990s which is particularly helpful as Turkey’s civil-military relations share similarities with the ‘new’ democracies. The second theoretical framework will be to consider Turkey as a “competitive authoritarian” regime defined by Levitsky and Way’s article “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism” as it gives criteria as to why
Turkey no longer can be considered a democracy but has not turned into a full authoritarian regime. Turkey has an intriguing political system which further adds to the debate on authoritarianism and the growing grey area between a democracy and authoritarian regime. The growing grey area is a worldwide occurrence and the thesis attempts to further analyse differences of full authoritarianism and partly authoritarian regimes. Turkey also differs to the common belief that a democratization shift in civil-military relations does not guarantee a wider democratization process, as it did in Spain and Greece.

The paper will use primary sources to support the claim of growing authoritarian rule by examining the closure of private and public institutions, such as media outlets and schools as well as the decline of free speech and press freedom in Turkey. These primary sources include human rights reports, such as Amnesty International and Freedom House. It is also necessary to use a variety of primary sources, including news articles as there is a lack of secondary sources about the aftermath of the 15th July. Furthermore there are no secondary sources on Turkey’s recent constitutional referendum. Additional to news reports the paper will make use of EU Commission reports on Turkey to explain legal changes to Turkey’s civil-military relations and human rights record.
I) To save democracy from itself

This chapter will investigate the military’s history, and the reasons for its power and influence in political affairs. To fully comprehend the significance of the changes in the civil-military relations, it is important to examine the Turkish military’s powerful position in Turkish society and politics and the reasons as to why it achieved such political power. It has a prominent and important role in Turkish society due to its history as the institution establishing the modern Turkish Republic and as a modernization force. Furthermore from the foundation of the Turkish Republic the Turkish military gained influence as a result of perceived threats to its security, this led to the military establishing an important position within domestic politics. In the final part of this chapter previous coups will be examined and what measures the military took in the aftermath to further strengthen its grip on politics. It will also investigate the paradox of coups being orchestrated by the military which in Turkey has always been a modernization force, especially in the promotion of democracy. A statement released by the military in 1960 to justify the coup was to “rescue Turkish democracy from the unfortunate situation it had found itself in” which gives a good insight to the military on its self-imposed role as a promoter of democracy.

The Turkish military and its history

For a long time the Turkish Armed Forced had been considered a modernization force, particularly in the promotion of democracy. Even before the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic, the military officers in the Ottoman Empire had a more modern outlook in terms of governance than officials in other institutions. This was due to the fact that Ottoman military officers received Western education thus acquiring a Western belief that a modern government has to be based on pluralism and debate and not a single sultan. This resulted in military leaders check on the sultanate’s authority, such as the Young Turk Revolt and the downfall of Sultan Abdulhamit II’s absolute regime in 1908 after he discarded the 1876 Constitution and parliament, which were eventually reinstated under pressure of Ottoman military officers (Varol, 2013: 730-731). The military continued being the most modern institution in Turkey throughout the early stages of the twentieth century. After World War One and the Ottoman Empire’s defeat, the country was parted and occupied by Allied Forces. As the sultanate was unwilling to resist the occupying Allied forces it was military officers that started the Turkish War of Independence (Yildriz, 2014: 396) and thus
establishing the Turkish Republic in 1923 and gaining independence under the military leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. As the Turkish military was the institution gaining independence and establishing the new sovereign country it has been regarded as a respected institution. This was evident until the early 2000s, according to the Eurobarometer there was a high public confidence and trust (up to 90 per cent) in the military among all social classes and demographics, considerably higher than other institutions in Turkey and higher than the average EU member state (Gürsoy, 2012: 11).

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the military valued traditions of Ottoman past but admired Western civilization and believed that Turkey had to modernize. To emulate Western powers and modernize, Atatürk and the military leadership regarded the creation of a liberal democracy as a necessity, this included a pluralistic political order (Varol, 2013: 731). Atatürk believed that further modernization efforts were necessary and radically reformed the old Ottoman Empire. His most radical reform was the strict separation of religion and state, known as secularism; therefore the formerly Islamic-based Ottoman Empire was transformed into the secular Turkish Republic. The political alterations to the new Republic indicated Turkey’s ideological shift to the West, as the changes included new legal codes based on European models, the change of Arabic to Latin writing (Bowering, 2013: 49), emancipating women to an even further degree than in most European countries and a progressive education system, which were also based on Western values. The values and ideology set out by Atatürk is referred to as Kemalism and was adopted by the Turkish military and state and enshrined in the 1924 Constitution (Earle, 1925). Atatürk further founded the first and until 1946 sole political party, the Republican Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) which is based on six constitutional principles: “republicanism, nationalism, populism, revolutionism, secularism and statism (economically)” (Los Angeles Times, 1991). Since Atatürk’s death in 1938 the Turkish military regarded itself as the guardian of the six constitutional principles that the CHP are based on (Heper, 2005: 35). Therefore any act that would threaten one of the six constitutional principles would threaten the Turkish state. As the principles of the CHP and the military are the same the Turkish Armed Forces have often favoured the secular CHP.

1 Republicanism – is the republican system of Turkey that replaced the previous Ottoman sultanate. Nationalism – a new Turkish national identity that replaced the former Ottoman Islamic identity. Populism – a more classless society. Revolutionism – a principle to justify complete change from the Ottoman to Turkish system. Secularism – a great decrease of Islam in the state and instead the adoption of Western principles. Statism – a centralized and state-led economy.
The Turkish military also modernized on an individual level. Compulsory military service required citizens from rural areas to attend the army and the military’s aim was to train modern soldiers and also create modern citizens. Therefore recruits started to take courses in reading, writing, arithmetic and social studies. Additionally, through deployment soldiers were assigned to different regions within Turkey exposing them to diverse populations. The military not only modernized recruits in the area but also rural districts. Due to large military deployments in rural eastern Turkish districts, they further supported modern developments in these areas, including expanding and modernizing the infrastructure therefore connecting rural eastern Anatolia with large western Turkish metropolitan cities as well as creating educational centres (Varol, 2013: 732-733). The Turkish military was further modernized and internationalized after Turkey joined NATO in 1952 and officers were sent abroad. Furthermore Turkey joined in several international missions, such as the Korean War, which further increased its efficiency and effectiveness (Heper, 2005: 34). The military therefore developed into the “most serious, well-organized, and effective institution” in Turkey and by the time of the first coup in 1960, the military had established its central position in society as a “modern social institution and a crucial agent of modernization” (Varol, 2013: 731).

Further consolidation of power through perceived threats

Apart from being a respected institution and a modernization force the Turkish military also had to consolidate its power in domestic politics for it to enjoy the importance it did. Ismet Akça and Evren Balta-Paker cite Michael Desch that the “strength of the civilian control over the military is based on the degree of internal and external threats” and if the internal threats are high and external threats low, the military gains greater influence and power in politics. In the case of Turkey, internal threats remained very high throughout the twentieth century (Akça and Balta-Paker, 2013: 78). This is supported by Ahmet T. Kurdu who argues that the military was able to obtain ideological allies through the perceived internal threats and therefore the military establishment had the ability to consolidate its power in domestic politics. As aforementioned the Turkish military’s role was to protect Turkey from internal and external threats, these threats included Islamic political movements, Kurdish separatism and communism. These perceived threats provided the military with ideologically powerful civilian allies in the judiciary, political parties, the media and some sectors of society which enabled the military with political power and encouragement to
influence domestic politics for half a century. These civilians embraced assertive secularism, Turkish nationalism and anti-communism. As a result of these perceived threats, the most effective way to avoid them was for the military to maintain oversight over the civilian government. With the three threats persisting the military was able to justify its role in politics (Kurdu, 2012: 38). The claim of perceived threats strengthening the military’s political power is also supported by Yildriz, as he cites Ergun Özbudun, who argues that the “Turkish military will continue to intervene in politics as long as these internal threats exist” (Yildriz, 2014: 388). Especially after the 1980 coup this view was strengthened as the military pledged to protect unitary and secularism against the perceived threats of Kurdish separatism and Islamist activities (Gürsoy, 2012: 742). Therefore democracy as experienced in the West was never completely established as a result of military tutelage over politics. This lead to elected governments consistent struggles with the military.


The chapter so far has pointed out the reasons as to why the military was capable to intervene in politics. This was due to the Turkish military’s public and the civilian elite’s support as a result of its history and perceived threats. In the next part of this chapter the paper will analyse the reasons and the paradox of the previous military interventions and how the military used the coups to further consolidate its power in domestic politics. The military intervened and dissolved elected governments four times, in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997. As aforementioned the Turkish military was a modernization force and promoted democracy as one of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s main beliefs. The question therefore remains that if the military as an institution considered democracy as an important part of a modern country, why did it intervene in domestic politics, especially as a coup is deemed as very undemocratic.

In all four military intervention the Turkish Armed Forces did not perceive the intervention as an anti-democratic act as each time it considered the Turkish state or constitutional principles threatened. As aforementioned until 1946 Turkey was under a single party rule, Atatürk’s Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP). However, from 1946 until 1950 Turkey transformed into a multi-party regime with the Democratic Party (Demokrat Parti, DP) as the main opposition party. The CHP and the DP differed greatly in cultural and political affairs. The CHP was secular, represented the country’s elite
and was supported by the military. The DP was a populist, anti-bureaucratic party which represented a large rural population and by 1950 they won the general election (Varol, 2012: 323). The DP government quickly turned authoritarian, through various methods attempting to suppress the CHP. These methods included forced retirement to CHP-friendly civil servants and judges, as well as passing laws to weaken CHP-friendly media and the DP government froze financial assets held by the CHP. Additionally to its authoritarian shift the DP also exploited religion to influence people, threatening secularism and republicanism. This led to nation-wide popular protests in 1960. In response the DP called for martial law and ordered the military to suppress the protests by shooting at protestors. However, segments of the military, primarily young officers, supported protestors and instead launched a popular military coup on May 25, 1960 (Varol, 2012: 324-325). The military therefore released a statement in which it justified the coup by saying it was necessary to “rescue Turkish democracy from the unfortunate situation it had found itself in” (Varol, 2012: 326). The leader of the DP and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes along with other cabinet members were arrested, trialled and executed. The 1960 military coup d’état is considered a “democratic coup” by Ozan Varol as it fits into his definition that “the military responds to popular opposition against an authoritarian or totalitarian regime and facilitates free and fair elections in a short period of time” (Varol, 2012: 294). The term of a “democratic coup” has been contested by scholars and is debatable, especially regarding issues of democratic progress (George Derpanopoulos et al., 2016: 6). Nevertheless it has to be stated that the military did not set up a long lasting regime and elections were held in 1961. However, the 1960 coup and the subsequent constitution strengthened the military’s grip on political affairs, which can be argued to hinder the progress of democracy. The 1961 Constitution institutionalized the military by creating the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, MGK). The MGK is a council which is attended by military commanders and civilian leaders; its primary role is to advise government officials on “national security and coordination”. This led to the legal obligation of the military to participate in political affairs (Heper, 2005: 35). The military also interpreted the constitutional phrase of “national security and coordination” broadly and included many domestic and foreign policies (Varol, 2013: 740).

In 1961 a multi-party democracy was re-established and elections were held but the DP was banned as a political party. However, Turkey experienced violent clashes between right-wing and left-wing students throughout the 1960s and early 1970s which turned more
deadly. The then-PM Süleyman Demirel appeared hesitant to take action to end the violence, partly because the 1960 coup was a result of the government violently supressing protestors. Additionally to violent unrests, the economy was stagnating and senior generals delivered an ultimatum to the government, which is also known as a coup by memorandum. The cabinet resigned and a cabinet of technocrats was established. The military was also authorized to take stronger measures against internal disorder and several arrests followed the coup (Harris, 2011: 206). The 1971 coup was therefore not a direct intervention by the military and new elections were held in 1973. The 1970s also saw the emergence of more overt political Islamic parties, nevertheless, Turkey’s politics was mainly overshadowed by weak coalition governments which resulted in political deadlocks. Added to the political problems, violence between right and left wing groups continued. To stabilize the country the military staged a coup d’état on September 12, 1980. The Chief of Staff Kenan Evran took power and the parliament was dissolved and all political affairs were placed under military control (Harris, 2011: 209). The 1980 coup d’état is considered the most violent direct military intervention in Turkey. Fifty people were executed and allegedly hundreds of thousands were arrested with several hundred dying in custody (The Economist, Feb. 2013). The 1961 Constitution was reformed to the 1982 Constitution and furthered increased the military influence in politics. The MGK increased the military commanders in the Council and therefore the military gained control of it, with a military member also established as the General Secretary and therefore setting the agenda. After the 1980 coup the MGK changed from an advisory body to an instructing body (Varol, 2012: 332-333).

The coups from 1960 to 1980 were primarily designed to protect democracy and the Republic’s ideology of Kemalism. In 1960 the military intervened primarily to stop Turkey shifting more authoritarian and refused to shoot protestors. In 1972 and 1980 the military intervened to save the country from what it perceived as weak civilian governments and stop wide-spread internal violence. The last military intervention in 1997 was not to save democracy but secularism. With the threat of communism disappearing and the decline of political unrests and violence, political Islam was the major threat to the Turkish Republic. A good insight to the Turkish military’s high command’s view on Turkish democracy and secularism is a statement by General Cevik Bir just before the military intervention. He stated the following: “In Turkey, we have a marriage of Islam and democracy … The child of this marriage is secularism. Now this child gets sick from time to time. The Turkish Armed
Forces is the doctor which saves the child. Depending on how sick the kid is, we administer the necessary medicine to make sure the child recuperates” (Dickson, 2014: 188).

The 1997 military intervention is often referred to as the post-modern coup, as the military did not take full control of the government and the coup was achieved through more peaceful means and less radical changes to the political system than previous coups. In 1997 the military forced the Prime Minister Erbakan to sign declarations to protect secularism in the Turkish education system, such as enforcing a headscarf ban at universities; it also placed state control over media outlets which have been critical towards the Armed Forces. Erbakan resigned and was banned for life as well as the Welfare Party, an Islamic political party. However, the parliament was not dissolved and the constitution was not amended (Dickson, 2014; 188-189).

By analysing the four military interventions in political affairs, it can be understood that the military believed its interventions were primarily to save Turkey, either from authoritarianism, inefficient governments, internal unrests or political Islam. Especially the coups from 1960 to 1980 were supported and not contested by the majority of the public and elites, as the civilian governments were incapable of establishing order and stability (Gürsoy, 2012; 742). Every time the military intervened it served in the interest of the state in order to protect Turkey, Kemalism and its constitution. It is important to note that the military restored elections after each intervention and did not intend to establish a long-term military government. However, the military consolidated its political power further after each coup by drafting a new constitution increasing its autonomy and political power, most notably by establishing the National Security Council with which they obtained the ability to force out cabinets (Gürsoy, 2012: 742-743). Even though the military believed it saved democracy, a liberal democracy cannot be consolidated if the military has political powers, prerogatives and has the ability to disrupt the political system (Gürsoy, 2012: 7).

Chapter conclusion

This chapter outlined the military’s ability to gain strength in political affairs. This was due to the military’s history as it has always been a trusted and highly respected institution. It was further a modernization force and promoted democracy in Turkey to a certain degree. Perceived threats throughout the second half of the twentieth century further consolidated the
military’s involvement in politics. The military’s intervention in domestic politics was never primarily to increase its power but as stated to tackle threats to the Republic, such as communist groups and political Islam. However, the coups also consolidated the military’s power as a show of force and by drafting constitutions which were beneficial to the military. This meant that by the end of the twentieth century the military was the country’s hegemonic institution with the ability to dissolve governments at will.
II) The Shift of Civil-Military Relations

This chapter will analyse the changes made regarding the civil-military relations in the Turkish Republic. As the thesis is concerned about the effect of the shift of civil-military relations on the political system it is important to understand the methods the civil government applied to enact its control, especially in the years following 2007 and the power struggle between Kemalists and Islamists. As outlined in the previous chapter the Turkish military had an enormous influence in domestic politics, which increased throughout the second half of the twentieth century. By the end of the century the Turkish military had established itself as the most powerful institution in the country and possessed the ability to dismiss an elected government through a memorandum without much condemnation by the media, public or civilian elites, which was evident during the 1997 post-modern coup.

This chapter will outline major factors of the civil-military shift. This paper primarily focuses on events after 2007. However, to comprehend the military’s decrease in political affairs post-2007 one needs to examine certain changing developments before 2007. Pre-2007 Turkey initiated a democratization process primarily to join the European Union under a strong AKP mandate, contrary to previously weak coalition governments. The main focus in this chapter are developments post-2007, these include further strengthening of the civil government and investigations into a deep state terror network ‘Ergenekon’ which led to the arrest of several active and retired high-ranking military officers that had been accused of planning a military coup in the early years of the AKP government this caused the military to lose its legitimacy in public and politics, constitutional changes in 2010 and the discharge of high ranking officers. Finally, this chapter will assess the failed coup d’état in 2016, the clear division within the military and the aftermath and effects of the attempted coup. All of these factors changed the balance and strengthened the civil government’s control.

Characteristics of civil-military relations in industrial democracies

As this chapter is related to civil-military relations the theoretical framework adopted will be by Samuel Huntington. The article referred to in this chapter was written in 1995 during a time of transition of authoritarian regimes to what Huntington describes as ‘new’ democracies. Included are military regimes which bare resemblance to the military tutelage in Turkey. Huntington identifies four factors which characterize civil-military relations in
industrial democracies, which he termed as ‘objective civilian control’. These include a high degree of professionalism within the military and the leadership’s acknowledgement of the limits of their capability. The second factor is the military’s subjection to the civilian government and the civilian government’s responsibility of foreign and military policies. Thirdly, the government must accept and recognize an area of professional ability and independence for the military. Finally, as a result of these three factors a military intervention in politics is greatly minimized (Huntington, 1995: 9-10). This chapter will identify to what extent Turkey has completed these characteristics.

Furthermore, Huntington describes what methods ‘new’ democratic governments implement in order to limit the military’s influence and political involvement and the reasons for the civil government’s success. The methods include a more centralized staff in order to control the military, civilians replacing military officers in influential and important political offices, the elimination of special military institutions applying political power and the enhancement of military professionalism through new doctrine and curriculum in military schools (Huntington, 1995: 12). By examining the methods it is possible to identify the various methods the Turkish government used to subordinate the military and to what extent they differ to the methods used by ‘new’ democracies. Therefore it will be possible to recognize how unique and distinctive the methods used by the Turkish government are.

Democratization process pre-2007 (EU accession talks and the AKP government)

As mentioned in the previous chapter after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the country underwent a radical modernization process based on Western ideas. Therefore the civilian elites of Turkey identified themselves as Western and thus European. It is therefore no surprise that Turkey sought to join the European integration project at various times. As early as 1963 Turkey and the European Community (the EU’s predecessor) signed agreements on trade and financial matters, with the prospect of full membership in the future. However, throughout the 1970s and 1980s Turkey’s prospect of EU membership remained distant due to various economic and political issues and differences with certain EU members, such as Greece. Throughout the 1990s Turkey continued attempting to join the European integration process, the newly named and restructured European Union. However, the EU seemed unwilling to grant Turkey membership due to various reasons ranging from
lack of human rights and democratization to political disagreements with Greece, an EU member state with the ability to veto (EUCE, 2008: 1-3).

However, by 1999, only two years after the military forced the Islamic Welfare Party out of government, Turkey was granted status of an applicant for EU membership by the Helsinki European Council. However, many political, social and economic reforms had to be undertaken before Turkey was granted full membership. As this chapter focuses on civil-military relations in Turkey, only this factor will be examined. The European Commission report on Turkey’s progress in 1999 stated the concern of the lack of civilian control of the military and the major influence of the military in political affairs through the National Security Council (MGK) (European Commission, 1999: 8). For Turkey to join the European Union it had to undertake radical changes to the civil-military relations, especially restructuring the MGK and thus limiting the military’s influence in domestic politics. The EU accession talks ensued just three years before the Turkish elections after another weak coalition had collapsed and Turkey had been hit by another economic crisis. The newly founded conservative-Islamic Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won the elections with over 34 per cent of the vote which granted them a strong mandate. Although, the AKP is considered a moderate conservative Islamic party, it was distinct from previous Turkish Islamic parties. Differently to previous Islamic parties, the AKP adopted liberal democratic values, a less assertive foreign policy and it also favoured Turkey joining the European Union. The AKP furthermore stated its support for secularism and the importance for democracy; in their party programme they argued that religion is important in a person’s social life but not in politics (Gumuscu and Sert, 2009: 958). These two developments marked the start of radical changes to Turkey’s civil-military relations. Especially, the leader of the AKP and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who had previously been imprisoned while Mayor of Istanbul by the military as a result of breaking secular law, was a powerful charismatic figure and a staunch critic of the military tutelage.

The European Union sets democratic civil-military conditions for any member state attempting to join, which are prevalent in Western developed countries. These factors are an important component of Western democracies. As the EU is an institution comprised of industrial liberal democracies their democratic consolidation conditions share similarities to Samuel Huntington’s factors. The conditions to join the EU are set out in the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) which “aims to prevent the military’s influence in politics
and subordinates the military to interests of a democratic society” (Güler and Bölücek, 2016: 251). As aforementioned the National Security Council (MGK) was a body for the military to directly influence Turkish politics, therefore it was necessary for the government to reform it. On July 23, 2003, the Turkish Parliament passed the seventh harmonization package which greatly altered the MGK’s functions. The civilian members of the council were increased and the appointment of the Secretary General of the Council was transferred from the military’s Chief of Staff to a civilian member, thus setting the agenda. The legislative changes further limited the military’s access as well as desecuritized civilian institutions, such as removing military representatives from the Higher Education Council and the Supreme Board for Radio and Television. Direct military intervention was reduced in the MGK reforms and thus turned the MGK into an advisory role which it was initially set up for (Bardakçi, 2013: 412-413). Another factor decreasing the military’s influence in politics was the AKP’s change in foreign policy. Turkey introduced the “zero problem policy” in which they use soft power as a foreign policy tool. Turkey’s adoption of soft power, such as economy-based policies, further decreased the military’s relevance in foreign affairs (Bardakçi, 2013: 413-414). The changes severely limited the military’s influence in politics and further democratized the country. Additionally to a softer approach to foreign affairs, Turkey also successfully combated the internal threat of Kurdish separatism, after the perceived communist threat largely disappeared due to the end of the Cold War. In 1999 Abdullah Öcalan, the leader and founder of the Kurdish separatist group, the Kurdish Worker’s Party (PKK), was arrested by the Turkish Intelligence Service. Subsequent peace talks throughout the 2000s greatly reduced the threat of Kurdish separatism (Akça and Balta-Paker, 2013: 78).

In the attempt to join the European Union and Erdoğan’s drive to democratize the country the military had lost considerable influence by 2007. However, even though the military lost power and influence it still yielded more than most other institutions in Turkey. This was very evident as between the AKP assumed power and the second election in 2007, senior military officers intervened through informal methods, such as speeches, press statements and declarations. Chief of Staff Hilmi Özkök (2002-2006) and his predecessor Yaşar Büyükanıt used these methods when opposed to AKP policies, especially when believed the AKP threatened secularism (Yıldız; 2014: 390). One of these instances was in 2006 during the debate of the headscarf ban at universities, as the military openly sided with the secular coalition (Akça and Balta-Paker, 2013: 84) thereby interfering in a political debate, which in a Western democracy is very rare. However, even though the military
believed that secularism was under threat it did not intervene as the then-Chief of Staff Özkök was opposed to a military intervention stating it was not the military’s role to govern the country (Heper, 2005: 216).

Post-2007 (AKP’s consolidation of power)

2007 was a year of even more radical change than the previous five years. 2007 was the year of presidential elections and the AKP government appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs and co-founder of the AKP Abdullah Gül as a candidate. Gül was a controversial choice due to the fact that his wife wore a headscarf and he was known to be involved in political Islam and therefore perceived as a threat to Turkish secularism. The presidential elections turned into a political crisis with several demonstrations throughout the country opposing the appointment of the AKP. The military along with secular civilian elites again intervened informally by stating that the president had to be committed to secularism in essence and not just words. Additionally to voicing their dissatisfaction the General Staff published a memorandum on April 27, 2007, stating that due to recent developments the fundamental values of the Republic of Turkey were under threat and the military may have to intervene. However, differently to previous governments, the AKP government did not back down and instead released a counter statement in which the military was criticized as undemocratic and reminding the Chief of Staff that he was under the subordination of the Prime Minister (Akça and Balta-Paker, 2013: 84). Along with AKP’s criticism, the European Union also criticized the military’s interference in the 2007 presidential elections (EU Commission, 2007: 9). The support of the West further legitimized AKP’s claim and strengthened their position in the upcoming elections. During the political crisis the AKP called for early general elections, primarily to reinforce their legitimacy in government and strengthen their mandate; during the election campaign secularism was a core topic. The AKP’s economic success and EU-friendly attitude over the previous five years resulted in the AKP acquiring support from liberal elites and academics. Additionally to the economic improvements in rural areas and the AKP’s promotion of Islam further increased their rural support (Bardakçı, 2013: 414). The AKP won the elections by a large margin, increasing their votes to 46.6 per cent (62 per cent of seats in parliament). By winning with such a strong mandate the AKP legitimized their rule and transformed into a powerful and hegemonic party. Shortly after the general elections Gül was appointed President by the Turkish
parliament (Akça and Balta-Paker, 2013: 84-85). This was a clear victory by the government and a sign that the military no longer dictated what the government does.

The civil-military relations were in favour of the military in the previous century partly due to the support from Kemalist civilian elites. This support helped the military to consolidate and exercise their power. This was especially evident in the 1997 post-modern coup as the civilian elite played a major role in forcing the government out of office, such as authorizing the media to warn the public of Islamist fundamentalism. Therefore it was necessary for the AKP to acquire the support of the civilian elite to consolidate their own power. The shift of civilian elites came in the expense of Kemalists and the previously disadvantaged Islamists benefitted from the AKP’s years in government. The AKP obtained considerable financial and political support from religious businesses which were mainly situated in Anatolia, and referred to as the Anatolian or Islamic bourgeoisie.\(^2\) Previously to the AKP government, these businesses had been suppressed and blacklisted by the military. These businesses flourished under the early years of the AKP and provided it with a socio-economic base. The AKP also acquired the support of several Islamist media organizations, which expanded their share and power throughout the AKP years in office. Failing media organizations were purchased by the state and sold to AKP-friendly media institutions, thus significantly increasing the number of Islamic media in Turkey. By 2009 Islamist-funded media outlets controlled 19 daily newspapers, 120 magazines, 51 radio stations and 20 TV channels. The media further scrutinized and criticised any wrongdoings by the military while praising the government’s work. The higher education also shifted from the Kemalist establishment to the Islamist civilian establishment, due to President Gül’s ability to appoint new members of the Higher Education Council as well as directors of universities. Furthermore there was a large increase of private schools and universities being established during the AKP’s years in office, many of them funded by the Islamic bourgeoisie (Bardakçi, 2013: 415). With the civilian elites shifting, the military lost considerable amount of power to the AKP and was no longer able to use Kemalist elites to intervene in politics.

\(^2\) The Anatolian or “Islamic bourgeoisie” is the term used to describe entrepreneurs raised in villages and towns in rural Anatolia with an Islamic conservative background. For most of Turkey’s history they were marginalized by the Turkish Republic as it favoured secular-orientated big city bourgeoisie and businesses. However, since the opening up of the economy in the 1990s (Yavuc, 2006: 5-6) and especially since the AKP’s successive governments they have increased businesses and influence. More on Islamic bourgeoisie can be found in Yavuc’s “The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti, The University of Utah Press, 2006”
Ergenekon trials and its consequences (2007-2014)

By 2007 the AKP had introduced reforms to curb the military’s influence in political affairs. Additionally to it the AKP had secured important civil elites and with a large majority in parliament they also established their legitimacy as the governing political party. However, the biggest shift in civil-military relations were the Ergenekon investigations and the subsequent uncovering of alleged coup plots which started in 2007. Due to length of this paper, it will primarily focus on the investigation’s impact on the civil-military relations and only give a quick overview of the alleged coup plots.

In June 2007 the police discovered an alleged deep state terrorist organization, known as “Ergenekon Terrorist Organization”, which involved several retired and active military officers as well as secular civilians, such as journalists, academicians and businessmen. The Ergenekon organization was discovered after police had raided a house in a district in Istanbul and several weapons were located. In coordinated raids several secular military officers and civilians were arrested and trialled. The defendants were charged with the involvement in a terrorist organization and attempts to discredit the AKP government by creating an atmosphere of terror in which several leading figures, including Prime Minister Erdoğan and Chief of Staff Büyükanıt were planned to be assassinated. They were also accused of planning bomb attacks in several cities, thereby legitimising a military intervention. After the first wave of arrests other alleged coup plots linked with Ergenekon were uncovered and several more primarily active and retired military officers were arrested and trialled. In 2012 the former Chief of Staff İlker Başbuğ was arrested for his involvement in the Ergenekon Terrorist Organization (Bardakçı, 2013: 418). Başbuğ denied any wrongdoings stating the accusations against him as “tragicomic” given the fact that the head of the armed forces of one of the most powerful armies was a member of a terrorist organization (Hurriyet, 2012). Furthermore a second trial under the name Balyoz (Sledgehammer) was opened in July 2010 implicating 350 officers for attempting to overthrow the Turkish government in the year 2003 by shooting down an airplane over the Aegean Sea and thus justifying a military coup. In the trials the former First Army commander, the commanders of the Air Force and Navy were each sentenced to twenty years in prison (Gürsoy, 2014: 269).

The Ergenekon investigations changed the balance of power. The Turkish Armed Forces lost its public status, it was unable to effectively resist the reforms and reduction in
power (Gürsoy, 2014: 270), more of which followed in the 2010 constitutional amendments. As mentioned in the previous chapter the Turkish military enjoyed high public confidence and as a result previous coups were rarely opposed by the public. In fact there was widespread public support in the interventions in 1960, 1972 and 1980. The scholar Yaprak Gürsoy utilized the Eurobarometer to measure trust and confidence in the military. In early 2000s around 87 per cent of surveyed people trusted the military which was considerably higher than any other institution in Turkey, as the government, parliament, legislative system and political parties scored lower. Public trust in the military in Turkey was also higher than in other EU member states. However, due to several investigations and court cases, trust in the military has dropped radically from 2007 onwards. By 2010 only 70 per cent trusted the military which was the same as other EU member states. However, people that did not trust the military increased from 10 per cent in 2004 to 27 per cent in 2010, which was considerably higher than the EU average (Gürsoy, 2012: 11). The loss of trust in the military was evident in the attempted coup d’état in 2016, as thousands of opposed civilians battled rebellious soldiers on the streets.

The second effect of the Ergenekon investigations was the justification for constitutional amendments in 2010 which occurred at the same time as the Ergenekon trials. The Constitutional amendments were approved by fifty-eight per cent and had two effects on the secular establishment, one amendment targeting the secular judiciary and another amendment targeting the military. By 2010 both institutions were still monopolized by the Kemalist establishment and thus represented a danger to the AKP government and an obstacle to Islamic conservative policies. It was another important step in curbing the secular elites’ power and influence. Previously to the amendments the HSYK officials (a court responsible for judges and public prosecutors) were selected by two high courts, with secular tendencies. Therefore the secular judiciary had a strong control over the AKP government and its conservative policies. However, the 2010 Constitutional amendments diversified the HSYK and the Constitutional Court by restructuring the system ensuring more representation and pluralism; this weakened the secular tutelage control over the AKP government. The second amendment weakened the secular elites by limiting previous privileges and immunities enjoyed by military personnel. Several amendments were made to various articles to achieve this. Crimes committed by military personnel against the ‘constitutional order of the state’ are no longer tried in military courts but instead in civilian courts (Özbudun, 2014: 156). Following these constitutional changes trials against former president and 1980 coup
leader Kenan Evren and officers that participated in the 1997 memorandum including General Çevik Bir were launched in 2012 (Bardakci, 2013: 421). The trials against former military leaders demonstrated the end of the military’s hegemony and indicated that no one is above the law. These amendments severely impaired military and judiciary challenges towards the AKP government (Özbudun, 2014: 156). Constitutional amendments were not the only legislative changes the AKP government implemented as a response to the Ergenekon trials. Further legislative changes decreased the possibility of the military’s interference in politics. One of the changes was the amendment of article 35 of the Armed Forces Internal Service Code. The Internal Service Code previously stated to protect Turkey from threats, not stressing on internal or external threats, thereby justifying military interventions in domestic politics. The newly adopted article explicitly stresses that the military’s duty is to defend the country from threats and dangers from abroad, thus eliminating any possibility on internal threats to the secular Republic (Bardakci, 2013: 421).

The third effect the Ergenekon investigations had were the military’s inability to promote high ranking officers. The Supreme Military Council (YAŞ) meets yearly and is responsible for the promotion, assignments and dismissal of high ranking military officers. New amendments secured military officers from suspension if suspected to be involved in Islamist activities. Previously, decisions by YAŞ could not be overturned (Bardakci, 2013: 421). Prime Minister Erdoğan intervened in the promotions and blocked several officers who were deemed hostile towards the AKP. Previously, a civilian intervening in the promotion of military officers was very rare (Jenkings, 2011). However, many military officers could not be promoted as they were suspects in investigations, even though none were convicted by the time of the Supreme Military Council meeting. Due to the inability of the military to promote officers and the continuation of court cases against active and retired officers the then-Chief of Staff General Kosaner and the commander of the Land Forces, Air Forces and Navy simultaneously retired out of protest. General Kosaner accused the investigations as a conspiracy case and stated that the investigations portrayed the military like a criminal organization. He further added that the situation (the investigations) had “prevented him to fulfil his duties to protect the rights of his personnel and thereby rendered him unable to continue this high office (…)” (Tuysuz and Tavernise, 2011). The simultaneous resignations by the high-ranking officers highlighted the little power left in the military as they were unable to intervene.
The Ergenekon investigations and subsequent trials had wide-ranging effects on the secular establishment and civil-military relations by severely weakening the former hegemonic military institution and secular elites. However, while praised by many as a milestone and defining moment in Turkish history and the introduction of democracy, it also had many critics who stressed that the Ergenekon trials were a witch-hunt against the former secular elite and Kemalist bourgeoisie by the new Islamist elites allied with Erdoğan, most notably the Hizmet movement by the Islamic cleric Fettulah Gülen. As aforementioned large parts of the secular establishment was eliminated through the Ergenekon investigations and wide-ranging legislative changes. Since 2014 it has been confirmed that the trials were orchestrated by members of the Hizmet movement, partly on fabricated coup plots (Basaran, 2016). By 2016 the court of appeals has overturned the convictions of several imprisoned officers and civilians; this included General İlker Başbuğ, who was released in March 2014 (Solaker, 2016). To comprehend events post-2014 it is vital to understand Gülen and the Hizmet movement. Therefore the next part will analyse Gülen and his followers who have also been accused of orchestrating the 2016 coup d’état attempt by the Turkish government and several observers.

Gülen’s Hizmet movement

To comprehend the possibility of Gülen’s involvement in the 2016 coup d’état attempt one has to examine the movement’s history and its ties to the AKP government. Gülen is an influential moderate Islamic cleric who operates a large network of private schools, mostly in Muslim countries, he has a large following and the movement is often referred to as the Hizmet movement. In 1999 videotapes emerged in which he openly told followers to infiltrate the state system without being noticed. However, he had fled Turkey previously and had lived in a self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania. Under the Turkish secular establishment and military tutelage he could not extradite much power or influence (Yavuc and Koc, 2016: 138). AKP’s victory in 2002 gave Gülen and his followers the chance to gain influence in the expense of Kemalists. To counter the secular establishment as mentioned earlier, Erdoğan allied with the Islamic bourgeoisie, one of the most prominent and powerful Islamic businessmen and cleric was Fettulah Gülen, as his members were well-educated and competent bureaucrats who could fill important posts, mostly in the police and judiciary during the early AKP administration (Yavuc and Koc, 2016: 136). To further weaken the
secular elites, Erdoğan relied on Gülen followers to eliminate the secular threat as they ensued with the Ergenekon investigations in 2007. As mentioned earlier it is known that some coup plots and thus evidence were fabricated (Basaran, 2016). It is believed that some members of Hizmet also infiltrated the staunchly secular military and by the dismissal of several high ranking officers during the investigations, Hizmet members managed to fill the newly vacated positions. Furthermore, as aforementioned as a result of a 2010 Constitutional amendments the YAŞ was no longer able to dismiss officers on suspicion of religious activities, which enabled officers in the Hizmet movement to quickly rise in the ranks. However, a power struggle between Erdoğan and Gülen slowly started, as both attempted to gain more power. The struggle started with Gülen followers who were close to Erdoğan wiretapping the Prime Ministers’ house and office. Subsequently Erdoğan ordered the closure of several schools which were operated by Gülen thus cutting off his main financial support and pool of recruitment. The struggle escalated into an all-out war in December 2013 when Turkish police detained 47 people on corruption charges; this included the sons of three ministers and close allies to Erdoğan, it also implicated Erdoğan’s family in corruption cases. Media controlled by Gülen reported extensively on the corruption charges and undermined the AKP government and Erdoğan. Erdoğan responded by large scale dismissals of police officers and officials in the judiciary (Yavuc and Koc, 2016: 139-140). However, by 2013 several members of the Gülen movement were deeply rooted in many institutions and hard to trace, including the military. By 2016 Gülen was deemed as a great threat to Erdoğan, much greater than the weakened secular Kemalists.

2016 attempted coup d’état

This part will quickly outline as to what happened during the attempted coup d’état. The coup started in the evening of 15th July 2016, with several pro-coup troops seizing control of the Bosporus bridges in Istanbul therefore cutting the city in half; several democratic institutions were attacked by the Turkish Air Force throughout the night, mostly in Ankara and Istanbul. The international airport in Istanbul was also temporarily taken over while police officers were arrested by soldiers. It was quickly revealed that only a minority of the military force was involved and it was not operated under the chain of command; as the General Staff Headquarters was attacked and the Chief of Staff Hulusi Akar along with other high ranking officers were arrested by pro-coup plotters. This resulted in pro-government
military forces and police fighting rebellious soldiers in the barracks and on the streets. As quickly as the coup started it ended, once Erdoğan launched a message to his supporters to go on the streets and fight the rebellious soldiers. Furthermore, there was no face to the coup and no one to challenge Erdoğan. Erdoğan arrived in Istanbul later that night which signalled the end of the attempted coup (Milan, 2016: 29-30). By the morning of the 16th July hundreds of civilians and soldiers were dead and thousands injured. In the aftermath several unarmed conscripted soldiers were attacked by mobs and some reports that soldiers were lynched. Furthermore, purges first against the military started and widened to other institutions which will be examined more closely in the next chapter. The Turkish government was quickly to accuse Fettulah Gülen as the mastermind behind the coup and his followers of orchestrating it. Even though many scholars and many news outlets in outside of Turkey believe that the Gülen movement was involved, no reliable evidence has been published by the Turkish government regarding Gülen’s involvement. The US government has repeatedly asked to be provided with evidence so Gülen can be extradited to Turkey; however, at the point of writing none has been provided. In the immediate aftermath Erdoğan stated that the attempted coup was a ‘gift of god’ to rid the system from Gülenists (Milan, 2016: 30). This made some critics of Erdoğan, including Gülen, claim that it was a ‘false-flag’ and staged by Erdoğan to justify further purges and dismiss anyone critical to him, during the state of emergency it is possible to accelerate dismissals. However, many observers believe that the coup went too far and dangerous for Erdoğan to stage it (Basaran, 2016).

*Effects of the coup on the civil-military relations*

The attempted coup exposed the divisions within the Turkish Armed Forces as well as the failure by the Turkish military leadership to effectively quell internal issues. It therefore had an impact on the public image, as the military had already suffered from the Ergenekon investigations. This was particularly evident as contrary to previous coups, when the public and the Republican Party (CHP) supported military control, the public fought pro-coup soldier and the opposition parties immediately denounced the attempted coup. Furthermore, it highlighted the shift of civil-military relations in favour of the civil government but at the same time it demonstrated remaining issues facing the government. In the last 20 years the Turkish government attempted to increase its control over the military, through formal procedures, such as constitutional and legislative changes as well as informal methods, such
as the Ergenekon and Balyoz investigations and subsequent mass arrests. However, the attempted coup demonstrated to the government that complete control had not been achieved and the necessity to implement further changes to the military structure. This part of the chapter will examine the effects of the attempted coup and the government’s plan to restructure the military. By the 5th August 2016, over 3,000 members of the military had been dismissed including more than 40 per cent of generals. The government announced that the military will be put under tighter governmental control to prevent any future coups (Solaker and Taksabay, 2016). The changes include that the Chief of Staff will be appointed directly by the President and not the YAŞ. There will be direct governmental control by balancing the numbers of cabinet ministers and generals in the YAŞ. The head of the Air Force, Navy and Land Forces will directly report to the Minister of Defence instead of the Chief of Staff. Furthermore, the military education system will be completely restructured as Military High Schools and academies will be closed and merged into a new National University of Defence operated by the Ministry of Defence and not the Turkish Armed Forces. Finally, units and facilities will be modified; the paramilitary units (the Gendarmerie and Coast Guard) will be completely subjected to the Ministry of Internal Affairs while military facilities, such as shipyards and hospitals, will be transferred from military oversight to the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Health (Haugom, 2016). By implementing these changes the military will be tightly controlled by the government.

Overview and current civil-military relations in Turkey

This chapter has outlined the changes in the civil-military relations since the EU accession talks until the aftermath of the 2016 coup d’état attempt. Additionally to the shift of civil-military relations, this chapter also examined the increase of Islamist elites in the expense of the military’s long term ally, the secular Kemalist establishment.

Finally, by assessing Turkey’s recent shift in civil-military relations one can see more resemblance with Samuel Huntington’s criteria. As mentioned in this chapter the military has increasingly become more subordinate to the civil government and the Turkish government decides on foreign and military policies. Even though civil-military relations have shifted there were still some persisting issues which were particularly apparent in the 2016 coup d’état attempt. The four reasons of success outlined by Huntington have to a certain extent been accomplished by the Turkish government, especially after the failed coup. The military
has increasingly been under tighter control of the Ministry of Defence. The special military institutions, such as the MGK and YAŞ, have not been disbanded but greatly reformed and no longer exercise political power. Therefore sharing some resemblance to Huntington’s ‘new ’democracies, as the military no longer possesses a platform to direct policies. In most governmental position civilians had already replaced military officers, such as the Presidency in Turkey. Finally, military education will be changed into a more open National University of Defence. According to Samuel Huntington these reforms minimize an attempted military intervention, a belief shared by the Turkish government. Therefore the Turkish government has democratized civil-military relations. However, another issue is Turkey’s informal and undemocratic methods of shifting the relations. This became more evident after 2007 with some fabricated coup plots and large scale arrests. Furthermore, the lack of fair trials was a great concern to international observers (European Commission, 2011: 6). On one hand civil-military relations in Turkey are more democratic while on the other hand the methods adopted to achieve this are not democratic. The four criteria of industrial democratic civil-military relations are no longer unique features of well-established democracies but also less democratic countries and it especially highlights the blurred line between democracies and authoritarian regimes. This leads to the final chapter and analysis. This chapter examined the shift in civil-military relations and the next part will analyse how it affected democracy and authoritarianism in Turkey.
III) A Political and Ideological Change

This chapter will assess Turkey’s current increasing authoritarian rule. The early years of the AKP and the so-called “Turkish Model” were hailed around the world. In the Arab world it was presented as a perfect model on the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Western leaders were also impressed by Turkey’s ‘improving democratic standards, economic performance and regional influence’ (Taspinar, 2014: 49). The biggest achievement of the AKP was the complete subordination of the military to civilian control as described in the previous chapter. This also meant that the civilian government replaced the military as the hegemonic institution in the country. Even though Turkey is no longer a military tutelage the country has not democratized and instead it can be argued it has shifted more authoritarian. This has been especially visible in recent years and Erdoğan’s complete failure to liberalize and democratize the country, which was a main pillar of the AKP’s policies. The major shift was that the old type of authoritarianism, in which the military and the secular bureaucratic elites have been replaced by the new civilian Islamist authoritarian regime (Tapsimar, 2014: 50).

This chapter will assess the criteria for a democracy and Turkey’s historical challenges and issues to meet the criteria. As stated even though Turkey is no longer a military tutelage and the government successfully achieved superiority of the military, it cannot be described as a democracy due to persisting problems, most notably the lack of civil liberties. The chapter will further analyse Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way’s definition of competitive authoritarianism and to what extent the current political situation in Turkey fits into the definition. By analysing current changes I will argue that Turkey is shifting towards a one man full-scale authoritarian regime, which has been especially evident since the attempted 2016 coup.

The failure of establishing democracy

Firstly, the civil competitive authoritarianism to which I will add Turkey must be distinguished from a democracy. To be regarded as a democratic nation one country must fulfil certain criteria and by examining these it is evident that Turkey cannot be regarded as a democracy. The criteria include the open and free elections of executive and legislative actors by all adults that possess the ‘right to vote’. A democratic country further ensures political
rights and civil liberties to all members within the state, including the freedom to criticize and scrutinize the government without retaliation. Finally, the elected authorities are not subjected to any other institution or actor, such as the military, and enjoy authority to govern. If the violations are frequent and serious and thus create a favourable position for the governing actor a country can no longer be described as democratic (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 53). By examining the criteria it is clear that Turkey was never a complete democracy. As mentioned in the first chapter, from 1960 onwards successive Turkish governments were subjected to the military and did not possess the authority to govern without interference. Furthermore, throughout Turkey’s history it has struggled with political rights and civil liberties. Even though Turkey signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the issue of human rights did not enter the political agenda until three decades later, after the 1980 coup. The 1980 coup and its subsequent brutal crackdown on left and right wing groups alarmed international human rights organizations. However, the lack of human rights persisted in Turkey through the 1990s mainly in the southeast of Turkey during the armed conflict with the outlawed separatist Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK). The human rights violations in Turkey ranged from torture to extrajudicial killings and death during incarceration (Casier, 2009: 3-4). During the mid-2000s and the peace process human rights improved, however, issues still prevailed and Turkey was not at a level permitted by the European Union (European Commission, 2011: 21). Political rights were also restricted in Turkey and even though parties were usually permitted to run at elections, after each military intervention certain parties, often parties with Islamic tendencies, were banned and the opposition leaders jailed. This happened as late as the 1997 post-modern coup when the Islamist Welfare Party was banned.

The political landscape has changed considerably after the turn of the century and the government is no longer subjected to the military. However, this does not mean the government has democratized the country as it clearly lacks political rights and civil liberties. Especially in recent years and the end of the liberal ‘Turkish model’ certain democratic criteria have deteriorated considerably, most notable in ‘individual rights and liberties, independent media and the increasing lack of separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers’ (Taspinar, 2014: 50). The possibly greatest difference of Turkey and a democratic country, as known as in the West, is the growing tendency of the complete disregard for civil liberties and human rights in Turkey. Although human rights improved throughout the 2000s as aforementioned, human rights quickly deteriorated after 2012. This was first highlighted in
the brutal crackdown of protests in the summer 2013 at Gezi Park. The Gezi Park protests started as an environmentalist protest to stop the park in Istanbul to be turned into a shopping mall. However, due to the violent crackdown by the police it grew into wider protests against the growing authoritarian practice by the government and the attack on the secular lifestyle through speeches and laws passed by the AKP government (Özbudun, 2014: 157). The excessive use of force by the security services were heavily criticised by the international community and highlighted the lack of civil liberties in Turkey. Additionally to physical force the police used chemical irritants, such as pepper spray and tear gas to disperse protestors. After a month of country wide protests over 8,000 people were reported to have been injured and another three civilians died, the deaths were linked to excessive use of force by the police (Amnesty International, 2013: 6-8). Since the Gezi Park protests in 2013 civil liberties and political rights have further deteriorated every year. In the 2017 Freedom House report Turkey is considered ‘not free’ in the categories of civil liberties and political rights (Freedom House, 2017). The lack of human rights was further brought into focus in the aftermath of the failed 2016 coup and the state of emergency. Since the coup, reports of human rights violations have accelerated to a level not experienced in Turkey since the 1980 coup. Over 100,000 public officials have been dismissed and tens of thousands have been arrested since the coup on anti-terror laws. According to Amnesty International there have been reports of wide spread abuse and torture within prisons including abuse of alleged members of the failed coup and the PKK. Since the failed coup the length of detention without trial has been extended to thirty days due to the state of emergency, which further highlights the decline of civil liberties in Turkey (Amnesty International, 2017). Additionally to the decline of civil liberties, political rights have also deteriorated in recent years. After the ceasefire between Turkey and the PKK collapsed, the government accused the Kurdish opposition party (HDP) of being a proxy for the PKK and subsequently members have been jailed, threatened and attacked. By 2017, 2,700 local HDP politicians have been jailed (Freedom House, 2017). The lack of civil liberties and political rights clearly illustrate that Turkey cannot be considered as a modern democracy.

*Turkey as a civil competitive authoritarian regime*

As Turkey cannot be defined as a modern democracy this part will examine the theoretical framework of competitive authoritarianism and to what extent Turkey fits into it.
Furthermore it will argue that Turkey is shifting to a more authoritarian regime than a modern democracy. Four contested arenas are the defining features of a competitive authoritarian regime, which distinguishes it from a full-scale authoritarian regime. The contested arenas are methods in which the opposition can defeat the incumbent; these include elections, the legislative branch, the judiciary and the media. However, as soon as the four contested arenas have been eliminated a regime has shifted to full authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 53).

The first contested arena is the electoral arena. In competitive authoritarian regimes elections are often bitterly fought and include large scale abuses by the government; these include the use of state resources, biased media coverage, attacks on opposition candidates and activists and the lack of transparency. However, it is unlikely that results are manipulated as it could greatly damage the legitimacy and thus the governing party (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 55). Two of the most recent elections in Turkey, the 2014 Presidential election and the 2015, have been plagued with reports of irregularities by domestic and international observers. Both election campaigns were accused by observers of media biased and censorship. Even though the 2015 parliamentary elections were transparent media restrictions and violence prevented campaigns for opposition parties. However, unlike the 2015 elections, the 2014 presidential election even included electoral fraud and a lack of transparency (Freedom House, 2017). The government was accused of mass fraud again in the 2017 referendum for a constitutional change which grants President Erdoğan unprecedented powers (Reuters, 2017). Turkey’s recent elections featured the characteristics of a competitive authoritarian regime.

The second contested arena is the legislative arena. In full authoritarian regimes the legislative branch does not exist or is in complete control of the ruling party. However, in a competitive authoritarian country the legislative branch is weak and often a major area for the opposition to challenge the ruling party (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 55-56). The legislative branch in Turkey is the Turkish Grand National Assembly, also known as the parliament. Since 2002 the AKP holds the majority of seats in parliament, however, the opposition often use it as a platform to challenge the AKP. Due to AKP’s consistent majority the opposition is limited in challenging the ruling party through legislative actions. President Erdoğan’s growing strength was apparent when Prime Minister Davutoğlu, the head of the country, was ousted after an alleged disagreement in May 2016. The Prime Minister was replaced by Binali Yıldırım, a close ally of Erdoğan. The coup and the subsequent state of emergency
Further weakened the legislative branch. During the state of emergency the government can rule by decree gaining the ability to ‘pass bills that have to force of law’. These can only be overturned by the parliament. However, the AKP holds a majority in the parliament as well making it further unlikely that bills will be overturned (Shaheen and Bowcott, 2016). The largest change to the legislative branch has come with the 2017 referendum as it allows the Turkish President to issue decrees on ‘political, social and economic issues that would carry the use of force’. This would make the President the head of state and the head of government further limiting the parliament’s power (Ekim and Kirişçi, 2017). The legislative arena is still an area contested as the opposition has used it to challenge the government and tensions are high in parliament. In early 2017 a ‘brawl’ erupted in the parliament further indicating high tensions between the opposition and the ruling party (Cakir and Smith-Spark, 2017). However, the legislative arena has become less effective each year as Erdoğan tightens his grip on the country, including the Turkish parliament.

The third contested arena is the judicial arena. In a competitive authoritarian regime the government continuously attempts to subordinate the judiciary through various methods, including impeachment, bribery and extortion. Even though the government attempts to control the judiciary it is unlikely that judges are punished when acting against the governing party, as the regime could lose legitimacy (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 56-57). Turkey’s government has attempted to subordinate the judiciary on several occasions and has succeeded many times. Traditionally the judiciary in Turkey was secular, however, this changed with the constitutional amendments in 2010, as mentioned in the previous chapter. The government claimed that the amendments were necessary to diversify the judiciary. Contrary to the government, critics of the AKP instead believe that the amendments were introduced to add judges and prosecutors with favourable view to the AKP in high courts (Özbudun, 2014: 156). The amendments altered the structure of the judiciary system but the most noticeable attempt to subordinate the judiciary was during the 2013-2014 corruption scandals. The corruption scandals started with a wave of arrests with close allies to Erdoğan charged with corruption. Soon after the first wave of arrests a recording of Erdoğan and his son surfaced discussing methods to hide millions of euros. Erdoğan immediately responded by sacking the lead prosecutor, reassigning hundreds of police chiefs, replacing 96 prosecutors and judges. He further introduced new laws in which the judiciary was under tighter control of the government and rewriting laws for the government to control future corruption investigations (Taspinar, 2014: 52-53). Another radical change happened in the
aftermath of the coup, as 4,000 prosecutors and judges have been dismissed and subsequently arrested on charges of links to the Gülen network (Pitel, 2017). Recently Erdoğan possesses the power to dismiss judges and prosecutors at will with no retribution. He will further strengthen his grip on the judiciary once the new constitution is in force. In the new constitution the President of Turkey appoints nearly half the members of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), who in turn oversee all appointments, promotions and transfers (Pitel, 2017).

The final and fourth arena of contest is the media. In competitive authoritarian regimes independent media are legal and often influential as watchdogs investigating and exposing the government. In fully authoritarian countries the media is completely state-owned and heavily repressed and censored (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 57). Press Freedom has rapidly declined in Turkey over the last years and reached unprecedented levels of restricted freedom after the 2016 coup. Turkey is currently ranked 155 out of 179 in the World Press Freedom Index, below countries that have been repeatedly condemned for media restrictions and censorships, such as Zimbabwe, Burma and most Middle Eastern countries (Reporters without Borders, 2017). According to a survey by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) Turkey has highest number of imprisoned journalists worldwide. 89 journalists are currently imprisoned in Turkey which is over a third of all imprisoned journalists worldwide. However, exact numbers are impossible to verify and the actual number is believed to be over 100. Additionally over 100 media outlets have been forcibly shut down by the government after the attempted coup (Greenwslade, 2016). The targeted media ranged from outlets with alleged links to Gülen, some secular media and also Kurdish media outlets or any perceived as critical towards Erdoğan. The press freedom status for Turkey on Freedom House is currently ‘not free’ (Freedom House, 2017). Although some independent media still exists in Turkey, such as Cumhuriyet, journalists are regularly harassed, attacked, threatened or imprisoned.3 By arresting great numbers of journalists and shutting down several media outlets; Turkey is moving towards full authoritarianism as independent media has declined rapidly over the last years.

Prior to the failed coup it was possible to define Turkey as a competitive authoritarian regime as many arenas were contested. However, in the past 12 months Turkey’s political

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3 Cumhuriyet is a centre-left secular daily newspaper. It gained international prominence in 2014 when two journalists uncovered a plot by the Turkish Intelligence Service to illegally send arms to Syria. Both journalists were subsequently charged for revealing state secrets and sentenced to 5 years and 10 months in prison (Yeginsu, 2016)
system has further shifted authoritarian. Therefore the definition by Levitsky and Way of competitive authoritarianism is helpful in understanding Turkey’s shifting position but does not accurately describe Turkey’s current political situation. The contested arenas are no longer as influential and competitive as experienced in a competitive authoritarian regime. Turkey can also not be completely regarded as an authoritarian regime as there is a visible opposition within the country attempting to challenge the growing authoritarian shift. Due to the current political climate a re-assessment of competitive and full authoritarianism with Turkey as a case study could provide important literature for future studies.

_Turkey’s shift to a one-man Islamic authoritarian regime_

As mentioned in this chapter, Turkey has long struggled to democratize the country. Therefore the paper does not claim that Turkey has turned from a democratic country to an authoritarian regime. It argues that Turkey’s ruling party, elites and hegemonic institution have changed. From the founding of the Turkish Republic, Turkey had continuous issues of adopting democracy as known in the West. Until 1946 it was a single-party state ruled by Atatürk’s party. From 1960 the military effectively controlled the country and had the ability to intervene and dismiss governments. The inability of democratizing the country for such a large period of time has been cited as the problem for the lack of democracy the current government has established. As the country never underwent a complete democratic transition it also lacked democratic institutions and many institutions had a lack of accountability. Furthermore for historical reasons, the AKP as an Islamic party developed a mental attitude of ‘conquer rather than democratize’ state institutions (Sommer, 2016: 485-486). Similarly Levitsky and Way state that one reason for a competitive authoritarian regime to be formed is the collapse of a former authoritarian regime and the emergence of a new regime. They state that democratic traditions within the society are weak and there is an absence of democratic institutions thus allowing the new regime to adopt more authoritarian tendencies (Levitsky and Way, 2002: 60). As a result the already existing authoritarian system in Turkey was largely unchanged but the Turkish leadership’s ideology changed. The previously secular leadership and Kemalist ideology supported by the military were replaced by the AKP and its conservative-Islamic ideology (Sommer, 2016: 482). This was only possible after the AKP successfully subordinated the military. However, most striking is the
popularity and the party’s personification in one man, which is the current President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

As Erdoğan has tightened his grip on the country it is important to comprehend his perception of democracy. Erdoğan has a very majoritarian conception of democracy, as he believes that elections are the only ‘legitimate tool of accountability’ (Özbudun, 2014: 157). During the Gezi Park protests he dismissed the protestors as ‘hooligans’ with no regard to democracy and reiterated that only elections matter. As mentioned in this chapter a democracy cannot simply be reduced to elections and Erdoğan’s growing grip on power is continuously distancing democracy. After the failed 2016 coup and the subsequent state of emergency Erdoğan managed to silence his opponents in the judiciary and media by labelling them as terrorist or as having links with terrorists, which as aforementioned resulted in the dismissal of thousands and the arrest of many others. The legislative branch is still one where the opposition can raise their voice but the AKP has majority and it is no more than a discussion platform. In April 2017 a referendum was held on a constitutional change, critics have argued that the new constitution removes the separation of powers of the legislative, executive and judiciary, which in Turkey had already been weakened (Kingsley, 2017). Finally, the four contested arenas are decreasing and two nearly completely eliminated: the judiciary and the legislative branch. The independent media is also declining and only one arena of contest remains crucial, the electoral. As elections are the only factor in a democracy that Erdoğan respects, according to his own interpretation of democracy. However, Erdoğan is still very popular especially in Anatolia which is most evident at rallies and the popular resistance during the coup, although recent elections and the referendum have suggested his popularity is declining. This is particularly apparent as the AKP has been losing seats in the parliament since 2007 and most notably a majority in 2015 which resulted in a snap election a few months later in which they then won with a majority. However, the AKP only won a majority in 2015 as a result of growing security issues and a climate of fear (Bardakçī, 2016: 15).

The latest election was the referendum in 2017 which was closer than many predicted. Furthermore Erdoğan lost in the major cities of Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Antalya (Kinglsey, 2017). Even though the later elections have been close, by 2017 he has still never lost an election and one cannot know if he will accept a defeat considering the powerful position he currently holds. Furthermore there have also been claims of major electoral fraud in the 2017 referendum which is uncommon for a competitive authoritarian regime due to the
possibility of loss of legitimacy. However, in a full-authoritarian country electoral fraud is common. Although Turkey cannot be regarded as a full-scale authoritarian regime, the recent accusations of electoral fraud are a strong indication of Turkey’s continuous shift to full-scale authoritarianism.
Conclusion

The thesis gave an overview on Turkey’s political system and helped understand how the shift in civil-military relations in the twenty-first century changed the long lasting political system. From the founding of the Turkish Republic the military was the most efficient and modern institution in Turkey and the self-appointed protector of its state ideology ‘Kemalism’ thus defending Turkey from internal threats, most notably political Islam. Due to its self-appointed role the military intervened four times as an attempt to “save” Turkey. In 1960 the military ousted the government in a popular coup to prevent the government’s increasingly authoritarian rule. In 1971 and 1980 to stop internal unrests and in 1997 the military intervened to protect secularism. After each intervention the military tightened its control over political affairs through special institutions and constitutional amendments. By the end of the twentieth century the civil-military relations were in favour of the armed forces and the country was a military tutelage. The shift in civil-military relations started after the country’s attempt to join the European Union. It was necessary for Turkey to introduce a democratization process in order to join the EU. However, the military remained the dominant institution within Turkey until 2007. Two major developments were crucial to shift the civil-military relations. The governing AKP obtained a strong mandate with a clear majority in parliament and the Ergenekon and later the Balyoz (Sledgehammers) investigations occurred. The investigations into alleged coup plots had a three-fold effect on the military: the military lost its legitimacy, the government justified wide-ranging constitutional changes weakening the military and opening the judiciary to less assertive secular prosecutors and judges, and large numbers of high ranking military officers were arrested. Many of the arrested officers and secular civilians have been released after reassessing the evidence and identifying that many alleged coup plots were fabricated but the military had already been considerably weakened.

The failed 2016 coup clearly indicated that even though the civil-military relations have shifted in the last twenty years there is still a lack of governmental control over the military. However, it was the first time in Turkish history that a military coup failed and it highlighted that the population no longer favours a military takeover. The failed coup emphasized the need to further change the civil-military relations. In the aftermath of the coup the government further tightened its control over the military and the AKP government has replaced the military as the new hegemonic institution. By further subordinating the military, the government is hopeful to avoid another military coup. However, contrary to
common assumption, the subordination of the military did not democratize the country, instead critics argue Turkey is shifting further authoritarian. The shift in civil-military relations did not affect the authoritarian system but the elites and ideology of the country. By subordinating the military the AKP government had the ability to replace the secular elite and with the growing Islamic bourgeoisie. This was achieved as the military no longer possesses the power to direct or oust an Islamic government. In recent years the AKP and especially the former Prime Minister and now President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have increasingly grown authoritarian.

The constitutional referendum in 2017 has increased Erdoğan’s power which he will most likely assume in 2019 after a presidential election. The new constitution will grant the President complete control of the government replacing the parliamentary system thus further erasing the separation of powers and limiting checks on Erdoğan. Furthermore, the President will have the possibility to govern for three terms if the second term is terminated and early elections are called. Hence he will have the possibility to govern for another 14 years after 2019 as the leader of the country, until 2033 (Kingsley, 2017). Although Erdoğan has increased his powers nearly yearly there is still a visible opposition in Turkey and it is highly improbable that it will ever completely disappear. However, unlike last century it is very unlikely that the military still has the ability to intervene and oust the elected government or leader. From a democratic point the military should not politically interfere as it would further obstruct democratization and destabilize the country. Furthermore, by assessing Turkey’s political system with Levitsky and Way’s definition of a contested authoritarian regime, it is apparent that the some of the contested arenas set by Levitsky and Way are no longer completely contested. Therefore Turkey cannot completely be regarded as a competitive authoritarian regime. However, as there is a visibly opposition it cannot be considered as a full authoritarian regime. The political system of Turkey can be further assessed especially since the constitutional change and the aftermath of the coup and to what extent opposition have the ability to contest Erdoğan’s growing authoritarian rule. Furthermore the region adds a wider framework to Levitsky and Way’s competitive authoritarianism, as the article mostly focuses on Latin America and former Soviet states. As Levitsky and Way’s article was written in 2002 it mainly analysed data from the 1990s which differs greatly from the current political situation in many states. Therefore eliminating some of the four contested arenas, as in Turkey’s case does not automatically turn a country to a full authoritarian regime. The reason is that a visible opposition exists and can still contest the
incumbent yet unlikely through some of the four arenas. New methods can be analysed for the contested arenas such as social media which has been widely used and has played a prominent role in countries that attempt to silence oppositions, including Turkey. Furthermore even though Turkey is shifting more authoritarian mass rallies and protests are held around the country. Analysing the changes in Turkey’s political system along with examining the opposition can widen the studies and add to the literature on the subject of democracy and authoritarianism and the growing grey area.
Appendix: Timeline on Turkish civil-military relations, post post-modern coup

1999: Turkey granted status of applicant for EU membership

2002: Liberal conservative AKP wins majority in Turkish general election

2003: Government passes seventh harmonization package which desecuritized civilian institution and turns National Security Council into an advisory role

2007: AKP win majority in Turkish general elections strengthening its mandate

2007: The government defies the military’s warnings and elect co-founder of the AKP Abdullah Gül as the Turkish President

2007 – 2014: Ergenekon investigations and trials: Military officers and secular elite are imprisoned for an alleged coup plot in the early AKP years. Three effects: Delegitimizes the military, justifies constitutional amendments and inability to promote officers by the Supreme Military Council (YAŞ)

2010: Another alleged coup plot uncovered by police, named Balyoz (Sledgehammer) involving 350 military officers

2010: Constitutional amendments: Military officers tried in a civilian court. Government can appoint more prosecutors in the HSYK

2011: Resignation of the 4 highest military officers due to the wave of arrests of military officers. Signals the apparent end of military interventions

2012-2013: Alleged split between Prime Minister Erdoğan and influential cleric Gülen

2014: Release of many military officers and secular elites. Erdoğan accuses Gülen movement of fabricating coup plots

2016: Attempted coup d’état by a fraction of the Turkish military. Turkish government blames Gülen supporters within the military for attempted coup. First failed military intervention in Turkey

2016-2017: Mass arrests of military personnel. Wide ranging changes announced to further subordinate the Turkish military
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