Theses and Dissertations   Student Research

Spring 5-25-2021

Backsliding to Autocracy: The Case of Turkey under Erdoǧan

Yasmina Khaled Elazazi
American University in Cairo, yasminaelazazy@aucegypt.edu

Recommended Citation

Backsliding to Autocracy
The Case of Turkey under Erdoğan

Thesis

Yasmina Khaled Elazazi

SID: 900120380

Spring 2021

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Nadine Sika (AUC)

1st Reader: Dr. Mostafa Hefny (AUC)

2nd Reader: Dr. Rolf Frankenberger (Tübingen University)

Comparative Politics and Middle East Studies (CMEPS)

Political Science Department

The American University in Cairo

Table of Contents

Tables and Figures

Chapter I: Introduction

Abstract

Democratic backsliding is a gradual process that results from changes in formal political institutions and informal political practices that significantly affect how citizens engage with the state (Lust and Waldner, 2015: 7). Even though such a phenomenon may occur in different types of democracies, there is always a threshold that determines whether the state will completely backslide to autocracy or conserve being a "minimal democracy". For instance, a current model of democratic backsliding is Turkey; a state which has been experiencing a decline in basic civil liberties, political rights and freedoms. According to Freedom House, from 2002 to 2020, Turkey's "political environment" has decreased from 23 to 31 (on a scale of 0 to 40, 40 being the worst); moreover, its "global freedom" has deteriorated to 32 (on a scale of 100, 100 being the worst), which labeled it "not free", compared to being "partly free" in 2002 (Freedom House, 2020). Indeed, the literature indicates that such decline mostly stemmed from Erdoğan's personalization of institutions and control of the military's political power after the attempted coup of July 2016. Nevertheless, when examining the literature on democratization, studies reveal that undermining the political influence of the military is crucial to consolidate democracy, yet in the Turkish case that did not happen (Droz-Vinznet, 2014: 668). Accordingly, an emerging puzzle is: why does a regime continue to backslide from democracy despite de-politicizing its military? How do other personalized institutions, within a state, determine the outcome of democratic transitions? Looking at Turkey under Erdoğan and the AKP[1], this thesis aims to examine the causes of democratic backsliding in relation to the de-politicization of the military.

---

[1] The AKP: The Justice and Development Party, known in Turkey by its Turkish acronym AKP (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi).

Conceptual Framework

Before examining the theoretical part of the thesis, a conceptual debate will be demonstrated then key terms will be defined. To begin with, there is growing uncertainty on how we should name the phenomenon "opposite to democratization", how many distinct forms it can take in the empirical reality, and consequently how relevant and worrisome it is. Three commonly used concepts vary in degrees of differences when describing "the moving away" from democracy: "backsliding, breakdown/decay and autocratization" (Luhrmann and Lindberg, 2018: 7). However, for the purpose of this thesis, I abide by the term backsliding, arguing that democracies can lose democratic traits without necessarily breaking down or becoming autocracies. It should also be emphasized that my conception of democracy adheres to Dahl's "procedural minimal democracy" which offers seven conditions for a modern democracy to be present:

1. *Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials.*
2. *Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.*
3. *Practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials*
4. *Practically all adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government, though age limits may be higher for holding office than for the suffrage.*
5. *Citizens have a right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined, including criticism of officials, the government, the regime, the socioeconomic order, and the prevailing ideology.*
6. *Citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information. Moreover, alternative sources of information exist and are protected by law.*
7. *To achieve their various rights, including those listed above, citizens also have a right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups* (Dahl, 1982: 10-11).

In general, those seven conditions capture the essence of a procedural democracy; however, I also include the additional two conditions proposed by Schmitter and Karl (1991), which are perceived

as implicit conditions for the prior seven conditions. These two conditions are, firstly, the ability of the elected leaders to exercise their constitutional rights without being subject to intervention from informal and unelected opposition (the military junta, entrenched civil servants, or elites who can veto decisions made by the people's representatives (Schmitter and Karl, 1991: 81). The second condition is the importance of having a self-governing polity that can act independently of the constraints present by the predominant political system (Schmitter and Karl, 1991: 82). In other words, modern democracy offers a variety of competitive means to express interests and values - associational, partisan, territorial, collective and individual in which all are eventually brought to practice (Schmitter and Karl, 1991: 78). This chimes with Aziz Huq and Tom Ginsburg's use, in their recent paper, of the term "constitutional liberal democracy" to include "the civil and political rights employed in the democratic process, and the availability of neutral electoral machinery, and the stability, predictability, and publicity of legal regime usually captured in the term rule of law" (Huq and Ginsburg, 2018: 87). Indeed, Huq and Ginsburg's approach reflects a broad and general consensus among researchers and practitioners; for instance, the Freedom House report of 2016 *Populists and Autocrats* observed how democracy advocates limit themselves to just elections and refrain from other core pillars of democracy (Freedom House, 2017).

Though there is no doubt that there is a significant contestation on the conception of democracy, the purpose is not to acknowledge this contestation, but to diagnose the process opposite to democracy. Accordingly, the reason behind not adhering to the concept of "democratic decay" is because it is, arguably, used with long-established or consolidated democracies (Daly, 2017: 10). Hence, it will not be possible to apply it to the selected case study: Turkey, which is often claimed that it never had consolidated because democracy has never been the "only game in town" (Huq and Ginsburg, 2018: 101). In fact, it is more relevant to adhere to the concept of

"backsliding" introduced by Nancy Bermeo in explaining the "move-away" from democracy. Bermeo asserts that backsliding can lead to different endpoints at different speeds as it can "constitute democratic breakdown or simply the serious weakening of existing democratic institutions for undefined ends," this backsliding "yields situations that are fluid and ill-defined, taking action to defend democracy becomes particularly difficult" (Bermeo 2016: 6). Additionally, Lührmann and Lindberg define democratic backsliding as a "deterioration of qualities associated with democratic governance, within any regime" (Luhrmann and Lindberg, 2018: 8).

Another concept that is important to define is the politicization of the military; a politicized military is an institution in which "a significant proportion of military men consider it appropriate for the military to be involved in overall government and even to be markedly influential in specific concerns involving the national security" (Miranda, 1992: 7). Although the process of politicization does not automatically exclude a constitutional mindset that sets the possibility of supporting the civilian authority, it confines boundaries to this constitutionalism (Miranda, 1992: 7). Besides, the indicators and activities of a politicized military vary, from attempts to enhance their political position within the framework of a civilian government to those which outrightly attempt to seize political power, as in the case of military coups (Miranda, 1992: 7). In this regard, the former definitions aim to serve the core arguments of the thesis and help to avoid sliding into a conceptual trap or stretching.

Theoretical Framework

The research framework of this thesis is not derived solely from one theoretical model due to the complexity of having one inclusive theory that considers the institutional and political context, and sequences of events behind the current trend of democratic backsliding; nevertheless, to establish a causal relationship, the case study pursues a historical path-dependent approach. The

6

path-dependent explanation integrates different levels of analysis, which regards institutions[2] as mediatory units between the structure and agency (Mahoney, 2001: 111). Mahoney suggests that path-dependency occurs when "the choices of key actors at critical juncture points lead to the formation of institutions that have self-reproducing properties" (Mahoney, 2001:111). These institutions are important to succeeding political development because their persistence affects the outcomes of regime; hence, in this approach, key actors at critical junctures[3] initiate more deterministic causal processes that eventually lead to processes of political development (Mahoney, 2001:112). Mahoney lists the analytical components in terms of sequential stages; in the first stage: *antecedent historical conditions* that influence the choices of actors; secondly, the *critical junctures* which refer to the "choice points" when a particular action is adopted among two or more alternatives; thirdly, *structural persistence*, the stage which institutions are formed; fourthly, *reactive sequences* which are the result of reactions and counter-reactions to those institutions formed; finally, *regime outcome*, which is the final political development that depends on the resolution of the conflict or prevailing arrangements (Mahoney, 2001: 112-113).

---

[2] Institutions are "humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. Corollary, they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social or economic" (Söyler, 2015: 30).

[3] Critical juncture: defined as "a key choice point or a particular option (e.g., a specific policy, institution, coalition, or a government) that is selected from among two or more alternatives" (Mahoney, 2001: 112). The critical junctures can vary from choices characterized by a high degree of individual preference to choices that are embedded in earlier occurrences (Mahoney, 2001: 113).

Analytic Structure of Path-Dependent Explanation

Antecedent Conditions	Critical Juncture	Structural Persistence	Reactive Consequence	Outcome
Theoretical factors that define available options and shape selection processes	Selection of a particular option (e.g. policy option) from among multiple alternatives	Production and reproduction of institution or structural pattern	Reactions and counter-reactions to institutions or structural patterns	Resolution of conflict generated by reactions and counter reactions

Figure 1: Excerpted from Mahoney (2001) "*Path-Dependent Explanations of Regime Change: Central America in Comparative Perspective*". p.113

Thus, in relating path-dependency to my case study, my explanatory figure is divided into two "path-dependencies" to demonstrate the impact of "path-dependency of institution (1)" on the "path-dependency of institution (2)" and vice-versa.

Institution (1) Structure-based The Military	Antecedent condition 1-The Turkish military identity. 2-Military tutelage in Turkey; coups of 1960, 1971 and 1980.	Critical Juncture 1-The institutional reforms in the early 2000s. 2- The EU conditions.	Structural Persistence A split in the officers' ideational integrity regarding their role in politics.	Reactive Sequence The 15 July 2016 coup attempt.	Outcome De-politicization of the military.

Institution (2) Agency-based The AKP & Erdoğan	Antecedent condition The change of political parties and the victory of AKP.	Critical Juncture The *Ergenekon* and 'Sledgehammer' legal processes starting in 2008 and 2010.	Structural Persistence Constitutional consolidation and state transformation in 2014.	Reactive Sequence Strong Presidential system 2018.	Outcome Another form of authoritarianism/ Democratic Backsliding

Figure 2: Own compilation after Mahoney's (2001) path-dependent explanation of regime change. P.113

Literature Review

The Decline of Democracy Worldwide

In the absence of a common understanding of the "worrisome signs" by Freedom House in 2005, the literature on democratization and its challenges has been divided in explaining the current alarming claims regarding the acceleration of a democratic erosion process (Cassani and Tomini,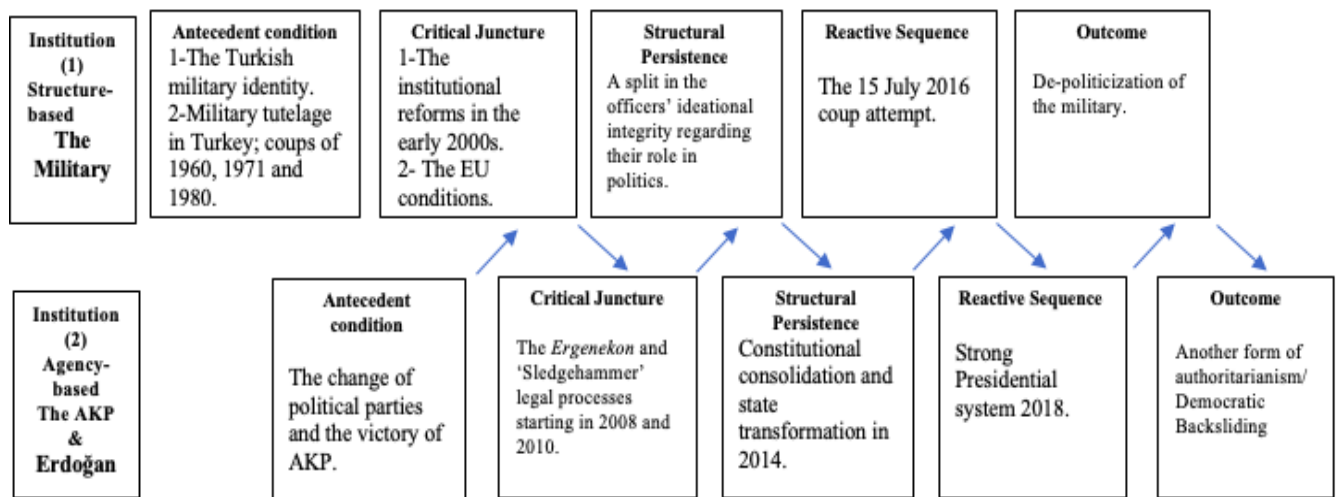 2018: 3). Indeed, the processes opposite to democratization have been highlighted more especially after the Freedom House report considered 2017 as the 12th consecutive year of a worldwide decline in political freedom, the worst decline in years as stated by the Economist Intelligence Unit (Cassani and Tomini, 2018: 3). According to Anna Lührmann, "Media autonomy, freedom of expression, and the rule of law have undergone the greatest decline among democracy metrics in recent years," hence, "this worrisome trend makes elections less meaningful around the world." (Jacobs, 2018). As described by Luhrmann, this growing trend of "autocratization"[4] has been evident as almost 24 counties have been backsliding from liberal democracy[5]. Interestingly, under the current autocratization trend, electoral institutions and practices remain robust, yet media freedom, freedom of expression and alternative sources of information, and the rule of law are undermined (Luhrmann et al, 2017: 1336).

Nevertheless, it is still debated if the world is currently facing a reverse wave or not, because on the one hand, the empirical data does not fully prove that a rising wave is occurring,

---

[4] Autocratization: Luhrmann defines autocratization in this context as "the backsliding away from democracy towards autocracy", other definitions are introduced, for example: autocratization is a "process of regime change towards autocracy that makes politics increasingly exclusive and monopolistic, and political power increasingly repressive and arbitrary (Luhrmann and Lindberg, 2018:10). Some authors used "autocratization" and "backsliding" interchangeably because the both imply a loss of democratic quality and changes towards increasing and different levels of authoritarianism.

[5] Liberal Democracy: a full-fledged democracy that entails "a commitment to liberal values such as the protection of key rights and civil liberties, as well as a willingness to use the institutions of liberal democracy to effect political change" (Foa and Moank, 2016:8). Additionally, such a democracy follows the tradition of Almond and Verba's classic 'The Civic Culture' which emphasizes key political values like civil rights (Foa and Moank, 2016).

as stated earlier it is only occurring in 24 countries. On the other hand, the increasing number of hybridizations and losses of democratic quality[6] are indicators for a possible upcoming reverse wave (Eichhor, 2016). Furthermore, the research is invigorated by the fact that not all countries that previously were considered in transition ever made it to "full democracy" as many introduced democratic institutions, but reasonable doubts concerning the democratic quality remain (Eichhor, 2016). Hence, in the absence of a shared understanding that can describe the process opposite to democratization, Cassani and Tomini (2018), presented in their paper a suggested framework for the comparative analysis, specifically identifying "political participation, public contestation and executive limitation as the main dimensions of regime variance" (Cassani and Tomini, 2018: 1).

Concerning the conceptual difficulty of the aforementioned phenomenon, several concepts and terms have been introduced, which is particularly challenging because many of these concepts overlap. According to Cassani and Tomini (2018), some scholars focus their concepts narrowly on cases of "democratic breakdown" (Svolik 2015), "overthrow" (Huntington, 1991), "death" (O'Donnell, 1992), or "failure" (Kapstein and Converse, 2008). Others consider episodes of "democratic backsliding" (Bermeo, 2016), "decay" (Shedler, 1998), "deterioration" (Economist Intelligence Unit), "recession"[7] (Diamond, 2015) and "erosion" (Bermeo, 2016). For the purpose of this thesis, I abide by the latter category of "milder" terms because they imply that although

---

[6] Democratic Quality: Although it is a challenging concept to measure, I abide by Diamond and Morlino definition which stresses on the "eight dimensions of democratic quality": (1) rule of law; (2) participation; (3) competition; (4) vertical accountability; (5) horizontal accountability; (6) freedom; (7) equality; and (8) responsiveness (Campbell, 2008:24).

[7] Democratic Recession: According to Larry Diamond, democratic recession encompasses four categories, "a deepening of authoritarianism in non-democratic states; an acceleration in the breakdown of democratic regimes; a decline in the stability or quality of democracy in younger democracies; and a decline in the vigor of long-established democracies, both in their internal democratic performance and in their faith in, and willingness to engage in, democracy promotion abroad" (Daly,2017: 2).

some autocratic processes might happen in democracies, a full-fledged transition to autocracy may still not take place. Moreover, the list of concepts includes even softer concepts like "worsening" and "decline" (Freedom House) or "deconsolidation"[8] (Foa and Mounk, 2016). A further obstacle in this debate lies in the proliferation of labels concerning how they relate or contrast to each other; for example, some scholars, arguably, include military coups and disruptive events in referring to "democratic backsliding", while others compare "democratic backsliding" with "democratic breakdown" (Cassani and Tomini, 2018:4).

Another argument presented in the literature is how the game of "electoral autocrats"[9] has changed, and although an autocrat is a strong label to refer to rulers or state officials in democracies, it is relevant when applying it to the president in Turkey, due to the autocratic laws he and his entourage implement. Luhrmann and Lindberg (2018) argue that electoral autocrats secure their competitive advantage through indirect tactics such as "censoring and harassing the media, restricting civil society and political parties and undermining the autonomy of election management bodies" (Luhrmann and Lindberg, 2018:6). Indeed, aspiring autocrats borrow and learn their tactics from each other because it is less risky than abolishing the multi-party elections altogether (Luhrmann and Lindberg, 2018:6). Thus, one can claim that the current wave is more clandestine, compared to earlier "autocratic waves", because around 40% of contemporary autocrats do not change the formal rules (Luhrmann and Lindberg, 2018: 21).

---

[8] Deconsolidation: Democratic deconsolidation is a term offered by Foa and Moank (2016-2017) to describe the phenomenon opposite to consolidation. They use Linz and Stepan definition of "democratic consolidation" when democracy is the "only game in town". Hence, deconsolidation is "concerned not with the extent of democratic rule but rather with the durability of democratic rule" (Foa and Moank, 2017:10)

[9] This label is used by several scholars in the literature including Luhrmann and Lindberg (2016), Cassani and Tomini (2018). Nevertheless, "electoral autocracy" is a term used when multiparty elections are held and some political and civil liberties exist but their meaningfulness is undermined by government repression, censorship, and intimidation (Luhrmann et al, 2017: 1327).

<u>How Democracies Die?</u>

There has been a long debate over how democracies die; nevertheless, the main factor that most scholars focus on is coup d'état. According to Nancy Bermeo, there are different forms of democratic backsliding over time, yet, we are now faced with more vexing forms that are legitimated through the institutions prioritized by democracy advocates (Bermeo, 2016: 6). Overall, the democratic backsliding trends have changed drastically since the Cold War, as the current trends in backsliding reflect the slow progress of democracy and not its demise; those trends include *promissory coups, executive aggrandizement and strategic manipulation* (Bermeo, 2016). The first persistent form of backsliding Bermeo addresses is *promissory coups*, which is a kind of coup that "frames the ouster of an elected government as a defense of democratic legality and makes a public promise to hold elections and restore democracy as soon as possible" (Bermeo, 2016: 8). Indeed, nowadays coup-makers emphasize that their intervention is a necessary step toward restoring a new improved democratic order, and mostly this claim is spoken out in their speeches; hence, the percentage of successful coups under the category of promissory coups has risen from 35% to 85% (Bermeo, 2016: 9). Moreover, after analyzing the aftermath of twelve successful promissory coups that took place in democracies between 1990 and 2012, only few states managed to conduct competitive elections and few have paved their way for improved democratic systems (Bermeo, 2016: 9). For instance, in the case of Haiti, 1990, the coup was justified by calling for a correction of the democratic process, yet the military soon never kept that promise (Bermeo, 2016: 9). In addition, the other cases: Gambia (1994), Pakistan (1999), Fiji (2006) and Honduras (2009), all have proved that elections are not a reliable route to democratic restoration as all the elections that have followed the promissory coups turned out to be in favor for those who backed the coups or the actual coups' perpetrators (Bermeo, 2016: 9). Indeed, even

though promissory coups initially raise positive expectations at home and abroad, those expectations have mostly proved to dash (Bermeo, 2016: 9). The second persistent form of backsliding is *Executive aggrandizement.* This form of backsliding occurs when elected executives succeed in weakening checks and balances through undertaking a series of institutional changes that prevent the opposition forces to challenge or defy the executive preferences (Bermeo, 2016: 10). The channels through which the institutions are disassembled are usually legal ones, such as elected constitutional assemblies, referendums or even democratic mandates (Bermeo, 2016: 10). Indeed, on the one hand, this form of democratic backsliding offered by Bermeo is precisely relevant to my case study and helps to explain how Turkey, under Erdoğan, is reverting to autocracy, but on the other hand, it does not completely explain why this reverse is occurring. In sum, executive aggrandizement slowly slides a state towards autocracy as often the call to change by opposition and movement leaders is not loud enough because the majority supports the already taken route (Bermeo, 2016: 14). The third and last persistent form is *strategic manipulation*. Being often associated with executive aggrandizement, strategic election manipulation includes a "range of actions aimed at tilting the electoral playing field in favor of incumbents" (Bermeo, 2016: 14). Those range of actions includes: sponsoring incumbent campaigns through government funds, changing the electoral rules, keeping opposition candidates off the ballot and hampering voter registration; all those actions are conducted in a way that appears to be free of fraud (Bermeo, 2016: 14). Bermeo asserts, "it is strategic in that international, and often domestic, observers are less likely to catch or criticize it" (Bermeo, 2016: 14). Additionally, it is argued that the manipulation of elections is a result of international pressure that widely perceives elections as "the only game in town"; hence, politicians manipulate them and use them as means to legitimize their rule (Bermeo, 2016: 15).

Furthermore, Linz's study on presidential democracies (1990) suggests that presidential democracies are more prone to breakdown in comparison to parliamentary democracies (Linz, 1990). According to the former study, presidential systems have key features that eventually make it more likely for the regime to "backslide". Firstly, presidential constitutions incorporate contradictory assumptions; on one hand, they create a strong executive system to stand against the interests of the legislature, and on the other hand, such constitutions reflect strong hidden personalization of power (Linz, 1990: 54). Secondly, presidentialism imparts rigidity to the political system in the sense that no electoral means can respond rapidly in the case of a political crisis (Linz, 1990: 55). Thirdly, such a system is problematic because it operates according to the rule of "winner-take-all", which eventually makes democratic politics a zero-sum game and portends more conflict (Linz, 1990: 56). Another notable feature in presidential systems is that the "style" of politics mainly results from the characteristics of the presidential office and that conflates the risk of having an "authoritarian presidential style" (Linz, 1990: 60-66). Additionally, a presidential regime leaves less room for the exchange of compromises and consensus-building, which eventually "freezes" the dynamics of any democratic political arena (Linz, 1990: 68). Accordingly, a lesson drawn from the aforementioned features of the presidential system is that the institutional design of a state matters, and in the case of Turkey, Erdoğan has utilized such a system to centralize the state's institutions and preserve his authority. Furthermore, Larry Diamond in his recent book, *Ill Winds* (2019), offers a thought-provoking account of the ongoing "democratic recession" through offering several case studies that have been on a sharp decline (Diamond, 2019). Diamond argues that the process of the "death of democracy" has changed compared to last decades when it was sudden with coups and authoritarian captures; however, currently, the "death" is gradual and the anti-democratic forces are: constraints of free media, on

14

independent courts/institutions and business community (Diamond, 2019: 55). Accordingly, the precise assessment of the democratic decay/backsliding/reversal in some countries is challenging because it involves more than one factor; besides, the events and processes that lead to anti-democratic regimes vary (for example, Putin's removal of opposing oligarch differs from Chavez's amendment of the constitution). However, the outcomes are closely the same, as elections become only an instrument to gain legitimacy and the basic civil and political rights are drastically exacerbated (Diamond, 2019: 55).

In the case of Turkey, Kirisci and Sloat briefly identify the internal and external drivers that contribute to democratic backsliding (Kirisci and Sloat: 1). Domestically, it is argued that the country has been adopting the culture that accepts "big man" rule; hence, Erdoğan's government is less attached to civil liberties and rights that are associated with liberal democracy (Kirisci and Sloat: 1). Additionally, the adoption of exclusionary policies has polarized the society, specifically after the July 2016 coup attempt that complicated the efforts to preserve shared democratic values (Kirisci and Sloat: 1). Another domestic reason Kirisci and Sloat identify is the crushing of the opposition by Erdoğan and the transformation to a heavily centralized presidential system that further crushed checks and balances (Kirisci and Sloat: 1). On the other hand, externally, Turkey's inability to join the EU, followed by the destabilization of the region due to the arrival of 3.5 million Syrian refugees, the attacks of some Turkish cities by ISIS and the ongoing clashes with the PKK, all played a role in its democratic regression (Kirisci and Sloat: 2). Nevertheless, it is still difficult to pinpoint a precise date when Erdoğan's authoritarian behavior became evident and the question is whether the aforementioned "drivers" are real factors or just means to legitimize his authoritarian rule?

Indeed, many scholars argue that Turkey has taken a turn towards authoritarianism, specifically with the series of consecutive autocratic laws, reforms and events that have taken place for the last decade (Duran, 2018). The failure of democracy in Turkey, according to Duran, can be seen as part or the "new reverse wave" that Larry Diamond identified between 2000 and 2014 (Duran, 2018: 99). Given that, the process of "autocratization" in Turkey can be summed up in the various institutional changes and a number of contingent and informal changes starting from the June 2015 parliamentary elections, the 2016 attempted coup d'état, and the 2017 referendum (Duran, 2018: 98). This "autocratization" is fundamentally related to the concentration of executive power in the figure of president Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2012, which has manifested itself as the longest period of a party's continuous rule in Turkey since 1950 (Duran, 2018: 100). In fact, the absolute control of the AKP through the presentation of a strong ideology, consecutive electoral victories (including presidential and parliamentary), control of institutions (like judicial and legislative institutions), social networks and media censorship have all led to the repression of freedom and the erosion of check and balances in the state's branches and government's accountability to voters (bipartisan policy, 2014).

Furthermore, some reports highlight the corruption alleged by Erdoğan and his close associates in increasing the state's power and insulating its accountability (bipartisan policy, 2014:6). Pierini adds that the new reform of the electoral law, which brought forward the elections to June 2018 instead of November 2018, embodied a political strategy that gave more control over ballot stations to the government officials vis-á-vis party representatives (Pierini, 2018: 7). Moreover, the jailing of various deputies, mayors, journalists, policemen, teachers and the opposition, in general, has significantly affected the quality of democracy; in other words, the system Erdoğan created, managed to establish a dysfunctional government in terms of civil liberties and rights (Duran, 2018

and Pierini, 2018). Lastly, White states how the polarization and control cycles have hindered productivity and social integration, which eventually "help keep strongman leaders like Erdoğan in place" (White, 2017: 36).

<u>The Politicization of the Military and Democratic Politics</u>

Throughout history, there has been an ongoing debate on the role of the military and its impact on democratic politics. William Thomson (1973, 1980) formulated a model "corporate grievance" that suggests the "self-interests" of the military institutions in ending civilian rule (Tusalem, 2014: 483). He states that the military aims to end democratic rule when its self-interests are not served by the national governments or when the state tries to only abide by austerity measures "imposed by domestic, external or populist forces," that threaten the military (Tusalem, 2014: 483). Aguero (1995, 1997) additionally asserts that the key to maintaining a consolidated democracy is to undermine the authority of the military and subordinate it to civilian rule (Tusalem, 2014: 484). Moreover, Miranda (1992) examines the relationship between the politicization of the military and its effect on democratic transition. He argues that mastering the military to serve under the constituted authorities has always challenged civilian regimes; thus the liberal democratic theory emphasizes the importance of establishing limitations on the role of the military and putting it under civilian officials and agencies (Miranda, 1992: 6). According to Miranda, various reasons explain the phenomenon of military politicization; some of them are the fragility of post-colonial orders, absence of traditional institutions that balance and control the "guardian-role-oriented military", and the corruption of civilian authorities who are not able to govern (Miranda, 1992: 7). Indeed, most of the studies that have been conducted to examine the relationship between the role of the military and the survival of democracy assert that it is vital to restraining the power of the military for democracy to survive (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Huntington, 1996).

Nevertheless, it is still puzzling why Erdoğan is following an autocratic path despite his current control over the military as he already managed to reduce its legal and institutional power in decision-making and criminalized any intervention (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016: 1584-1585). One way to solve this puzzle is to first measure the politicization of the military, and secondly to look at the history of democracy in Turkey; thus, chapters two and three examine more the later issues.

Research Question, Hypotheses and Variables

After reviewing part of the literature on democratic backsliding and Turkey, this thesis aims to lead to a better understanding of why the process of democratic backsliding has taken place in Turkey despite depoliticizing the military as an institution. Hence, the thesis research question is:

*RQ: Why is Turkey reverting to autocracy despite de-*politicizing *the military?*

H1: Restrainaing the power of the military does not gurantee the survival of democracy.

H2: The autocratic policies by Erdoğan are influenced by the historical experience of Turkey[10].

H3: The personalization of institutions[11] is a key cause of democratic backsliding in Turkey.

In this thesis, the dependent variable is *the reverse to autocracy/democratic backsliding* function. The independent variables are the *politicization of the military (IV1), personalization of institutions (IV2) and the historical experience (IV3).*

---

[10] Referring specifically to the authoritarian legacy and the role of the Turkish deep state.

[11]personalization of politics is a term developed by Rahat and Sheafer, according to them, "personalization should be seen as a process in which the political weight of the individual actor in the political process increases over time, while the centrality of the political group (i.e., political party) declines" (Rahat and Sheafer, 2007: 65).

Research Design and Methodology

The research will be addressed through process tracing. The term "process tracing" originally derived from the field of cognitive psychology in the late 1960s. yet in 1979, Alexander L. George appropriated the term to describe it as "the use of evidence from within case studies to make inferences about historical explanations" (Bennett and Checkel, 2015: 5). In fact, "process tracing" is a mean to examine the intermediate steps in a process to make inferences about hypotheses on how that process took place; thus, Bennett and George defines it as "the use of "histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is, in fact, evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case" (George and Bennett, 2005: 6), adding, "the process-tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable [or variables] and the outcome of the dependent variable" (Bennet and Checkel, 2015:6). With those definitions in hand, it is important to note that process tracing is highly dependent on historical explanations, and that does not mean it is only a detailed sequence of events; rather, it draws on different theories that aim to explain each important step that contributes to causing the outcome (Bennet and Checkel, 2015:8).

The reason behind adhering to this method is that quite often the events that lie between the variables are not fully determined by those specified variables; hence, analyzing the evidence on processes, sequences and conjunctures of events within a case allows one to either develop hypotheses about the causal mechanisms that might explain the case or generate additional testable implications (Bennet and Checkel, 2015:7-8). Another analytical advantage of using this method is that it draws close attention to the incentives generated by the institutional, organizational and societal context including case-specific knowledge of "formal and informal institutional structures, patterns of political competition, economic and social conditions, and details of the substantive

issue at hand" (Bennet and Checkel, 2015: 72). Thus, employing this method will help solve the thesis puzzle and trace how Turkey is still abiding by its democratic narrative despite employing a key "authoritarian arm" and structuring other institutions in favor of the ruler and his political party. Moreover, to examine the phenomenon of democratic backsliding, this approach is the most practical for evaluating the competing theoretical explanations.

Case Selection:

The thesis is a single-case study; it is defined as an intensive study of a single unit to understand an issue or refinement of theory (Berg-Schlosser, 2012: 55). Although conclusions from a single case are not enough to verify or falsify theories, the accumulation of knowledge derived from such case studies could in the long run add or determine the fate of broader generalizations (Berg-Schlosser, 2012: 55). Moreover, since the core argument of the thesis is that the politicization of the military matters for the future of democracy, the Turkish case study is significantly relevant as it also presents an empirical example of the possible relevance of factors for the survival or breakdown of democracy.

Obtaining Data

The data was collected through secondary sources, using already existing literature and scholarly work on:

- The study of democratization and autocracy.

- The relationship between democracy and the politicization of the army.

- The steps through which Turkey has moved to autocracy.

In addition, official statements of President Erdoğan published in newspaper articles, as well as, reports on the status of Turkey, will be observed.

Organizational Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides an introductory overview of what the thesis is examining; this includes the research puzzle and question, the hypotheses, the theoretical and conceptual framework, the literature review and the methodology.

The second chapter is offers a historical background on the role of the military and its impact on democratic politics, as different theoretical explanations will be presented to examine the causal relationship between the politicization of the military and the survival or demise of democracy.

The third chapter will examine the Turkish model since the establishment of the republic in 1923, and trace the historical events to determine how the democratic project has begun and what processes have led to its deterioration.

The fourth chapter is the core of this study as it aims to explain the reversal to autocracy under Erdoğan and the AKP. The analysis will help to determine the turning point through which this reversal has occurred as it will be looked at the empirical evidence behind the restructuring of the Turkish political and legal institutions, military and media outlets.

Finally, chapter five provides a conclusion of the study and a restatement of the key findings.

Chapter II: The Military and Democratic Politics

The civilian control of the military is one of the key conditions for the consolidation of democratic institutions (Croissant et al, 2011). Indeed, in the subject of civil-military relations[12], various theories tend to explain the success or failure of civil control and its relation to democracy. Civil control is defined as the ability of the exclusive authority to decide and implement national policies on the military, which has an autonomous power that does not go beyond those already defined by the civilians (Croissant et al, 2011: 77). Thus, the term "civilians" refers to those individuals and organizations in the state apparatus that have the authority to formulate, implement and oversee political decisions, whereas the term "military" is narrowly defined as a permanent state organization that is authorized by law to use coercive power to provide security for the state and the society against any external threat (Croissant et al, 2011: 77). To evaluate *H1: Restrainaing the power of the military does not gurantee the survival of democracy,* this chapter aims to outline key explanations on the impact of the politicization of the military on the survival or demise of democracy (democratic outcome). Followingly, different theories about the impact of institutional changes in civil-military relations will be examined to understand the role of the military in the Turkish political system.

The Politicization of the Military and Democratic Politics

Edmund Burke once said, "an armed disciplined body is, in its essence, dangerous to liberty" (Kemp and Hudlin, 1992: 8). At first glance, the conflict between the military and the survival/consolidation of democracy has been always obvious and most studies have emphasized

---

[12] civil-military relations is described as a continuum of political decision-making power with full civilian control and complete military dominance over all political structures, processes, and policies at the respective endpoints of the scale; cases in which political decision-making power is divided between civilians and the military are positioned somewhere along this continuum (Croissant et al, 2011: 78).

the importance of restraining the power of the military for democracy to survive (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Huntington, 1996; Barany, 1997; Agüero, 1998; Schedler, 1998). For instance, Schedler in his study (1998) posits the risk of former authoritarian governments that had military regimes or strong politicized military to democratically collapse; this occurs when civilian governments face a legitimacy problem and the military tends to intervene to reassert itself either through direct intervention in politics or an outright coup (Schedler, 1998: 96). Thus, eventually, such tendencies lead to uncertainty and may lead to democratic decay/erosion (Schedler, 1998: 96). In other cases, the military intervenes by rigging elections, reversing democratic reforms by supporting civilian elites who have a similar ideological connection or by performing multiple coup plots, which result in making the government chronically unstable and accordingly compels it to curtail basic civil freedoms and rights (Diamond, 1999: 61-62). Moreover, in other cases, the historical institutionalism and its role as a vanguard actor provide the justification for the military to intervene in politics; therefore, according to Diamond, to deepen democracy "the military must be steadily removed from the political realm" (Diamond, 1999: 113). Similarly, Agüero asserts the importance of subordinating the military to the civilian authority, as it is considered one of the key determinants of a state's democratic outcome, and indeed the democratic reversals that occurred in Latin America result from the failure of civilian governments to remove the military from the executive leadership (Agüero, 1998: 383-404). In addition, earlier Alfred Stepan et al. (1988) emphasized the importance of including the military in democratization studies because it has been long neglected, although it is a "central topic of empirical research" (Stepan et al., 1988: 9). The latter is emphasized by Zultan Barany (1997), stating "the military is the most consequential actor in post-authoritarian transitions and the success or failure of these processes to a large extent hinges on its political behavior" (Barany, 1997: 1). Barany (1997) studied the impact of a state's military

23

infrastructure on the quality of democratic transitions; his conclusion is the more professionalized a state's military pre-transition, the more likely its democracy will consolidate post-transition like in the case of Poland and Hungary. On the other hand, the more politicized is the army, the more turbulent are the transitions, like in the case of Romania (Barany, 1997: 21-43). Moreover, Stepan (1988) affirmed in his study on Latin America how can some "prerogatives" or "reserved domains" of the military in post-transitional periods affect consolidation; such prerogatives include: limiting the presidential decisions on the affairs of the military; allowing the military's participation in the executive cabinet; preserving partial autonomy of the military; giving advantages and amnesty to ex-military officers; prohibiting the prosecution of military officers in civilian courts (Stepan et al, 1988: 94-97). Furthermore, Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) explained how the reserved domains of the military and their significant control led to stalling the democratic progress in Africa (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997: 170). The path dependency is manifested through the institutional legacies of the militaries and their demand of "reserved domains", which they refuse to let go easily post-transition. Accordingly, the likelihood of democratic consolidation for transitional states with politicized militaries becomes difficult. Lastly, Finer (1962) posed the question: "Why does the military ever refrain from political intervention?" The answer is dependent on the nature of civil-military relations within the state (Finer, 1962: 84). Thus, in the following paragraphs, I aim to explore the different theories and mechanisms of civil control over the military.

Theorizing Civil-Military Relations

Political scientists have proposed a series of contending theories on civil-military relations, offering various explanations that range from agent-based to structural and institutional approaches. Each of these approaches not only aims to provide the factors explaining the success

or failure of civilian control over the military in democracies but also takes up a fixed position towards the structure-agency debate (Kuehn and Lorenz, 2011: 231-232). Nevertheless, the literature has not explicitly addressed the interplay of both structure and agency except recently through the works of few scholars who integrated different elements from each approach. Hence, briefly, the four traditional approaches will be demonstrated following an overview of explanations for the civil-military relationships. To begin with, the agent-based approach emphasizes two aspects for institutionalizing civilian control; firstly, the military must give up any formal or informal power it acquired under an authoritarian regime; secondly, civilians have to secure their authority over former and current "reserved domains" in which the military had held exclusive institutional autonomy (Kuehn and Lorenz, 2011: 235). Subsequently, the main dimension in theorizing change of civil-military relations is the identification of the relevant actors who possess the ability and intention to safeguard or extend the political and institutional autonomy. Similarly, the ideational approach centers around the subjective aspects of human action and the influence of culture and actors' behaviors; for example, "the political socialization of the officer corps or the degree of social militarization" (Kuehn and Lorenz, 2011: 236). In contrast, a structural approach looks at the macro-social and political environment; for instance, the level of modernization, economic performance of the regime and the internal and external threats of the environment concerning the independent decisions of agents (Kuehn and Lorenz, 2011: 236). Last but not least, the institutional approach aims to explain the civil-military relations through examining the man-made formal or informal rules, which constitute the institutions of the political system such as: "as the centralization of decision-making power or the 'path dependence' of authoritarian legacies" (Kuehn and Lorenz, 2011: 236).

<u>Traditional Approaches</u>

One of the main scholars to theorize and conceptualize civil-military relations is Samuel Huntington in his famous study "The Soldier and the State" (1957). Huntington argues that professionalism is the key to both maintain civil-control over the military and at the same time it is the gate to military autonomy (Huntington, 1957: 80). Hence, his basic methodological assumption is based on an equilibrium that simultaneously maximizes security while ensuring civilian control (Huntington, 1957: 80-83). Nevertheless, Huntington's ideas do little in providing clear measures that can be used to increase civilian control and, additionally, fails to explain what may happen if the military disobeys the civilian institution despite its professionalism. Another theoretician who conceptualized civil-military relations is Morris Janowitz who reviews the impact of international relations on the relationship between the military and the civilian government (Janowitz, 1960: 418). According to him, the invention of nuclear weapons has blurred the line between peace and war, persuading the military to become more politicized through its increasing interference in the affairs of the civilian government (Janowitz, 1960: 418). Indeed, "as a pressure group, the military is not a voluntary association acting on the organs of government; on the contrary, it is an organ of government seeking to develop new techniques for intervening in domestic politics" (Janowitz, 1960: 365). Therefore, to keep the military under control, Janowitz advocates several measures such as: increasing the legislative oversight, extending civilian control and involvement in the military organizations and developing the values and the curriculum of military education (Janowitz, 1960: 369). However, Samuel Finer provides a different view of civil-military relations by detailing the means of the military influence and suggesting that professionalism may render the achievement of civilian control (Finer, 1962: 4). Thus, the military

adopts the perception of having "a unique duty, a duty of supererogation, to watch over the national interest," which allows it to significantly intervene in politics and undermine the power of governments (Finer, 1962: 63). Furthermore, Finer distinguishes the military motives and "moods" for intervention which include: nationalist interest, sectional interest and social/individual interests; yet, for a motive to transform into an actual intervention, it has to be associated with an emotion (Finer, 1962: 20-50). Indeed, he emphasizes that the level of intervention is dependent on the nation's "political culture" and level of development (Finer, 1962: 89). Finer's theory goes beyond Huntington and Janowitz's theories in demonstrating the preconditions and motivations of civil-military control, which helps explain the behaviors of the military. Peter Feaver is another scholar who argues that all civil-military relations theories fall under one simple paradoxical "problematique", which is "the institution created to protect the polity is given sufficient power to become a threat to the polity" (Feaver, 2003: 4). Feaver emphasizes the dangers of infringing military influence and addresses the importance of having a strong civilian government even in the absence of direct military intervention; hence, he uses the principal agency-based theory to explain the "strategic interaction" and the role of punishment between both actors (Feaver, 2003: 51). Strategic interaction is useful because "the choices civilians make are contingent on their expectations of what the military is likely to do, and vice versa," accordingly, this level of uncertainty pushes both actors to take calculated risks to achieve optimal results (Feaver, 2003: 54). Lastly, Eric Nordlinger and Amos Perlmutter, described as "interventionist scholars", focus on the military elites who maintain their influence through establishing power-related networks (Nordlinger, 1977; Perlmutter, 1981). Nordlinger argues that the actions of the military are driven by the self-interests of the corporate rather than any wider conception of national interest; moreover, the military generally intervenes when the civilian government fails to strongly perform

27

and loses its legitimacy to protect its corporate interests (Nordlinger, 1977: 65-66). Perlmutter states that the military's decision of intervention is purely political. Using the term "praetorianism" which means: "a situation where the military class of a given society exercises independent political power within it by virtue of an actual or threatened use of force." Perlmutter describes the military's tendency to intervene in the government to dominate the executive (Perlmutter, 1981: 5). He further distinguishes between two types of "praetorian armies": "the ruler army" which exercises direct rule over an extended period of time, and the "arbitrator army" which seeks to consolidate its political power and indirectly intervene in politics (Perlmutter, 1981: 25-27). Nevertheless, although Perlmutter's theory offers us an understanding of different military scenarios, it fails to offer policy solutions that allow civilian governments to maintain control of the military.

Integrative Approaches

Throughout the last decade, few scholars have introduced integrative approaches that look at different factors as: "the mode of transition, the cohesiveness of civilian coalitions vis-à-vis the military, the strength of public support for democracy, civilian expertise in military issues, and the international context" (Croissant et al, 2011: 80). Among those scholars is Muthiah Alagappa (2001) who analyzes the declining political role of the military in Asia through integrating ideational and agential factors such as "beliefs, power and interests of the key civilian and military actors" (Alagappa 2001: 63). The struggle Alagappa sees among competing political and military elites is not limited to one actor, rather, it includes different societal groups and institutions (Alagappa, 2001: 30-31). Indeed, at first, he relies primarily on a single structural variable which is the "the weight and role of coercion in governance"; thus, if coercion is a necessary tool for the implementation of government decisions, the military in return has a stronger position to possess

28

more decision-making authority (Alagappa, 2001: 63). Clearly, Alagappa's argument entails an integrative model in which he assumes that the structure influences action through producing actors' preferences (Alagappa, 2001: 63). Simultaneously, his argument suggests a resource model that includes "economic, coercive, organizational, as well as, political and ideational components that merge with beliefs" (Alagappa, 2001: 63). However, it lacks a model of actors' decisions that would examine the impact of the discrete action on different outcomes (Kuehn and Lorenz, 2011: 240). Another example of an integrative approach is the study by Felipe Agüero "*Soldiers, Civilians, and Democracy*" in which he argues how the bargains between military leadership and civilian elites, those who reside in the government, determine the development of civil-military relations in new democracies (Agüero, 1995: 11). Agüero asserts that the reason behind the strive for autonomy by the military leadership is due to its fear of uncertainty and its aim of preserving control over internal affairs (Agüero, 1995: 22). Additionally, other institutional factors include the system of government and the degree of democratic institutionalization in the polity; hence, Agüero argues that although both presidential and parliamentary systems could tame the military's power, civilian elites in presidential systems might encounter more factionalism between the executive and legislative branches of the government (Kuehn and Lorenz, 2011: 241). On the other hand, if those civilian elites unite against the military, their power will be strengthened; therefore, military factionalism is a valuable resource, especially if parts of the military are "professionally" minded and as a result accept the normative principle of military subordination (Kuehn and Lorenz, 2011: 241). In addition to Agüero and Alagappa, Harold Trinkunas (2005) offers a comprehensive framework that focuses on the actions of civilians who can reform the initiatives of decision-making and maximize their control over the military (Trinkunas, 2005: 10). According to Trinkunas, civilians tend to choose between four strategies in order to "co-opt, recruit, or

29

intimidate a sufficiently large number of military officers into supporting the government's agenda"; such strategies include appeasement, monitoring, divide-and-conquer, and sanctioning (Trinkunas, 2005: 12). All those strategies fall under the umbrella of "regime capacity", which is dependent on the strength of civilian institutions and the degree of defense expertise to break the "old path" of civil-military relations and establish a new one (Trinkunas, 2005: 13-16). Trinkunas, additionally, emphasizes the importance of institutionalizing secondary resources like ministries, legislative committees, courts and NGOs (Trinkunas, 2005: 17-19). Lastly, Croissant et al. (2011) agree with Trinkunas in stating that the chances of institutionalizing civilian control depend to a great extent on the decisions taken by the civilians; however, they restrict the agential capacity to political elites who "have the authority to formulate, implement and oversee political decisions" (Croissant et al., 2011: 77). In this respect, they assume that civilians are generally interested in expanding their control; yet, the actions of the civilians are not all alike once in power, as both the mechanisms and "control strategies" differ (Croissant et al., 2011: 83). The types of mechanisms and control strategies used by the civilians to institutionalize control depend on the political resources at disposal, as they can range from weak to robust ones (Croissant et al., 2011: 86).

Table 1: excerpted from: Croissant et al., 2011: 86.

Table 1: Mechanisms and strategies of civil-military change

Power	Legitimization	Compensation
Robust ⟵⟹		_Weak_
Sanctioning	Ascriptive Selection	Appeasement
Counterbalancing	Political Socialization	Acquiescence
Monitoring		Appreciation

As demonstrated in the table, the mechanisms and strategies of civil-military change vary and in the following paragraph, those mechanisms will be examined in detail to provide a coherent

30

explanation of civil-military relations. Firstly, *power mechanisms of institutional change* are attempts to adjust the status quo of civil-military relations through power and that occurs when civilians try to coerce the military into submitting to the newly introduced rules (Croissant et al., 2011: 86). The corresponding strategies are (a) *sanctioning*, (b) *counterbalancing* and (c) *monitoring. Sanctioning* is a mean that strengthens the civilian's supremacy by depriving military factions and individual officers of their benefits; such a measure includes: "discharge, early retirement or court-martialing of disloyal officers, summary purges of the officer corps and "reputational attacks" [that] aim to destroy the social prestige of the armed forces (Croissant et al., 2011: 86). On the other hand, *counterbalancing* is dependent on the inter/intra-agency rivalries among different segments of the security sector and the creation of parallel or additional security forces outside the military's chain of command, like presidential guards, parliamentary police and other security forces under the command of the ministry of interior and the president (Croissant et al., 2011: 87). Indeed, most authoritarian regimes rely on this strategy to preserve the military's subordination (Croissant et al., 2011: 87). The third coercive strategy is *monitoring* and it mainly raises the expected cost of military non-compliance by increasing the probability of punishment by creating surveillance networks and reporting systems inside and outside the military (Croissant et al., 2011: 87). Moving on to the *legitimization mechanisms of institutional change*; civil-military relations occur when civilians transform the normative framework of the military through institutional change (Croissant et al., 2011: 87). If the former mechanism is successfully applied through *a*) *ascriptive selection* or (*b*) *political socialization*, then the military in return tends to accept the institutional transformation and perceives it as morally right and legitimate (Croissant et al., 2011: 87). *Ascriptive selection* is a strategy that reduces the military's disposition by promoting officers to top positions, based on ethnic origin, class affiliation, ideological orientation

and other ties to civilian leaders (Croissant et al., 2011: 87) In contrast, *political socialization* is a long-term strategy that aims at transforming the identity of the military through involving political education, confidence-building measures and training programs to strengthen the acceptance of democratic civilian control (Croissant et al., 2011: 87). The last mechanism is *institutional change through mechanisms of compensation*; this category includes all the civilian attempts to extend control by granting benefits to the military when it accepts the new institutional framework (Croissant et al., 2011: 87). Accordingly, the three types of strategies are: *(a) appeasement*, *(b) acquiescence*, and *(c) appreciation. Appeasement* occurs when civilian elites supply the military with financial demands; for example, in Indonesia after the transition to democracy, civilians allowed the military to maintain its various business and economic activities to gather extra revenues (Croissant et al., 2011: 88). Similarly, *acquiescence* is a strategy that depends on the exchange of political subordination, as civilian authorities "refrain from government intrusion on military prerogatives and institutional autonomy of the military (Trinkunas 2005, 10). Lastly, *appreciation*, which is a strategy that creates military loyalty through enhancing the public support and social acceptance of the armed forces, providing them new roles and missions, and improving their stance through pro-military propaganda and administrative reforms (Croissant et al., 2011: 88).

In sum, all the aforementioned forms of strategies could be understood as illustrative examples of the possible concrete actions conducted to change civil-military relations. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that civilians in civil-military relations make their decisions based on certain macro-domestic and structural circumstances (e.g. socio-economic development, military identity, type of political culture and structure of the international system) in certain institutional settings and under particular historical legacies (Croissant et al., 2011: 90).

Indeed, David Dessler's description of the "agency-structure problem" explains how the choices and strategies of actors "can be realized only in concrete historical circumstances that condition the possibilities for action and influence its course" (Dessler, 1989: 443). Last but not least, the use of each strategy depends on the available resources the citizens have; for instance, more robust strategies demand more resources than less robust strategies (Croissant et al., 2011: 90). By adopting Mahoney's path-dependent explanation for institutional change and stability, those three mechanisms "power, legitimization and compensation" act as means for civilians (change agents) to break path dependence and make new institutions (Croissant et al., 2011). Overall, Croissant and his colleagues predict, "that the more robust a strategy, the higher the chance of 'breaking' a path, and the more likely a displacement of existing rules and a substantial increase in civilian control" (Croissant et al., 2011: 93). Finally, all the aforementioned theories of civil-military relations offer a broad foundation; however, they take for granted the notion when the military is institutionalized, democratization or democratic consolidation is given, and the case of Turkey proves otherwise.

Overview of Civil-Military Relations in Turkey

The military always had a central role in the Turkish state and society; indeed, the preservation of the state, both internally and externally, has been traditionally missioned to the military (Haugom, 2019: 3). This legacy, extended from the Ottoman times, was continued in the modern Turkish Republic as the military has been always perceived by the Turkish society as a "guarantor of stability" or the "guardian"[13] (Haugom, 2019: 3). Indeed, its prestige at certain times

---

[13] Eric A. Nordlinger defined this guardian role as one in which the military has a governmental control to preserve the status quo and correct what it perceives as deficiencies (Nordlinger, 1977: 22 in Haugom, 2019: 3). In addition, Nilüfer Narli revealed how this guardian role permitted the military "to use various forms of intervention, ranging from a coup to controlling and influencing the civilian political process through formal and informal mechanisms" (Narli, 2011: 215 in Haugom, 2019: 3).

was optimum; according to Süleyman Demirel, the late Turkish political leader, "In Turkey, God first created the military" (Haugom, 2019: 3). Moreover, the military was "the one institution that repeatedly checked civilian autocratic tendencies, maintained moderation, and ensured the preservation of the state" (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 174). Nevertheless, since the end of the Cold War, the influence of the military in politics has been decreasing and the civil-military relations in Turkey have evolved; thus, in the following paragraphs, I will first overview the military interventions before 2002 then demonstrate the factors and dynamics that led to realignment and evolution of the Turkish Armed Forces (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 172).

Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the military and the ruling party (Republican People's Party, CHP) were considered one strong entity, until 1950, because none of them was strong enough to suppress the other (Demirel, 2005: 247; Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 175). Nevertheless, even though there was no clear legislative arrangement defining the army's position, Ataturk's governments used the military as "an instrument of education, social mobilization and nation-building" (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 176). In fact, the Turkish military remained independent and unsubordinated to any constitutional organization till it was subordinated to the Prime Minister in 1944 and the Ministry of Defense in 1949 (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 176). Following a general election in 1950, the single-party government came to an end and the military's influence over civilian power declined under the Democrat Party (DP) governments (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 177). In fact, during the period between 1950-1960, civilian authorities relatively exercised more control over the military; hence, this period is viewed as the "highest level of professionalism" along with strong internal dynamics that greatly impacted civil-military relations (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 177). Nevertheless, the means that the DP used to undermine the political influence of the military, eventually led to more "tight-fisted" actions by the military.

Indeed, the military had a growing view that the DP is violating the secular principles, in addition to increasing authoritarian practices by the government to political conflicts (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 177). Eventually, those conflicts resulted in the coup of May 27, 1960, involving middle-ranking officers and military-bureaucratic elites who dominated the CHP and feared losing their ground (Demirel, 2005: 249). After the intervention, the Turkish General Staff (TGS) introduced several institutional mechanisms to ensure that the upcoming governments abide by their acceptable bounds; hence, those mechanisms were legitimized by adding them in the new constitution of 1961 (Jenkins, 2007: 342). Indeed, not only the coup and its aftermath policies gained widespread support among civilian elites, but also the DP supporters did not show any serious resistance against the new regime (Demirel, 2005: 249). Thus, the military perceived the opponents (DP supporters) not as a threat but as a group of people who need to be "educated" (Demirel, 2005: 249). Even though the 1960s was a period of partial military rule, it was still perceived as a period of progress in which freedom and civil rights were broadened yet it did not bring "more democracy" (Demirel, 2005: 249). In fact, towards the end of the 1960s, clashes between the right and left-wing students escalated, causing domestic disorder, and the government of the Justice Party (JP), which won the majority in the parliamentary elections of 1965 and 1969, proved to be inefficient in dealing with the social and economic unrest (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 178).

Moving towards the 1970s, the government of JP led by Suleyman Demirel resigned and the military intervened by issuing a memorandum demanding the formation of a technocrat government (Demirel, 2005: 250). The technocrat government was approved and the political influence of the military was significant (Demirel, 2005: 250). Towards the end of the 1970s, Turkey was experiencing tremendous political, social and sectarian turmoil; indeed, at the political

level, the country was considered almost ungovernable[14] (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 178). For instance, "unsuccessful coalition governments followed each other; the society was divided along the ideological lines; and the parliament could not manage to choose its president after 102 successive attempts," accordingly, the 1980 coup was welcomed by the Turkish people and the military managed to restore order at a huge cost (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 178). In fact, the means used by the military to restore this order were highly undemocratic as curfews were imposed, people were arrested, political activities were prohibited and major trade unions and associations were closed (Jenkins, 2007: 342). The impact of the coup became evident in the mid-1980s and 1990s with the rise of Islamic radicalism[15] that started to destabilize the notion of secularism in Turkey (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 178). Consequently, in 1997 almost all the state organs became involved in countering the Islamic threat, which resulted in issuing 18 measures by the military to the government; following by a report on the "spread of political Islam" that eventually increased the reactions against the Islamists and leading to the formation of a new coalition that was accepted by the military (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 178). Many scholars defined the former actions as a "post-modern coup"; indeed, this period revealed how citizens choose to defer to the military as a better alternative, instead of insisting on a democratic process, and as Demirel puts it, "the unstated

---

[14] 50 Frequent changeover in leadership occurred as follows:• March 1971—January 1974 (elections in October 1973): A military/civilian regime• January 1974—November 1974: CHP (Republican People Party)/MSP (pro-Islamist National Salvation Party) coalition• November 1974—March 1975: A non-party caretaker government• March 1975—June 1977: Right-wing coalition• July 1977—January 1978: A two-week coalition followed by a second right-wing coalition• January 1978—October 1979: Ecevit led minority government• October 1979—September 1980: Demirel led minority government (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 178).

[15] The Welfare Party, the largest party in 1995 elections, acted as the center of Islamic views forming a coalition government with other Islamic parties like the Truth Path Party (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 178).

assumption was that the military would clear away the playing ground and then return to its barracks without doing much damage to the status quo" (Demirel, 2005: 255).

To understand the period of military interventions until 2000, numerous scholars have agreed that the Turkish civil-military relations could be explained through Huntington's theory that suggests when the military is more professionalized, it tends to become more autonomous and not intervene in civilian politics. However, the professionalized military in Turkey tended to intervene more and did not distance itself; indeed, "the increased professionalism of the army is associated with greater influence in the Turkish case" (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 179). Furthermore, the interventions revealed how the military perceives itself closer to the state than the government; in fact, the military and the civilian spheres were not separated (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 179). Nevertheless, the military interventions have been described as a "moderator" type because they were conducted to stop a political-economic turmoil or "re-secularize" a government (Demir and Bingöl, 2018: 179). In fact, even though the Turkish military always returned the power to the civilians and never preserved its rule permanently, it never installed a system that ensures good governance, and thus it always used the "coup" as a last resort, which created a system of civilian authority rather than supremacy (Jenkins, 2001: 34). In addition, Heper (2005) states how the interventions failed to create lasting solutions, although they always had to precipitate conditions like the inability of the civilian ruling governments to resolve major problems either due to economic conditions, disagreements or other external factors (Heper, 2005: 215). On the other hand, William Hale (1994) argues that the Turkish military tends to return the power to civilians after the interventions as a result of the gradual process of accepting the notion of disengaging from the political system, not due to its adherence to democratic ideals and civilian rule (Hale, 1994: 295). In sum, the overview of the military interventions till 2002 reveals how the

military did not differ much from periods of civilian rule, in the sense that the military always managed to ensure that every coup was supported by a segment of the political elite, business owners and peasants (Demirel, 2005: 252). In fact, in the periods of military governments (1971-1973, 1980-1983), in terms of better protection of liberties and businesses, the people perceived the military as a better alternative compared to "the so-called democratic regime" by the civilians (Demirel, 2005: 254). Finally, it is important to note that all the aforementioned military interventions have not only paved the way for a new party system[16] but also have set the stage for a real shift in the Turkish civil-military relations which will be elaborated on more thoroughly in chapter four.

The Role of the Turkish Military in Politics after 2002

Despite the military's efforts in trying to sustain its tutelary and guardian role in Turkish politics, a series of drastic developments started taking place since the AKP was elected to government in 2002 (Keyman, 2012: 1). In fact, 2002 has indicated a real shift in the balance of Turkish civil-military relations, as for the first time the elected civilian government is more powerful than the military, and according to Haugom (2019), this unprecedented development has occurred through three main stages (Haugom, 2019: 4). However, before discussing the changes that resulted in this shift, it is crucial to layout first the reasons for diminishing the influence of the military under the AKP (Bardakçi, 2013). According to Bardakçi (2013), four identifiable factors changed the balance of power between the AKP and the military (Bardakçi, 2013: 414). The four major factors are a de-securitization/ democratization process led by the European Union; a powerful mandate given by the electorate to the AKP; a change in the balance of power between

---

[16] The military attempted to ban most of the political parties and undermined the organizational strength of the major political parties, which eventually resulted in a weak institutional party system (Bulut and Yildirim, 2020).

the AKP and the Kemalist camp; and lastly, the uncovering of a series of coup plots and the "Ergenekon and Sledgehammer'" legal processes (Bardakçi, 2013: 414; Haugom, 2019: 4). In fact, the last factor acts more as a catalyst that triggered this transformation (Bardakçi, 2013: 414).

The constitutional and legislative reforms started with the launch of EU accession talks[17] to allow Turkey to become a candidate after the Helsinki Summit in 1999 (Bardakçi, 2013: 412). The talks suggested changes that brought changes that aimed to de-securitize and curb the institutional role of the military; indeed, post these talks, the Turkish parliament passed the "seventh harmonization package" which altered the composition and duties of the National Security Council (MGK, Milli Güvenlik Konseyi) and limiting it to be an advisory body with a majority of civilian members (Cagaptay, 2019: 77; Bardakçi, 2013: 412). Additionally, the expenses of the military were put under the control of the Court of Accounts, which keep both the defense and military expenditure accountable to the Parliament (Bardakçi, 2013: 413). The second major development was the powerful mandate of November 2002, which brought an end to the political fragmentation, allowing the AKP to strengthen its position and exercise full domestic and external authority vis-a-vis the military (Bardakçi, 2013: 412). From the beginning, the AKP distanced itself from previous Islamic governments and managed to build its character as a moderate conservative democratic party (Bardakçi, 2013: 414). In addition, the AKP has pursued a "strategy of confrontation-avoidance" in dealing with the military and established stronger connections with liberal intellectuals (Bardakçi, 2013: 419). Eventually, the AKP government

---

[17] The EU's criteria for membership required Turkey to undertake a number of political reforms, including the establishment of civilian supremacy and oversight of the armed forces, which was considered a crucial step for Turkey to become a modern democratic secular state. In fact, the EU criteria became an important tool for reducing the political influence of the military after Brussels imposed on Ankara to uphold "the rule of law" (Cagaptay, 2019: 77; Haugom, 2019: 4).

gained more domestic and international support, especially after it achieved several economic successes and prevailed in a huge electoral battle[18] against the military (Bardakçi, 2013: 414). The third factor is the expansion of "pro-AKP elements at the expense of the Kemalists" (Bardakçi, 2013: 415). As mentioned earlier, Kemalism had been the main ideological notion and "common denominator that penetrated all schools of Turkish political thought," and was expanded to the whole society (Söyler, 2015: 106). However, with the rise of AKP, Turkey witnessed a rapid ideological transition obtained from a wide spectrum of the conservative classes, the "Anatolian bourgeoisie" and the electorate (Bardakçi, 2013: 414-415). Similarly, the realm of higher education, a pillar of the Kemalist establishment and a significant influence in the 1997 coup has undergone a major transformation process (Bardakçi, 2013: 414-415). Nevertheless, despite the transformations aimed to change the role of the military in politics, the military remained a threat to the civilian government. Indeed, in 2007, the diaries of a former Navy Commander revealed the military's conspiracy against the AKP in 2003-2004; the reasons behind this conspiracy were due to the reforms of the AKP government to decrease the military's independence and meet the Copenhagen political criteria (Matos, 2013: 25). However, the AKP's strength and the divisions within the military led to the failure of the coup, along with the judicial investigations of "Ergenekon and Sledgehammer"[19] that have become a symbol of the AKP and Erdoğan's victory over the generals and opened the door for more influence to the civilian government (Haugom, 2019: 5). In sum, the civil-military relations under the AKP from 2002 till the failed coup attempt

---

[18] On April 2007, the Constitution Court cancelled the election of the Parliament of Abdullah Gül (The AKP candidate) on the ground that it did not meet the minimum number of deputies, and in the same day the General Stuff warned the AKP government; nevertheless, the AKP did not submit to the pressure and won a sweeping victory and elected Gül as president (Bardakçi, 2013: 414).

[19] The Ergenekon and Sledgehammer cases weakened the position of the Turkish Military; indeed, the many charges that followed caused a crisis within the armed forces as many of the officers were prohibited from being promoted and in facing the crisis, the Chief of Defense, and Commanders of land, sea and forces resigned. Moreover, by 2012 over half of all Turkish admirals and one in 10 generals found themselves behind bars (Haugom, 2019: 5).

of July 2016, could be divided into two stages; the first one is the period (up until 2006) in which there was a strong motivation by the government to join the EU membership, and the second stage is a phase marked by the various institutional reforms that have curbed significantly the military's power.

"The Straw that Broke the Camel's Back"

The 15th of July 2016 coup attempt is perceived as "the straw that broke the camel's back"; following the various institutional, political, constitutional and ideological changes to end the tutelary of the Turkish military, the coup was not only the last opportunity to regain the military's political power, but also it was the ultimate step Erdoğan needed to completely seize control over the military. Before addressing the implications of this coup, I will first briefly give an idea about the circumstances that made it happen. The causes of the coup are debatable, yet the main reason was that the "perpetrators"/coup-plotters believed that it is their last chance to halt Erdoğan from cleansing the military of Gülen loyalists (Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 141). This belief came to be after the pro-government newspapers' reports that were published and filled with news of possible purges and retirements of Gülen-loyalist army officials; thus, "realizing that their time was running out, the conspirators decided to carry out a kamikaze-style coup" (Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 141). Furthermore, although the plotters were small in size, they managed to attract more generals and hundreds of military officials who were aiming to preserve their careers and personal interests, along with the increasing discontent of the policies[20] implemented by Erdoğan (Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 141).

---

[20] All the policies will be discussed in detail in chapter four. Because they are discussed as part of the shift towards the reverse to autocracy under Erdoğan.

<u>The Attempt</u>

In the evening of July 15, 2016, some units from the Turkish military declared that they seized control over the government, state institutions, and key communication media outlets (Haugom, 2019: 1). Operating under the name "The Peace at Home Council" the coup plotters declared on national television that the Turkish military had seized control; however, the main target was capturing Erdoğan, who managed to leave the hotel in Marmaris just 15 minutes before the forces arrived (Haugom, 2019: 1; Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 142). Indeed, just a few hours after the declaration, it became clear that the Chief of Defense and other top commanders were against the coup and it was evident that the coup was about to fail (Haugom, 2019: 1). Accordingly, Both Erdoğan and Prime Minister Binali Yildirim denounced the coup and called the people to take the streets and resist the coup attempt, which resulted in confrontations that led to the killing of 240 and people and several thousand were injured (Haugom, 2019: 1; Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 142). The coup failed for multiple reasons: the first of them is a result of the refusal of the chief of staff of the military and top commanders to sign on; in addition to the majority of the military who chose to remain loyal to Erdoğan (Azeri, 2016: 466; Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 142). Moreover, the media outlets and almost all of the political parties backed the civilian government, except the Kurdish Nationalist Party (HDP). In fact, those who first responded to his calls are the religious conservatives and Imams, addressing "believers" to defend Erdoğan and democracy (Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 142). However, despite the failure of the coup, many Western observers are reluctant to accept the premise that the Gülen were responsible for the coup; indeed, others claim that the coup was staged by Erdoğan to use it as a justification to destroy his opposition and establish a strong authoritarian rule (Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 143).

<u>The Consequences of the Coup Attempt</u>

42

Following the defeat of the coup, Erdoğan launched a massive liquidation movement within the army, various ministries, the academia and then instantly declared a state of emergency, which suspended basic rights and freedoms (Azeri, 2016: 466). Accordingly, a rapid restructuring of the Turkish military has taken place, which expelled hundreds of generals and admirals, and imprisoned hundreds more; however, the main change was the transition from a parliamentary to a strong presidential system in 2018 that resulted in giving the president absolute authority to appoint the chief of defense, and give direct orders to the commanders of land, air and sea forces without going ahead through and other authority (Haugom, 2019: 6). In addition, the Supreme Military Council has also been suspended from many of its previous functions, leaving all the major decisions like the assignments and promotions of generals to the president (Haugom, 2019: 6). Moreover, a new board of Security and Foreign Policy has been formed as a consultative body to the presidency, which largely took over the guidance functions of the MGK. Erdoğan's administration also aimed at changing the educational system of the military as many military high schools and academies were closed and fused into a new university under the Ministry of National Defense (Haugom, 2019: 6). Currently, the Turkish Armed forces run the risk of becoming a "more politicized and dysfunctional organization with a greater internal rivalry between branches and a more restive officers' corps", indeed civil-military relations now seem to be highly based on the personal relationship between the president and the minister of defense who has to prove his loyalty to the former (Haugom, 2019: 7). Finally, without much participation from other state bodies or the government, the failed coup not only marks the end of the Turkish military tutelage but also demonstrates how the democracy in Turkey is far from being consolidated (Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 147).

Chapter III: The Democratic Project: Old versus New

Democratization studies have proven that the role of formal institutions is what differentiates between autocracy and democracy; indeed, in defective democracies, the formal institutions are usually downplayed by the function of informal ones and, thus, this mode of domination is what creates the "deep state" (Söyler, 2015: 43). The concept of the deep state has been often connected to the democratic experience in Turkey, and although the history of democracy in Turkey goes back to 1923, since the establishment of the Modern Republic; it is argued that the democratic project has never been fully developed and what has been only implemented is a form of "electoral democracy" (Söyler, 2015; Somer, 2016: 4). According to Murat Somer (2016), the old authoritarian regime of Turkey is still prevailing due to a particular preset relationship between the state and society and an embedded state tradition that prevents the establishment of accountable institutions and a balanced power-share (Somer, 2016: 4). Indeed, the core of old authoritarianism is reflected in the numerous institutions that serve this top-down power structure; the most leading example of these institutions has been the armed forces, as illustrated earlier in chapter two (Somer, 2016: 4). However, other current ones play crucial roles in reproducing this old authoritarianism like "The Council of Higher Education, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, the Judiciary…furthermore, the ruling elites who control these institutions, unwilling or unable to seek consensus with rival elites in opposition" (Somer, 2016: 4). To conceptualize the former argument, Somer refers to the "influence of history" to describe the foundational changes in institutions that have impacted democratization in Turkey (Somer, 2016: 4). Accordingly, for the purpose of evaluating *H2: The autocratic policies by Erdoğan are influenced by the historical experience of Turkey*, the chapter examines the role of the historical experience in Turkey through tracing the different phases of the democratic project with a greater focus on the impact of institutions and political parties.

The Deep State

The deep state is described as a type of "dual modality of domination" that results from the "interplay between formal and informal institutions in post-transitional settings,"[21] (Söyler, 2015: 43). This interaction between formal and informal institutions[22] usually fosters undemocratic and informal rules that either weaken or completely dismantle the function of constitutional institutions and inscribed formal rules (Söyler, 2015: 44). Söyler adds that this "perverse institutionalization"[23] is just negative because it creates "games"; for instance, when protestors aim for change, those in the government, members of the parliament and military men know that there are other means to prevent this change (Söyler, 2015: 44). In fact, the undemocratic informal rules are often upgraded to the state's "formal" codes to secure the interests of the elites of preceding authoritarian regimes and, thus, prevent the transitions to democracy. Nevertheless, the absence of "perverse institutionalization" does not also guarantee a consolidated democracy; therefore, it is important to examine the formal rules in constitutional institutions with respect to the presence of the undemocratic informal ones (Söyler, 2015: 44). In addition, the deep state is often supported by an "autocratic clique"[24] that is often part of the political establishment or the state's coercive apparatus like the leader of the "security community" (Söyler, 2013: 312). The security community

---

[21] Formal institutions are created "through channels that are widely accepted as official", while the informal institutions do not (Söyler, 2013: 311).

[22] Informal institutions are established under "forms of specific relationship (clientelism, or more precisely autocratic cliques, clientelist parties, and mafia), using "material exchange (corruption) or violent exertion of influence (putsch threat, guerrilla warfare, riots, and organized crime), or legal practice (custom law)" (Söyler, 2013: 312).

[23] Perverse institutionalization: occurs when the institutions (formal and informal) are incompatible with the workings of democracy (Valenzuela, 1990: 8).

[24] Autocratic cliques: are considered semi-formal institutions due to their unofficial recognition; nevertheless, they are granted the impunity to officially operate (Söyler, 2013: 312).

is described as, "those elements of the regime most directly involved in the planning and execution of repression, intelligence gathering, interrogation, torture, and internal clandestine armed operations, [in which] can either be steered by the military institution or operate autonomously" (Söyler, 2013: 312).

The Phases of the Turkish Deep State

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the only element that was consistently emphasized is secularism; indeed, to avoid the return of all types of religious practices and symbols in the political and public sphere, strict policies were implemented (Hale, 1994: 80). Without a doubt, secularism is a crucial element of a consolidated democracy, yet Turkey was a different case because the secularist military and civil bureaucracy opted to dominate almost all institutions (Hale, 1994: 81). In fact, this hegemony over the state's formal and informal institutions was just another form of sustaining an authoritarian power that eventually led to the growth of the deep state. The first establishment of the Turkish deep state was organized in the 1950s by the US and British Secret Intelligence Service to counter the "communist threat" (Karakoç, 2015: 44). The operation in Turkey was found under the code name "Turkish Gladio" and its official name was the Special Warfare Department (Özel Harp Dairesi, ÖHD), which was linked to the General Staff (Karakoç, 2015: 44-45). Nevertheless, over time the initial purpose of the organization changed and it was given the duty to protect the secular ideology of the state by any means including killing politicians, subverting governments, as well as supporting underground groups like the "White Forces" (Karakoç, 2015: 44-45). Moreover, the Turkish deep state has been always strongly associated with the military, especially the industrial complex that acts as a mode of capital accumulation to deliver political and economic resources to the military; indeed, the military-

46

industrial complex has been either ruled by a strong executive branch or by military men who guise as industrialists or investors (Söyler, 2013: 311).

It is argued that the deep state has been present throughout the different political changes Turkey experienced. Nevertheless, with the invocation of Kemalism, the Turkish Armed Forces maintained suspending democracy through conducting the two coups of 1960 and 1980, and the two military interventions in 1971 and 1997 (Söyler, 2013: 315). The "threats" (communism, Kurdish separatism, and Islamism) changed throughout the decades, yet Kemalism/secularism remained the ultimate political "meta-language", which led to a serious distorted electoral system and "perverse institutions" (Söyler, 2013: 315). For instance, during the one-party era between 1925-1945, the expression of nationalism and secularism was further radicalized, then continued in the 1960s with the rightist and leftist political movements that entered into a violent conflict in the 1970s (Kaya, 2009: 102). Furthermore, in the 1980s, with the rise of the Kurdish question, a new ground for the secretive operations by the deep state existed to contain the instability happening in the southeast region of the state (Kaya, 2009: 102). Among those secretive operations are those conducted by the Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-terror Unit (*Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele,* JİTEM) that has been allegedly responsible for thousands of executions and assassinations of judges and PKK supporters (Kaya, 2009: 102). Despite the West's increasing interaction with the government to trigger democratization, the combination of events like the Susurluk scandal and others that occurred a decade later, drastically shifted the prevalent paradigm (Kaya, 2009: 103). In fact, such events created a profound societal awareness to question authority, and people started examining the new meanings of state-society relations in a manner that provided a better and convenient ground for democratization (Kaya, 2009: 103) The latter developments

coincided with the Helsinki European Council in 1999 when the European Union (EU) referred to Turkey as a candidate, which consequently invigorated its accession process (Kaya, 2009: 103).

The decline of the Turkish deep state started gradually in the 2000s with the introduction of new "(in)formalities" (Söyler, 2013: 318). Indeed, the period of the post-Cold War era witnessed changes in the distribution of power; for instance, the AKP came to fill a political void that was created in 1997 by pledging to be a pro-western conservative political party that encourages new democratization reforms to curb the military's tutelage and simplify the process of joining the EU (Söyler, 2013: 318). Despite the achievement of such reforms to reverse "perverse institutionalization", the military still had this "survival instinct" to maintain its "vanguard role", particularly since the vast majority of the public supported the EU project (Söyler, 2013: 318). Yet, the military faced other prevalent issues like the disenchantment of the United State for Turkey's refusal to join the invasion of Iraq, along with the conspicuous support towards the AKP as a "democratic model" in the Middle East (Söyler, 2013: 318). In fact, the circumstances occurring at this period made it easier for the AKP to wane the tutelary of the military and the prevailing deep state; in 2005 the AKP opted to ride the tide of "xenophobic anti-politics" that prioritized the threat of a coup over democratization (Söyler, 2013: 319). The later phase ended after the General Staff's website released an e-memorandum charging the AKP of having a covert Islamic agenda, yet the victory of the AKP in 2007 early presidential elections proved to be a "democratic reflex" that forced the military to step back from its "putsch politics" because conducting a coup would have left Turkey isolated and sabotaged its accession to the EU (Söyler, 2013: 319). The following historical episode that appeared to be the final battle between the AKP and the deep state is the Ergenekon court case in 2008 (Gingeras, 2017:9). Indeed, for the first time, the military generals were brought to justice for alleged coups; according to the indictments,

the Ergenekon "group/gang" are responsible for four coup attempts between 2003-2004 (Söyler, 2013: 319). The Ergenekon group has been perceived as the core representative of the deep state; its organs spanned the military, bureaucracy, academia, and solely conducted immense crimes over decades to suppress the emergence of "true democracy" (Gingeras, 2017:9). Later, in 2010 the "Operation Sledgehammer" (initially drafted in 2003) and "the Action Plan to Fight Reactionism", which merged with the anti-government propaganda in 2011, were conducted (Söyler, 2013: 319). Finally, the constitutional amendments of the 2010 referendum had a real impact on changing the "deeply engraved informal rules" in the Supreme Military Council, which was responsible for making the decisions on promotion, dismissals, benefits, retirement and disciplinary measure (Söyler, 2013: 319).

The Authoritarian Legacy

Conducting regular elections is not the only element that determines having democracy; indeed, democracy at the most basic level is grounded on the diffusion of power within government and society (Haass, 2003: 139). Moreover, it is crucial to have a balance of power among institutions to prevent the accumulation of power by one branch, concerning the presence of opposition and government leaders who are conscious that they are only serving temporarily (Haass, 2003: 139). In a democratic regime, civil societies, trade unions and the media should be independent of state control; in addition, all ethnic, social, religious and gender groups should equally have the right to participate and be included in the political life (Haass, 2003: 140). In this context and based on the former perspective, this part of the chapter aims to analyze the democratic project in Turkey during the respective ruling periods of the Democrat Party (DP, 1950-1960), the Motherland Party (ANAP, 1983-1991), and the Justice and Development Party (2002-present), which are perceived as the "most stable periods in which Turkey had the opportunity to achieve

democratic consolidation" (Karakoç, 2015: 38). However, for the purpose of the thesis, I will be giving a greater focus on the ruling period of the AKP.

The Democratic Party (DP) rise to power led to major changes in the political system; indeed, during its rule, the military encountered many political developments and policies (Karakoç, 2015: 45). However, later during its second term, the DP government began exhibiting authoritarian tendencies towards any opposition, not only against rival parties but also within the government and the DP itself (Karakoç, 2015: 45). Accordingly, the military felt threatened and its political prestige and ideological influence on the society kept declining; in fact, the military perceived the DP government as an "enemy" that broke the convention, which assured the inclusion of the military institutions in different branches of state institutions (Karakoç, 2015: 45). According to many scholars, the DP failed to consolidate democracy in the country, and instead exploited the strong public support it had, and implemented authoritarian policies that only caused more distrust and polarization among the society (Karakoç, 2015: 46). The DP failed to transform the prevailing system, and overlooked the actions of the deep state; indeed, this period witnessed brutal nationalistic attacks against minority groups (Greeks, Armenians, and Jews) particularly in September 1955 (Kuyucu, 2005: 362). The failure of the DP to deal with such turmoil, created a struggle for power, especially against the secularists like the Republican People's Party (CHP), and eventually led the military to remove the government from power (Karakoç, 2015: 46). Consequently, the undemocratic policies and the failure to disrespect opposition and minority groups paved the way for the military to establish the coup of 1960 to use its right as a "guardian of the state" and preserve its secular ideology (Karakoç, 2015: 46).

Following a period of substantial privileges and power for the military, The Motherland Party (ANAP) came to power. During the period between 1980-1983, the National Security Council (MGK) that included the Chief of the General Staff, commanders, and ministers, was charged with providing "recommendations" that were in de facto decrees (Narlı, 2011: 218). Moreover, the MGK had exclusive power to interfere and define the national security priorities and threats through formulating a "National Security Policy" document that is amended every five years (Narlı, 2011: 218). Though in 1984, after the attacks of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), things got worse and the mission of the military was clearly directed to protect the state against "Kurdish separatism" and "fundamentalism" (Sarigil, 2009: 712). However, the period of the ANAP was more characterized by its leader Turgut Özal who challenged the state traditional policy set by the military; for instance, he continuously aimed to strengthen the civilian control of the government and reduce the military's position by returning the banned leaders to the political arena and replacing the appointed military liaisons in ministries with civilians (Karakoç, 2015: 47). Despite the efforts of Özal, the military still had a strong position and reinforced it through using the normative justification of "military struggle against terrorism", and "the war against the PKK" (Karakoç, 2015: 47). Nevertheless, it is important to note that Özal, as a conservative leader, did not want to oppose the military; instead, he aimed to bring the military under civilian control and transform Turkey into a regional power by allocating his resources to modernize the army and build a strong economy (Narlı, 2011: 220). Özal chose to strengthen the civil society and the business elites; and even though the military, relatively remained in the background, compared to the period of the DP, he could not affect the deep state that remained active throughout his time in office and maintained to consistently bring back the military hegemony (Narlı, 2011: 220). Unfortunately, willingly or unwillingly, Özal fell into the pit of the deep state, and in 1987 the east

and southeast provinces in Turkey became the headquarters of one of the prominent deep state groups: The JİTEM (Kaya, 2009: 102).

The struggle between the military and Islamists/conservatives has been going on since the AKP government came to power in 2002 (Karakoç, 2015: 48). The struggle stems from the military's position to protect secularism; in contrast, the AKP continues to promote itself as a "conservative democratic" political party that struggles to establish "European Union standards" democracy (Karakoç, 2015: 48). In this context, the military and its supporters continue to accuse the AKP of having a secret Islamic agenda that eventually aims to transform the state into an Islamic one (Karakoç, 2015: 48). Consequently, the AKP's focal mission was to complete Özal's legacy and implement the needed reforms to limit the military's political influence over the civilian government. To defend its existence, the AKP began with fully devoting its efforts to joining the EU, because at the time such a step was crucial in restraining the political power of the military (Karakoç, 2015: 48). In 2003, the MGK's operational authorities were dismissed under a constitutional amendment to meet the EU membership guidelines; accordingly, such reforms prompted severe reactions from the military and the secular opposition groups who persisted to allege the AKP of using the "EU negotiations" as a pretext to implement its fundamentalist policies (Karakoç, 2015: 49). In fact, these reforms and efforts to eliminate the military's power resulted in putting the old elite against the ruling new one; however, the former could not prevent the latter from increasing its influence in state institutions (Karakoç, 2015: 50). Nevertheless, the opposing secularists maintained to express their disapproval of the "Islamization" of state institutions under the government of the AKP through "Republic Protests" (Karakoç, 2015: 50). In addition, before the beginning of the presidential elections in 2007, demonstrations were held carrying the slogans "claim your republic!" and mottos such as "our territory is sacred" and "Turkish youth will not

permit anyone to sell it" (Karakoç, 2015: 50). In this context, the AKP was perceived as an agent of the "separatists" Western powers who aim to divide Turkey due to their insistence on supporting Kurdish rights (Karakoç, 2015: 50). However, the battle between the military and opposing secularists against the AKP government was arbitrated by the Ergenekon case in June 2008, which has been discerned as a counterattack against the civil and military bureaucracy; eventually, the military lost a great share of its authority and the AKP government started consolidating its power instead of consolidating democracy.

The Impact of the Authoritarian Legacy

As reflected in the previous paragraphs, Turkey's democratic experience has never been fully consolidated and was characterized by many authoritarian tendencies. Indeed, Baykan (2018) argues how the authoritarian legacy of Turkey has played a role in shaping the process of democratic backsliding because it did not only destroy opposition parties (specifically the left-wing parties) but also drove the influential actors who represent the Islamic identity to construct "a powerful mass membership organization" (Baykan, 2018: 237). Indeed, one of the major circumstances that shaped this legacy is the military's use of "selective pluralism"[25] strategy to avoid the fragmentation and radicalization of political space (Baykan, 2018: 57). Nevertheless, this restrictive and coercive strategy was not fully realized and led to unintended consequences, including the destruction of the leftist organizational networks, and a gradual Islamization of the society (Baykan, 2018: 59). Specifically, at the beginning of the 1990s, with the reemergence of the center-right and center-left in the political arena, the Motherland Party lost momentum and that resulted in a period of political stability and weak coalitions in the government (Baykan, 2018:

---

[25] A strategy used by the military junta that was restrictive and coercive to inhibit "the fragmentation and radicalization of the political space" (Baykan, 2018: 59).

59). In addition, social and economic problems accompanied those political developments and led to a clear decline in the political system, which also played a role in giving rise to Islamism in Turkey and at the end triggered the intervention of the secular elite to prevent this rise (reflected in the "soft coup" of 28 February 1997) (Baykan, 2018: 57). Accordingly, the Islamic elite developed a reformist agenda and the AKP was found. In other words, the selective pluralism strategy played in the favor of the Islamists and led to the AKP's huge electoral victory of 2002 and later created strong organizational leverage for electoral success and political resilience (Baykan, 2018: 60).

The AKP "Democratic Model"

The AKP successful and exceptional "normalization"[26] as a political party with an Islamic background has attracted the interest of many observers in the academia due to its success in maintaining votes steadily in general elections for the past eighteen years, irrespective of the negative incumbency effect and its position in power (Baykan, 2018: 9; Öniş, 2015: 23). Thus, the AKP has been gradually labeled the "hegemonic party" to describe its unprecedented dominance in the Turkish political system (Öniş, 2015: 23). In retrospect, scholars divided the AKP rule into three distinct periods; the first phase extends from 2002-2007, following by the second one from 2007-2011, and lastly from 2011 till present (which, arguably, could also be divided into sub-periods because it includes different major events that led to major repercussions) (Tansel, 2018; Öniş, 2015). The AKP was broadly positioned as a "force of democratization and a harbinger of a new type of politics" which gave the chance to civil society actors to ultimately take precedence

---

[26] Normalization is described as a "process by which Islamist parties increasingly accommodate themselves to the rules of the political regimes in which they operate; in other words, they become less unique and more normal political actors when compared with other parties in the competitive system"; indeed, this terms draws less normative implications than other terms like "liberalization" and "moderation", yet it does not tell how the "normalizing" political actors transforms to the "normal" (Baykan, 2018: 5).

over the ossified state elites (Tansel, 2018: 204). In its first phase, which is also referred to as the "golden age", the AKP used and emphasized the democratic discourse with a clear intent on reviving the economy, highly and inclusively, and joining the EU through reinforcing liberalization and democratic reforms (Tansel, 2018: 198). In addition, the AKP promised a radical reordering of the civil-military relation, and a recognition of the minority language and cultural rights (Öniş, 2015: 23). The phase also witnessed successful foreign policy decisions dependent on soft power and a "zero problem with neighbors" plan; thus, Turkey at the time was perceived as a crucial mediator in regional and global conflicts (Öniş, 2015: 23). Indeed, throughout its first two terms, the electorally successful "post-Islamist" party was recognized by its battles with tutelary state apparatuses such as the military and the secular elites who wanted to preserve their stance; in addition, it was praised for its role in bridging between Islam and democracy and launching "democratic openings" (Tansel, 2018: 206). Öniş and Keyman (2003) used three words "competence, integrity, and democracy" to describe the AKP's keys to electoral success, declaring "Turkey has finally elected a single-party government that strongly believes in economic reform, basically respects the IMF framework, and wants full-fledged EU membership" (Öniş and Keyman, 2003: 99-105). On the domestic level presented a historic opportunity for the country to exit from the authoritarian regime post the military coup 1980, and on the international level, the party was "a peace broker in multiple cultural, religious and political arenas" (Tansel, 2018: 206).

The second phase represented a relative period of stagnation particularly economically, even though it managed to overcome the financial global crisis at the time. In addition, in the political sphere, the democratic performance was mixed with elements of progress and decay

associated with a dramatic decline in Turkey's prospects for EU accession[27], which already reflected the flounder of democratization-economic development and the beginning of the third phase (Öniş, 2015: 24; Gürsoy, 2012: 760). The third phase has proven to be a period of decline in the performance of the AKP, both politically and economically. As argued by Alpan (2016) and Tansel (2018), the reliance on "coercion" rather than "consent" to shape policies, and enforcing highly politicized court cases in 2010 against the alleged coup plotters represented the breaking point for AKP's "authoritarian turn" (Alpan, 2016: 17; Tansel, 2018: 205). On the other hand, other observers believe that the real turning point is the government's response to the Gezi's protests in 2013, which gravely undermined the AKP's credibility and self-representation as a "vehicle of civilianization, democratization, freedom of belief and equality of opportunity" (Tansel, 2018: 205). The latter narrative shift corresponded to AKP's own restructuring as the party replaced its own claim of Turkey being a "conservative democracy" with obscure "advanced democracy" (Alpan, 2016: 18). The striking fact, in this context, is the continuation of the AKP's electoral success despite the countless allegations concerning the party's poor performance in key policy areas. Thus, it is interesting to examine the prospects for democracy in Turkey regarding the prolonged political and economic challenges under the AKP dominance. The growing evidence of the democratic backsliding under this phase is indisputable, as many terms have been frequently used to describe the authoritarian reversal like "illiberal democracy", "hybrid democracy" or "competitive authoritarianism" (Öniş, 2015: 25). Indeed, Turkey's growing democratic shortfalls are apparent in different yet interrelated spheres; beginning with a steady decline in freedoms like the freedom of media and expression, jailing political activists and opposition, growing use of excessive physical force, and overall monopolizing almost all state institutions (Öniş, 2015;

---

[27] In 2006, the EU suspended eight chapters of the "*aquis*" that would lead Turkey to become a member (Gürsoy, 2012: 760)

Baykan, 2018; Tansel, 2018). In addition, the judicial system has been heavily politicized and corrupted, as many court cases have proved to be void and biased. The corruption levels[28] have tremendously increased, and accordingly, those who benefited are the new elites and individuals affiliated to the higher ranks of party apparatus (Öniş, 2015: 25).

On the Deep State: Undemocratic Civilian Supremacy

The constitutional and legislative reforms in the 2000s[29]undeniably led to the decline of military autonomy; however, tracing the circumstances reflects the societal polarization that made these reforms unavoidable (Söyler, 2015: 178). Indeed, Turkey endorsed a rapid transition that to a great extent restored another form of a deep state characterized by a feeling of insecurity and undemocratic control of the military (Söyler, 2015: 178). Nevertheless, specifically after 2005, the AKP related the deep state to the "gangs of the nationalist struggle" (referring to the military and its supporters) (Söyler, 2015: 205). Moreover, with the closure of the Ergenekon case in 2008, the AKP decreased the leverage of the putsch threat (Söyler, 2015: 206). On the other hand, the reforms reflected the division and distrust circle between those who regard the deep state as a real danger and those who regard the deep state as a justification used by the AKP to punish its opponents (Söyler, 2015: 207). Later the amendments of 2010 revealed the establishment of a religious-conservative alliance between the Gülen Movement and the AKP that aimed to end the leverage of the military in Turkish politics through exerting illegal instruments to influence state apparatuses, such as the police and the judiciary (Baykan, 2018: 239). The result was a reproduction of an authoritarian logic, and growth of a state within a state (Baykan, 2018: 239; Söyler, 2015: 207). Despite the elimination of the Gülen movement as a political actor after the

---

[28] All the empirical data are later presented in chapter four.
[29] Discussed earlier in chapter 2.

failed coup of July 2016, the deep state continues to be restored as the state-banditry, and the undemocratic control of "state security" remain unchallenged, and the reproduction of nationalist discourses and the threat of "internal enemies" still exists.

The literature on the democratic journey of the AKP has been marked by analyses that reflect the party's fragmentary developments; in addition, the plethora of concepts used to describe the late AKP period could be considered new theoretical explanations. However, the exact nature of the Turkish regime is difficult to comprehend since it is fluid and evolving fast. Indeed, the research by Cemel Tansel (2018) on Turkey's Authoritarian neoliberalism and democratic backsliding suggests that tracing the country's political and institutional developments yield different results, and only sub-categories of authoritarianism will be labeled according to the different "events" chosen to be the "point of departure" towards authoritarianism (Tansel, 2018: 207). For instance, if taken before or after the AKP's victory in general elections in 2011, the Gezi Park protests of 2013, the struggle between the Gülenists and the AKP in late 2013, the 2014 presidential elections, the twin elections of 2015, the failed coup attempt of 2016, and lastly the presidential referendum in 2017, it will be nearly impossible to determine the exact "label" of what is happening in Turkey (Tansel, 2018: 209). Accordingly, underscoring the "phases" of "backsliding" or "authoritarian turn" does not provide a precise explanation of what went wrong; indeed, it just obscures the lineage of the AKP's tendencies and policies towards its authoritarian governance. In addition, overemphasizing certain political moments over the other prevents us from considering the AKP's authoritarian turn as a whole single authoritarian model, which has already been shaped by executive centralization of power and sustained by the deployment of state's institutions in the service of the party's interests (Tansel, 2018: 209-210). Such interests have eventually transformed the state's regulatory roles, yet normalized and legitimized

authoritarian practices (Tansel, 2018: 210). Nevertheless, what is puzzling and remains problematic is the continuation of the AKP's electoral success despite its overt acts of authoritarianism and exploitation of power. In addition, it is interesting to study the instruments and strategic choices used by the party and Erdoğan to maintain their popularity.

Conclusion

The democratic project in Turkey has been dependent on "pact building, explicit formal and informal rules" that are comparatively weak (Somer, 2016: 5). The latter, arguably, could be considered a feature of old authoritarianism since it replicates the tendency of old elites to dismiss the existence and legitimacy of other social and political segments. In addition, the consensus among political actors has been absent or very short-lived due to the major transformations and constant institutional makeovers that have been occurring since the establishment of the modern republic. In fact, as mentioned earlier, most of these changes/decisions are based on the preferences and interests of hegemonic actors, excluding others even though such decisions are meant to be democratic, inclusive and formal (Somer, 2016: 5). However, it is important to note that both constitutions of 1961 (mainly liberal and democratic) and 1982 (more anti-liberal and nationalist) were prepared by bodies chosen by the military; thus, some segments of the society who were affiliated to the ideological convictions of the junta enjoyed more privileges than those who did not (Somer, 2016: 5) Furthermore, in both periods the military exercised its veto powers and institutionalized its influence in politics; accordingly, the elected government, post the 1987 elections, could not enjoy a fully-fledged autonomy and the military remained intervening explicitly and implicitly (Somer, 2016: 5). Another fundamental flaw that has been present in the Turkish democratic project is the inability of the governments to integrate ethnic groups' representatives (mainly Kurdish and Islamists) in the political system; thus, the democratic

transition is incomplete, demographically and institutionally, and does not apply to a major segment of the population (Kurdish region) (Somer, 2016: 6). Last but not least, the chapter indicates how the democratic project in Turkey has never been fully consolidated as it emphasizes the importance and popularity of "electoralism" in Turkish politics. In addition, it presents the impact of authoritarian legacy and underscores the challenges of the deep state, and the authoritarian tendencies that have always existed and continue to be present in the Turkish political system.

Chapter IV: Reversing or Surviving?

Building on the arguments presented in the previous chapters, what remains puzzling is the continuation of the AKP's electoral success despite its overt acts of authoritarianism and exploitation of power. Indeed, even with the existence of rich literature on the Turkish case presenting the authoritarian practices under the present government, most of the structural explanations fail to account for its regime trajectory. Thus, for the purpose of evaluating *H3*: *The personalization of institutions is a key cause of democratic backsliding in Turkey,* this chapter aims to examine the authoritarian reversal and strategies used by Erdoğan and the AKP to entrench their power, through using evidence excerpted from newspaper articles, expert analyses, statements by Erdoğan, and independent agency reports. The arguments will highlight the role of agency since the former arguments were structural-based.

Personalism, Populism and the "Erdoğanization of Turkish Politics"[30]

What explains the move to autocracy under Erdoğan and the AKP? Is it a means of survival or reform? Why in general is Turkey backsliding despite the marginalization of a key institution, the military, since the mid-2000s? As presented in the previous chapters, most of the literature on authoritarian backsliding and resilience provides several structural explanations like state capacity opposition strength, economic performance and historical legacies; however, such factors fail to provide a comprehensive answer to the aforementioned questions. Thus, looking at the agency-based explanations will help in examining adequately the solidification of Erdoğan's rule over the past two decades. To begin with, it is argued that politics have become more personalized both in

---

[30] Adopted from Selçuk et al (2019) research paper *"The Erdoğanization of Turkish Politics and the Role of the Opposition".*

advanced democracies and developing nations; accordingly, the role of the individual has become more prominent at the expense of other institutional actors like parliaments and political parties. Personalization is defined as "a process in which the political weight of the individual actor in the political process increases over time, while the centrality of the political group (i.e., political party) declines" (Rahat and Sheafer, 2007: 65). Similarly, personalism is defined as the "loyalty to persons rather than to impersonal ideologies, institutions, or rules"[31] (Ansell and Fish, 1999: 286). On the other hand, populism is another concept that is understood in this context as a strategy and a means that has played a role in maintaining power and building the personalization process under Erdoğan (Narin, 2019: 120). Due to the emphasis of individuals over institutions, the personalization of the regime is referred to as "the notion in which the individual political actors have become more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities" (Karvonen, 2010: 4). Consequently, power is concentrated more at the executive branch, which results in weakening other state institutions (Selçuk et al, 2019: 544). Personalism can be "charismatic", "strategic" or both; firstly, *charisma* according to Weber (1974) is a term that has been initially used as an adjective to describe a leadership performance and a component that is strongly affiliated with moral authority and legitimacy (Weber, 1974: 46-47). Charismatic leaders often produce ideological or intellectual narratives to their people, yet non-charismatic leaders have "transactional roles" and use power with different segments of groups to derive their authority as they attach greater importance to effectiveness and cohesion than to political principles (Ansell and Fish, 1999: 288). According to Ansell and Fish, non-charismatic leaders greatly benefit from publicly maneuvering in their programs and positions by using "robust action", which is a tactic to effectively reach diverse segments of the society through convincing each audience that he/she

---

[31] Personalization and personalism are two inter-related concepts that will be used inter-changeably to understand how Erdoğan developed his autocratic rule.

represents their interests (Ansell and Fish, 199: 288-308). In line with this trend, various scholars have referred to the increasing prominence of Erdoğan as "Erdoğanization" since he has managed to strongly enforce his personalistic leadership at the expense of other key institutional actors: the military, judiciary, parliament, and media sphere (Selçuk et al, 2019: 541). In fact, in relating personalism to "Erdoğanization", Erdoğan as a leader has managed to merge both "robust action" and "populist -appeal" in his style of ruling to strengthen his rule and legitimize his undemocratic actions. According to Baykan (2018), Erdoğan depends heavily on his organizational power, pragmatism and dynamism that are components of "robust action" and essential for his strategic inventiveness (Baykan, 2018: 130). "Robust action" is visible in many of his speeches (will be later addressed), in his activities within the party, during his electoral campaigns, and most importantly when encountered with unprecedented "threats" or circumstances (Baykan, 2018: 130). In fact, it is important to note the structural circumstance profoundly shape the strategic choices of Erdoğan, in addition to his "pseudo-charisma" that relies on populism and organized mass support (Baykan, 2018: 138).

The current debates on the Erdoğanization of Turkish politics particularly focus on Erdoğan's third term in government, arguably also thought as the beginning of the AKP's shift towards favoring Islamism over democratic ideals (Selçuk et al, 2019: 546). Özbudun (2014) emphasizes how Erdoğan's style of leadership, in his third term, manifests "clear marks of personalism, with a strong sense of mission and an excessive concentration of authority in his hands;" in addition, Erdoğan's accountability is dependent on the ballot box (vertical accountability), "as the only instrument of accountability and the only source of democratic legitimacy" (Özbudun 2014, 163). Yet, instruments of horizontal accountability have been significantly weakened, since according to Erdoğan and the AKP, the "national will" is sacredly

expressed through the ballot box (Özbudun 2014, 163). Similarly, Öniş (2015) expresses the growing signs of personalism in Erdoğan's third term in government, especially post the political developments in 2013 (Gezi protests), 2014 (local and presidential elections), and 2017 (presidential referendum) (Öniş, 2015: 22). Moreover, Lancaster (2014) traces the AKP's internal operations since its founding and argues that there has been a gradual deterioration of democracy within the party that transformed to oligarchy then personalism (Lancaster, 2014: 1672). She points out that democracy was the core primary method for carrying out the internal affairs of the party; however, by 2007 the intra-party democracy backslid towards increased centralization of power around Erdoğan (Lancaster, 2014: 1680). In complementing Lancaster's argument, Taş (2015) explains how the AKP is distinctly representing a one-man rule under Erdoğan, especially after he gained full control over the party by 2008 and relegated his competitors (Taş, 2015: 782). Taş asserts, "Erdogan also assured his ascendancy in both the party administration and in government by hiring numerous advisors, some of whom are considered to be more powerful than ministers" (Taş, 2015: 782). Some scholars categorize Erdoğan as populist and identify certain variables of populism, which will be examined to demonstrate how populism plays a role in the Turkish democratic backsliding. Populism is defined as "a political phenomenon in which an anti-establishment figure cultivates direct linkages with the people in an antagonistic way" (Selçuk, 2019: 57). Erdoğan uses certain criteria of populism; firstly, he depends on "historical references" as 59% of his speeches included historical accounts to strengthen his arguments (Narin, 2019: 81). For instance, he draws a comparison between historical Ottoman battles and the night the July 15 coup attempt, as there is always a political continuation within the Turkish nation, stating "*The ones who do not understand the secret of the conquest of Istanbul, cannot understand the actual meaning that the Republic of Turkey expresses*" (Narin, 2019: 82*)*. In addition, he aligns himself

64

with historical political figures like Selahaddin Eyyubi, Fatih, Sultan Selim and more (Narin, 2019: 82*).* Another criterion that is present in 68% of Erdoğan's speeches is the "will of the people" rhetoric to establish a communication between him and the nation; indeed, he always used this rhetoric as a justification for campaigning in elections or when introducing new amendments in the constitution (Narin, 2019: 83). The third populist element Erdoğan uses is the reference to "evil minority" as 63% of his speeches always include "the other" or "the enemy" (Narin, 2019: 84). The "evil minority" the Gülen movement and the PKK since they lack enough power to damage the country, yet Erdoğan often manages to combine all the threats Turkey faces in a single plan; for example, in one of his speeches, he stated, "*Turkey, just like in other fields, is under siege economically. The attacks started with the Gezi protests, went on with the 17-25 December coup attempt, and promoted to a higher degree by the July 15 coup attempt, seem to be going on. We need to be prepared the different types of such attacks that target the independence, the economic interests, and the national pride of Turkey*" (Narin, 2019: 86). In sum, for Erdoğan, the different political incidents or "threats" are not seen a result of economic, social or political circumstances, but they are a result of an inter-connected bigger plot that attacks him, the AKP and Turkey (Narin, 2019: 86). Another populist element often addressed by Erdoğan is the rhetoric of revolution and liberation, which is utilized specifically before the elections; indeed, in his first speech after before succeeding in changing the political system, Erdoğan used words like "*building new Turkey and renaissance*" to encourage people to vote in the referendum and shift to the presidential system in 2018 (Narin, 2019: 87). Last but not least, Erdoğan strongly criticizes any opposition and justifies non-democratic means against them; and to appeal this notion to the people, he is vocal about it in many of his speeches (Narin, 2019: 120-124. Finally, apart from the elements of populism, another aspect of personalism Erdoğan strongly carries is the concentration of power into his hands;

65

accordingly, in the following section, the strategies of "reversal" will be addressed to help in explaining the reality of personalizing state institutions.

Strategies of Reversal

Throughout the mid-2000s, by all accounts, most of the structural and external factors necessary for deepening democracy existed; indeed, the economic growth was at its peak, the middle class expanded, the ethnic conflicts were restrained, the cooperation between Turkey and the West was subdued, and most importantly the Turkish military was relatively contained in its barracks (Arbatli, 2014: 77; Öniş, 2015: 40; Esen and Gumuscu, 2016: 1604). Nevertheless, by 2013 the ruling elites shifted towards authoritarian practices, and "incumbents regularly violated the political rights and civil liberties of opposition groups, abused state resources, and manipulated electoral results" (Bayulgen et al., 2018: 335). Bayulgen et al. (2018) introduce three strategies implemented by ruling elites: centralization, legitimation and repression[32] (Bayulgen et al, 2018: 333). They analyze the dynamics of the three strategies, arguing that the interaction among those strategies in hybrid regimes is a defensive/reactive mechanism instead of being a goal in itself (Bayulgen et al, 2018: 336-337). Briefly, during the 2002-2013 period, Erdoğan and the AKP elites' survival strategy was first based on legitimation by committing to liberal economic and political reforms, introducing populist social reforms, enhancing relationships with neighboring countries, and reinforcing minority rights (Bayulgen et al, 2018: 338-340). However, by 2007 the regime undertook the centralization strategy by systematically marginalizing the political role of the military, restructuring the judicial branch through introducing the constitutional referendum of 2010, moving towards an executive-centered legislature, and weakening intra-party opposition to

---

[32] Repression is defined as the "actual or threat-ened use of physical sanctions against an individual or organization, within the territorial jurisdiction of the state, for the purpose of imposing a cost on the target as well as deterring specific activities" (Davenport, 2007: 2).

minimize the challenges that could encounter the AKP's legislative hegemony (Bayulgen et al, 2018, 338-340). In addition, this period witnessed targeted repression against the media and opposition forces, especially towards the military elites (Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials), left-wing activists, and Kurdish politicians (Bayulgen et al, 2018, 338-340). In sum, "the electoral successes of the AKP in 2007 and 2011 were achieved by this balancing act between increased centralization, transactional legitimation, and selective repression" (Bayulgen et al, 2018, 338). On the other hand, as will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs, the period between 2013 to present witnesses a different and higher level of ideological legitimacy, extreme centralization, and widespread repression.

Threats and Responses

Twin crises

In efforts to deal with the challenges and political crises, Erdoğan has successfully managed to deal with each "threat" through using different responses that intensified repression and consolidation of his powers. In fact, particularly since 2013, the regime has survived under a new equilibrium using a mix of the aforementioned strategies (Bayulgen et al., 2018: 356). With unprecedented increased repression to suppress any opposition, Erdoğan responded to the Gezi Park protests of 2013 (Gurcan and Peker, 2015: 29). The Gezi Park protests began with a movement called "Taksim Solidarity" that included different causes of 124 trade unions, political parties, initiatives and community groups that called for a peaceful expression of demands and rights (Jadaliyya, 2013). The protestors were acting under the constitutional right that should guarantee for them the freedom of demonstration and expression under Article 34 of the Turkish Constitution; however, Erdoğan warned the protestors to end their demonstration in the square, stating, "if our brothers are still there, I am telling them in goodwill to please leave the area,

because it belongs to all Istanbul and it is not to be occupied by illegal groups" (Phillips, 2017: 37). However, the protestors ignored the warning demanding their rights and Erdoğan responded with, "we have made our decision, and we will do as we have decided" (Letch, 2013). The raid on the protestors began, as more than twenty-five thousand police members surrounded Taksim Square and used excessive force including tear gas bombs and water cannons to disperse the protestors (Letch, 2013). The police brutality was unprecedented and the violence was spread all over the country; commenting on this abuse of force, Koray Caliksan, a political scientist in Istanbul University, "Erdoğan is a very confident and very authoritarian politician, and he doesn't listen to anyone anymore, but he needs to understand that Turkey is no kingdom and that he cannot rule Istanbul from Ankara all by himself" (Letch, 2013). In fact, later the protests turned into a conflict between Erdoğan's supporters and the protestors, as Erdoğan threatened to bring his supporters to the streets, warning, "if you use provocative words, our people will never forgive you [and] if you gather 100,000 people, I can gather a million" (Letch, 2013). The use of excessive force was condemned by international human rights organizations and EU officials like Stefan Fuele, the EU Enlargement Commissioner, who disdained the brutal means used by Erdoğan and emphasized that such means should have no place in a "democracy" (Phillips, 2017: 37). The Gezi Park protests signify a turning point in Erdoğan's approach in dealing with human rights and freedoms and reflect his adoption of a repressive strategy. Similarly, in response to the corruption probe of 2013, Erdoğan depleted the full force of the state's coercive apparatus to remove prosecutors and police officers linked to the Gülen Movement (Demiralp, 2016: 5). Nevertheless, the crackdown on the Gülenists continued with the beginning of the elections in November 2015, as the government officially declared the Gülen movement as a terrorist organization (Demiralp, 2016: 5). Furthermore, in 2014, Erdoğan aimed to expand the powers of the Turkish Intelligence

Agency (MIT) by passing a bill that gives the agency a mandate to perform any action (like accessing data and information of a public and private institution without parliamentary oversight) in the name of preserving the national security (Bayulgen et al., 2018: 359). In addition to the widespread repression, Erdoğan's consolidation of power reached another level after the presidential elections of 2014; he took multiple steps to avoid a future succession crisis. The steps included appointing Ahmed Davutoglu, a longtime loyalist, as a prime minister, and ignoring the symbolic constitutional status of the presidency office, and transforming it into an executive post (Öniş, 2016: 151-152).

<u>"Under Siege"</u>

> *"Democracy is like a streetcar. You get off when you have reached your destination"*

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Phillips, 2017: 3)

Although it is hard to gauge Erdoğan's intentions, some of his earlier statements on democracy could be illuminating in understanding the logic behind using authoritarian measures. On the other hand, it is argued that such measures are only means of defense against the military tutelage and the defenders of the Kemalist regime (Bayulgen et al, 2018, 447). Accordingly, the first area of centralization concerned the military establishment. As illustrated in chapter two, the Turkish military had always been a veto player in the political system; therefore, the prominent goal for Erdoğan in his first term was to eradicate the "threatening" political authority of this player through abiding by the EU harmonization reforms (Bayulgen et al, 2018: 348). However, the first real backlash against the military was in 2008 by using the judicial branch to contain its political influence; for example, the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer coup trials that targeted military elites and resulted in arresting more than 400 officers, including high-ranking generals and admirals (Bayulgen et al, 2018: 348). In fact, by 2013 more than 10% of the military generals and admirals

were imprisoned under charges of alleged attempts to overthrow the government (Bayulgen et al, 2018: 348). Whereas overhauling and decreasing the Turkish civil-military relations is a crucial democratizing step, many opposed the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials and raised serious concerns regarding fundamental human rights (Heper, 2011: 243-244). However, the real commencement of hostility between Erdoğan and the military began with the alleged 15th of July coup in 2016.

> *"The Turkish Armed Forces, in accordance with the constitution, have seized management of the country to reinstate democracy, human rights, and freedom, and to ensure public order, which has deteriorated"*

15th July 2016 Coup plotters (Phillips, 2017: 165).

This statement reflected how Turkey at the time of the coup was deeply divided between two camps: backers and opponents of the coup (Phillips, 2017: 168). Nevertheless, the majority of the Turkish society was against the coup, as the coup plotters did not only lack support from the opposition political parties, but also within the military itself (Phillips, 2017: 168). Indeed, the lack of support from the opposition proved that military intervention is not the "path" to democracy (Phillips, 2017: 168). However, after the coup, the blame game started immediately upon Erdoğan's arrival from Istanbul who accused Fethullah Gülen of being the coup "mastermind" (Phillips, 2017: 169). Erdoğan later issued statements like: "This latest action is an action of treason, and they will have to pay heavily for that," he added, "this attempt, this move, is a great favor from God for us. Why? Because this move will allow us to clean up the armed forces, which needs to be completely clean" (Arango and Yeginsu, 2016). In addition, he promised to "purge all state institutions of the virus spread by Gülen's supporters" (Phillips, 2017: 169). The actual crackdowns began with the declaration of a three-month state of emergency, subject to extending, which allows the government to have exclusive and extraordinary powers; accordingly, by the end

of 2016, Erdoğan dismissed more than 100,000 people state institutions (including the military, judiciary and security forces) (Phillips, 2017: 171). Indeed, the coup was a "gift from God" as it justified unprecedented centralization of power and repression (Bayulgen et al, 2018, 361).

Personalized Reforms

The reforms after July 15 have been characterized by being extensively personalized. Indeed, under the state of emergency law and the fear of an active "parallel-state", many executive decrees have been wielded and many purges have been justified by the power of the presidency (Gürcan and Giscoln, 2017: 68). According to Gürcan and Giscoln, the military's reforms targeted four main aspects: education, judicial system government relationship, and privileged domain (Gürcan and Giscoln, 2017: 70). The reforms on the military education started with closing all the military schools in Turkey, and instead, a new inclusive National Defense University was founded; as a result, more than 16,500 military cadets were expelled from naval academies and military high schools (Gürcan and Giscoln, 2017: 70). The reforms targeting the military judicial system required disciplining military judges through the Ministry of Defense; in fact, the disciplinary action became a major function under the Ministry of Defense's authority. The latter resulted in completely eradicating the military judicial system that was earlier and partially affected by the EU-inspired reforms over the last decade (Gürcan and Giscoln, 2017: 72). Additionally, the reforms ended the military's privileged domains through implementing radical decisions to dismantle the military's medical network, industrial establishments, factories and more (Gürcan and Giscoln, 2017: 71). Regarding the reforms targeting the military-government relationship, the first clash was the postponement of the annual meeting of The Supreme Military Council (YAŞ) that is made to foster the discussion of the promotions and retirements of military personnel, which reflected a sign of "civilianization". (Gürcan and Giscoln, 2017: 71). Additionally, the structure of

71

the YAŞ changed, as more civilian representatives were appointed at the expense of dismissing a number of military officers (Gürcan and Giscoln, 2017: 71). In short, all the aforementioned reforms have been just steps towards depoliticizing and sidelining the military, yet they led to the unprecedented rise of personal and autocratic concentration of power under the state's executive branch.

Another key implication of the coup is the transition from a parliamentary to a "super" presidential system in 2017[33] (Bayulgen et al., 2018: 360; Haugom, 2019: 6). The transition came with a new set of laws; for instance, the appointment of the Chief of Defense is directly chosen by the president, the General Staff will be part of the Ministry of National Defense instead of attaching it to the Prime Minister's office. In addition, the president has the right to appoint and give direct orders to the commanders of forces without having to pass through other authority (Haugom, 2019: 6). The Supreme Military Council had been discharged of its former units and functions, giving all the major decisions concerning the armed forces to the president; furthermore, a new Board of Security and Foreign Policy has replaced the "so powerful" MGK that played the role of the "guardian" since the establishment of the Turkish Republic (Haugom, 2019: 7). To establish control, Erdoğan sought to appoint those close and loyal to him; for example, his first move was the appointment of General Hulusi Akar as the Minister of National Defense (former Chief of Defense) who proved his loyalty to him and the civilian government during the 15th of July coup attempt (Jongerden, 2019: 266; Haugom, 2019: 7). Another loyalist is Adnan Tanriverdi[34] who is

---

[33] In the parliament, the AKP was able to acquire votes needed to send the constitutional amendment to a referendum, which took place on April 16, 2017. Despite strong opposition, Erdoğan claimed a narrow victory of 51.4% in favor.

[34] He is also the founder of SADAT, a defense contractor that trained pro-Turkish fighters in Syria and was accused by Erdogan's opponents of training pro-AKP militias (Danforth, 2020: 6).

a former general and served as a chief military advisor from 2016 till early 2020 (Danforth, 2020: 6). Disputably, the Turkish military is becoming a more politicized and dysfunctional organization with internal rivalries. In fact, as argued by Gurcan (2018) "Civil-military relations now seem largely based on the personal relationship between the president and the minister of defense, without much participation from other government or state actors" (Gurcan, 2018: 11). This observation, certainly, emphasizes how this change in civil-military relations provides a fertile ground for political factionalism in the military (Haugom, 2019: 7). Moreover, under the AKP and Erdoğan, new religious conservative elites emerged and worked on depriving the military of many of its former advantages, especially economic ones (Ankur, 2013: 141). In addition, even though Turkish society has always respected the role of the military in guaranteeing political stability and secularism, the majority of the Turkish public prefers to place limitations and oppose its intervention in politics (Sarigil, 2011: 275). In sum, the civil-military relations under Erdoğan drastically changed; however, the real opportunity to completely de-militarize Turkish politics was the attempted coup of July 2015 (Haugom, 2019: 7).

Reforms and Strikes

"Let's make this period a time of reforms, prioritizing a new constitution. The Turkish Republic has enjoyed its best period in the last thirteen years. Now, we shouldn't be worried about changing the nature of the regime"

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Toksabay and Aslan, 2015)

Erdoğan has systematically aimed to consolidate his power, and in pursuing this goal, he has strongly depended on reforming institutions and organizations, controlling civil society, repressing and dismissing public officials (particularly from the military personnel, judiciary, police, and state officials from almost every state department), and changing the old legislation and introducing the

73

new one (Yılmaz, 2020: 268). Yılmaz (2020) refers to this new form of legalization as "strategic legalism", which is defined as "the use, abuse and misuse of rule of law to achieve politically legitimate aims, hence, reducing the rule of law to the existence of legal norms by strategically manipulating/abusing legal powers, processes, and rules" (Yılmaz, 2020: 271). Strategic legalism includes many components; for instance: power is expanded in decision-making processes, the rule of law is reduced through the instrumentalization of other governmental strategies, the executive inserts new "legal black and grey holes" to increase its dominance, and lastly, the judiciary, in general, becomes politicized through directly transforming political questions into legal ones (Yılmaz, 2020: 271). Eventually, the logic behind strategic legalism is to curb the powers of other areas of state authority and serve the president's supreme power (Yılmaz, 2020: 271), In line with this logic, Erdoğan, and the AKP have systematically deployed the law and court as instruments to marginalize potential rivals, repress opposition and consolidate their political power (Yılmaz, 2020: 272).

The first strike against the judiciary was the 2010 constitutional amendments, which aimed to restructure the duties of the higher courts and Supreme Council of Public Prosecutors and Judges (Bayulgen et al., 2018: 349). Supported by 58%, the AKP succeeded in imposing the amendments that give the president and the parliament greater say over the appointments of senior officials (Bayulgen et al., 2018: 349). In fact, weakening the judicial branch significantly provides the AKP government unchecked powers and significant opportunities to implement policies that serve the executive interests. Thus, the party organization functions as an instrument to implement the legislative agenda of Erdoğan (Bayulgen et al., 2018: 350). However, the powers of the executive were further entrenched when the AKP won the parliamentary elections of 2011, gaining 59% of the seats. Accordingly, during the first six months, the AKP managed to pass 35 decrees, and

Erdoğan offered a new constitutional debate to replace the parliamentary system with presidentialism besides the proposition of drafting a new constitution (Taş, 2015: 782). Erdoğan's wills were, indeed, met with the 2017 constitutional amendment, which witnessed the rise of a new presidential regime. In fact, the constitutional amendment of 2017 opened that way for an extremely powerful presidency that now holds all the state's institutions' powers and provides the elected president with absolute powers (Yılmaz, 2020: 276). In short, the role of the president is no longer symbolic, as it was under the parliamentary system because the president has become a non-partisan and has the power over his/her party (Yılmaz, 2020: 276). The benefits and rights of the president in a presidential system are plenty; for example, the president has the right to bypass legislation, issue decrees concerned with executive power, appoint ministers and high-level state administrators, determine the state's annual budget, dissolve the parliament, choose half of the Board of Judges and Prosecutors, and declare a state of emergency when "threatened" (Öztürk and Gözaydın, 2017: 220). Nevertheless, such supreme powers are not subject to supervision or criticism; consequently, the president is not only the executive head of the state but also a representee of the state and party unification (Öztürk and Gözaydın, 2017: 220). In addition, as mentioned before, Erdoğan used the politicization of the judiciary in attacking opposition and potential rivals. Over time, an unprecedented number of political trials targeted military officials, Kurdish politicians, Kemalist elites, Gülenists, socialists and more[35] (Bayulgen et al., 2018: 351). In line with these measures, thousands of state employees were deprived of their passports, at least 228,137 persons were detained (from July 2016 to March 2018), more than 130,000 state employees got expelled, and 1,427 associations were dissolved (Yılmaz, 2020: 268). In sum,

---

[35] According to the report released by the Turkish Ministry of Justice, between 2009 and 2012 alone, a total of 32,279 people was tried for being leaders or members of an "armed organization," and 19,635 people were convicted on these charges (Bayulgen et al., 2018: 351).

Erdoğan and the AKP have managed to implement strategic legalism, and currently, the distinctive line, between what is legal and what is not, is blurry (Yılmaz, 2020: 277).

<u>"The Parallel State"</u>

> *"All the dirty laundry will come out. Many people won't sleep a wink tonight"*
> Kemal Kilicdaroglu, chairman of the Republican People's Party (Pitel, 2016).

Although it is certainly autocratic to claim that one is the "sole guardian of the nation and the people," Erdoğan has managed to exploit his powers in his favor; in addition, his rule has been not only characterized by repression and instability but also corruption (Yılmaz and Turner, 2019: 693). Indeed, some commentators on Turkish politics have argued that the corruption has never been more evident, and that results from Erdoğan's decisions of choosing his "personal loyalty" to deepen his autocratic structure (Matusiak, 2015: 32). Even though Erdoğan blames the military and Fethullah Gülen for inaugurating a "parallel state", in reality, his expansion of personal clientelist networks from the top government levels to the local ones is the main cause of creating a corrupt parallel state (Matusiak, 2015: 32). As argued by Yılmaz and Turner (2019), "the AKP revived the security state of the 1990s and organized a reactionary backlash composed of resentment, extreme nationalism and state violence", which consequently, shifted Turkey from a "tutelary democracy" to an authoritarian competitive regime (Yılmaz and Turner, 2019: 694). In 2010, the government adopted an anti-corruption action plan, as part of the EU accession process; the plan included a set of reforms to criminalize bribery, money laundering, extortion and all illegal actions that provide greater benefit to a specific group of people (Phillips, 2017: 47). However, practically, the anti-corruption authorities proved to be ineffective, because the rules were weakly enforced, particularly after the AKP earned its third mandate in the elections of 2011 (Phillips, 2017: 47). Accordingly, officials increasingly became bold in their practices, and impunity

fostered a room for corruption that touched top levels of government and Erdoğan's family (Phillips, 2017: 48). Corruption is a tool for Erdoğan to reward his family, loyalists, and also a weapon to undermine his opponents and consolidate his power (Phillips, 2017: 52). In fact, his concentration of power is a form of corruption that is reinforced through both constitutional reforms and "personalized" institutions that prevent him from getting investigated and protect his interests (Phillips, 2017: 52). One of the institutions that serve the corruption of Erdoğan and his entourage is the civilian secret service (*Milli Istihbarat Teşkilati* MIT), which according to Erdoğan is "the most important state institution" (Matusiak, 2015: 32). The head of MIT, Hakan Fidan, is considered one of Erdoğan's closest friends, often referred to as his "mystery box" or "person number two in the state", since he is in charge of dealing with critical issues; for example, the Kurdish opposition and the Gülen movement (Matusiak, 2015: 32). As mentioned earlier, post the coup Fethullah Gülen was the main source of "disruption" for Erdoğan and the Turkish state; thus, Gülenists were charged with treason and were referred to by the Turkish officials as "terrorists" (Phillips, 2017: 48). Indeed, Erdoğan's accusations reached foreign ambassadors, like the former US Ambassador to Turkey, Francis J. Ricciardone, who was threatened and accused of corruption for defending Fethullah Gülen from accusations of terrorism (Phillips, 2017:48). Other foreign envoys were also condemned, like the Interior Minister of Israel, Efkan Ala. In fact, the Turkish government clearly declared a forewarning, through the words of Ahmed Davutoglu, "[We] will break the arm of anyone involved in graft, even if it's our own brother" (Phillips, 2017:48).

"State of Emergency"

"It's not only the person who pulls the trigger, but those who made that possible who should also be defined as terrorists. There was no difference between a terrorist holding a gun or a bomb and those who use their position and pen to serve the aims."

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Mezzofiore, 2013)

Erdoğan had the choice to reconcile with his opponents post the failed coup attempt; however, as he has already shown in dealing with other incidents like the twin crises of 2013 (Gezi Park protests and the 2013 corruption investigations), he chose to unleash his "inner-Stalin" (Phillips, 2017: 177). Indeed, the methods used by Erdoğan to justify the use of repression, and consolidate public support depends on the narrative "with or against us" that has been continuously reinforced and in Turkish society (Matusiak, 2015: 33). As emphasized by Yılmaz and Turner (2019), the coup was the gate for Erdoğan to infuse conspiracy theories in the name of "saving the nation" and a means to justify unprecedented abuse of human rights (Yılmaz and Turner, 2019: 693). In fact, the state of emergency enforced post the coup transformed Turkey into a "giant gulag" in which the rule of law was further undermined, legitimate forms of disagreement were denied, and massive purges and arrests were striking (Phillips, 2017: 177). In that context, the government has further violated freedoms of speech, demonstration, and assembly. Moreover, daily police operations have become a means to convey a message to the public that any opposition will be considered a crime against the regime, and the distinctive borderline between freedom of speech and crime could be suspended (Yılmaz, 2020: 227). In other words, these emergency decrees created a "legal black hole" that is dependent on a "system of arbitrary laws based on the exigencies of the emergency" ignoring basic human and political rights and establishing a plebiscitary regime based on the centralization of all powers to the president (Taş, 2015: 780; Yılmaz, 2020: 269). Indeed, the numbers reflecting the level of repression after the failed coup attempt are unprecedented; as from July 2016 to the present, an estimate of 50, 348 were dismissed, 96,885 were arrested, 500,650 were investigated on terrorism charges, 189 media outlets were shut down, 30003 private schools and universities were closed, 4,463 judges and prosecutors were dismissed, and 6,021 academics

lost their jobs (Turkey Purge)[36]. In fact, not only the coup planners and those tied to the Gülen movement were affected, but also all segments of the Turkish society on every level, which created an atmosphere of fear and diminished any space of opposition (Bayulgen et al., 2018: 359). Moreover, the statistics concerning the crackdown on the military are exceptional, as one-third of the generals were detained, one-third of all the admirals were arrested, and thousands of officers and soldiers were taken into custody (Phillips, 2017: 171).

Freedom of expression is another victim of Erdoğan's policies as the government has been increasing its pressure on media conglomerates and outlets to censor a wide array of news and to silence opposition. Even though the tools to pressure and control the media outlets and journalists existed before the AKP came to power, the party increasingly used those tools with unprecedented frequency and force (Corke et al., 2014: 8). Post the Gezi Park protests, more than 70,000 URL addresses were restricted, permanently; in addition, restrictions on social media networks were imposed to reveal users' data to state authorities (Matusiak, 2015: 35). As a result, the Freedom House Foundation has classified Turkey as "not free" in terms of freedom of expression, and civil and political rights (Freedom House). The detention and imprisonment of a large number of journalists who criticized the government created an atmosphere of fear, as the numbers of arrest warrants kept increasing to the extent of listing Turkey as the top jailer of journalists in the world, ahead of Iran and China (Corke et al., 2014: 14). Indeed, some laws facilitated the process of control for the government, like the Internet Law no.5651 of 2015, which empowered Turkey's Telecommunication Directorate (TIB) to allow the government to block websites "in the interest

---

[36] data collection on the post-coup purges, from Turkey Purge website, at http://turkeypurge.com/.

79

of national security, the restoration of public order, and the prevention of crimes" (Phillips, 2017: 39). A month later in April 2015, the law was amended allowing the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) to access personal data without court approval and it gave the MIT personnel and impunity from legal violations committed in the course of their work (Phillips, 2017: 39). In addition, post the failed coup, a new law endorsed sentences of up to nine years for individuals who publish or leak intelligence material. Moreover, under Article 8 of Law 5651, the TIB continued monitoring and blocking news websites, even though Article 8 only allows for the blockage of publications related to gambling, prostitution, sexual abuse, and drug use (Phillips, 2017: 39). Accordingly, the European Parliament (EP) issued a report condemning the harsh and repressive actions of the government against the journalists, noting that Turkey is facing "serious backsliding" specifically in terms of freedom of press, expression and opinion (Candar, 2016). The report, additionally, criticizes the authoritarian tendencies of Erdoğan, and acknowledged the "rapidly deteriorating" security condition in Turkey (Candar, 2016). Furthermore, Washington advised Turkey to follow the rule of law and stop the arbitrary purges since it contradicts the principles of NATO and its "respect to democracy" (Phillips, 2017: 171). Last but not least, another example of the increasingly repressive and polarizing governmental style by Erdoğan is the response to the "peace petition" conducted by more than 1400 academics calling an end to the "deliberate massacre and deportation of Kurdish people" (Khalidi, 2016). The petition called for peace talks with the PKK, stating "we will not be party to this crime"; however, Erdoğan accused the academics of betrayal and responded: "We are not in the position to seek permission from the so-called academics. These [people] should know their place, they commit the same crime as those who carry out massacres" (Khalidi, 2016). Consequently, signatories were targeted and harassed, and others received death threats (Khalidi, 2016).

The AKP and Erdoğan have proved that their perception of being a democratic party/government is nothing but a façade to preserve their electoral success and interests. Indeed, the AKP programme emphasizes the importance of protecting fundamental rights and freedoms (AKP official website: 1-13)[37]. Meanwhile, the reality is different as illustrated earlier in the literature, the rule of law in Turkey has been systematically dismantled specifically since the July 15 coup attempt that narrowed the space for opposition, oppressed basic political freedoms, and diminished confidence in state institutions. Moreover, even though one of the main political principles of the AKP is "Democratization and transparency of the internal structures of the parties that constitute the nucleus of an institution are the compelling necessities for the proper functioning of the system", the state institutions under the AKP have become highly politicized due to the fusion of the state and the party, and the resort to massive electoral fraud and repression to stay in power (AKP official website: 11; Esen and Gumuscu, 2016: 1585-1586). Similarly, Erdoğan has used his electoral strength to permanently remove all the constraints on his power and use those politicized state institutions against any potential threat; thus, additionally contradicting the party principle that calls for "the separation of the powers [and] checks and balances shall be ensured between the powers of the legislative, executive and judicial branches" (Castaldo, 2018: 482; AKP official website: 12). The AKP and Erdoğan current political trajectory have the potential to generate a more radical type of authoritarianism, yet it is still questionable whether the Turkish military will remain obedient to the present government or decide to re-embrace its "guardian role of secularism and Kemalism". Some observers (as demonstrated in the former chapters) argue that the military as an institution has already crumbled, which justifies the military's obedience to Erdoğan's Islamic agenda. Nevertheless, others argue that the Turkish military is not forced to

---

[37] For more information about the AKP programme visit their official website:
https://www.akparti.org.tr/en/parti/party-programme/

obey Erdoğan's, but the military is voluntarily and strategically staying in barracks to maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of the in the international community, especially that the civilian control of the armed forces is a highly respected and strictly applied NATO doctrine. Accordingly, it greatly unlikely that the Turkish military will plan a future coup against Erdoğan's government.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the reversal to autocracy through an agency-based approach by looking at literature on personalism and populism. The arguments presented to demonstrate the strategies through which Erdoğan and the AKP used to consolidate their power. Through looking at the empirical evidence behind the restructuring of the Turkish political and legal institutions, military and media outlets, several outcomes are indicated. Firstly, the repressive government style has led to the re-emergence of fear and self-censorship, and discouragement from expressing and practicing socio-political rights. Secondly, the deployment of formal and informal mechanisms of repression has led to unprecedented human rights violations and oppression of opposition. Thirdly, all the aforementioned legal amendments and institutional changes have resulted in establishing an institutional configuration of state power that eventually transformed state-citizen relationships; thus, the capacity to challenge authoritarianism has become restrained. Finally, understanding the logic behind the use of such strategies by Erdoğan is still controversial and the question remains: Are those strategies mechanisms of defense or goals within themselves?

Chapter V: Conclusion

After examining the literature on democratic backsliding and Turkey, the aim is to reach a better understanding of why the process of democratic backsliding has taken place in Turkey despite the de-politicization of the military, and also contribute to the understanding of using autocratic measures in a more general manner. In regard, to evaluate the findings the three main hypotheses are:

> *H1: Restrainaing the power of the military does not gurantee the survival of democracy.*

> *H2: The autocratic policies by Erdoğan are influenced by the historical experience of Turkey.*

> *H3: The personalization of institutions is a key cause of democratic backsliding in Turkey.*

Review of Findings

Hypothesis 1

The political developments in Turkey in the past 18 years, including the many crises that have been unfolded since 2007, provide an important opportunity to study the phenomenon of democratic backsliding in hybrid regimes that once had the potential to become more democratic. Defying all theories in the literature, Turkey has turned visibly more authoritarian. In order to explain this puzzle, the thesis focuses on the correlation between *democratic backsliding* vis-á-vis *the politicization of the military* and the *personalization of institutions.* The literature examined, proves that controlling the military by the civilian government, and eradicating its political autonomy and tutelary powers is a crucial step for democracy; nevertheless, in the case of Turkey, despite the government's ability to change the civil-military relations- perceived as a positive democratic development- the country has moved towards democratic backsliding. Even though analysts of Turkish politics differ on the cause of this "authoritarian turn", it is settled that there is

a series of "turning points" not a specific single one in this context. As discussed in *chapter two*, the first turning point is the constitutional reforms introduced between 1999 and 2010 to limit and remove the military's institutional mechanisms of power[38], which partially proved to be effective yet not fully successful in some incidents like the 2007 e-memorandum and the July 2016 failed coup attempt. The military, indeed, is abiding by the constitutional reforms and acting within the parameters of its legal rights. Another finding is the impact of punishment on the military's tendency to intervene. As was mentioned previously, the AKP government under Erdoğan managed to unprecedently conduct trials and punishments against military officials, which have gained significant criticism for their lack of transparency and failure to provide detailed judicial explanations during sentencing. In regard, the military's identity seems to have changed over time as a result of the consecutive constitutional amendments, especially after the 2010 amendments that enforced the change of the Internal Service Law to prevent military officials from having constitutional grounds for carrying out coups against the civilian government. Thus, the end of the military tutelary in Turkey is summed up in three steps; first, the implementation of legal reforms that reduced the power of the military in the decision-making process; secondly, the de-legitimization of the military's intervention in politics; thirdly and lastly, the criminalization and punishment of the military personnel in case of intervention. Accordingly, in assessing *H1*, restrainaing the power of the military has not prevented the democratic backsliding in Turkey due to the existence of other factors that paved the way for Erdoğan to adopt autocratic policies as mentioned in *chapter four*.

---

[38] MGK, bureaucratic hierarchy, autonomy in promotion process, State Security Court, autonomy of defense budget and TAF internal service.

In evaluating *H2*, a key finding discussed in *chapter three* is the incompletion of the Turkish democratic transition demographically and institutionally, which accordingly reflects how the democratic project in Turkey has never been fully consolidated and underscores how the authoritarian tendencies have always existed and continue to be present in the Turkish political system. Additionally, one could argue that Turkey has only changed from one type of authoritarianism (under the rule of the military) to another one (under the rule of Erdoğan and the AKP); accordingly, a new type of a deep state has emerged that is characterized by a governmental structure that does not comply with the constitution and a fictious division of power among state branches. Indeed, the present Turkish political system has become a representation of a one-man rule whose powers are befalling to be unlimited. In fact, the development towards deeper forms of authoritarianism has been increasingly reflected in a simultaneous personalized and rearrangement of the state-society relations.

Hypothesis 3

As discussed in *chapter four*, the fusion of the state and the dominant ruling party has generated deeply politicized state institutions created to serve the political and economic interests of Erdoğan and the AKP. Today, Erdoğan and the AKP control the key state institutions: the judiciary, the Turkish intelligence service, the police, the state bureaucracy, and partially the military. In addition, Erdoğan has managed to control most of the media outlets; however, an interesting component of this democratic backsliding/authoritarian turn is the lack of serious opposition due to the growing repression and imprisonment of the opposing actors and the legitimization of this authoritarian turn in the eyes of weak opposition parties. Another key finding in *chapter four* is Erdoğan's successful legitimation of authoritarian practices through the use of

85

populist rhetoric in appealing to the citizens and opposition. The first step was the legitimation construct of the "New Turkey" that ultimately opened the door for justifying more power grabs, and developed a new pattern of identification for citizens and relevant groups. Indeed, specifically after the failed July 15 coup, the key ideological narrative of the "New Turkey" proposed this logic of "them against us" to eliminate both internal and external enemies. Consequently, in the aftermath of the failed coup, the measures introduced under a state of emergency were essential to decide who is with or against Erdoğan. Moreover, the media reproduced this rhetoric by emphasizing the notion of "national security". In addition, to strategies such as using permanent anti-terror laws to punish dissident political groups, new forms of oppression were introduced that deepened the ontological insecurity. The latter resulted in purposefully creating a form of Islamic authoritarian populism that blurred the polarized Turkish society and mobilized Islamic and nationalist sentiments to widen the electoral base of the AKP. Can Turkey emerge from its crisis? Erdoğan's personalization of institutions and alienation of checks and balances has definitely rendered Turkey in a state of permanent political crisis. His success in elections does not indicate his success in achieving the democracy promised by his political party for the people. Indeed, currently in many hybrid regimes, modern authoritarians have succeeded in mastering the control over electoral processes, creating an illusion of pluralism to maintain their power.

Last but not least, in examining *H1*, it is "valid" to say that restrainaing the power of the military does not gurantee the survival of democracy due to the abuse and personalization of other state institutions by partisan, which led to a new type of authoritarian tutelage. Secondly, in examining *H2*, it is partially "valid" to say that the historical experience in Turkey has played a role in the democratic backsliding process because other factors have also affected it like the dependence on aggressive populist tactics, fractured opposition, and deep political polarization of

86

the Turkish society. Finally, in examining *H3,* it is valid to say that the personalization of institutions by Erdoğan is a key cause of democratic backsliding since currently politics in Turkey is more centralized around the aspirations of one man who according to many Turkish scholars has unprecedently consolidated power around his person in a way no other Turkish political leader has ever done.

Concluding Outlook

I do believe that the limitations of my research prevent me from reaching definitive conclusions. The first and biggest limitation that I experienced is the lack of understanding of the Turkish language, which I believe would have been fruitful and allowed me to access archives, gather field research, and gain a better understanding of Turkish society. In addition, I wanted to analyze the rhetoric of military and government officials as well as Erdoğan's in order to note the shifts in statements that influence the Turkish population during different time spans. Finally, I would like to have the opportunity to research this topic again and overcome the stated boundaries hoping to offer a productive angle that examines democratic backsliding and authoritarian-turns in other parts of the world.

Bibliography

- Agüero, F. (1998). Legacies of transitions: Institutionalization, the military, and democracy in South America. Mershon International Studies Review, 42. 383-404.

- Akin, A. (2017). Conditions of sense making and news making in Turkey after the failed coup attempt: Sisyphus labor on two fronts. *Journalism*, *18*(4), 518-532.

- Aknur, M. (2013). Civil-military relations during the AK Party era: major developments and challenges. Insight Turkey, 15(4), 131.

- Alagappa, M. (2001) Investigating and explaining change: An analytical framework. In: Alagappa, Muthiah (ed.) Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 29–56.

- Alexander, A. C., & Welzel, C. (2017). The myth of deconsolidation: Rising liberalism and the populist reaction (No. 10). ILE Working Paper Series.

- Alpan, B. (2016). From AKP's 'conservative democracy'to 'advanced democracy': shifts and challenges in the debate on 'Europe'. South European Society and Politics, 21(1), 15-28

- Ansell, C. K., & Fish, M. S. (1999). The art of being indispensable: noncharismatic personalism in contemporary political parties. *Comparative Political Studies*, *32*(3), 283-312.

- Aydınlı, E. (2012). Turkey under the AKP: civil-military relations transformed. Journal of Democracy, 23(1), 100-108.

- Azeri, S. (2016). The july 15 coup attempt in Turkey: The erdogan–gulen confrontation and the fall of 'moderate'political islam. Critique, 44(4), 465-478.

- Barany, Z. (1997). Democratic consolidation and the military: The East European experience. Comparative politics, 21-43.

- Bardakçi, M. (2013). Coup plots and the transformation of civil–military relations in Turkey under AKP rule. Turkish Studies, 14(3), 411-428.

- Baykan, T. S. (2018). The Justice and Development Party in Turkey: Populism, Personalism, Organization. Cambridge University Press.

- Bayulgen, O., Arbatli, E., & Canbolat, S. (2018). Elite survival strategies and authoritarian reversal in Turkey. Polity, 50(3), 333-365.

- Bennett, A., & Checkel, J. T. (2015). Process tracing: From philosophical roots to best practices. Process tracing: From metaphor to analytic tool, 3-37.

- Bermeo, N. (2016). On democratic backsliding. Journal of Democracy, 27(1), 5-19.

- Bratton, M., & Van de Walle, N. (1997). Democratic experiments in Africa: Regime transitions in comparative perspective. Cambridge university press. 170.

- Brooker, P. (2013). Non-democratic regimes. Macmillan International Higher Education, 80-104.

- Bulut, A. T., & Yildirim, T. M. (2020). Political Stability, Democracy and Agenda Dynamics in Turkey. Palgrave Macmillan US.

- Cagaptay, S. (2018). The New Sultan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey. The International Spectator, 53(4), 1-15.

- Cagaptay, S. (2019). Erdogan's empire: Turkey and the politics of the Middle East. Nova Iorque: Bloomsbury Publishing.

- Caliskan, K. (2017). Explaining the end of military tutelary regime and the July 15 coup attempt in Turkey. Journal of Cultural Economy, 10(1), 97-111.

- Campbell, D. F. J. (2008). The basic concept for the democracy ranking of the quality of democracy. Vienna, Austria: Democracy Ranking.

- Cassani, A., & Tomini, L. (2018). Reversing regimes and concepts: from democratization to autocratization. European Political Science, 1-16.

- Castaldo, A. (2018). Populism and competitive authoritarianism in Turkey. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, *18*(4), 467-487.

- Corke, S., Finkel, A., Kramer, D. J., Robbins, C. A., & Schenkkan, N. (2014). Democracy in crisis: Corruption, media, and power in Turkey (pp. 1-20). Washington, DC: Freedom House.

- Croissant, A., Kuehn, D., Chambers, P. W., Völkel, P., & Wolf, S. O. (2011). Theorizing civilian control of the military in emerging democracies: agency, structure and institutional change. Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft, 5(1), 75-98.

- Dahl, R. A. (1983). *Dilemmas of pluralist democracy: Autonomy vs. control*. Yale University Press.

- Daly, T. (2017). Diagnosing Democratic Decay. Gilbert & Tobin Centre of Public Law Comparative Constitutional Law Roundtable, UNSW, Sydney (August 2017).

- Danforth, N. (2020). The Outlook for Turkish Democracy: 2023 and Beyond. Washington, DC: The Washington Institute of Near East Policy

- Davenport, C. (2007). State repression and political order. Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci., 10, 1-23.

- Demir, S., & Bingöl, O. (2018). From military tutelage to civilian control: an analysis of the evolution of Turkish civil–military relations. British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 47(2), 172-191.

- Demiralp, S. (2016). The Breaking up of Turkey's Islamic Alliance: the AKP-Gulen Conflict and Implications for Middle East Studies. Meria Journal, 20(1).

- Demirel, T. (2005). Lessons of military regimes and democracy: The Turkish case in a comparative perspective. Armed Forces & Society, 31(2), 245-271.

- Dessler, D. (1989). What's at stake in the agent-structure debate? International organization, 43(3), 441-473.

- Diamond, L. (1999). Developing democracy: Toward consolidation. JHU Press. 60-120.

- Diamond, L. (2015). Facing up to the democratic recession. Journal of Democracy, 26(1), 141-155.

- Droz-Vincent, P. (2014). Prospects for "democratic control of the Armed Forces"? Comparative insights and lessons for the Arab world in transition. Armed Forces & Society, 40(4), 696-723.

- Ege, A. (2019). Identity and Populism in Turkey through Foreign Policy: The West as the "Superior Mind" as a Conspiracy Theory. *Contemporary Approaches in Social Science Researches*, 531.

- Eichhorn, K. (2016). Determinants of Re-Autocratization. Politikon: The IAPSS Journal of Political Science, 31, 53-77.

- Eissenstat, H. (2017). Erdoğan as autocrat: A very Turkish tragedy. *The Project on Middle East Democracy*, *12*.

- Erensü, S., & Alemdaroğlu, A. (2018). Dialectics of Reform and Repression: Unpacking Turkey's Authoritarian "Turn". Review of Middle East Studies, 52(1), 16-28.

- Esen, B., & Gumuscu, S. (2016). Rising competitive authoritarianism in Turkey. Third World Quarterly, 37(9), 1581-1606.

- Ethan, K., & Converse, N. (2008). Why Democracies Fail. Journal of Democracy, 19(4).

- Feaver, P. (2003). The civil–military gap in comparative perspective. Journal of Strategic Studies, 26(2). 4-54.

- Finer, S. E. (2002). The man on horseback: The Role of the military in politics. Transaction Publishers. 4-89.

- Foa, R. S., & Mounk, Y. (2016). The danger of deconsolidation: The democratic disconnect. Journal of democracy, 27(3), 5-17.

- George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). Case studies and theory development in the social sciences. mit Press.

- Gingeras, R. (2017). Implications behind Erdogan's 'Second War of Independence.'. New Age. Available online: http://www. newagebd. net/article/19767/implications-behind-erdogans-second-war-of-independence.

- Gurcan, M. (2018), "Tentative Transition Civil Military Relations in Turkey since the July 15 Uprising" The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. 1-18.

- Gürcan, E., & Peker, E. (2015). Challenging neoliberalism at Turkey's Gezi Park: From private discontent to collective class action. Springer.

- Gürcan, M., & Gisclon, M. (2017). Turkey's Security Sector After July 15: Democratizing Security or Securitizing the State?. *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, *15*(4), 67-85.

- Gürsoy, Y. (2012). The changing role of the military in Turkish politics: democratization through coup plots?. Democratization, 19(4), 735-760.

- Haass, R. N. (2003). Toward greater democracy in the Muslim world. The Washington Quarterly, 26(3), 137-148.

- Hale, W. (1994). Turkish politics and the military Routledge. London and New York.

- Haugom, L. (2019). The Turkish Armed Forces and Civil-military Relations in Turkey after the 15 July 2016 Coup Attempt. Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies, 2(1).

- Heper, M. (2005). The Justice and Development Party government and the military in Turkey. Turkish Studies, 6(2), 215-231.

- Heper, M. (2011). Civil-Military Relations in Turkey: Toward a Liberal Model?. Turkish Studies, 12(2), 241-252.

- House, F. (2017). Freedom in the world 2017. Populists and autocrats: The dual threat to global democracy. *Freedom House*.

- House, F. (2020). Freedom in the World 2020 Report.

- Huq, A., & Ginsburg, T. (2018). How to lose a constitutional democracy. *UCLA L. Rev.*, *65*, 78.

- Huntington, S. (1996). Reforming civil–military relations. In: Diamond, Larry and Marc Plattner (eds). Civil–Military Relations and Democracy. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Huntington, S. P. (1957). Officership as a Profession. The soldier and the state: the theory and politics of civil-military relations. 80-83.

- Huntington, S. P. (1991). Democracy's third wave. Journal of democracy, 2(2), 12-34

- Jacobs, T. (2018, June 22). Democracy Is in Decline in Much of the World. Retrieved from https://psmag.com/news/democracy-is-in-decline-in-much-of-the-world.

- Janowitz, M. (1960). The Political Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait. 360-418.

- Jenkins, G. (2007). Continuity and change: prospects for civil—military relations in Turkey. International Affairs, 83(2), 339-355.

- Jongerden, J. (2019). Conquering the state and subordinating society under AKP rule: a Kurdish perspective on the development of a new autocracy in Turkey. Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies, 21(3), 260-273.

- Karakoç, J. (2015). Authoritarian Tendencies versus Democratization: Evidence from Turkey. In Authoritarianism in the Middle East. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 36-66.

- Kaya, S. (2009). The rise and decline of the Turkish" deep state": the Ergenekon case. Insight Turkey, 99-113.

- Kemp, K. W., & Hudlin, C. (1992). Civil supremacy over the military: Its nature and limits. Armed Forces & Society, 19(1), 7-26.

- Khalidi, A. (2016). "Turkish President Slams Academics Calling for Peace." Kurdistan 24. www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/1a7b68b6-9b83-459e-82a9-813843aa6b27/turkish-president-slams-academics-calling-for-peace.

- Kirişci, K., & Sloat, A. (2019). The rise and fall of liberal democracy in Turkey: Implications for the West. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-rise-and-fall-of-liberal-democracy-in-turkey-implications-for-the-west/.

- Kuehn, D., & Lorenz, P. (2011). Explaining civil-military relations in new democracies: structure, agency and theory development. Asian Journal of Political Science, 19(3), 231-249.

- Kuyucu, A. T. (2005). Ethno-religious 'unmixing' of 'Turkey': 6–7 September riots as a case in Turkish nationalism. Nations and Nationalism, 11(3), 361-380

- L. Pitel. (2016). "Turkey Corruption: Gold Trader's Arrest in Miami Could Put President Erdogan in the Spotlight Once Again," Independent.

- Lancaster, C. (2014). The iron law of Erdogan: The decay from intra-party democracy to personalistic rule. Third World Quarterly, 35(9), 1672-1690.

- Legislating Autocracy? Recent Legal Developments In Turkey. (2014). Retrieved from https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/legislating-autocracy-recent-legal-developments-turkey/.

- Lessons from the rise of strongmen in weak states. (2018, June 16). Retrieved from https://www.economist.com/leaders/2018/06/16/lessons-from-the-rise-of-strongmen-in-weak-states.

- Letsch, C. (2013). Turkey protests spread after violence in Istanbul over park demolition. The Guardian, 31.

- Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). How democracies die. Broadway Books.

- Linz, J. J. (1990). The perils of presidentialism. Journal of democracy, 1(1), 51-69

- Linz, J. J., & Stepan, A. C. (1996). Toward consolidated democracies. Journal of democracy, 7(2), 14-33.

- Lust, E., & Waldner, D. (2015). Unwelcome change: understanding, evaluating, and extending theories of democratic backsliding. US Agency for International Development, 11.

- Lührmann, A., & Lindberg, S. I. (2018). Keeping the Democratic Façade: Contemporary Autocratization as a Game of Deception. V-Dem Working Paper, 75.

- Lührmann, A., Mechkova, V., Dahlum, S., Maxwell, L., Olin, M., Petrarca, C. S, & Lindberg, S. I. (2018). State of the world 2017: autocratization and exclusion?. Democratization, 25(8), 1321-1340.

- Mahoney, J. (2001). Path-dependent explanations of regime change: Central America in comparative perspective. Studies in comparative international development, 36(1), 111-141

- Matos, A. (2013). The Role of the Military in the Turkish Democracy: Are the Military the Guardians of or a Threat to the Turkish Democracy?. 25.

- Matusiak, M. (2015). The great leap. Turkey under Erdogan. Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich im. Marka Karpia.

- Mezzofiore, G (2013). "Turkey Protests: Terror Squads Lead Government Crackdown on Protesters and Social Media." International Business Times.

- Miranda, F. (1992). The politicization of the military. 7

- Narli, N. (2011). Concordance and discordance in Turkish civil-military relations, 1980–2002. Turkish Studies, 12(2), 215-225

- Narin, B. R. (2019). *Defining Populism Through Turkey's Erdogan* (Bachelor's thesis, Università Ca'Foscari Venezia).

- Nordlinger, E. A. (1977). Soldiers in politics: military coups and governments. Prentice Hall.

-O'Donnell, G. (1992). Transitions, continuities, and paradoxes. Issues in democratic consolidation: The new South American democracies in comparative perspective, 17-56.

- Phillips, D. L. (2017). An uncertain ally: Turkey under Erdogan's dictatorship. Taylor & Francis.

- Pierini, M. (2018). Turkey's Perfect Path to Autocracy. Carnegie Europe.

- Puddington, A. (2017). *Breaking down democracy: Goals, strategies, and methods of modern authoritarians* (pp. 1-2). Washington, DC: Freedom House.

- Rahat, G., & Sheafer, T. (2007). The personalization (s) of politics: Israel, 1949–2003. *Political communication*, *24*(1), 65-80.

- Robert, D. (1971). Polyarchy: participation and opposition. New Haven.

- Runciman, D. (2018). How democracy ends. Basic Books.

- Sarigil, Z. (2009). Deconstructing the Turkish military's popularity. Armed Forces & Society, 35(4), 709-727.

- Sarigil, Z. (2011). Civil-military relations beyond dichotomy: With special reference to Turkey. Turkish Studies, 12(2), 265-278.

- Schedler, A. (1998). What is democratic consolidation?. Journal of democracy, 9(2), 91-107.

-Schmitter, P. C., & Karl, T. L. (1991). What democracy is... and is not. *Journal of democracy*, *2*(3), 75-88.

- Selçuk, O., Hekimci, D., & Erpul, O. (2019). The Erdoğanization of Turkish politics and the role of the opposition. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 19(4), 541-564.

- Somer, M. (2016). Understanding Turkey's democratic breakdown: old vs. new and indigenous vs. global authoritarianism. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 16(4), 481-503

- Somer, M. (2019). Turkey: The slippery slope from reformist to revolutionary polarization and democratic breakdown. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 681(1), 42-61.

- Söyler, M. (2013). Informal institutions, forms of state and democracy: the Turkish deep state. Democratization, 20(2), 310-334

- Söyler, M. (2015). The Turkish deep state: State consolidation, civil-military relations and democracy. Routledge.106.

- Stelgias, N. (2015). Turkey's Hybrid Competitive Authoritarian Regime; A Genuine Product of Anatolia's Middle Class. The Levantine Review, 4(2), 201-216.

- Stepan, A. C., Năstăsescu, C., & Van Oystaeyen, F. (1988). Rethinking military politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone. Princeton University Press.

- Svolik, M. W. (2015). Which democracies will last? Coups, incumbent takeovers, and the dynamic of democratic consolidation. British Journal of Political Science, 45(4), 715-738.

- T. Arango and C. Yeginsu, "Turkey Cracks Down as Coup Unravels," July 17, 2016, The New York Times, A1.

- Tansel, C. B. (2018). Authoritarian neoliberalism and democratic backsliding in Turkey: Beyond the narratives of progress.

- Taş, H. (2015). Turkey–from tutelary to delegative democracy. Third World Quarterly, 36(4), 776-791.

- Toksabay E., Aslan, M. (2015). Turkey's Erdogan calls for new constitution as EU frets about rights. Reuters. Last modified November, 10.

- Trinkunas, H.A. (2005). Crafting civilian control of the military in Venezuela: A comparative perspective. Chapel Hill: university of North Carolina Press. 10-20.

- Tusalem, R. F. (2014). Bringing the military back in: The politicisation of the military and its effect on democratic consolidation. International Political Science Review, 35(4), 482-501.

- Valenzuela, J. S. (1990). Democratic consolidation in post-transitional settings: notion, process, and facilitating conditions (Vol. 150). Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame.

- Weber, M. (1974). *On charisma and institution building* (Vol. 322). University of Chicago Press.

- White, J. (2017). Spindle autocracy in the new Turkey. Brown J. World Affairs. 24-37.

- Yavuz, M. H., & Koç, R. (2016). The Turkish coup attempt: the Gülen movement vs. the state. Middle East Policy, 23(4), 136-148.

- Yilmaz, I., Caman, M. E., & Bashirov, G. (2020). How an Islamist party managed to legitimate its authoritarianization in the eyes of the secularist opposition: the case of Turkey. Democratization, 27(2), 265-282.

- Yılmaz, Z. (2020). Erdoğan's presidential regime and strategic legalism: Turkish democracy in the twilight zone. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 1-23.

- Yılmaz, Z., & Turner, B. S. (2019). Turkey's deepening authoritarianism and the fall of electoral democracy.

- Çandar, C. (2016). EU Report Ruffles Turkey's Feathers. Al Monitor.

- Öktem, K., & Akkoyunlu, K. (2016). Exit from democracy: Illiberal governance in Turkey and beyond.

- Öniş, Z. (2015). Monopolising the centre: The AKP and the uncertain path of Turkish democracy. The International Spectator, 50(2), 22-41.

-Öniş, Z. (2016). Turkey's two elections: the AKP comes back. Journal of Democracy, 27(2), 141-154.

- Öniş, Z., & Keyman, E. F. (2003). Turkey at the polls: a new path emerges. Journal of Democracy, 14(2), 95-107.

- Öztürk, A. E., & Gözaydın, İ. (2017). Turkey's constitutional amendments: A critical perspective. Research and Policy on Turkey, 2(2), 210-224.

- Özbudun, E. (2014). AKP at the crossroads: Erdoğan's majoritarian drift. *South European Society and Politics*, *19*(2), 155-167.

- "AKP Party Programme" Akparti.org.tr/en/parti/party-programme/.

- "Turkey's Post-Coup Crackdown." Turkey Purge, turkeypurge.com/.