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THE NEW CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN TURKEY

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Introduction

The July 15, 2016 coup attempt, which left over 200 civilians dead, put an end to the military's prestige and popularity in Turkey and ushered in a new era in civil-military relations (CMR), with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) asserting full civilian control over the Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*, TSK). Back in 1999, when Turkey obtained candidate status to accede to the European Union, the prerequisite of attaining democratic consolidation required, first and foremost, achieving the demilitarization and civilianization of the state. But after 2016, while the TSK was stripped of its reputation and traditionally dominant role in society and politics, the AKP government simultaneously solidified into a populist, authoritarian regime.

The following paper introduces the military's traditional role as the "guardian" of Turkish politics before the AKP came to power in 2002. It then argues that three factors paved the way for the new CMR between 2002 and 2016. First, this study discusses how the EU harmonization packages imbued legal and institutional changes that dwarfed the military's role in politics. Second, it discusses how the lack of a military victory against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan*, PKK) weakened the Armed

Forces' hand. Third, it reviews the unearthing, in 2007, of Ergenekon, an allegedly military-linked organization tied to ultra-nationalist circles and accused of carrying out various assassinations and bombings in Turkey. Hundreds of military officers were ousted or arrested as a result of the uncovering of this plot. The subsequent Ergenekon trials, despite being based on fabricated evidence, became a milestone, leading for the first time to a questioning of the Turkish military's political motives. Finally, the paper reviews how the 2016 coup attempt became an opportunity for the AKP and its leader, now-President Erdoğan, to further eliminate all opposition from different factions of society and politics, including the military.

Overall, this study argues that while the military's tutelage over Turkish politics was gradually replaced with the AKP's control over the TSK, the 2016 failed coup finalized the process, paving the way for a personalistic regime lacking rule of law and accountability. If the AKP stays in power, the TSK will remain under the regime's grip, acting as Erdoğan's private army. If the opposition wins the upcoming 2023 elections, however, a reworked system of CMR, wherein the TSK remains under democratically accountable civilian control, could finally allow Turkey to advance on its path to democracy and rule of law. The paper concludes with a discussion of the Turkish political opposition's current stance on CMR.

CMR Until 2002

Turkey's military has historically enjoyed a guardianship role in the country; however, CMR have evolved over time due to changes in agency and political circumstances. For example, between 1923 and 1960, the military was under the civilian control of a government run by the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) — the founding party of the republic and currently the main opposition faction under AKP rule. Despite efforts to establish a multi-party democracy by the country's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey remained a one-party regime until 1946. Internal Service Act (*İç Hizmet Kanunu*) No. 35 of 1935, which subsequently became the most important justification for military interventions, officially assigned the guardianship role to the military.

At first, Atatürk's adoption of elitism and prioritization of a top-to-bottom modernization/Westernization project positioned the Armed Forces as a tool of civilian rule. However, this changed after the 1960 coup, undertaken by young officers, following the rise of political Islam and a series of economic crises. The 1960 coup effectively put an end to the civilian control of the military in Turkey until 2016. Between 1960 and 2001, as the watchdog of the Kemalist¹ regime, the military intervened in politics either through coups (1960 and 1980) or memoranda forcing the resignation of elected governments (1971 and 1997). Although when it came to security issues, the TSK cadre appeared to be made up of professional technocrats, the military routinely exploited internal threats, such as Kurdish nationalism and political Islam, to limit politicians' policy alternatives and shape public opinion.²

Moreover, the TSK presented itself as the only competent organization "to bring order and Kemalist democracy to the country that 'incompetent' civilian governments could not achieve."³ The rise of the PKK in 1984 and the political

discourse positioning the Kurdish issue as a security threat consolidated the military's control. The fight against the PKK not only increased the army's prestige but also resulted in it being deemed, by the people, an institution capable of solving the country's other problems.⁴

Turkey's radical secularist break from its Ottoman legacy made defending the nation and the republic against political Islam a *raison d'être* for the military, which became the country's most widely trusted institution according to all polls. On Feb. 28, 1997, the Turkish National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*, MGK) issued a list of measures against the Islamists, pressuring the government into establishing state control over public religious expression. Wearing headscarves, for example, was banned in public institutions. This "post-modern coup," later labeled the "February 28 process," became the new norm in CMR, whereby the military threatened to act if civilians stepped outside the prescribed bounds.

In 1999, Turkey received official candidacy status for EU membership, and the security services captured the PKK's leader, Abdullah Öcalan. Together, these developments created a unique opportunity for the ruling coalition government to pass three democratization packages without much pushback from the military. Then, the 2002 early elections brought the AKP to power, starting a new era in CMR.

CMR in Flux Between 2002 and 2016

Liberal scholars argue that Turkey's CMR transformed into a liberal democratic model in the first decade of the AKP's reign.⁵ This was mainly the result of then-Prime Minister Erdoğan's pragmatic approach to politics, including when it came to relations with the military. The changing balance of power between the AKP and the TSK was due to various factors: the democratization/demilitarization process triggered by Turkey's EU candidacy during 2001-04; the sense of security that success in multiple elections granted the AKP; recovery following the 2001 global economic crisis; weak opposition from Kemalist and nationalist parties; the military's perceived

1. Kemalism is the official founding ideology of Turkey, which includes the main pillars of secular modernization and reform that Atatürk set as a goal for the Turkish republic and society. Kemalist factions in the TSK strictly followed these principles (republicanism, laicism, populism, revolutionism, etatism, and nationalism) and perceived themselves as the guardian of the Turkish state and people.

2. For a discussion of the use of internal threats at the expense of Turkish democracy, see Nil S. Satana and Tijen Demirel-Pegg (2020), "Military Counterterrorism Measures, Civil-Military Relations, and Democracy: The Cases of Turkey and the United States," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 43, 9: 815-836. Abul-Magd, Akca, and Marshall argue these perceived threats became justifications for the military's involvement in politics, which helped protect its vested economic interests. Zeinab Abul-Magd, Ismet Akca, and Shana Marshall, "Two Paths to Dominance: Military Businesses in Turkey and Egypt," *Carnegie Middle East Center*, June 3, 2020, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/06/03/two-paths-to-dominance-military-businesses-in-turkey-and-egypt-pub-81869>.

3. Nil S. Satana, (2008), "Transformation of the Turkish Military and the Path to

Democracy," *Armed Forces & Society* 34, 3: 357-388, 365.

4. For a detailed analysis, see Ahmet Kuru (2012), "The Rise and Fall of Military Tutelage in Turkey: Fears of Islamism, Kurdism, and Communism," *Insight Turkey* 14, 2: 37-57.

5. For a discussion of how the AKP is a secular and conservative-democratic party, see William Hale and Ergun Özbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP*, Routledge, 2010.



Photo above: People holding Turkish flags in Taksim Square in Istanbul watch and listen to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on TV as he delivers a speech during a press conference after the National Security Council and Cabinet meetings on July 21, 2016. Photo by Arif Hudaverdi Yaman/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images.

inability to bring the PKK to heel; as well as an aggressive and populist foreign policy — implemented with the use of the TSK — that was supported by Turkish Islamists and nationalists. Finally, a critical juncture remains the aforementioned Ergenekon trials (2008-13), which tried hundreds of officers in civilian courts and opened a public debate for the first time about the political and economic ambitions of the military.

Three of these factors merit further discussion. First, EU candidacy was a driver for adopting one of the most important institutional changes that curbed the TSK's power: the seventh harmonization package, of 2003, which substantially adjusted the composition, duties, and functions of the MGK. This reform transformed the MGK into an advisory body and eliminated the chief of staff's hold on the president to convene and make decisions under the TSK's direction. Moreover, state institutions such as the Council of Higher Education (*Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu*, YÖK) and the Radio and Television Supreme Council (*Radio ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu*, RTÜK) civilianized, thus eliminating the TSK's direct influence in education and media. Military expenses received more oversight by the Court

of Accounts, with an attempt to make defense and military expenditures accountable to the Turkish Grand National Assembly — at least in theory. Another crucial change was the AKP assuming control over decisions by the Supreme Military Council (*Yüksek Askerî Şûra*, YAŞ), which determines military promotions and dismissals. These and several other institutional and legal reforms to the TSK's role gradually demilitarized the country.

Despite occasional objections, the military cooperated with the civilian authorities for the sake of EU accession/Westernization, while the inner struggle continued. The AKP, however, had an advantage that no other government enjoyed. Many factions in the society coalesced to push for an end to military tutelage and supported the AKP. Liberals who wanted more democracy, Kurds who needed more political space, and civil society groups and big business organizations such as the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (*Türkiye Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği*, TUSİAD) or the Anatolian conservative bourgeoisie business owners (Anatolian Tigers) that longed for a better economy and more opportunities, all supported

the AKP's efforts to civilianize the regime. This kind of societal backing for a transformation in CMR was unprecedented. Moreover, Turkey's Western allies, including the U.S. and EU, also supported the AKP government⁶ and its attempts to demilitarize/civilianize the regime.

Second, the public started questioning the military's professionalism for the first time after the devastating PKK attacks in 2007-08. This became clear during the 2007 presidential elections. When the AKP nominated Islamist Abdullah Gül to run, the TSK issued an e-memorandum (*e-muhtıra*) on its website and tried to manipulate public opinion through the media to prevent his presidency. These efforts failed. Both the EU and U.S. renounced the Turkish military's interference in politics.⁷ Consequently, the 2010 referendum on constitutional amendments effectively marked the end of military tutelage. Several constitutional changes further normalized CMR, including the restriction of military courts to rule on military offences and a requirement that military personnel stand before civilian courts in cases involving civilian matters. Moreover, changes to the structure and election of the members of the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (*Hâkimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu*, HSYK) granted the government more control over judiciary processes and eliminated the military and Kemalists' extant influence on it. In 2011, Chief of Staff Işık Koşaner resigned when Erdoğan and Gül ignored his recommendations on military promotions, instead of issuing a memorandum.

Third, the Ergenekon purges changed the internal structure of the TSK. Unprecedentedly, former Turkish Chief of the General Staff Gen. İlker Basbuğ was arrested in 2012 following the arrests of high-level commanders such as Gen. İbrahim Fırtına and Gen. Çetin Doğan and Adm. Özden Örnek in 2011. Internal Service Act No. 35, which had cemented the military's guardianship role, was abolished in 2013. Despite the controversy surrounding the Ergenekon allegations, these developments broke the mental barriers for many in the society to hold the military accountable for its undemocratic actions, including but not limited to coup plots.

6. "Europe hails AKP victory in Turkey," November 4, 2002, *CNN*, <https://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/11/04/turkey.elections/>, last accessed on May 25, 2022.

7. Ian Traynor, "EU warns army in Turkey dispute," May 2, 2007, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/may/03/turkey.eu>, last accessed on May 26, 2022.

Civilian Control of the Military Post-2016

Any remaining informal influence the military held in politics as well as its popularity within society ceased after the 2016 coup attempt. The attempt was allegedly carried out by Gülenists, namely the followers of the U.S.-based Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen, who was a close ally of the AKP and Erdoğan between 2002 and 2013.⁸ His assistance then was particularly important for the AKP's election efforts as he had disciples in the military, police, judiciary, bureaucracy, media, universities, and civil society organizations.⁹ Furthermore, Gülenists were pivotal in prosecuting Kemalist military factions during the Ergenekon trials. However, Erdoğan and Gülen eventually found themselves at odds over "the control of key government positions and the allocation of resources."¹⁰ The infighting was revealed when, in December 2013, Gülenist prosecutors instigated a graft probe against Erdoğan's cabinet ministers and family members. Erdoğan claimed he was "conned and deceived" by Gülenists and managed to remain in power. Thus, when the president immediately blamed the 2016 coup attempt on Gülen, political and academic circles bandwagoned. High-ranking Kemalist officers came out publicly to oppose the coup.¹¹ The AKP government declared a state of emergency and suspended legislative and judiciary processes in the wake of the attempted overthrow of the regime. Tens of thousands of military officers and civil servants linked to the Gülen movement were purged. The Gülen movement was declared a terrorist organization, *Fethullah Gülen Terör Örgütü* (FETÖ). Soon afterwards, the AKP began to use accusations of affiliation with FETÖ to persecute Kurds, leftists, and liberals.¹²

8. The Gülenist *Hizmet* ("Service") movement has been working in Turkey and abroad as a civil society association providing mainly education. See Gönül Tol, Matt Mainzer, Zeynep Ekmekci, "Unpacking Turkey's Failed Coup: Causes and Consequences," August 17, 2016, *Middle East Institute*, https://www.mei.edu/publications/unpacking-turkeys-failed-coup-causes-and-consequences#_edn9, last accessed May 27, 2022, for an assessment of the movement and the coup.

9. Rusen Cakir, "Gülen Cemaati: Nereden nereye?" *Al Jazeera*, August 10, 2016, last accessed June 4, 2021, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/gorus/gulen-cemaati-nereden-nereye>

10. M. Hakan and Rasim Koç, 2016, "The Turkish Coup Attempt: The Gülen Movement vs. the State," *Middle East Policy*, 23: 136-148, 139.

11. Kemal Gursel, "Turkey's failed coup reveals 'army within an army,'" July 22, 2016, *Al-Monitor*, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2016/07/turkey-coup-attempt-shows-army-within-army.html>, last accessed June 5, 2022.

12. Kareem Shaheen, "Turkey arrests pro-Kurdish party leaders amid claims of internet shutdown," November 4, 2016, *The Guardian*, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/04/turkey-arrests-pro-kurdish-party-leaders-mps>, last accessed on May 31, 2022.

The Turkish military was at last tamed. The generals who once refused to send troops to Syria when Erdoğan pushed hard cooperated after 2016 in order to secure their positions. As Erdoğan's calls for the extradition of Gülen from the U.S. went unanswered, the president retaliated by declaring his plans to buy an S-400 air-defense missile system from Russia.¹³ Despite U.S. and NATO protests and U.S. sanctions, the Turkish military did not try to prevent this move, which ultimately resulted in Turkey's removal from the F-35 program in 2019.¹⁴ And though the military had previously rejected repeated efforts to place the General Staff under the control of the Ministry of National Defense, in 2018, the TSK stayed silent as this reshuffle was carried out.

In 2017, Turkey's parliamentary coup investigation commission released a report on the events of July 2016, but it failed to convince international audiences that FETÖ was responsible for the attempted overthrow of the Erdoğan government. For example, the head of Germany's foreign intelligence service, Bruno Kahl, declared, "Turkey has tried to convince us of that at every level but so far it has not succeeded."¹⁵ However, Turkish polls show that FETÖ is considered a real and imminent danger to the nation and is seen as the culprit behind the failed coup.¹⁶ Moreover, AKP deputies openly accused the U.S. and NATO of instigating the coup attempt, and public polls also support this notion.¹⁷ Once the most trusted public institution in the country,¹⁸ the Turkish military has lost its prestige and popularity.

Civilian control of the military, however, was not enough for Erdoğan. On April 16, 2017, he held a referendum and changed

the political system from a parliamentary to a presidential republic. While this change had been in the making since 2011, Erdoğan pushed his agenda further after being elected president in 2014. That said, it took a failed coup and the support of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) to finally rewrite the constitution. As the Gülenists had previously hurt so many factions within society, particularly during the Ergenekon trials, Turkey's opposition parties said nothing when the 2016 purges kicked off; but after the constitutional change, it became too late to stop Erdoğan. For example, both the CHP and MHP voted in favor of the government's decision to lift the Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party's (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*, HDP) parliamentary immunity from prosecution for having ties to the PKK. In the absence of opposition, and backed by popular support, Erdoğan consolidated power, replacing military tutelage with a populist, authoritarian strongman regime.

The Opposition, CMR, and the Future of Turkish Democracy

Turkey is now part of a broader global trend of competitive authoritarianism arising in former pluralist democracies, characterized by a "weakening of political institutions and the erosion of rule of law by leaders who had initially come to power through the ballot box."¹⁹ In 2022, Turkey scored 32 out of 100 in the Freedom House index and was considered "not free."²⁰ Thus, with the erosion of the rule of law under the AKP, a complete normalization of CMR clearly failed to bring about greater democratization. Can political opposition reverse this trend inside Turkey?

Economic decline presents an opportunity that the opposition can and must seize upon to reinstate Turkish democracy.

According to various polls from 2022, the AKP's popular support has dropped to around 30%, while the CHP and the Good (*İYİ*) Party could, together, stand to win more than 40% of votes cast.²¹ An opinion survey from 2020 found that 52.3%

19. Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu (2016), "Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey," *Third World Quarterly* 37, 9: 1581–1606, 1582.

20. "Freedom in the World 2022. Turkey" <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2022>, last accessed August 23, 2022. Turkey scored a 54 and was considered partly free in 2015. See https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/01152015_FIW_2015_final.pdf, last accessed August 23, 2022. In 2001, before AKP came to power, Turkey was deemed partly-free due to the military's influence but its freedom scores presented an upward trend. See https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_2001-2002_complete_book.pdf, last accessed August 23, 2022.

21. "2022 seçim anketleri! Anket şirketleri tüm seçim anket sonuçları ve son

13. Turkey and Russia's relations were tense in 2015-16, following the shooting down of a Russian aircraft by a Turkish F-16 near the Turkish-Syrian border. After the attempted coup, the two Turkish Air Force pilots involved in the downing of the Russian jet were arrested for alleged ties to FETÖ, which helped ease the tensions with Moscow.

14. "S-400: Türkiye'nin Rusya'dan satın aldığı, ABD'yle krize yol açan füze savunma sistemi," September 27, 2021, *BBC*, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-58709766>, last accessed on June 1, 2022.

15. "German spy agency chief says does not believe Gulen behind Turkey coup attempt," March 18, 2017, *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-germany/german-spy-agency-chief-says-does-not-believe-gulen-behind-turkey-coup-attempt-idUSKBN16POLQ>, last accessed on May 8, 2022.

16. A SETA poll undertaken shortly after the coup attempt shows AKP, MHP, and CHP voters hold FETÖ responsible and believe the U.S. aids FETÖ. http://file.seta.org/Files/Pdf/20160804165732_15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi-toplumsal-algı-arastirmasi-pdf.pdf, last accessed on May 31, 2022.

17. See for example "15 Temmuz'un dış mihrak listesi," July 13, 2017, *Euronews*, <https://tr.euronews.com/2017/07/13/15-temmuzun-dis-mihrak-listesi>, last accessed on May 28, 2022.

18. For the results of various polls on the TSK's popularity, see Zeki Sarigil, 2009, "Deconstructing the Turkish Military's Popularity," *Armed Forces and Society* 35, 4: 709-727.



Photo above: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan chairs a meeting of National Security Council at the Presidential Complex in Ankara on September 28, 2022. Photo by Mustafa Kamaci/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images.

of those who voted for the AKP-MHP alliance in previous elections later changed their minds due to the downturn in the economy and the rising cost of living.²² The economy has further worsened since then, accelerating the devaluation of the Turkish lira. Moreover, Erdoğan's professed ideal of raising a "pious generation" has polarized society.²³ Youth that grew up with the stories of the Gezi Park protests of 2013 demand a more democratic country.²⁴ Kurds have had enough failed peace processes to know that Erdoğan will not solve the

Kurdish problem. Leading advocates of political and cultural rights for the Kurds have been imprisoned since 2015. Liberals who wholeheartedly supported the AKP in 2002 are, today, disgruntled or imprisoned. The Kemalist, nationalist, and conservative opposition is trying, against the odds, to seize this opportunity and remain united in a heavily Erdoğan-controlled environment that discourages political competition. The next year will determine what awaits Turkey for decades to come; but what will CMR look like if the opposition beats the AKP at the ballot box?

seçim anketleri burada! Kronolojik sırayla CB, seçim anketi, anket sonuçları," October 13, 2022, *Haberler.com*, <https://www.haberler.com/haberler/2020-2021-son-anketler-anket-sirketlerinin-tum-14567816-haber/>, last accessed October 16, 2022.

22. "Covid-19 sonrası anket: En büyük sorun ekonomi, AK Parti'ye destek yüzde 35" June 16, 2020, *Euronews*, <https://tr.euronews.com/2020/06/16/covid-19-sonras-anket-en-buyuk-sorun-ekonomi-ak-parti-ye-destek-yuzde-35>, last accessed June 5, 2022.

23. Carlotta Gal, "Erdoğan's plan to raise a 'pious generation' divides parents in Turkey," June 18, 2018, *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/world/europe/erdogan-turkey-election-religious-schools.html>, last accessed June 3, 2022.

24. In May 2013, what started as a sit-in at Istanbul's Gezi Park to save it from demolition became a symbol of a budding democratic culture when millions of people took to the streets to protest the government's reluctance to stop police violence. Özge Zihnioğlu, "The Legacy of the Gezi Protests in Turkey," October 24, 2019, *Carnegie Europe*, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2019/10/24/legacy-of-gezi-protests-in-turkey-pub-80142>, last accessed on June 1, 2022.

A review of the opposition parties' stances on CMR shows that particularly the two major parties, the social-democrat CHP and the nationalist İYİ Party — both Kemalist — do not explicitly discuss CMR, individually or with one another.²⁵ When they mention the military at all, it tends to be only in passing, as a foreign policy instrument in cross-border operations, and not as a major actor in politics — as used to be the case. Yet the

25. Empirical data is scarce on the opposition's stance regarding CMR likely because the media in Turkey is heavily monopolized and self-censored. This section is based on the analysis of the party group meeting reports published by the newspapers *Cumhuriyet*, *Sozcu*, and *Evransel* between January and May 2022.

İYİ Party and CHP differ in their stances regarding the extent of this role. While the former supports a more expansive role for the Armed Forces, including carrying out international operations, the latter follows the traditional republican foreign policy of sticking to Turkey's national borders and avoiding the loss of territory. Moreover, the program of 10 principles agreed upon by CHP, the İYİ Party, and four other smaller parties in the opposition mentions the TSK only as a deterrent force in foreign policy.²⁶ This, by itself, is an indication of the perceived irrelevance of the Turkish military to the opposition's political program; whereas, in the past, the Armed Forces would have been a critical actor in the decision-making, let alone the discussion, of such matters.

The İYİ Party and CHP, however, agree that the military's reputation should be restored to what it was prior to the 2016 coup attempt.²⁷ Meral Akşener, the leader of the İYİ Party, believes that the TSK, the Ministry of National Defense, and the National Defense University need to be restructured. In June 2018, for example, Akşener accused Erdoğan of "fighting with buildings instead of FETÖ," as war academies and military schools were shut down after 2016;²⁸ in 2021, she promised to re-open them to fix the current flaws in military education.²⁹ These statements make one wonder if civilian control of the military may be reversed if the İYİ Party has enough clout in a coalition government. Despite her reluctance, in 1997, while minister of the interior, to stand up to the military during the February 28 process, Akşener is not pro-military. For instance, she reacted harshly when, in April 2021, 104 retired admirals issued a memorandum criticizing Erdoğan's plans to build a new canal in Istanbul, bluntly calling it "silliness" and stating that the military has no business in politics and should stay in their lane or bear the consequences.³⁰ Similarly, CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, another avid Kemalist, has at times harshly criticized the

military and promised the "new CHP" would stand up to military interference in politics.³¹

Overall, the two main opposition parties as well as the other four small parties that they are in coalition with — three of which are led by Islamists/conservatives, including former AKP ministers — have very little to say on CMR. Nevertheless, institutional changes that installed civilian control over the military before and after 2016 will be difficult to reverse under a coalition government, which will have to work on a new constitution to return Turkey to a parliamentary system. Since none of the parties are expected to secure the numbers needed to form a majority government alone, even if one faction fails to persevere against any potential interference from the TSK, the other parties in the coalition will likely stand firm. More importantly, the "new" military, disgraced and restructured, has shown no sign of interest in politics since 2016.

In sum, the case of modern-day Turkey shows that democracies cannot be consolidated without strong institutions and a democratic culture to protect the rule of law — a normalization of CMR is necessary but not sufficient. In the absence of robust institutions to protect the state not only from the military but also populist authoritarian leaders, civilian control of the Turkish military gave way to civilian authoritarian rule. It is now up to the opposition to put Turkey back on track by winning the 2023 elections and cementing legitimate democratic control over the military.

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26. Mert Öz, "Altı parti lideri 10 ortak ilkeye imza attı," May 30, 2022, *Sozcu*, <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2022/gundem/alti-parti-lideri-10-ortak-ilkeye-imza-att-7163491/>, last accessed June 5, 2022.

27. "Meral Akşener: Beli çökertilmiş denilen ordu Türkiye'yi kurtarıyor," January 25, 2018, *Sozcu*, <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2018/gundem/meral-aksener-beli-cokertilmis-denilen-ordu-turkiyeyi-kurtariyor-2189318/>, last accessed June 3, 2022.

28. "Akşener'den Erdoğan'a: Abdülhamit Han'ın kurduğu harp okulunu kapattın," June 16, 2018, *Diken*, <https://www.diken.com.tr/aksenerden-erdogana-abdulhamit-hanin-kurdugu-harp-okulunu-kapattin/>, last accessed June 3, 2022.

29. "Akşener yeni sistem önerisini açıkladı," May 26, 2021, *Cumhuriyet*, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/aksenerden-erdogana-daha-ne-kadar-sessiz-kalacaksin-1839293>, last accessed June 4, 2022.

30. "İYİ Parti Genel Başkanı Meral Akşener: 104 emekli amiralin yaptığı bildiri zevzekliktir," April 4, 2021, *CNN Türk*, <https://www.cnntrk.com/video/turkiye-iyi-parti-genel-baskani-meral-aksener-104-emekli-amiralin-yaptigi-bildiri-zevzekliktir>, last accessed June 5, 2022.

31. "Kılıçdaroğlu'ndan TSK'ye sert tepki ve özeleştirisi," May 8, 2012, *Cumhuriyet*, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/kilicdaroglundan-tskye-sert-tepki-ve-ozelestirisi-340928>, last accessed June 5, 2022.