



## CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN TURKEY: THE AK PARTY ERA

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### Abstract

The relationship between civil-military relations is one of the important issues of Turkish politics and sociology. Every decade, the army intervened in politics with its armed force; has influenced the parameters of society, politics and even economy and determined the limits. In this study, civil-military transformation that have lived in the country were examined at period of AK Party which has governed the country interruptedly since 3 November 2002. In this direction, the main events which reveals the spirit of every period and the parameters of the period were analyzed firstly by classifying the period of AK Party. For this purpose, the April 27 e-memorandum, the 367 crisis that emerged during the presidential elections process, the status quo Kemalist soldiers and events attempting to mortgage democratic life and national will as a coup attempt by FETÖ has been described in a holistic manner. In this context, the reform steps by the AK Party, led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, were elaborated and political photo of Turkey's transformation was illustrated with descriptive method with democratic transformation. In this way, despite the pressure of the status quo Kemalist soldiers and different ideological groups, it was revealed that the AK Party which ruled the country with the authority given by the national will has achieved permanent transformations in the civil-military relations that will affect the present and the future.

**Keywords:** Ak Party, Politics, Turkey, Military.

### INTRODUCTION

After the May 27, 1960 military coup in Turkey, there appeared to be a habit of illegal structures within the army to intervene the civil politics. One of the dimensions of this habit, which has been repeated almost every 10 years since 1960, is directly intervening civilian life. The military intervention was sometimes directly carried out, and sometimes politicians were forced to withdraw from their posts after being given memorandums by the military.

It is possible to say that the autonomous structures within the army or sometimes the army itself didn't have only the power to determine the daily politics thanks to military coups or memorandums, but also could manipulate the public by controlling media organs and used it to suppress civilian political actors at any time. The junta structures' intervention to politics is not something new. Briefly, the dates of May 27, 1960, March 12, 1971, September 12, 1980, February 28, 1997 and April 27, 2007 have been recorded as direct and indirect military intervention in Turkey's Republican era. All these coups have naturally caused many problems in the county while led increase of tensions in the civil-military relations for it hampered the democratic political atmosphere to gain power. As a result, Turkish politics have been shaped according to the military's wishes. On July 15, 2016, the country witnessed the last coup attempt which was staged by Gülenist Terror Group (FETÖ)<sup>1</sup> (it was formerly known as Gülen Community which belong to Fetullah Gülen living in Pennsylvania in the U.S.) members who had infiltrated into the army.

In this study, we aimed to describe the transformation and shift in civil-military relations during the 15-year rule of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan since Nov. 3, 2002. In this framework, the main events affecting the civil-military relations have been examined and the reforms made by the AK Party to weaken the military tutelage have been mentioned.

Undoubtedly, it needs to be underlined that this transformation started after the AK Party coming to power with the majority of the vote in Nov. 3, 2002. It would be an exaggeration to say that after this date, civilian-military relations have been completely changed in favor of civilians, but it can be said that there has been a more civilized government in the point of representing the social support given to it. Because, during the period of the AK Party governments, the tension between the junta formations in the Turkish Armed

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<sup>1</sup> Turkish Grand Assembly, "The report released by the Research Commission of the Assembly that is founded in aim to determine what kind of precautions should be taken by searching the FETÖ's July 15 coup attempt and its terrorist activities" (2017).



Forces (TSK) and the civil politics continued and the AK Party resisted against such illegitimate attempts and strengthened the legitimate ground of democratic politics against military tutelage.

However, the junta formations' memorandum and military coup attempts continued during the AK Party; on the contrary, the tension between the civilian and the military has increased over time. Moreover, an unprecedented bloody coup attempt was staged as never before on July 15, 2016.

Contrary to the previous governments which failed to stand against the military tutelage, the AK Party government, under the leadership of Erdoğan, resisted every time against the coup soldiers and thus was rewarded with election victories by society. This should be one of the most significant reasons for the AK Party's electoral success. Turkish people went to the polls 12 times in total between 2002 and 2017 and the AK Party won in all of them. By using this support from the society, the AK Party has strengthened the emphasis of civilian politics in order to struggle against non-democratic initiatives.

### 1. COUPS IN TURKEY'S REPUBLICAN ERA

Historically, the military's gaining power in Turkey's political system began in the late Ottoman period and it regained strength after the 1960 coup. It is because the military junta didn't internalize the civil administration after the transition to democracy in 1950 (Burak, 2011, 46). That's why Turkey witnessed its first coup in its Republican history on May 27, 1960 when the military soldiers directly overthrew the elected government. In the 1960 coup, Democratic Party (DP) Chairman and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and two ministers Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and Hasan Polatkan were executed after they were judged by the military soldiers. Many DP members and supporters, particularly President Celal Bayar, were sentenced to life imprisonment. As Kemal Karpat, a prominent Turkish political scientist, says, a witch hunt was started against all DP members to push them all out of the political platform (Karpat, 2010, 332-333).

The military junta which perpetrated the May 27 coup d'état did its best in order to establish its hegemony over not only civil politicians but also over the army, universities and media according to its own ideology (Özkır, 2011, 91-114). A result of the radical practices that have taken place in this context, the mentality after the May 27 coup was reflected not only in the junta in the army but also in the civil life. As existed before May 27, non-governmental organizations, universities, media organs, different parts of the bureaucracy, and some institutions from the business world were among these civilians that were increasingly visible in the subsequent coup processes. For example, Doğan Avcıoğlu's Revolution and Direction Magazines [*Devrim ve Yön*], played a big role in the March 12 memorandum period while the daily newspapers such as Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet and mainstream TV channels such as Kanal D, ATV and Show TV played an effective role during the process of Feb. 28, 1997 post-modern coup. In addition, some NGOs and business organizations such as TİSK, TESK, TÜRK-İŞ, DİSK and TOBB played a role in the process of eliminating the democratically-elected government from power during the February 28 coup period.

These organizations usually constitute an environment for the military coup d'états to be made and they accordingly take position to legitimize the military coups. That's why, the first coup in Turkey, the May 27, 1960 coup, has been the source of inspiration for all following coups in the country.

May 27, 1960 Military Coup	The Democratic Party Government Was Overthrown
March 12, 1970 Military Memorandum	The Justice Party Was Government Overthrown
Sept. 12, 1980 Military Coup	The Justice Party Government Was Overthrown
Feb. 28, 1997 Military Coup	Welfare Party (RP)-True Path Party Government Was Overthrown
April 27, 2007 Military Memorandum	The AK Party Could Repel The Memorandum
July 15, 2016 Military Coup Attempt	The AK Party Could Repel The Bloody Coup Attempt

Table 1: Military Coups and Memorandums in the Republican Era

The bloody coup attempt perpetrated by FETÖ member soldiers on July 15, 2016 represents a current example in this respect. In the indictments of the FETÖ cases, we can clearly see how the planning and execution phases in the May 27 coup are modeled by FETÖ member soldiers in the July 15 coup attempt.<sup>2</sup> This similarity is elaborated in the top indictments prepared for 221 suspects related to FETÖ actions in the Office of Chief of Staff during the coup attempt on July 15. Therefore, after the May 27, 1960 coup, Turkey

<sup>2</sup> "The bill of indictment prepared by Ankara Republican Prosecutor for 73 suspicious including FETÖ leader Fetullah Gülen related to FETÖ and its parallel structure."



directly or indirectly witnessed such painful incidents in the following period such as in March 12, 1971, Sept. 12 1980, and Feb. 2, 1997. During the process of all these coups and memorandums, the democratically-elected legitimate governments were forced to withdraw their administration and Turkey experienced many big crises both socially as well as economically. Turkish economy was damaged in May 27, 1960, Sept. 12, 180 coups and Feb. 28, 1997 post-modern coup and economic crises repeated in the following periods (Karagöl, 2016, 40-42).

In April 27, 2007, Turkey faced a new way of coup when the Chief of Staff released a declaration in its official website issuing memorandum to the democratically-elected ruling AK Party. The declaration released by status quoist Kemalist (Demirel, 2010) has been recorded as e-memorandum in history. A few years after the AK Party government repelled the military junta's memorandum, the July 15 military coup attempt was staged by the very same junta within the army.

As discussed in more detail below, one of the main differences that distinguishes the last two coup attempts from the previous ones is the presence of FETÖ members behind them. In a word, the coup tradition has not changed, but its perpetrators have changed from the status quo Kemalists to FETÖ members.

## 2. IDEOLOGICAL GROUND OF MILITARY COUPS

As stated in the prominent studies on the Turkish modernization process such as Niyazi Berkes's *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma (Modernization in Turkey)*, Şerif Mardin's *Türk Modernleşmesi (Turkish Modernization)*, Bernard Lewis's *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu (The Emergence of Modern Turkey)* and Erik Jan Zürcher's *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi (Turkey: Modern History)*, the modernization process in late Ottoman period started first in the military. At that period, it was believed that if the army gets stronger, the state will survive being demolished. For the modernization, the state took the West as an example, and in this sense, the first westernization was imposed on the society via the army. Thus, it is safe to say that the army was the center of the modernization process. The Westernization attempts, which were limited to the military and administration in late Ottoman Period, were imposed on society in the aftermath of the foundation of Republic.

In modern Turkey founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his friends in 1923, the Westernization applications were carried out on not only military but also in all social, cultural and political life by the state itself. The secularism and Atatürkism, which were among these Westernization practices, are worth to mention because the two were many times referred as "one of the reasons for coup" during the coup processes. From the May 27, 1960 coup to the July 15 coup attempt, they were basically expressed for legitimization in all coup and memorandum declarations. According to late Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birand, the junta group in the army believed that the conservative people wanted to hamper the Westernization process and abuse the religion. It is because why the term "reaction" was emphasized even before "terror" during the process of Feb. 28, 1997 coup (Birand, 2012, 190-204). Similar claims were reported in the subsequent April 27, 2007 and July 15, 2016 coup processes.

Therefore, the "de facto" legitimacy ground that the junta in the army depended on to intervene in politics is the claim of regime and secularism defending. The attempts that threatened the civil politics and ignored the will of people in this framework came from the Kemalist representatives (they could be sometimes civilians from retired soldiers or various professions with the same approach) or hidden groups from different ideological backgrounds in the army until 2013 (Akkır, 2016).

In a more clear way, what lies behind the army's tradition of intervening into the politics, economy and societal issues is the army's organizational powerful bureaucracy from the Ottoman period to the Republican era. The army that consolidated its power with Westernization policies was the most significant power during the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. From the period of single-party regime to the current times, it has taken action per 10 years to shape political relations and determine balances in the society (Şen, 2005, 29). The bureaucratic power of the army was used by the coup soldiers against civil politics. In fact, the situation is consistent with Max Weber's definition of bureaucracy. According to Weber, the bureaucracy is one of the most difficult social structures to be abolished after it was founded (Weber, 1993, 207). The military bureaucracy has directed the society and politics thanks to its power it has gained in the process and has expanded its own strength and legitimacy.

Therefore, the junta members have always sought to suppress those who objected their paradigm or advised different method. The army, which wanted to determine what would be described as a threat or not to the country, and who was to be identified as friend or foe, and the coup d'états that infiltrated into it, imposed their political agendas to the society. As such, the social imagination of the junta has naturally set out "enemies of the state" or socially "others".



Therefore, the pressure of the army and generally the coup soldiers in the army over politics and society brought together democratic demands and anticipations in political life. This is indeed reason for the struggle between pro-democracy supporters and coup soldiers since the year 1950 when Turkey entered into the democracy regime. The coups soldiers staged military coups per 10 years by using their military power but people never choose the political actors promoted by coup soldiers but civil politicians in the polls. In such a chaotic atmosphere, few years after the Feb. 28 post-modern coup, the AK Party came to the power as a civil and legitimate government and started governing Turkey.

Almost all of the democratically-elected politicians struggled to reduce the military's influence on politics and society in every period and made efforts to raise democratic standards. Sometimes internal and sometimes external dynamics such as the criteria of the European Union were used to weaken the military bureaucracy and acted as a balancing factor.

The civil politicians' approach to the army is as such that it should concentrate on protecting the country, which is its field of activity, from external threats as it is in normal democracies. The army depends on the elected officials. That is why it can not and should not declare how civil politics will be shaped, how the country will be governed and how social problems will be solved. The dynamics that determine civil-military relations in the AK Party era have such a background. Of course, it is very important for the independence of an army and the deterrence of its enemies. Therefore, it is worth to mention about President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's word safter the bloody coup d'état on July 15, 2016: "*We continue and will continue to struggle with the traitors, but we will not allow anybody to take advantage of this opportunity to attack our officers, our soldiers... Because this army is not the army of the junta or tutelage circles. This army is not the army of this or that foreign institution. This is only the army of Turkey and of the Turkish nation*" (NTV, 11, 11, 2017).

Below, the developments of civil-military relations in the AK Party period are discussed in accordance with the historical progress. The dynamics that affect and determine the civil-military relations periodically change and it is seen that the AK Party's efforts to defend civilian politics against military tutelage has not changed.

### 3. AK Party and Civil-Military Relations

The AKP, which was established on Aug. 14, 2001 and defined itself as a conservative democrat (Akdoğan, 2004), started its political journey with a great success in the general elections held on Nov. 3, 2002. This political journey does not mean that the AK Party is founded only in political circles. The AK Party's existence in the political arena also means that political and military institutions in Turkey change in terms of democratic and militarist approaches. Because the AK Party could succeed in making the most serious reforms and democratization moves as part of civil-military relations. Although it was subject to discussions many times, the army could secure its position and historical power until the AK Party period. However, with the AK Party's coming to power, the army gradually began to lose its oppression on the political institution and return to its real mission which is to protect the country from external threats by exercising its military profession (Beriş, 2008, 415).

Despite the fact that there are many political, economic and social factors in the background of this change of desire, it should be noted that one of the most important thing in the AK Party's first period is the EU negotiations and the AK Party's strong democratization efforts. The AK Party emphasized this issue in its election declaration during the process of its foundation. The AK Party which sees Turkey's EU full membership as a natural result of the modernization process expressed its approaches on it by saying that "putting the EU criteria on economy and politics into effect is an important step to be taken for the sake of our modernization as a state and society" (AK Parti, 2002, 13). Therefore, the AK Party has taken serious steps towards democratization of Turkey by making a series of reforms that are appropriate to EU standards. That is why it could make unprecedented achievements in the EU accession talks and could open new negotiation chapters. The EU process, which directly contributes to domestic politics, has reduced the suspicion of the AK Party in the secular elites relative to the status quo, while at the same time it has facilitated the AK Party's distance to become a reform party. In particular, the success in the EU accession talks helped the AK Party to success in elections and economy.

Gaining momentum in the EU process and ensuring economic stability have been one of the key factors in increasing the AK Party's votes every period. Thus, by consolidating its political presence and power, the AK Party could take initiatives to end Turkey's rooted problems such as the Kurdish and Alevi issues and military tutelage (Demirel, 2010, 7). Certainly, these chronic problems include the exclusion of religious people from the public sphere and depriving them of fundamental human rights, such as equality of opportunity in education. As part of this discriminations, girls who wore headscarves for religious beliefs had



been forced out of the educational life and state office, and the students of Imam Hatip High Schools had been subjected to discrimination in university exams.

In order to be able to distinguish the transformation of civil-military relations in the AK Party period, it is necessary to evaluate its each period. Hale and Özbudun (2010, 141), known for their work on Turkish politics and soldiers, distinguish three divisions of the civil-military relations in the AK Party era; the first of them is the "controlled disputes" period, which lasted from 2002 to the end of 2006. The army, the guardian of secularism in this period, admitted that the government is the only force that has the authority to determine controversial political issues while at the same time pressuring the government not to change the unitary power. Although the military saw itself as the true owner and guardian of the state, it left a little space for the politics.

The second period is the "challenge and crisis period". During this period, army commanders followed a strategy aimed at bringing out the crisis by challenging political actors. Especially with the e-memorandum published by the Chief of Staff on its website on April 27, 2007, the army intervened politically by taking an open position against the government's actions and especially the election of the president.

The third is the "withdrawal of soldiers" period. Although the conflict between the military and the elected politicians continued, it is the period when the army agreed not to be on the frontline. During this period, the army returned to its mission of securing the country against external threats and lost much of its influence over politics. This assessment by Hale and Özbudun covers the process up to 2010. Therefore, the coup attempt initiated by FETÖ on July 15, 2016 was out of scope.

For us, the relationship between the army and AK Party, which has been in power for fifteen years, can be evaluated in three periods. The reason why we make a new distinction is these three fundamental characteristics of Turkey's changing era of civil-military relations that determine routes, as well as the historical process of creating fault lines. The above classification covers the period up to 2010; but the major democratic change in civil-military relations has been experienced since July 15, 2016. It can be said that the government took the mission of governing and administrating back from the army as Prometheus steals fire from Zeus. It is also necessary to add that it is difficult to say that this process, which is quite tough, is completely over.

1	Passive Conflict Period (2002-2007)
2	Active Conflict Period (2007-2013)
3	Period of Establishment of Democratic Balance (2013-2017)

Table 2: Civil-Military relations during the AK Party era

The first one of these periods is the **passive conflict period**. It lasted from Nov. 3, 2002 to April 27, 2007 when the e-memorandum was published by a structure in the army. The distinctive feature of it is that the clash between the army and the political institution is implicit. The second is the active conflict period. It starts from April 27, 2007 e-memorandum and continues until Dec. 17 and Dec. 25, 2013. In this period, the tension between the AK Party governments and certain structures within the army has become visible to the public. Besides, various judicial processes have been experienced and the judicial extensions of the army have filed a lawsuit to close the AK Party. The third period is the period of establishment of democratic balance in in civil-military relations. The period which started after the FETÖ coup attempt was repelled by people and politicians under the leadership of President Erdoğan, is not over yet.

### 3.1. Passive Conflict Period (2002-2007)

As previously noted, the army has always been effective on civil politics in Turkey. Until the AK Party period, the tutelage on the military politics continued in general, and all the democratic movements to reform the civil-military relations remained incapable of. From the period of the AK Party coming to power to the April 27 e-memorandum process, the army's hegemony over civil politics continued.

The most important feature of this period is the army's distant and suspicious approach to the AK Party. Because the AK Party was founded by the figures from the Welfare Party government which was overthrown by the military by coup on Feb. 28, 1997. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who had been the Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality of the Welfare Party, was the leader of the AK Party.



Although Erdoğan stated that he changed the notion of making politics and said that they are now defending conservative democracy, the army was suspicious over the AK Party. That's why, the army members didn't attend the oath-taking ceremony of the president, low level military officers attend the meeting organized by the presidency or they didn't participate the opening ceremony of the Turkish Grand Assembly (Hale and Özbudun, 2010, 155-156). The most obvious reason for this is that the AK Party is ontologically-based on the tradition of National Vision and a majority of its founding members have an Islamic background and memory (Yavuz, 2008, 335-338). The members of the army have the perception that the AK Party is hostile to secularism because they see themselves as the only defender of the Republic and Kemalism (Jenkins, 2010, 235). For example, the General Secretary of the National Security Council (MGK) Tuncer Kılınc told Erdoğan that "...We know the changes you want to make, the efforts of your staff and you aim to remove General Secretariat of the MGK. We, as the Turkish nation, will not allow it. Nobody is blind ...", or Gendarmerie Commander Org. Şener Eruygur said that "...they [the reactionaries] should act as enlightened persons..." (Birand, Milliyet, 31. 08. 2010).

According to military perception, the AK Party was dangerous for secularism and Kemalism had Islamic background although it claimed that it changed its rhetoric about its ontology. Therefore, during the establishment of the AK Party, the army and AK Party played a kind of shadow game over the symbols. As Jenkins says, "the AK Party will push the limits of Kemalist orthodoxy, and if it creates a strong reaction in the army, it will be withdrawn. Meanwhile, the TSK [Turkish Armed Forces] seeks to protect the orthodox Kemalist interpretation of secularism but avoid directly intervening into politics. At the same time, both sides have an eye on the EU membership process" (Jenkins, 2010, 236). In fact, this assessment summarizes the political atmosphere of the AK Party from 2002 to 2007. During this period, the AK Party had to take into account the attitude of the army while making reforms. The military tried not to intervene directly in politics but to continue 'protecting regime'. In other words, the two fronts were conflicting each other, but they try to do it not directly in public. The conflict continued behind the scenes, while the ones that were reflected to the public remained as the visible face of the iceberg.

### 3.1.1 The AK Party's Approach against Repressive Laicism

Since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, secularism has been the most important tool on the agenda of politics and society. Due to the accusation of anti-secularism, many political parties such as the National Order Party (MNP), the Freedom and Democracy Party (ÖZDEP) and the Welfare Party (RP) were closed down and politicians were banned from politics. Because of this, since the day it was founded, the AK Party has had to declare on different platforms that it does not have a problem with secularism. In general, the AK Party argues that Islam does not have any conflicts with libertarian secularism or modernity, and that religion is a common ground in the beliefs and values of this society (Karpas, 2010, 290-291). What kind of perception of secularism does the AK Party have? It is necessary to examine the AK Party's approach in this regard because the reasons for the coup attempts faced by the AK Party include statements released in order to "protect secularism"

First of all, the AK Party defends libertarian secularism, in contrast to the repressive interpretation of secularism that was applied in the single-party period (1923-1946) (Program, 2002, 14). In the "Development and Democratization Program", which the party published in 2002, the relationship between religion and secularism is described as follows: "Laicism enables all members of religion and belief to perform their worship, to explain their religious convictions and to live their lives in this direction. In this respect, secularism is the principle of freedom and social peace." (Program, 2002, 14). It is clear that this secularism is not based on separation or differentiation, it is built on social integration and has a liberating tone. Contrary to the repressive secularism which leaves out religion and beliefs from public life, libertarian secularism is defended.

One aspect of the AK Party's understanding of secularism is the understanding that the state is equally distant to different religions and beliefs and that sacred values should not be exploited. In its program, the AK Party "rejects the use of sacred religious values and ethnicity by exploiting as a tool for politics. It is against the anti-democratic, -human rights and -freedom attitudes and practices against religious people and it is also against discriminative treatments to religious people due to their religious life and preferences. On the other hand, it is unacceptable to use religion as a tool for political, economic or other interests or as a tool to oppress people who think and live differently" (Program, 2002, 15). These expressions in the AK Party's declaration were loved by people because they thought that the secular interpretation of the single-party period, which especially excludes religious and conservative people from public life, is very anti-democratic approach that also paves the way for those who exploited the religion.

The understanding that secularism is not an enemy of religion is another dimension of the AK Party's understanding of secularism. Again, according to the same program, the AK Party "Sees the religion as one of



*the significant institutions of mankind and laicism as the essential principle of guarantee of freedom of thought and faith. And it is against the laicism being commented as enmity toward religion or being marginalized” (Program, 2002, 14). These statements in the program of the AK Party show that the AK Party defends a libertarian interpretation of secularism that protects religious beliefs and does not exclude religious people from public life nor appeal to religious abuse.*

Despite the fact that the AK Party's point of view on secularism is declared in the party program, it was target of the army because it was “threatening the laicism”. This was simply the reflection of the tutelage mindset of the coup soldiers in the army. Because the concept of laicism or secularism concern is the most-used tool by those who want to shape politics in Turkey. In a similar way, there are dozens of examples that the AK Party was under attack by the army and its affiliation in the civil politics, the Kemalist elites, due to “the fear for disappearance of laicism” or “the fear of reactionary”. In this context, the “coup diaries” of Retired Admiral Özden Örnek, published under the title “*We Have Gotten Over Two Coups in 2004*” in the *Nokta Magazine* in 2007, is quite striking in the context of military-politics relations. In addition, the headline of “*Young Officers Disturbed*”, which was published by the daily *Cumhuriyet* in 2003, is a reflection of the media's desire to rearrange politics of the army. It is also worth noting that the source of the headline of “*Young Officers Disturbed*” used by the daily *Cumhuriyet* is the coup officers that organized coup d'état of the May 27, 1960 coup, showing the historical dynamics of the situation.

### **3.1.2. The AK Party Supports Civil Politics Against April 27 E-Memorandum**

So, one of the most important events of this early period, where the sense of insecurity is deeply felt, is the effort to prevent the AK Party from electing president. Another important event was the Republican Rallies organized by neo-Kemalists to prepare the grounds for a coup. According to recent information about these rallies that began on April 14, 2007, these rallies were organized to cooperate with non-governmental organizations and universities to prepare the ground for the coup. This approach, however, is also the basis for the content of the placards and speeches made during the rally (Kabakçı, 2011).

For example, one of the speakers at the Republican Rallies, Professor of Political Sciences at Ankara University, Professor Birgül Ayman Güler, called for the army to the streets by saying “*Kemalist army will speak, university will speak, the judiciary will speak*”. During her speech, there were many ununiformed soldiers and then-famous soldier figures like retired colonels Şener Eruygur and Hurşit Tolon among the listeners. Members of Judiciary like the candidate member of Constitutional Court, Fettah Oto, bureaucrats like the President of Council of Higher Education (YÖK), Kemal Gürbüz, and chancellors of some universities like Ankara, Gazi and ODTÜ universities participated the rallies. It is safe to say that these militarist rallies were a show of strength by military tutelage.

The odds of the Republican rallies are not limited to these. Just a few days after Professor Birgül Ayman Güler's words ‘*Kemalist army will speak*’, the General Staff issued a statement on its website and gave a memorandum to the AK Party government. In the process of the e-memorandum, the university, judiciary and military coalition were involved in the action to prepare the ground for a coup d'état. The unchanging controversy of Turkish politics like the issues of reactionary, hijab and secularism have begun to come to the fore again and the presidential election has been tried to be hampered by anti-democratic formations and positions. Social and political atmosphere were surrounded by the actions of the army to prepare the ground for an intervention to politics.

This period is not only limited to such anti-democratic actions. President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who spoke at the MGK Council, which was held two weeks before the e-memorandum on April 27, brought the ‘increasing reactionary activities’ to the agenda and started talking on different platforms for this topic. Speaking at the War Academies Conference on April 13, 2007, he said “*The political regime in Turkey, since the founding of the Republic, has not been exposed to danger in any period as it is today. The basic values of the secular republic is openly debated for the first time. Internal and external forces act within the same interest in this matter. Foreign powers predict Turkey to be transformed into a moderate Islamic republic by changing its regime ‘secular republic’ under the name of ‘democratic republic’ to make the country be a model for the Islamic countries. Moderate Islam means that the social, economic, political and legal order of the State is influenced to a certain extent by the laws of religion. As such, the model of moderate Islam can be perceived as a progress for Islamic countries but it is not the same for Turkey, instead it is a reactionary model for the Republic of Turkey. Turkey can only be a model for the region with its secular and democratic state model; it is ready to share its such values to others*” (Sezer, tcdb, 10. 11 2017), expressing the importance of military tutelage over politics. When these explanations are examined, it will be seen that the concepts of reactionary, moderate Islam or secularism, which are the indicators of the status quo era, are tried to be put into action in order to shape politics.



Another political actor who took a position against civil politics with a discourse parallel to the speech of President Sezer was Deniz Baykal, the previous leader of the Republican People's Party. Baykal said that Erdoğan was at odds with the YÖK and the army and that someone who had a problem with the army could not be the commander-in-chief (Baykal, 10.01.2007). However, the issues such as reaction, headscarf, the AK Party's intention, secret agenda of the AK Party and secularism were intensively put into the agenda of politics, and with this rhetoric the AK Party was tried to be pressed while the military was encouraged for a possible coup (Findley, 2011, 370-377). In the statement of the Chief of General Staff Yaşar Büyükanıt on April 12, 2007, he said *"We hope that someone who will depend on the core values of the Republic will be elected President"*. These words can be evaluated as both an intervention to politics and the footsteps of a memorandum. Thus, the developments between 2002 and 2007 proved the urgency of transformation of civil-military relations in the country.

Precisely at this period, Zeyno Baran, a Turkey expert in the Hudson Institute in the U.S., wrote in the Newsweek Magazine that *"in 2007, Turkey is likely to face a coup."* By reminding the army's position in Feb. 28 and the pressure on the late Welfare Party leader Necmettin Erbakan to resign, Baran said that *"The conditions that created that coup [Feb. 28 coup] are coming out today again. Once again there is an Islamist in power. Once again, the generals whisper in anger how the government hurt the secular state. For me, the chance to be a military coup in 2007 is 50 percent in Turkey"* (Sabah, 26.11.2016).

The e-memorandum was given against the AK Party government on April 27 in such an atmosphere. The justification of the memorandum and the reason for the Republican Rallies have very similarities in the context of secularism and the aim to shape politics and society.

The following words in the e-memorandum are worth to mention in order to show the junta's efforts to intervene in the civil politics and direct the society according to its agendas: *"In recent days, the apparent problem in the presidential election is the debate over secularism. The Turkish Armed Forces is highly astonished. It should not be forgotten that the Turkish Armed Forces is a party in these debates and is definitely the defender of secularism. In addition, the Turkish Armed Forces is precisely against the ongoing debates and negative comments and will clearly take position and show its attitude when necessary. No one should worry about it...The Turkish Armed Forces is determined to fulfill its duties that are required by the laws."* (Sabah, 29, 04, 2007). The AK Party government responded quite harshly in an unprecedented way against the military announcement.

The AK Party government spokesman Cemil Çiçek spoke on a day after the e-memorandum on April 28, 2007 and made a speech like a democracy manifesto by reminding the democratic principles to the army.

*"This statement was perceived as an attitude towards the government. Undoubtedly, it is even deceptive to think of it in a democratic order. First of all, we want to say that the Chief of Staff, an institution affiliated to the Prime Minister, can not be considered in a democratic state of law to use an expression against a sentence in any matter. The Office of the Chief of the General Staff is an institution designated by the government under its mandate, the Constitution and related laws. According to our Constitution, the Chief of General Staff is responsible to the Prime Minister because of his duties and authorities,"* Çiçek said and stated that they do not accept the military announcement. These statements of Çiçek were the first time in the history of Turkish democracy. It was simple answer given by civil politics to coup soldiers in the army. These answers also opened a new page for the sake of Turkish democracy.

### 3.1.3. Reforms in the Army during the Passive Conflict Period

The AK Party government made some preparations before the 27 April e-memorandum, aiming to limit the military's actions in civil politics, particularly seen the Feb. 28 post-modern coup. The changes in the National Security Council (MGK) were the most effective ones. The reforms can be summarized as follows:

a. Firstly, the meeting period of the MGK was rearranged. It was decided that the monthly meeting should be held every two months and that the Secretary General should be civilian.

b. The authority of the General Secretariat to follow up and control was given to the Deputy Prime Minister. This change was very influential because of the strong position of the Secretary General within the MGK. Thus, a step was taken in favor of civilian politics through the MGK.

c. The secret regulations that regulate the principles of the tasks and functions of the General Secretariat of the MGK were repealed by a new regulation published on Dec. 29, 2003. The cancellation of these regulations that give a very powerful authority to the General Secretariat, enabling him to act as an independent organ was very good step for the transparency of the politics (Özcan, 2006, 33).

d. In accordance with the regulation adopted by the Council of Ministers on Dec. 29, 2003 and numbered 6688 for the reorganization of the General Secretariat of the MGK, the redefinition of its duties and powers, the cadres directly related to the General Secretariat were limited. Thus, the organic link between the





MGK and the Chief of General Staff was broken. In addition, the number of intermediate service units decreased from 11 to 6 by the new regulation and units such as the 'Ministry for Societal Relations', which was assigned to conduct psychological operations, were closed down (Özcan, 2006, 34).

e. The election of the member of the Higher Education Council (YÖK) by the Chief of General Staff was ended. In addition, the provision for nominating candidates for the membership of Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) to the General Secretariat of the National Security Council was also abolished.

f. It became more difficult to prosecute civilians in military courts, and the jurisdiction of military courts was narrowed.

g. Changes were made to the control of military goods. The Article 160 of the Constitution titled "Court of Accounts", "Procedures for the control of state property in the hands of the Armed Forces on behalf of the Grand National Assembly are regulated by law in accordance with the principles of confidentiality required by national defense services" was abolished. Thus, a very sharp step was taken towards the control of military goods. It was decided that the audit should be carried out by the Court of Accounts, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on condition that it is kept 'confidential' with Law No. 4963 dated 30.07.2003 (Yıldız, 2006, 14).

Simply put, the AK Party, since the first of its foundation, tried to take steps to improve the country's democracy by trying to end the military junta's hegemony on civil politics. While the conflict between politics and the army continued, the AK Party worked hard to carry out democratic applications to prevent the junta from intervening the civil politics.

### 3.2. Active Conflict Period and Peak of the Conflict (2007-2013)

The period starting from April 27, 2007 e-memorandum until Dec. 17-25, 2013, when the Gülenist Terror Group tried to overthrow democratically elected government via its disciples infiltrated into Turkey's judiciary, is the period of active conflict. During this period, the government exerted to fend off Kemalist status quo within army, which threatened civilian politics, in order to overcome the military tutelage over the political area. It is possible to say that in this period, roughly three basic incidents affecting the relations between civilian politics and military occurred. These can be summarized as follows:

a. The first one of these incidents was the AK Party's election victory in July 22, 2007 general elections by collecting 46,5 percent of votes and gained right to form government again. The result is evaluated as an award of the electorate, which was given to the AK Party as result of firm stance against April 27 military memorandum. AK Party Chairman and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan nominated Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül for Presidency after Ahmet Necdet Sezer, whose term was finished at 2007. The military's efforts to prevent Gül's election as President, which was among motives of April 27 memorandum, was eventually failed. Thus, the judiciary's last-minute imposition, which assumed necessity of presence of 367 deputies during Presidential election, was also overcame.<sup>3</sup> The AK Party government solved the crisis out broken by Kemalist elites by electing Gül as President with 339 votes.

b. The second case was opening a closure case against the AK Party. The party survived from closure with just one vote, according to the final statement made by the Constitutional Court on July 30, 2008, (Balancar, Elmas, 2008, 185). Accusations of 'violating secularism' against the AK Party government, which was fabricated in the April 27 e-memorandum, were also embodied case file of Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya, Chief Prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals.

Demanding of closure of the AK Party, Yalçınkaya asserted that the AK Party intends to bring 'moderate Islam' and 'sharia' by emphasizing 'taqiyya' and 'social consensus' in its indictment. He argued that the Turkish Republic was in great danger, and demanded barring 71 people of politics, including President Abdullah Gül, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the former TBMM President Bülent Arınç (Bianet, 05, 11, 2017). Since the qualified majority required closing a political party is not provided, the Supreme Court ruled cutting 50 percent of the AK Party's treasury aid it received in 2008.

c. The third case is the uncovering of the Ergenekon structure that was established to "overthrow the elected government by military coup" (Özkır, 2011, 91-114). Ergenekon case began with the seizure of grenades, explosives and detonators in a house in the Ümraniye district of Istanbul on June 12, 2007, and then continued with the Sledge hammer case. Politicians, academicians, journalists, NGO executives (Sarıklı, Kılıç, Anadolu Agency, 14, 06, 2017) and retired officers were tried in the Ergenekon case, which was exploited by

<sup>3</sup> In order to prevent an AK Party member from being a president after President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's term finished in April 2017, there were many attempts. The Republican Rallies were just one of them. And the April 27 e-memorandum was made. This situation was brought to the agenda by Head of Court of Cassation Sabih Kanadoğlu; it contains that 367 deputies are required to be present in the process of voting in the Assembly. It was a controversial decision against the current laws prevented the AK Party from electing its own candidate Abdullah Gül for presidency.



members of FETÖ in police and judiciary after certain degree. In the Sledgehammer case, the soldiers who participated in a seminar in the headquarters of First Army in Istanbul were tried in 2003 and some espionage cases were opened for some soldiers (Görmüş, Al Jazeera Turk, 18,11,2014). With the expression Hürriyet newspaper's columnist, Sedat Ergin, expressed the statement, "Ergenekon investigation is vital to reveal the networks that threat to democratic stability" (Ergin, 2013, 26-37).

In the context of civilian-military relations, the Ergenekon case contains two important consequences. Firstly, it revealed of the existence of illegal organizations operating in the military, and secondly, it showed that coup tradition within military was still alive. The Ergenekon case has focused on these two issues for a while. The case had three important results. Firstly, it compelled the military to focus on its main duty, to stay away from politics, and to improve its image and prestige. Secondly, the military has entered in a process of judgement itself. And thirdly, a coup attempt has been brought to justice, for the first time in Turkish political history (Balancar and Elmas, 2009, 197). This whole process has become an important step in opening the way for the civilian authority and emergence of a democratic civilian-military relationship.

### 3.2.1. Reforms in the Active Conflict Period

Certain changes were made during this period, when conflict peaked, in order to clear remnants of anti-democratic practices of past and maintain democratic standards in civilian-military relations. These changes can be summarized as follows:

a. Safety and Security Cooperation Protocol (EMASYA), which signed in 1997 between Chief of Staff and Interior Ministry and allowed military to intervene social events, was abrogated in 2010 (Bianet, 05, 01, 2010).

b. National security lessons were removed from high school syllabuses as a part of efforts strengthen civilian politics and put an end to military tutelage (Alabarda, 2016, 12).

c. In this period, the expel decisions of the Supreme Military Council were opened to judicial review. The provision of Article 125 of the Constitution stating that the decisions of the Supreme Military are out of of the judiciary control was abolished, and way to judicial review was opened against all kind of expulsion decisions except for promotion decisions of the Supreme Military Council and retirement due to lack of cadres.

d. Another change was the restricting of the military jurisdiction. Thus, it was decided that soldiers should be prosecuted in civil courts for the offenses including severe penalty. Besides, civilians were prevented from being tried in military courts except state of war.

e. Another change was related to military jurisdiction. The statement of the establishment and operation of military judicial organs shall be regulated "according to the requirements of military service" was removed from the Constitution (Official Gazette, 08, 01, 2010).

f. The provisional Article 15, which prevented the putschists of Sept. 12 coup from being tried, was abolished. Thus, way for a trial of coup plotters was opened.

### 3.3. Period of Forming a Democratic Equilibrium (2016...)

The third period in civilian-military relations in AK Party term began with the coup attempt of July 15, 2016, which was perpetrated by FETÖ. The essence of defining this period in the context of forming a democratic equilibrium is AK Party's usage of social legitimacy that gained by resisting coup attempts for supporting civilian politics and take concrete reforms in TSK.

The reforms, which had previously been undertaken in an effort to curb the military's attempts to intervene politics and social sphere, were dealt with a way to prevent the emergence of new coup attempts within the TSK. The aim of the reforms is transformation of pro-coup mindset, which caused new coup attempts in every 10 years onwards May 27, 1960 coup. Instead of continuing the process with palliative solutions, steps were taken for a paradigm shift that would prevent emergence of such actions in the TSK.

It is necessary to evaluate steps taken particularly after July 15 in this framework. During this period, the military neither declare its opinions in the presidential election nor took part in the actions that would create pressure on politics. This situation, compared to foundation period of AK Party, can be seen as a sign that the military is not go beyond its duties anymore, and that democratic equilibrium has begun to be maintained. We will see the scope of these reforms below. First of all, two major events occurred concerning society and economy in Turkey.

a. First of these incidents was the emergence of a new illegitimate center of power that trying to suppress civilian politics on Dec. 17-25, 2013. While previous tutelage attempts usually initiated by Kemalist status quo within the military, Dec. 17-25 coup was attempted to intimidate political actors by FETÖ



members, who infiltrated police and judiciary and formed an independent hierarchy within themselves other than chain of command of state mechanism.

The name of this network, as mentioned above, was “Gülen Community”. Judicial process started after the attempt was repelled, and name of this network was publicized by the judiciary as Parallel State Structure (PDY) (Cumhuriyet, 22, 07, 2015) or Gülenist Terror Group (FETÖ). This is the basis behind the usage of FETÖ name in this article. As it will be seen below, with the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, FETÖ fully disclosed its criminal record.

With the emergence of FETÖ as an illegitimate actor that tried to direct civilian politics at that date, a new page was opened in the coup history started by the Kemalist status quo on May 27, 1960. For the first time, a structure other than Kemalist officers, which defined itself as an NGO, education volunteers, a service or a religious community, took step to overthrow a democratically-elected government and its Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. It carried out this attempt through its members infiltrated the judiciary and police. The point that needs to be emphasized once again is the fact that despite the perpetrators of the attempt has changed, the goal remains same. AK Party government, which led by Prime Minister Erdoğan, fended off this coup attempt organized by FETÖ members in police and judiciary, and clinched its legitimacy by winning elections took place just after the attempt.

This attempt, which took place at the moment when the AK Party government tried to strengthen civilian politics against bureaucratic oligarchy and military tutelage, did not interrupt the AK Party's aim of democratization in civilian-military relations; but indicated that a coup attempt may not only initiated by military. This incident convinced AK Party of necessity both to make reforms on democratization of military and also in judiciary and security forces. When this process leading to the July 15 coup attempt is examined, it will be seen that AK Party governments extended democratization steps into various sections of the bureaucracy, including judiciary and security forces.

b. The second major incident that occurred in this period was the attempt by FETÖ to carry out bloodiest coup attempt in July 15, 2016 in Turkish political history through its members in military (Üçok, 2016; Acar, 2016; Demirağ, 2016; Önsel, 2016; Akkır, 2016). First of all, as a new generation of terrorist organization, FETÖ is a threat not only for Turkey but to the entire world with its zealous believers, its infiltration to state institutions, being a proxy in intelligence operations and its understanding of “the end justifies the means.” While inner rings of this structure, which infiltrated the state since nearly forty years, have worked like intelligence and terrorist organizations, outer rings exerted to influence the public opinion (Duran, Daily Sabah, 25, 11, 2017). As an international threat, FETÖ attempted a bloody coup attempt in July 15 in many provinces of Turkey, particularly in Istanbul and Ankara. To get rid of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and help FETÖ members whose influence restricted due to prosecution processes were major motives of the bloody attempt. Additionally, loss of achievements of FETÖ in education, health and media sectors can be considered among the motives.

On July 15 night, putschist FETÖ members took over the control of public broadcaster TRT about 22.00 o'clock in Ankara and tried to control transportation. Appearance of tanks on some streets of Ankara, occupation of some public buildings, closure of Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul with tanks and military vehicles and firing bullets to citizens, paved the way for a new era in Turkish politics. However, FETÖ members, who didn't refrain themselves from committing massacres by using all the tools of army, including tanks, F-16 warplanes, war ships and cobra helicopters, were defeated on the morning of July 16th because of the public resistance.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's firm stance against coup plotters as a political actor and millions of citizens who responded his call of resistance were among main reasons of failure of the coup attempt. Thus, for the first time in Turkish political life, a coup attempt was unable to succeed. As a result of coup plotters' attacks, 249 people were killed and 2194 people were wounded. Repelling a coup attempt by citizens with standing against tanks became a milestone in Turkey's political and social life. It is possible to summarize these milestones in a few articles, raised to despise democracy in Turkey, “Society gives only vote, but that does not defend politicians have also voted for the” cliché phrase meaning in the history of the nation's resistance has thrown into the trash.

a. With defeating the coup attempt, society showed resistance and stood against putschist soldiers for the first time. It was proven that kind of attempts can be foiled with astuteness.

b. The belief of “no one could resist against coup plotters” was vanished.

c. The cliché of “society only gives vote, but doesn't defend politicians in difficult times,” which was voiced to underestimate democracy in Turkey, became history with resistance of public.



d. The understanding that “national forces may prevail over foreign powers even if they don’t have weapons,” inherited to future generations. The soldiers, who would consider a coup attempt, will have to take account of this experience.

e. Military tutelage order which was started with May 27 coup attempt came to an end.

Hence, AK Party pioneered to beginning of a new era in civilian-military relations by using experience gained in attempts in April 27, 2007 and Dec. 17-25, 2013. The focus of this new era is to normalize democracy and to rebuild civilian-military relations altogether. The steps within Turkish Armed Forces taken after July 15 need to be considered in the framework.

### 3.3.1. Reforms in Process of Construction of Democratic Equilibrium

The government quickly started to take steps of democratization in military after fend off July 15 coup attempt with the support of citizens. Dismissal of FETÖ members from military was one of the first things made in this regard. The meticulous examination of Turkish judiciary was considered when determining these names for dismissal. After clearing military of FETÖ members, the officers began to stay away from politics. In this period, starting from 2013, some legal amendments were made in order to bring civilian-military relations to democratic standards. All major reforms except for Article 35 in Internal Service Law of TSK, which gives armed forces the mission of protecting and safeguarding democracy and thus paved the way for coups, were made after July 15, 2016. The reforms starting from the amendment in the TSK Internal Service Law are as follows;

a. Firstly, Article 35 of the TSK Internal Service Law, which was enacted after the May 27 and gave legitimacy to coups, was amended. The statement of "the mission of armed forces is to protect and safeguard Turkish homeland and republic" was changed. Instead, statement of “the mission of the armed forces is to defend and protect the Turkish homeland against threats posed from abroad, to ensure of strengthening of military power to provide deterrence, to carry out duties in abroad given by Turkish Parliament and to contribute international peace" (Hürriyet, 13, 07, 2013) was put. The legitimate basis to attempt for a coup was removed from the Constitution.

b. The definition of the Article 2 of TSK Internal Service Law, "Military service is an obligation to learn and conduct the art of war to protect the Turkish homeland, independence and the Republic, " was also changed with the phrase of "Military service is an obligation to learn and conduct the art of war. “A statement in Article 2, “this obligation is imposed by special laws” (Akşam, 28, 06, 2013) was also abolished. The military focused on protecting the country from external threats with these changes.

c. Another amendment that facilitates construction of democratic equilibrium and allows the military to be adhered to the civilian authority was removing statement of “Turkish Armed Forces is above all political influences and opinions. It is forbidden for armed forces personnel to enter politics, present in political activities and all kinds of political demonstrations, meetings, and give speeches, statements and write articles in this regard," in Article 43. This paragraph was amended as "members of the Turkish Armed Forces can not engage with political activities" (Akşam, 28, 06, 2013).

d. In the context of the restructuring of the TSK following the July 15 coup attempt, Air, Land and Naval Forces Commands were become subordinate of National Defense Ministry and military schools were closed (BBC, 31, 06, 2016). This change is an important indicator of subordinating the military to civilian authority.

e. The election of the Chief of General Staff has also been changed after July 15. With the proposal of the cabinet and the approval of the President, it has become possible for anyone among admirals or generals to be chief of the General Staff. “Chief of General Staff is appointed by President upon proposal of cabinet among generals and admirals, who have served as Land, Sea or Air Forces Commander,” statement was changed in this context as “The Chief of General Staff is appointed by the President upon the proposal of the cabinet among the generals and admirals” (Anadolu Agency, 08, 17, 2016).

f. Another change took place in the structure of the Supreme Military Council (YAŞ). This change is important for Turkish politics; because the YAŞ meetings and its decisions once functioned as an upper authority that determines politics and support tutelage system. The Law on the Establishment and Duties of the Supreme Military Council, which was established to serve in peace time, was amended and the structure of the Supreme Military Council was reorganized. In this frame, members of the YAŞ determined as Prime Minister, Chief of the General Staff, Deputy Prime Minister, Justice Minister, Foreign Minister, Interior Minister, National Defense Minister and the Commanders of Land, Naval and Air Forces (Mevzuat, 28, 12, 2017). The memberships of military commanders, Gendarmerie Commander, the Navy Commander, generals



and admirals were terminated. In addition, the General Secretariat, which was functioned under Chief of General Staff, was transferred to National Defense Ministry (haberler, 01, 08, 2016).

Another practice applied after July 15 is the establishment of the National Defense University. This university consists of newly established institute, land, naval and air war school and non-commissioned vocational college with the purpose of training officers and gives post-graduate education. Chancellor of the university is elected by the President among the three candidates, which is determined by the National Defense Minister and approved by Prime Minister. National Defense Minister also appoints aides to chancellor not more than four. It has been decided that the tasks of student admission and military student operations will be fulfilled by National Defense Ministry (Official Gazette, 24, 12, 2016).

g. With the establishment of the National Defense University, military schools and non-commissioned vocational colleges have been included in the university. War academies, military high schools and non-commissioned schools were closed (Official Gazette, 24, 12, 2016).

h. Another change is the removal of some prohibitions on military schools. Some graduates, including graduates of İmam-Hatip schools were not allowed to enter military schools. With the amendment, all high school graduates are allowed to enter military schools. In addition, women among TSK personnel were allowed to wear headscarf.

ı. The research hospitals operating under the Military Medical Academy, Turkish Armed Forces Rehabilitation and Care Center, military hospitals, dispensaries and similar health service units and the health institutions belonging to the General Command of Gendarmerie were subordinated to Health Ministry (Official Gazette, 24, 12, 2016). Thus, these institutions gained civilian identity.

İ. Demilitarization of National Defense Ministry started. In accordance with this purpose, it was decided that the cadre to be assigned by the Turkish Armed Forces should be determined and appointed by the National Defense Ministry (Official Gazette, 24, 12, 2016).

j. Air, Land and Naval Forces Commands are subordinated to National Defense Ministry with article no. 1325 issued by the AK Party. Also, an amendment was made allowing President or Prime Minister to obtain direct information from commander of Land, Naval and Air forces or give direct orders to them if it is deemed necessary (Mevzuat, 15, 11, 2017).

k. The appointment of officers and non-commissioned officers was changed. It was decided that the assignments should be made upon the proposal of the Land, Naval and Air commanders and with the approval of National Defense Minister. Especially after July 15th, transferring much authority to National Defense Minister shows change in civilian-military relations.

l. After the July 15 coup attempt, law enforcement officers were subordinated to the Interior Ministry, and Land, Naval and Air Commanders were subordinated to National Defense Ministry with statutory decree. However, Land, Naval and Air Commands were given the task of reinforcing law enforcement officers in matters related to internal security. Along with this change, discords between state institutions concerning fight against terrorism were eliminated.

m. One of the serious decisions taken after the July 15 coup attempt is the decision to move military zones and facilities outside of cities. With this change, military garrisons and troops were begun to be transferred outside of cities starting from Istanbul and Ankara.

n. In addition, with the referendum held on April 16, 2017, Turkish people voted in favor of constitutional amendment package, which included transition to new Presidential System. With this package, the Military Supreme Court, the Supreme Military Administrative Court and all military courts were abolished.

## CONCLUSION

In this research, we examined 15 years of the AK Party government, which started on Nov.3, 2002 and is still continuing, in three parts. In this context, we defined the period between 2002 and 2007 as passive conflict, the period between 2007 and 2013 of active conflict, and between 2013-2017 as establishment of democratic equilibrium or consolidating of democratic equilibrium.

The most basic characteristic of the three periods is the AK Party's uncompromising attitude on democratization of the military. Even though the internal dynamics of each period differentiated, and the main dynamic that determines the AK Party's approach has been democratization. It has been willing to use the legitimate power that given by nation in elections until last phase. That's why; the AK Party has been targeted both by the pro-junta officers and by other powers within the bureaucracy, which are the extensions



of the junta in the military. Now, military has returned to its main duty of protecting the country against foreign threats especially after July 15, 2016 coup attempt, moving away from repressing civilian politics and social engineering efforts. When discussing civil-military relations in Turkey, it would be right choice to evaluate the issue before the AK Party and after the AK Party. Because when the AK Party began to rule the country, the military bureaucracy was the first among equals. At such basis, the AK Party achieved to transform today's and future's politics and civil-military relations despite ideological drawbacks and repression of army.

It doesn't withdraw from efforts to extend democratization to military institutions despite it was exposed to the bloodiest coup attempt of Turkish political history. As a result of these regulations, the military has become stronger position as it shed its putschist image and returned to its main duty of protecting the nation. The success of fight against PKK terrorism, driving away Daesh terrorist group from Syrian borders by clearing Jarablus, Azaz, al-Bab from terrorists with Operation Euphrates Shield and developments in defense industry have increased intimidation of Turkish military.

Undoubtedly, the military has privileged status in Turkey's political and social culture. It has historical dynamics, as well as geopolitical grounds deriving from our geography. Therefore, the AK Party; on the one hand supported the military and took steps in this direction, and on the other hand, continued reforms to remove coup tradition instilled within army with May 27 coup.

At this point, it is clear that the reforms have strengthened the military. However, its strength will be much improved when it will focus its own duty of protecting the country instead of trying to make social engineering. Despite the coup attempts it faced with, it is very crucial that the AK Party achieved to maintain its presence by defending national will, and also carried the military to stronger position with reforms. Surely, obliteration of military coups entirely is the main goal.

But it will take time to extirpate coup tradition within army. Therefore, steps for democratization and change are continuing. And the AK Party needs to be on the watch against coup threats, while continue to make democratization permanent.

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