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# Explaining the end of military tutelary regime and the July 15 coup attempt in Turkey

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## ABSTRACT

What were the dynamics behind the July 15 2016 coup attempt in Turkey? At a time when academic literature has been focusing on the dissolution of the country's military tutelary regime, how can this military coup attempt be explained? As an early response to this unanticipated puzzle, I argue that the success of civilian moves towards the dissolution of the military's political power contributed – paradoxically – both to the emergence and to the failure of a coup organized by a junta of Gulenist officers and their collaborators. Through a description of the historical evolution of civil–military relations, I explain the dissolution of the military tutelary regime with reference to a combination of push and pull factors. The interaction of these push and pull factors presents the historical context behind the emergence and failure of the July 15 failed coup in Turkey.

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## Introduction

A military tutelary regime is a political system dominated by non-elected military officers and ruled by elected officials. Hybrid in nature and borrowing institutions and practices from democracy and authoritarianism, tutelary regimes provide on-duty and retired officers with rights and devices to deploy political power when they deem it necessary: Stepan has described these tools and rights as ‘military institutional prerogatives’. These prerogatives

refer to those areas where [...] the military as an institution assumes they have an acquired right or privilege, formal or informal, to exercise effective control over its internal governance, to play a role within extramilitary areas within the state apparatus, or even to structure relationships between the state and political and civil society. (Stepan 1988, p. 93)

The comparative politics literature locates Turkey since 1950 as a hybrid regime governed by tutelary democracy: It is ‘tutelary’ because the Turkish military has carved out spaces of autonomy and instruments of power in politics (Cook 2007; Cizre 2011; Özbudun 2014), securing most of the prerogatives as defined by Stepan; it is a ‘democracy’ because, following all three *coup d'états*, the army retracted from politics to allow for repeated elections (Gürsoy 2012). The military ‘[was] not praetorian; it did not try to undermine democracy or usurp civilian authority’ (Cizre-Sakallioğlu 1997, p. 153).<sup>1</sup>

In the mid-twentieth century, Turkey began to experience the power of tanks as well as democracy. Since its first multi-party elections in 1946, the soldiers’ shadows receded at the end of every decade, only to be followed by the dark clouds of a *coup d'état*. The coups of 1960, 1971, and 1980 dissolved years’ worth of political organizing, brutally punished dissidents, and imposed bans on various political actors (Ahmad 2010). Yet neither these coups nor the 1997 intervention

and 2016 failed coup attempt resulted in a lasting military government, except for three brief periods in 1960–1961, 1971–1973, and 1980–1983. Reluctantly taming their political aspirations, the soldiers stayed away from directly governing the country's everyday affairs instead aiming to increase and maintain their tutelary powers.

With the rise of Erbakan's Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) to prominence in the 1990s, the balance between military and civilian rule was destabilized. Erbakan not only took aim at military tutelage, but also at the western secular discursive palette of the country. Only two years after his party's joining the coalition government, the military showed its teeth in 1997, forcing the government to resign after a few months of shuttle diplomacy. This was the last successful military intervention in Turkish politics to topple a government.

As the old generation of Islamists such as Erbakan weakened, the younger generation learned their lesson about how to deal with the military and its civil allies. Establishing the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) in 2001, Erdoğan took advantage of the opportunity when his mentor Erbakan's Virtue Party was closed down. Rather than confronting the military directly, Erdoğan built a coalition against military tutelage and offered the country the carrot of the European Union in order to control the stick of the military. Presenting himself as an openly pro-EU and pro-Western politician, he adjusted the negative image of his Islamist-leaning AKP and promised democratization and economic development (Kuru 2012). Erdoğan's way was to convince civil society to support his agenda so that the military would be pushed into institutional exclusion: by taking over its prerogatives one by one over time, politics could be set free of the military's tutelage. It worked. The secular right wing, the undecided, Islamists, even a few socialist and social democrat groups supported Erdoğan's agenda of democratization. Winning every local and national election after 2001, Erdoğan began to push the military further away from politics, crowning his party's success by winning a constitutional referendum with a large margin in 2010.

Since then, the judiciary associated with the Fethullah Gulen Movement (the FGM), politically supported by Erdoğan, has accused various officers of planning a coup against civilian political rule. As a result of the ensuing trials, the number of arrested and prosecuted officers exceeded 340, more than 60 of which were generals and admirals. This was the first time in modern Turkey's history that a civilian court prosecuted top-ranking military officers for planning a *coup d'état*. These cases, however, produced more political heat than justice. Their importance derived not from the validity of the prosecutors' accusations – many of them were dubious or fabricated<sup>2</sup> – but from the fact that civilian rule proved its strength. The military remained silent during these court cases, at a time when even a few demonstrations pressed for their decisive response. Instead of forcing civilians to resign, for the first time in Turkey's history, the entire senior command of the army, including the Chief of the General Staff, Işık Koşaner, resigned in July 2011, criticizing the prosecution of military officers. This move symbolized the end of the tutelary regime in Turkey.

During these years, Erdoğan's AKP saw Gulenist civil and military bureaucrats as allies, opening the entire civilian and military bureaucracy to the followers of the FGM to the extent that, following the AKP and the FGM split in 2013, Erdoğan proclaimed, 'Whatever they (Gulenists) wanted, we gave, including universities' (Star 2013). A series of cases (including the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer accusations; see below) were used to decrease the army's political power, at the expense of the increasing power of Gulenist officers in that very army, which was supposed to stay away from politics. During all these years of judicial scandals that traumatized non-Gulenist officers, the Gulenists found an opportunity to rapidly increase their ranks in the army and get organized within the secular cadres of Turkish Armed Forces.

Over these years, the increasing political and economic demands the FGM made of the AKP government reached a limit when Erdoğan began to block the ascendance of FGM followers in the bureaucracy. In response, the FGM first threatened to retaliate and then opened a political communications war against the AKP, hoping to decrease its power. It did not work: Erdoğan won the 2014 presidential election without any difficulty, and his AKP secured two parliamentary election victories in June 2015 and November 2016, increasing its vote to 49.5%. These developments

unfolded at a time when hundreds of the FGM's private tutorial schools were closed down, their newspapers and TV channels were taken away, and the tax authorities began to show their muscle against FGM-associated corporations.

Rapidly losing its power in public bureaucracy, media, judiciary, and the market, the FGM then faced losing recruitment its institutions and economic framework. The 2016 coup attempt came at a time when various prosecutors took decisive steps against Gulenists in the country and just a few weeks before an important Higher Military Council (HMC) meeting, which was announced by the AKP government as an opportunity to further decrease Gulenists' power in the army.

The July 15 coup attempt was the last response of Gulenists.<sup>3</sup> Knowing that neither they nor their collaborators in the army had power to take control of the entire country, they aimed at kidnapping the chiefs of staff and either assassinate or kidnap the president himself. They succeeded in their first step, taking hostage all chiefs of air, land, and naval forces staff, including the chief of staff of the Turkish Armed Forces. Their second step, however, failed twice as a result of General Dundar's successful take-over of the general command and clearing of the Istanbul airport, while various forces in Ankara were bombarding the parliament, the National Intelligence Organization, and various police headquarters. The coup's failure became clear when tens of thousands took to the streets against the tanks, the general command of the army worked hard to suppress the plotters, and Erdoğan gave a live interview from the airport.

If the plotters had been successful in their second objective, they would possibly have used their force to consolidate power by creating chaos in the country and thus better control it. Their steps might have included bombarding the İmralı Prison where Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), had been serving a life sentence since 1999, thus forcing the supporters of both the AKP and the Kurdish political movement to take to the streets, bringing the country to a total social, political, and economic collapse.

All prior coups in modern Turkey's history had aimed at a creating an *order* that soldiers preferred. In stark contrast to previous coups, however, the Gulenists and their collaborators during the July 15 coup attempt aimed at producing *disorder*, in order to win time to bring together the necessary civil, media, and military coalition to gain back all the prerogatives the army had lost since 2010. The response to the coup attempt was as novel as the nature of the attempt itself: the plotters failed when civil and political society, from the government to the main opposition, from Turkish nationalists to the Kurdish political movement, stood firmly against the plotters.

How to explain the end of one of the longest-lived military tutelary regimes in the world in conjunction with the emergence of a coup attempt during the dissolution of that very regime? This paper describes the dissolution of military tutelage in parallel with the developments that resulted in the army's loss of its military prerogatives, as defined by Stepan (1988). Presenting the legal steps of taking away military prerogatives over time does not equal explaining the end of military tutelage. A narration of its unfolding shows that it happened, but it does not explain why and how.

The political science literature has explained the end of various tutelary regimes by referring to a combination of 'pull' and 'push' factors (Stepan 1988; Rabkin 1992; Norden 1998). Pull factors draw on structural conditions of possibility that drag the military into the context of political demilitarization. In Turkey, there existed four 'pull factors' that prepared the context for the demilitarization of politics: (1) the soldiers' incorporation into the neoliberal market regime, (2) the changing nature of the international context regarding the political role of the army, (3) a split in the officers' ideological integrity regarding their role in politics, and (4) the emergence of a new Islamist-leaning counter-elite in the state bureaucracy.

More crucial for ending tutelage, 'push factors' incorporate civilians' strategic actions and choices that push the military out of the political sphere by successfully taking away the army's military prerogatives. In Turkey, there have been three such factors: (1) the AKP's success in taking careful steps towards demilitarization without framing the developments as demilitarization, (2) the emergence of

an anti-tutelage hegemonic cluster in civil society, and (3) the strategic moves of anti-tutelage military and civilian actors in the judicial and security bureaucracy.

These pull and push factors' success, however, created the conditions of possibility for both the emergence of the coup attempt and its failure. The AKP's willingness to promote Gulenists in every institution of civilian, legal, and military bureaucracy, together with its support of a corrupt judiciary in neutralizing secular officers in the army, created a power vacuum, which was filled by the Gulenists, who in turn, following their split with the AKP, used its power to topple the AKP's own government. Their failure was also a result of civil and political societies' firm opposition to and struggle against the plotters, forming an anti-tutelage coalition that proved its power during and after the July 15 coup attempt.

### The institutionalization of tutelary democracy in Turkey

Turkey was founded by military officers who left the army to take up civilian posts but did not cease to act like soldiers. Until 1946, the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) governed the country without any real parliamentary opposition. Incorporating politicians from the left and right, from mild Islamists to racists, and from rural landlords to the urban *nouveau riche*, the CHP then represented a state coalition (Caliskan 2014). Needing no democracy to rule, the regime did not have a tutelary character: when it came to making a decision, the state, the party, and the military were the same: the guardians ruled directly.<sup>4</sup>

This coalition collapsed after World War II, resulting in the establishment of the Democratic Party (DP). Led by the founders and former members of the CHP, the DP had two landslide victories in 1950 and 1954. However, the shift in political power was not complete. The military resisted the transfer of all political power to civilians and tolerated elections as long as the winner did not want the soldiers to leave politics altogether (Akkoyunlu 2014). The first non-CHP Prime Minister, Menderes, was no exception. Belonging to the founding modernizing elite himself, Menderes had inherited the authoritarian political culture of his times. His preliminary call for democratization turned into increasing authoritarianism (Zurcher 1993; Lenze 2011). In 1957, his declining support signaled to the military that the DP's popularity had come to an end. As soon as the military recognized the substantially decreasing support for the DP among intellectuals and the public, the generals used the pretext of Menderes's anti-democratic measures to organize a military take-over and to rid the country of democracy altogether. The junta closed down the DP and hanged Menderes (Kalaycıoğlu & Sarıbay 1986). The coup was not the outcome of the tutelary character of the regime but a moment of its institutionalization.

Seeing the instability of its prerogatives in Turkish politics, the military set a course to further institutionalize the regime's tutelary character. The regime faced a dilemma: the army was aware that during the time of the Marshall Plan, of which Turkey was one of the first beneficiaries, it was impossible to form a renewed symbiosis between soldiers and civilians. Democracy had to be the way, but it was impossible for the military to accept no political power at all. Tutelary democracy was the solution.

Tutelary democracy draws on a competitive party system 'in which open and uncontrolled competition is restricted to the periphery of power, while the real holders of power keep out of the way of the electoral contest' (Rouquié 1986). According to Przeworski, '[t]utelary democracy [is] a regime which has competitive, formally democratic institutions, but in which the power apparatus [...] retains the capacity to intervene to correct undesirable states of affairs' (1988, p. 61). In short, tutelary democracy is a political system dominated by non-elected military officers and ruled by elected officials.

The Turkish military legalized its tutelary function by injecting the concept of 'guardianship' into the relevant laws and regulations. This was nothing but a self-conceptualization of the very regime they wanted to construct, as the term 'tutelary' derives from the Latin *tutela*, meaning 'guardianship'. The protective function of the military first emerged in 1935, in Article 35 of the Armed Forces

Internal Service Law: ‘The obligation of the armed forces is to guard and defend the Turkish fatherland and the Republic of Turkey, as determined in the Constitution’. This function was restated and reinforced multiple times during periods of direct military rule in 1960–1961, 1971–1973, and 1980–1983. The army interpreted this guardianship not only in military but also political and ideological terms, including their understanding of the Kemalist ideological foundations of the Republic in the list of things to be guarded (Ahmad 2010; Akkoyunlu 2014). Following each all coup, the military receded to the barracks; yet it kept the prerogatives that provided its capacity to intervene in times of ‘necessity’. The Turkish military elite developed and deployed a series of prerogatives in order to normalize these *coup d'états*, by legalizing them as an act of guardianship, and to ensure the military’s autonomy in major political and economic matters.

Stepan has identified 11 prerogatives that militaries produce and deploy at changing levels in order to make and maintain tutelary regimes in democracies: (1) a constitutionally sanctioned independent role of the military in the political system, (2) a military relationship to the chief executive, (3) the coordination of the defense sector, (4) active-duty military participation in the cabinet, (5) the role of the legislative in defense matters, (6) the role of senior career civil servants or civilian political appointees, (7) the military’s role in intelligence, (8) in the police, (9) in military promotions, (10) in state enterprises, and (11) in the legal system (Stepan 1988).

Following the 3 *coups d'états*, the Turkish military institutionalized or reinforced the institutionalization of 6 of Stepan’s 11 prerogatives: the constitutionally sanctioned independent role of the military in the political system, active-duty officers’ de facto control over the armed forces, preserving the military’s upper hand in the coordination of the defense sector, the military’s active-duty officers’ de facto executive power in the defense sector, autonomy in the making of military budgets, and autonomy in military promotions. The presence of all of these have been well documented and unanimously accepted in the literature (Cizre 2011; Harris 2011; Karaosmanoğlu 2011; Akça & Balta-Paker 2013; Canan-Sokullu 2013; Akkoyunlu 2014; Gürsoy 2014a). The Turkish military lacked only 3 prerogatives: active-duty military participation in the cabinet, an active role in the police force, and administrative positions assumed by serving generals in state enterprises (Cizre 2011). Regarding the remaining two prerogatives, the Turkish military held only limited power: military intelligence had a limited position in civilian intelligence,<sup>5</sup> and military courts were permitted to prosecute civilians, albeit in a restricted fashion (Gürsoy 2014b).

The Turkish military’s prerogatives aimed at constructing autonomy and building strength in three areas: political, economic, and bureaucratic. In the political arena, the founding of the National Security Council (NSC) by the 1961 Constitution introduced a routine to the military’s interventions in everyday politics (Cizre-Sakallioğlu 1997). Its general secretary was an on-duty officer, but the council remained an ‘advisory’ body. Yet this is an understatement of its political power. Further strengthening its political grasp, the NSC became a kind of parallel cabinet whose decisions determined the country’s entire security policy, which vetoed decrees of multiple cabinets, and which intervened in areas from school curriculum development to regulating public TV broadcasting, closed down prisons, advised local election coalitions, and even forced governments to dissolve (Cizre-Sakallioğlu 1997; Harris 2011).

As for the second area, the military’s economic autonomy and power was based on the compliance of civilian rule when it came to making, spending, and accounting for the military budget. The military did not allow civilians to control or monitor its finances (Akça 2010). In the third area, bureaucratic autonomy rested with the power of the military to decide about promotions, appointments, and military education and reform. The Turkish military enjoyed full and uncompromising bureaucratic autonomy in all of these areas, creating a parallel state for its bureaucratic governance in the country (Cizre-Sakallioğlu 1997; Jenkins 2007; Akay 2008). Maintaining the tutelary functions of the regime, these prerogatives ensured the military’s institutional autonomy and hegemony over political, economic, and bureaucratic sectors of the country. The first decade of the twenty-first century, however, marked the dissolution of the tutelary regime in Turkey.



## The dissolution of the tutelary regime in Turkey

Tutelary regimes dissolve either when the military is ‘pulled’ into a context of demilitarization, by integrating of soldiers as advisors with no political power, into the universe of the state, or by ‘pushing’ the army into a limited space of military engagement only in order to subordinate soldiers to civilian rule. These two clusters of variables are referred to as ‘pull’ or ‘push factors’ (Stepan 1988; Rabkin 1992; Norden 1990, 1998). Turkey’s demilitarization displayed a combination of both types. Pull factors created the structural conditions of possibility for a successful demilitarization, while push factors directly pursued demilitarization itself by taking effective strategic steps to limit the military’s political power.

### **Pull factors**

In Turkey there have been four ‘pull factors’ that structurally prepared the context for the demilitarization of politics: (1) the soldiers’ incorporation into the neoliberal market regime, (2) the changing nature of the international context regarding the political role of the army, (3) a split in the officers’ ideational integrity regarding their role in politics, and (4) the emergence of a new generation of Islamist-leaning counter-elite in the bureaucracy.

The first pull factor consists of the military’s incorporation into neoliberal capitalism as a result of the officers’ pursuit of economic interests in the market economy. After the last *coup d’état* in 1980, both on-duty and retired generals increasingly became integrated into capitalist relations of production, exchange, and management. The establishment and growth of a holding company for military officers in the 1960s, the Armed Forces Trust and Mutual Fund (OYAK), created the single most important factor tying the economic interests of the military elite to developments in the global economy (Parla 1998). Investing in all sectors from construction to technology, OYAK partially or fully owned 60 companies, all under the full control of the military (Akça 2010). The fund grew exponentially and became a market giant, to the extent that its bank was eventually sold to ING for 2.7 billion USD (Kuru 2012).

This development sparked a novel transformation drawing on the marketization of relations and ideas governing the military officers’ political relationships, an empirical development that has yet to be theoretically analyzed by new directions of research in capitalism, economization, and performativity (Callon 2010; MacKenzie 2010; Cooper 2011; Konings 2015).

In 2010, OYAK became the third largest corporate group in the country, after Koç and Sabancı (Akça 2010). Becoming the biggest military corporate enterprise in the world in terms of total financial worth and assets, OYAK’s presence resulted in a context of demilitarization through the military’s excessive economic integration with the requirements of free market capitalism (Koçer 2002; Akkoyunlu 2014). This unprecedented development created market discipline in the military, to the extent that the military chose to issue political communiqués on Friday afternoons following the closing of the Istanbul Stock Exchange.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, since the late 1980s, retired generals have served as board members of non-OYAK holding companies, thus further integrating military and market networks (Arslan 2004). Recent research has shown that in 2008, among the 944 directors sitting on the boards of 118 listed Turkish companies, almost all included at least one retired military officer (Ararat et al. 2010). These two developments opened the army to the effects of neoliberalism and the market (Hale 1994). Yet it would be naive to think that the military’s neoliberal economic orientation alone would lead to demilitarization, for neoliberalism can also be pursued in authoritarian contexts (Akça and Balta-Paker 2013; Canan-Sokullu 2013).

OYAK’s tycoon status, together with on-duty and retired generals’ board membership and economic administrative service, encouraged a cost-benefit analysis of the forms of military intervention. The generals had learned their lesson well: a military take-over would have been a serious blow to OYAK and the military’s economic power, because Turkey’s complex economy had been fully

incorporated into the country's neoliberal market regime, of which the army's economic investments represented a smaller engagement (Koçer 2002). Furthermore, the generals' positions on the boards of holding companies brought them into constant interaction with the country's civilian economic and political elite. These elites knew that Turkey's bid for the EU made it impossible to tolerate another military take-over. Also, the military's own 'westernizing' mission discursively trapped the soldiers. At a time when the West was against any form of coup, pursuing the road of a military take-over was undesirable, if not impossible.

The first pull factor's effect was felt even more as the second pull factor began to assert itself: the changing nature of the international context. Since 1952, Turkey has always been a crucial NATO member due to its strategic location in the Middle East. During the Cold War, the US policy of supporting military tutelary regimes and various *coup d'états* created an international context for the further militarization of politics in the global South. The end of the 1980s also marked the end of this context. The disappearance of the 'Soviet threat', together with premature expectations of a global transition to democracy, created an international context more conducive to further demilitarization. In addition, the late 1990s witnessed the increasing importance of the EU in the politics of the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Openly promoting democratization in its neighboring countries and economically punishing authoritarian measures, the EU began to blow a powerful wind of democratization towards its east.

Having signed a Customs Union agreement with the EU in 1995, Turkey became a candidate for full membership in 1999. In 2002, the EU decided to open negotiations with Turkey, if the Commission Report suggested that Turkey had fulfilled the necessary criteria. These criteria required the country to increase its democratic standards. Without framing its objective as the demilitarization of politics, the AKP government pursued these reforms diligently. Acknowledging the progress of the AKP government, the EU decided to start accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005. The international pull factor was so structurally and discursively strong that even the army had chosen to legitimize its last direct intervention in 1997 with reference to a need to further integrate Turkey's economy with the global markets and making Turkey a full EU member. Atatürk's mission of westernization and the neoliberal language of market expansion were so inseparably intertwined that the military had no discursive defense against the power of this second pull factor.

The third pull factor emerged when the EU started to press for further democratization in Turkey. There has always been a divergence in Turkey's military corps with respect to the soldiers' ideological orientation (Karaosmanoğlu 2011). Yet there has been no split concerning whether the military should intervene in politics. The differences were about the mode of and follow-up to intervention. According to Aydınli, soldiers have historically been divided into two groups: *Absolutists* believe that until Turkish society and politics mature, they must be carefully guided by the strong hand of [...] its armed forces', whereas *[g]radualists* accept that coups and other harsh tactics are counterproductive and that working with the civilians is a better way of achieving modernization' (my emphasis, Aydınli 2012, p. 102).

The first two pull factors made it possible for the gradualists to grow in size and gain an upper hand in the military. This split gave birth to a pull factor that made it possible to later destabilize the political integrity of the tutelary coalition between civilians and the absolutist officers who aimed at maintaining the military's political power in the country. The third pull factor became even more evident when the Chief of Staff Hilmi Özkök made two coup plans obsolete in 2003 and 2004 (Akkoyunlu 2014, p. 278). Similarly, also due to this split, in 2011 the chief of staff and all the senior commanders resigned in protest against the court cases opened by the Gulenist judiciary and supported by the AKP government, a move that represented a clear change of attitude on the side of the military.

Finally, the emergence of a new generation of Islamist-leaning counter-elites in the state bureaucracy created a fourth pull factor. Seemingly an unrelated development, this factor played a decisive role in the end of military tutelage. In contrast to the AKP's political Islamist position, which aims at reforming the country by winning elections, the followers of the FGM, a powerful religious order run



by self-exiled leader Fethullah Gulen with political and economic aspirations, aimed at strengthening the movement by funding the education of working-class children in its hundreds of private schools. The FGM later convinced the graduates to take positions in the military and civil bureaucracy, such as the army, the police force, and the judiciary. Thanks to its political alliance with the AKP, the FGM followers then assumed positions of central importance in the bureaucracy.

The FGM followers and other Islamist-leaning cadres in the public bureaucracy represented a pull factor in that their emergence created a split in the cultural and political universe of the state bureaucracy, which had represented a secular bloc up to that point. This split had two pull functions regarding the demilitarization of politics: first, it created a faction of intelligence, police, and judicial bureaucrats who could be consulted and mobilized to preempt a potential military intervention, should politicians decide to take action. And, second, this split created a pull factor by creating an anti-tutelary bureaucracy that destabilized the power of the military in the state.

### **Push factors**

Erdoğan's AKP came to power at a time when the four pull factors of demilitarization had already been at work for more than a decade. The pulling effect of these developments created the structural conditions for civilians to take direct steps towards demilitarization and to 'push' the army away from politics. These steps consisted of three factors: (1) the AKP's success in implementing a careful plan of demilitarization without ideologically framing it as such, (2) the emergence of an anti-tutelage hegemonic cluster in civil society, and (3) the strategic moves of anti-tutelage actors in the public bureaucracy.

Following the 1997 intervention of the military, Erdoğan saw that his mentor Erbakan's political Islam had drawn on a confrontational politics that made it impossible to build a social and political coalition against the military. The closing down of Erbakan's Welfare Party gave Erdoğan an opportunity to establish his own party, the AKP. Erdoğan's now famous line summarized what was new with the AKP: 'We changed our shirt'. In this way, he wanted to sound appealing to both followers and opponents, by claiming that he had changed and at the same time had not. Remaining discursively distant from political Islam and situating his new party as a conservative democratic movement, Erdoğan made three political promises to the larger civil society in Turkey: EU membership, economic development, and advanced democracy. All of these worked to produce a large coalition for his rule, but he delivered none of them.<sup>7</sup>

Coming to power at a time when the three major political parties could not pass the 10% threshold in the 2002 elections gave the AKP unprecedented strength in the parliament. Winning 34% of the votes, the AKP secured 66% of all seats, making it the most powerful government in decades. However, Erdoğan knew that his power was limited by the will of the military. In 1999, he had to leave his office as mayor of Istanbul to serve a short jail sentence, as a result of an Islamist poem he recited in the city of Siirt.

While he was in prison, his fame grew, winning him moral superiority against the military and civil establishment. Yet Erdoğan could not run for office as a result of a law that prevented recent inmates from becoming members of parliament. Nevertheless, he was still the chairman of the AKP. His party had the power to change the law that banned him from running, and so it did. President Sezer expectedly vetoed the amendment, but then ratified it when the AKP government insisted. Following this amendment, an AKP member of parliament from Siirt resigned, and a new election in the very city from which he had been sent to prison now sent Erdoğan to parliament. He became Prime Minister in 2003.

The AKP came to power after the country's worst economic crisis in recent memory. Under the leadership of Kemal Derviş, the Minister of Economy from 2001 to 2002, structural adjustment policies fixed certain economic problems, giving the AKP a tremendous advantage. Erdoğan did not change the basic parameters of the IMF's stand-by agreements. Economic growth was the result, helping Turkey to meet once more the growth rate it had averaged since the 1920s. Catching up

with the average looked like a great success after the worst economic crisis of modern Turkey's history. As GDP growth continued, Erdoğan's government turned towards the EU.

Turkey had entered the European Customs Union in 1995. Being accepted as a candidate for full membership in 1999, the EU decided to open membership negotiations with Turkey in 2002. This decision was dependent on Turkey's performance in increasing its democratic standards, as assessed by the European Commission. In 2004, upon seeing positive developments reported by the Commission Reports, the EU decided to open negotiations. The EU's criteria required the country to pursue a political reform agenda to increase its democratic standards. Without framing its objective as the demilitarization of politics, the AKP government diligently pursued these reforms. Acknowledging the progress of the AKP government in 2004, the EU decided to start accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005.

The AKP effectively used the pretext of democratic reform to curb the military's institutionalized power in Turkish politics. EU reform packages were employed as a legal and discursive ground for taking aim at the NSC, the most vital institution of the tutelary regime in the country, which worked as a parallel government whose advisory decisions from education to foreign relations had been accepted as policy. Dominated by the military, the NSC was the military's instrument to maintain the prerogatives that reproduced its political power. The NSC's domain of control was limited by a series of EU reform packages. First, the position of the general secretary of the NSC was taken away from the military and given to civilians. This move was instrumental, as it took away from military bureaucrats the right to communicate orders to civilians. Following this move, the number of civilian members was increased to balance the power of the military, pushing the officers into a minority position. Consequently, the NSC was made an advisory board whose decisions became more and more isolated in Turkey's political universe.

Parallel to this central development, the military's power in the judicial world was decreased through three additional steps. First, the State Security Courts were abolished; these civilian courts had had a military presiding judge until 1999. Second, the conditions to apply the Military Penal Code to civilians were severely limited, making it practically impossible for the military to prosecute civilians. Third, it was made legally possible to prosecute officers in civilian courts for their suspected attempt to organize a *coup d'état*. Similarly, the right of the military to intervene in civil strife without government authorization was annulled, making it legally impossible for the military to bypass the police force. Further elements of this push factor included civilian control and monitoring of the HMC, which has the sole authority for military promotions, severance, and appointments. Previously, the HMC had been exempt from civilian judicial review (Kuru 2012; Yıldırım 2015). Also, the military's right to send board members to the Council of Higher Education, a board that supervises all universities in the country, was taken away. Additionally, the military lost its right to appoint board members to the Radio and Television High Council, a higher body that governs television and radio programming in the country (Cizre 2011).

These moves to meet the EU accession criteria created a strong momentum towards the demilitarization of politics. The EU bid also had a discursive advantage: instead of framing the change within a negative politics of demilitarization, the government presented this great transformation as a positive politics of democratization for the purposes of EU membership. Creating an effective legitimating device, the EU bid also helped the AKP to build a stronger and wider coalition in civil society, a coalition that supported its government in political society. The military was almost completely isolated now.

As mentioned above, acknowledging the progress of the AKP government, the EU in 2004 decided to start accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005. Dropping its initial rejection of Erbakan's die-hard political Islam, Turkey's civil society increasingly began to support Erdoğan's new path. The opposition parties, however, became more and more isolated as they began to mobilize negative politics against Erdoğan and the AKP's agenda. As the AKP announced its dreams, others promised the general public how they would work to make those dreams impossible.

The AKP won the 2007 elections with a larger margin, increasing its share from 34% to 47% and creating a buffer of legitimacy for the further demilitarization of politics. The final move came in 2010, with a constitutional referendum that sought to seal all the amendments and limited arrangements that the government had been drafting and legislating regarding demilitarization. This was the ultimate test for Erdoğan. The CHP and the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) decided to call for a 'no' vote on the grounds that the proposed amendments entailed simultaneously democratic and authoritarian clauses. The Kurdish political movement decided to boycott the referendum on the same grounds, arguing that the AKP government's proposals were not enough for the country's democratization. The now infamous slogan 'not enough, but yes' was the answer of many liberal and socialist intellectuals who created a small but very vocal pro-government mobilization before the referendum. Public discussions began to revolve around the issue of whether the AKP reforms were enough or not.

Strengthening the government's hand in furthering the demilitarization of politics, the AKP won the referendum by 58%. Nine months after the referendum, in the 2011 general elections, the AKP won 50% of the votes in the country, forming the strongest post-tutelage civilian government in Turkey's history. Then came the final blow that proved to everyone at home and abroad that the tutelary regime had ended: following the referendum, the government threw full support behind the Gulenist associated judiciary in showing their muscle against the military. Many of the judges and prosecutors were followers of the FGM, the very judicial bureaucracy who had made possible the fourth pull factor: the emergence of a new generation of Islamist-leaning counter-elites in the state.

The Ergenekon case, the first of a series of court cases against an alleged coup plan, had already been opened in 2008, but it progressed only in slow motion as a result of the government's reluctance. As demilitarization increased in pace, the case began to serve as a defining point for symbolizing civilian rule's superior power, to the extent that the Erdoğan claimed to be 'the prosecutor' of the case, while the head of the opposition, Baykal, announced himself to be the 'defendant of the accused'.

In 2011, a few weeks before the general election, 200 on-duty and retired officers were formally charged with involvement in a suspected plot to topple the AKP government. In protest against these cases, three top generals resigned from their post, at a time when detained officers were about to be promoted by the HMC, an almost automatic process under military tutelage. Believing in his power, Erdoğan rejected the promotion of all detained officers, winning an opportunity to appoint the generals he preferred. This unprecedented move consolidated civilian control over the military (Eligür 2014). Following the Erdoğan government's encouragement of the FGM-associated prosecutors, a snowball of cases functioned like a judicial avalanche rolling over the military's prerogatives. In 2012, seven separate cases were united under one single court case.

As the Ergenekon case matured, the AKP and the FGM-supported judiciary developed a parallel case, accusing various military officers of plotting another *coup d'état* in 2010. A young journalist associated with the FGM from the newspaper *Taraf* claimed that 'an anonymous military officer' had brought him a suitcase full of documents proving the supposed plot. A few weeks after the arrival of the suitcase, prosecutors arrested hundreds of officers and their alleged supporters as a result of the now infamous Sledgehammer case, a name given after the alias of the *coup* plan. Two years later, 300 of the 367 suspects were sentenced to prison terms. In 2014, however, following the split between the FGM and the AKP, all of the accused were released from prison after the Constitutional Court decided that there had been no proper trial. Many of the testimonies were dubious, and there was proof of fraud in various sets of evidence. One crucial document that supposedly proved the Sledgehammer plot was dated 2003, yet turned out to be composed with a 2007 version of Microsoft Word.

The Ergenekon and Sledgehammer cases produced more heat than justice. As the prosecutors associated with the FGM failed to convince the public about the soundness of their case against the military, the cases lost legitimacy. These court cases did not aim at prosecuting officers who were about to organize a military take-over, for there was none. Their main function was to

anesthetize the political reflexes of the military in order to push them into mode of defense. In this way, the government and those civil society organizations that opposed tutelage had the chance and time to normalize the idea of removing military prerogatives by means of legal measures. Furthermore, by taking out hundreds of officers from the military promotions process, a vacuum was created to rapidly pull up FGM-associated officers to positions of power in the military. It was this Gulenist cadre with its collaborators who would be instrumental in organizing the July 15 coup attempt in 2016.

As a result of these pull and push factors, Turkey's military's tutelary powers were dismantled by removing almost all of the prerogatives Stepan theorized. The Turkish military had once fully or partially enjoyed 8 of the 11 prerogatives, but during the AKP government, the military lost all of them. The AKP's success in demilitarization drew on an anti-tutelary coalition within civil society as the military failed to gather sufficient support for maintaining its tutelage.<sup>8</sup> Social democrats, socialists, and liberals – that is, intellectuals and civil society leaders who were not political Islamists – either supported or shied away from resisting AKP's demilitarization agenda, presented by Erdoğan as a larger process of democratization. The Kurdish political movement also gave open consent to the demilitarization of Turkish politics, using its moral power among the left to curb militarist enthusiasm. Furthermore, the PKK's reluctance to resort to armed resistance for extended periods of time also helped the government to discursively turn its face from a potential internal threat to democratization. The army did not have any enemies to fight at home or abroad (Akça & Balta-Paker 2013).

Thus, various strange bedfellows within Turkey's civil society united behind the cause of demilitarization, under the banner of democratization for EU membership. From Kurds to Islamists, from social democrats to feminists, numerous groups and organizations found a way to support demilitarization without necessarily supporting the AKP itself. This anti-tutelary hegemony and its moral upper hand in civil society played a decisive role for the end of military tutelage in Turkey.

Only a few years later, however, in 2016, the same coalition this time stood against the Gulenists' coup attempt by drawing on a decade-long struggle against military tutelage. Paradoxically, the success in demilitarization of politics in Turkey entailed taking away the political power of the officers by injecting and promoting in the army another cadre of officers with political aspirations. Thus both the coup attempt and its failure were a result of the success in ending the military tutelary regime in the country.

## Conclusion

This paper has argued that since 2010, Turkey can no longer be described as a tutelary regime. Drawing on the political science literature concerning the demilitarization of politics, I have shown that the end of military tutelage in Turkey can be explained by a combination of pull and push factors. The former factors are based on structural conditions that have dragged the military into a context conducive to political demilitarization. The article has argued that there existed four of them: (1) the soldiers' integration into the neoliberal economy, (2) the international context's changing dynamics regarding the political role of the army, (3) a division in the officers' position regarding their role in politics, and (4) the emergence of an Islamist-leaning bureaucratic counter-elite in the country. These pull factors created a universe of political opportunity where anti-tutelage actors in civil and political society could take decisive steps towards demilitarization. It is those actors who generated the three push factors: (1) the AKP's achievement in pursuing demilitarization without framing it as demilitarization, (2) the emergence of an anti-tutelage hegemonic cluster in civil society, and (3) the strategic moves of anti-tutelage military and civilian actors in the judicial and security bureaucracy.

Drawing on Stepan (1988), the paper has demonstrated that until 2010 the Turkish military fully or partially enjoyed 8 of 11 key prerogatives. Yet during the AKP government, the military lost all of them: a constitutionally sanctioned independent role of the military in the political system, active-

duty officers' control over the armed forces, the military's control over the defense sector, autonomy in the coordination of the defense sector, autonomy in the making of military budgets, autonomy in military promotions, the military intelligence's privileged position in civilian intelligence, and the right of military courts to prosecute civilians. The Turkish military's institutional capacity to intervene in politics was completely dissolved.

From a comparative perspective, the demilitarization of Turkish politics is similar to the cases of Brazil and South Korea, in the sense that in both countries neoliberal economic restructuring created the economic context for the end of the tutelary regime (Roett & Tollefson 1986; Shorrock 1986; Zaverucha 2014). The changing nature of the international context, together with Europe's reinforcement of demilitarization, played a similar role in Turkey and Greece (Duman & Tsarouhas 2006). Finally, AKP's choice to not pursue open demilitarization and frame the process as a move to democratization is similar to the Chilean experience (Rabkin 1992).

All demilitarization processes of politics around the world draw on a combination of pull or push factors. Yet research has shown that, without a positive contribution by civil society, the push factors planned by politicians fail. If civilians continue to drag the military into politics, neither push nor pull factors work. According to Rouquié (1986), without civil society saying farewell to arms, soldiers never leave. This is why the anti-tutelary coalition in Turkey's civil society, the second push factor in the demilitarization of politics, served as the decisive factor ensuring the success of the unique blend of the other factors, both pull and push.

It is also this second push factor that helps us understand the failure of Gulenist coup attempt in the country. During and after the July 15 coup attempt, civil society stood firmly against the plotters. Despite the violence against them, resulting in the death of 246 civilians, all sectors of civil society worked to suppress the coup by taking to the streets for extended periods of time. Without such a strong and wide anti-coup and anti-tutelage coalition, neither ending the tutelary regime nor preventing the success of this latest coup would have been possible. It must be acknowledged that the army's general command also stood against the plotters and took decisive military steps to crush it as they protected civilian politicians such as Erdoğan.

The comparative politics literature shows that there have been various reversals in the processes of political demilitarization around the world. Armies can and do return to politics (Rabkin 1992; Satana 2011; Singh & Hickman 2013; Zaverucha 2014). Turkey proved that solidly in the July 15 coup attempt. Thus we cannot know how long-lasting the end of military tutelage will be nor whether another coup attempt will shake the foundations of civilian politics in Turkey. One has to be careful about two crucial current developments in the country: first, despite the disappearance of all military prerogatives in Turkey, the military still maintains its *de facto* autonomy in matters of budget and in the structuring of its defense policies (Yıldız 2014). Second, the slow-paced dismantling of the tutelary regime in Turkey entailed a fast-track rise of authoritarianism, resulting in the dissolution of the anti-tutelage hegemony in a civil society that once supported the AKP's promise of democratization (Caliskan 2015). In the future, the institutionalization of the end of military tutelage in Turkey will depend on how these two developments will impact the prospect of the demilitarization of Turkey's politics.

Politics can take unexpected turns, especially in countries where under-institutionalization results in sudden shifts of power. If the coup attempt of July 15 had been successful, this paper could not have been written this way. Gulenists and their collaborators in the army would have worked hard to reconstruct all the prerogatives of the military. From a historical and comparative perspective, however, the failure of the coup plotters in enlisting political and civil society makes it harder to expect the further militarization of politics in Turkey.

## Notes

1. Also see Weiker (1973); Heper and Guney (2000); Heper (2002); and Narli (2011).
2. For a list of allegations and proofs of fabrication, see The Washington Post (2011).



3. Fethullah Gulen refused his involvement in the coup attempt, yet witness accounts, testimonies, and interviews of Gulenist and non-Gulenist officers, including all the chiefs of staff show that Gulenist officers were behind the organization of the coup attempt, well-documented, at least by pro-government and independent media. For these accounts, see <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/orgeneral-hulusi-akar-in-gundem-2283595/>; [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/570760/Ve\\_Orgeneral\\_Akar\\_in\\_yaveri\\_itiraf\\_etti\\_.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/570760/Ve_Orgeneral_Akar_in_yaveri_itiraf_etti_.html).
4. For a short history of the making this symbiosis, see Hale (2011).
5. The National Intelligence Agency of Turkey is civilian in nature; however, the agency's top officials were recruited from among retired or on-duty officers. For a detailed discussion, see Cizre-Sakallioğlu (1997).
6. This development presents a rich empirical universe that could be fruitfully researched within the framework of sociology of finance and cultural economy. See Bryan and Rafferty (2006); Karl (2013); and McClanahan (2013).
7. For a detailed discussion, see Gürleyen (2014).
8. For a discussion of how the military alienated itself, see Aydinli (2012). For the international and cultural context of demilitarization, see Karaosmanoğlu (2011).

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