

KARI COFFMAN

THE IMPACT OF CHANGING CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS  
ON TURKEY'S APPROACH TO THE KURDISH QUESTION

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THE IMPACT OF CHANGING CIVIL-MILITARY  
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TO THE KURDISH QUESTION

A Master's Thesis

by  
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Ankara  
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Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

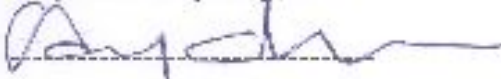
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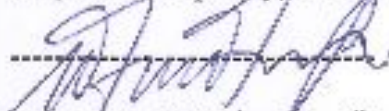
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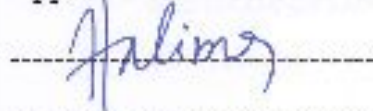
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## ABSTRACT

### THE IMPACT OF CHANGING CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS ON TURKEY'S APPROACH TO THE KURDISH QUESTION

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This study considers the relationship between democratization and conflict resolution by examining the effect that changing civil-military relations have had on the Kurdish question in Turkey. In addressing democratization, this paper focuses on demilitarization, or the transition of political power from military to civilian control. A significant change in Turkish civil-military relations occurred after 2007, as the civil government averted military threats of intervention in the “e-memorandum.” Demilitarization has potential ramifications for Turkey’s approach to the Kurdish question, exemplified by Peace Process negotiations commenced in 2012 between the Turkish government and PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. The Peace Process signals a major shift from counterterrorism to negotiation as the primary tool of conflict resolution. This thesis aims to understand the effects that demilitarization has had on the attitudes and perceptions of military leaders with respect to the Kurdish question.

This thesis utilizes a mixed methods research approach that combines qualitative data collected through discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews with quantitative data from content analysis. This thesis highlights the role of changing civil-military relations in approaches to conflict resolution and counterterrorism by examining the construction of democracy and terrorism in National Security Council (MGK) and Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) press releases from 2007-2012 and from interviews

with retired military officials. The findings of this thesis suggest that institutional changes to the political structure of the state contributed to a shift in civil-military relations that facilitated the introduction of accommodative approaches to counterterrorism, which was accepted by military leaders due to normative change in the military's perception of its role in politics, despite a lack of normative change on issues of counterterrorism strategy.

***Keywords:*** *Civil-Military Relations, Demilitarization, Kurdish Question, the PKK, Turkey*

## ÖZET

### DEĞİŞEN SİVİL-ASKER İLİŞKİLERİN TÜRKİYE’NİN KÜRT SORUNUNA YAKLAŞIMINDAKİ ETKİSİ

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Bu tez çalışması, Türkiye’de değişen sivil-asker ilişkilerin Kürt sorunu üzerindeki etkisini inceleyerek demokratikleşme ve uyuşmazlık çözümü arasındaki ilişkiyi ele almaktadır. Bu çalışmada demokratikleşme, sivilleşme veya politik gücün ordudan arındırılıp sivillerin kontrolüne geçişi olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Sivil hükümetin “e-muhtıra” ile ortaya çıkan askeri tehditleri bertaraf etmesiyle birlikte, 2007 yılından sonra Türkiye’de sivil-asker ilişkilerinde önemli bir değişim meydana gelmiştir. Türk hükümeti ve PKK lideri Abdullah Öcalan arasında 2012 yılında başlatılan Barış Süreci müzakereleri örneğinde olduğu gibi sivilleşme süreci, Türkiye’nin Kürt sorununa yaklaşımı ile ilgili potansiyel sonuçlar barındırmaktadır. Barış Süreci, terörle mücadelede, başlıca uyuşmazlık çözümü aracı olarak müzakereye geçişi simgelemektedir. Bu tez, sivilleşmenin, askeri liderlerin Kürt sorunu ile ilgili tutumları ve algıları üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmayı hedeflemektedir.

Bu tezde karma araştırma yöntemi benimsenmiş olup; söylem analizi ve yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlar ile nitel veri, içerik analizi ile nicel veri toplanmıştır. Araştırmada, Milli Güvenlik Kurulu (MGK) ve Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri’nin (TSK), 2007-2012 yılları arasındaki basın açıklamalarında demokrasi ve terörizm kavramlarının yapılandırılması mercek altına alınarak değişen sivil-asker ilişkilerin, uyuşmazlık çözümü ve terörle mücadelede benimsenen yaklaşımlar üzerindeki rolü vurgulanmaktadır. Araştırmanın bulguları, devletin siyasi yapısındaki kurumsal değişimlerin sivil-asker ilişkilerde de bir değişimi tetiklediğini önermektedir. Ayrıca, her ne kadar terörle mücadele konularında normatif değişim gözlenmese de, ordunun

siyasetteki rolünde meydana gelen normatif deęiřime baęlı olarak, sivil-asker ilişkilerinde meydana gelen deęişimin, askeri liderler tarafından kabul gören terörle mücadelede uzlaşmacı yaklaşımların takdimine olanak sağladığı araştırmanın bulguları arasındadır.

***Anahtar Kelimeler:*** Kürt Sorunu, PKK, Sivil-Asker İlişkiler, Sivilleşme, Türkiye



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |      |
|---|------|
| ABSTRACT.....   | iv   |
| ÖZET.....   | vi   |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....  | viii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS.....  | ix   |
| LIST OF TABLES.....   | xii  |
| LIST OF FIGURES.....  | xiii |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....  | 1    |
| CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....                                  | 6    |
| 2.1. Demilitarization.....  | 6    |
| 2.1.1. The Military and Democratic Consolidation.....                 | 9    |
| 2.1.2. Demilitarization in Turkey.....                                | 11   |
| 2.2. Civil-Military Relations.....                                    | 15   |
| 2.2.1 Civil-Military Relations in Turkey.....                         | 22   |
| 2.2.2. Changing Civil-Military Relations, Post-2000.....              | 25   |
| 2.2.3.1. European Union (EU) Accession Process.....                   | 26   |
| 2.2.3.2. Election of the AKP Government.....                          | 33   |
| 2.2.3.3. Emergence of New Political Elite.....                        | 40   |
| 2.2.3.4. Changing Threat Perception.....                              | 43   |
| 2.2.3.5. Changing Security Discourse.....                             | 46   |
| 2.2.3.6. Changing Public Opinion.....                                 | 49   |
| 2.2.3. Factors Contributing to Changing Civil-Military Relations..... | 51   |
| 2.2.4. Evaluation of Factors.....                                     | 52   |
| 2.3. Conceptualizing Terrorism.....                                   | 54   |
| 2.4. Approaches to Counterterrorism.....                              | 58   |
| 2.4.1 Deterrence-Based Approach.....                                  | 60   |
| 2.4.2. Accommodative Approach.....                                    | 64   |
| 2.4.3 Significance of Changing Approaches.....                        | 69   |
| 2.5. The PKK and the Kurdish Question.....                            | 69   |
| 2.5.1. Development of the PKK.....                                    | 71   |
| 2.5.2. Increased Terror Activity: 1990-1994.....                      | 73   |
| 2.5.3. Shift to a Political Campaign: 1994-1999.....                  | 74   |
| 2.5.4. Following the Capture of Öcalan: 1999-2012.....                | 77   |
| 2.5.5. Opening of a Peace Process in 2012.....                        | 79   |
| 2.5.6. Significance of the Peace Process.....                         | 80   |
| CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY.....                         | 84   |
| 3.1. Research Design.....   | 84   |
| 3.2. Data Collection.....   | 91   |
| 3.3. Discourse Analysis.....  | 93   |
| 3.4. Content Analysis.....  | 101  |
| 3.5. Limitations.....   | 102  |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER 4: INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: ANALYSIS OF MGK PRESS RELEASES.....        | 105 |
| 4.1. Discourse Analysis of MGK Press Releases.....                          | 109 |
| 4.1.1. Themes and Linguistic Structures.....                                | 110 |
| 4.1.1.1. Construction of “In/Out” Dichotomy.....                            | 110 |
| 4.1.1.2. Omissions from MGK Press Releases.....                             | 113 |
| 4.1.1.3. Construction of “Us/Them” Dichotomy.....                           | 115 |
| 4.1.1.4. On-going Nature of the Fight against Terrorism.....                | 116 |
| 4.1.1.5. Length and Style of the Press Releases.....                        | 116 |
| 4.1.2. Discourses.....  | 118 |
| 4.1.2.1. Discourse 1: Terrorism.....  | 118 |
| 4.1.2.2. Discourse 2: Democracy.....  | 119 |
| 4.1.2.3. Discourse 3: Security.....   | 123 |
| 4.1.2.4. Discourse 4: the Nation.....                                       | 125 |
| 4.1.2.5. Discourse 5: Unity.....  | 127 |
| 4.1.2.6. Discourse 6: Military.....   | 128 |
| 4.1.3. Discussion of Discourse Analysis.....                                | 129 |
| 4.2. Content Analysis of MGK Press Releases.....                            | 131 |
| 4.2.1. Discourse 1: Terrorism.....  | 132 |
| 4.2.2. Discourse 3: Security.....   | 133 |
| 4.2.3. Discourse 4: The Nation.....   | 134 |
| 4.2.4. Discourse 5: Unity.....  | 136 |
| 4.2.5. Discourse 6: Military.....   | 137 |
| 4.2.6. Discourse 2: Democracy.....  | 138 |
| 4.2.6.1. Discourse 2a: Democracy as a Political System.....                 | 139 |
| 4.2.6.2. Discourse 2b: Democracy as an Ideal.....                           | 139 |
| 4.2.6.3. Discourse 2c: Democracy as an Approach to Conflict Resolution..... | 141 |
| 4.2.6.4. Discourse 2d: Democratic Institutions.....                         | 143 |
| 4.2.7. Discussion of Content Analysis.....                                  | 144 |
| 4.3. Evaluation of Institutional Change.....                                | 148 |
| 4.3.1. Expansion as Continuity.....   | 149 |
| 4.3.2. Stability through Strategic Omission.....                            | 150 |
| 4.3.3. Democracy and Terrorism.....   | 151 |
| CHAPTER 5: NORMATIVE CHANGE: ANALYSIS OF TSK PRESS RELEASES.....            | 155 |
| 5.1. Discourse Analysis of TSK Press Releases.....                          | 162 |
| 5.1.1. Themes and Linguistic Structures.....                                | 163 |
| 5.1.1.1. Construction of an “Us/Them” Dichotomy.....                        | 163 |
| 5.1.1.2. Construction of an “In/Out” Dichotomy.....                         | 166 |
| 5.1.1.3. On-going Nature of the Conflict.....                               | 167 |
| 5.1.1.4. Construction of a “Part/Whole” Dichotomy.....                      | 167 |
| 5.1.1.5. Precision.....   | 168 |
| 5.1.1.6. Civil-Military Relations.....                                      | 169 |
| 5.1.2. Discourses.....  | 170 |
| 5.1.2.1. Discourse 1: Terrorism.....  | 170 |
| 5.1.2.2. Discourse 2: Democracy.....  | 172 |
| 5.1.2.3. Discourse 3: Security.....   | 173 |
| 5.1.2.4. Discourse 4: Nation.....   | 173 |
| 5.1.2.5. Discourse 5: Unity.....  | 175 |
| 5.1.2.6. Discourse 6: Military.....   | 176 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 5.1.2.7. Discourse 7: Legal System.....                        | 176 |
| 5.1.2.8. Discourse 8: Media.....                               | 178 |
| 5.1.2.9. Discourse 9: Ethics.....                              | 179 |
| 5.1.3. Discussion of Discourse Analysis.....                   | 180 |
| 5.2. Content Analysis of TSK Press releases.....               | 181 |
| 5.2.1. Discourse 1: Terrorism.....                             | 181 |
| 5.2.2. Discourse 3: Security.....                              | 183 |
| 5.2.3. Discourse 4: the Nation.....                            | 184 |
| 5.2.4. Discourse 5: Unity.....                                 | 187 |
| 5.2.5. Discourse 6: the Military.....                          | 188 |
| 5.2.6. Discourse 2: Democracy.....                             | 191 |
| 5.2.6.1. Discourse 2a: Democratic Politics.....                | 191 |
| 5.2.6.2. Discourse 2b: Democratic Ideals.....                  | 192 |
| 5.2.6.3. Discourse 2c: Democratic Approach.....                | 193 |
| 5.2.6.4. Discourse 2d: Democratic Institutions.....            | 194 |
| 5.2.7. Discourse 7: Legal System.....                          | 196 |
| 5.2.8. Discourse 8: the Media.....                             | 197 |
| 5.2.9. Discourse 9: Ethics.....                                | 198 |
| 5.2.3. Discussion of Content Analysis.....                     | 200 |
| 5.3. Evaluation of Normative Change.....                       | 203 |
| 5.3.1. Discourse and Identity.....                             | 204 |
| 5.3.2. Democracy and Terrorism.....                            | 205 |
| 5.3.3. Production of and Challenges to Identity.....           | 206 |
| 5.4. Supplementary Interview Findings.....                     | 209 |
| CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION.....                        | 211 |
| 6.1. Comparison of MGK and TSK Press Releases.....             | 212 |
| 6.2. Significance of the Comparison.....                       | 214 |
| 6.3. Discussion of Interview Results.....                      | 215 |
| 6.4. Civil-Military Relations and Approaches to Terrorism..... | 220 |
| 6.5. Significance of Democracy.....                            | 225 |
| 6.6. Public opinion as an Exogenous Factor.....                | 228 |
| 6.7. Review of the Research Question.....                      | 231 |
| 6.7.1. Military Practices.....                                 | 232 |
| 6.7.2. Military Perceptions.....                               | 232 |
| 6.7.3. Conclusions.....  | 236 |
| 6.8. Evaluation of Hypotheses.....                             | 238 |
| 6.9. Conclusion.....   | 240 |
| 6.10. Implications and Policy Recommendations.....             | 242 |
| REFERENCES.....  | 245 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Threat perception and civil-military relations..... | 18 |
| Table 2: Overview of six exogenous factors.....              | 52 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1: Support for the Solution Process.....  | 82  |
| Figure 2: Research Design: Understanding Civil-military relations.....   | 88  |
| Figure 3: Relationship between discourse, identity, and policy.....  | 98  |
| Figure 4: Operational Mechanism linking Civil-Military Relations (CMR) and<br>Approaches to Conflict Resolution..... | 216 |
| Figure 5: MGK Discourse 1: Terrorism.....  | 132 |
| Figure 6: MGK Discourse 3: Security.....   | 134 |
| Figure 7: MGK Discourse 4: The Nation.....   | 135 |
| Figure 8: Total Frequency v. 1st Person Plural.....  | 136 |
| Figure 9: MGK Discourse 5: Unity.....  | 137 |
| Figure 10: MGK Discourse 6: Military.....  | 138 |
| Figure 11: MGK Discourse 2a: Democratic politics.....  | 139 |
| Figure 12: MGK Discourse 2b: Democratic ideals.....  | 140 |
| Figure 13: MGK Discourse 2c: Democratic approach.....  | 141 |
| Figure 14: MGK Discourse 2d: Democratic institutions.....  | 143 |
| Figure 15: TSK Discourse 1: Terrorism.....   | 182 |
| Figure 16: TSK Discourse 3: Security.....  | 184 |
| Figure 17: TSK Discourse 4: The Nation.....  | 185 |
| Figure 18: Variations of "Nation" (millet) in TSK Press Releases.....  | 186 |
| Figure 19: Comparison of the Frequency of In/Out of Country.....   | 187 |
| Figure 20: TSK Discourse 5: Unity.....   | 188 |
| Figure 21: TSK Discourse 6: Military.....  | 189 |
| Figure 22: Military Self-Referencing in Press Releases.....  | 190 |
| Figure 23: TSK Discourse 2a: Democratic politics.....  | 192 |
| Figure 24: TSK Discourse 2b: Democratic ideals.....  | 193 |
| Figure 25: TSK Discourse 2c: Democratic approach.....  | 194 |
| Figure 26: TSK Discourse 2d: Democratic institutions.....  | 195 |
| Figure 27: TSK Discourse 7: Legal System.....  | 196 |
| Figure 28: TSK Discourse 8: Media.....   | 198 |
| Figure 29: TSK Discourse 9: Ethics.....  | 199 |

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Turkish military has occupied a position of reverence in Turkish society since the founding of the Republic in 1923 and has regularly intervened in politics through a series of coups. However, the 2007 “e-memorandum” represents a turning point in civil-military relations, as the civil government averted military threats of intervention by calling for and winning early elections. The consolidation of power within the civil government has potential ramifications for Turkey’s approach to security issues such as the Kurdish question. After over two decades of military-led counterterrorism efforts against the PKK, the Turkish government commenced negotiations with PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 2012. The Peace Process signals a major shift from counterterrorism to negotiation as the primary tool of conflict resolution. This thesis aims to understand the effects that demilitarization has had on the attitudes and perceptions of military leaders with respect to the Kurdish question. In doing so, it considers the relationship between democratization and conflict resolution by examining the effects that changing civil-military relations have had on the Kurdish question in Turkey.

The literature on democratization suggests that, while the military often plays a critical role in guiding democratic transition (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986; Karabelias, 1999), it hinders democratic consolidation (Svolik, 2008). Military leaders tend to prioritize stability over reform, meaning that security concerns are often invoked by military leaders to delay the process of democratic consolidation (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986; Aydınli, 2013). In developing democracies with strong military traditions, democratic consolidation requires the transition of political legitimacy from the military to the civil government, either voluntarily or by force.

Turkey provides a compelling study for the role of civil-military relations in democratization. Since the founding of the Republic, the Turkish military has been cited as one of the most revered and trustworthy institutions in the country. Defining its role in politics and society as guardian of the state, the military regularly intervened in politics throughout the twentieth century through a series of coups. Security concerns, such as Kurdish separatism and political Islam, were framed as threats to the integrity of the state and used to stall the implementation of democratic reform (Cizre, 2004). Because the Turkish military was viewed as the protector of the state, its interventions in politics were perceived as benign by the general public (Demirel, 2005, p. 254). However, since the early 2000s, a shift in civil-military relations can be observed. The 2007 "e-memorandum" represents a turning point in civil-military affairs, as the civil government averted military threats of intervention through the successful election of a pro-Islamic candidate as President and continued electoral success at the national level.



The process of removing the military's influence in politics is described in the literature as democratic consolidation understood as the demilitarization of civil-military relations. This thesis aims to understand the potential ramifications that demilitarization has on approaches to security issues. In examining civil-military relations and the Kurdish question in Turkey, this thesis poses the following research question:

*What effect (if any) has changing civil-military relations in Turkey had on the practices and perceptions of military leaders with respect to the Kurdish question?*

This thesis begins by developing its conceptual framework through an in-depth review of the existing literature on demilitarization, civil-military relations, and approaches to terrorism (Chapters 2). Demilitarization is conceptualized as a component of democratization and offers a lens through which to understand democratizing reforms in Turkey. The conceptual framework examines civil-military relations in Turkey as well as conceptualizations of terrorism, approaches to counterterrorism, and the development of the PKK. The research design used for the analysis of empirical data is presented along with the data collection and analysis procedures in the following chapter (Chapter 3).

The conceptual framework and research design chapters are followed by a presentation of the empirical data and analysis, divided into two chapters examining the press releases of the National Security Council (MGK) and the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), respectively. The first empirical chapter (Chapter 4) analyzes institutional factors contributing to changing civil-military relations and approaches to the Kurdish question through discourse and content analyses of MGK statements.

The second empirical chapter (Chapters 5) analyzes normative changes contributing to the research question through the analysis of TSK press releases. The empirical analysis is followed by a concluding chapter (Chapter 6) that evaluates and synthesizes the findings of this research project. The results of semi-structured interviews with retired military officers and former AKP parliament members are integrated into the empirical analysis chapters and the concluding chapter described above.

Prior to research, this thesis expected to find that the demilitarization of civil-military relations resulted in changes to the military's self-perception that allowed for accommodative strategies of conflict resolution to replace deterrence-based, military-led counterterrorism strategies as the primary approach to the Kurdish question in Turkey. As such, by focusing on the military as its primary actor, this thesis hopes to contribute to the literature by evaluating the military as an active rather than static player in democratic consolidation and demilitarization. This thesis also hopes to highlight the diversity of factors involved in processes of democratization and suggest ways in which the demilitarization of political institutions may affect approaches to terrorism and other security issues.

Contrary to its initial hypothesis, the findings of this study suggest that the demilitarization of civil-military relations did not result in normative changes to the Turkish Armed Forces' (TSK) approach to counterterrorism. Demilitarization did not compel the TSK to adopt a more democratic, accommodative approach to the Kurdish question in its discourse from 2007-2012. Rather, the TSK continued to emphasize military-based approaches to counterterrorism. A greater emphasis on the

role of democracy and a multi-dimensional approach to conflict resolution, emphasizing social, economic, and political reforms, can be found in the press releases of the National Security Council (MGK), a committee comprised of both civil and military leaders, throughout the timeframe of analysis. Thus, the findings of this thesis suggest that accommodative approaches to the Kurdish question are the result of institutional changes to civil-military relations that precipitated compromise between civil and military leaders, brought about by the military's concern for its public image and willingness to support democratization. The findings from interview data suggest that this compromise can be understood as the product of institutional change, particularly changes to the courts and legal system. However, the interview data also suggests that the military supported a demilitarized model of civil-military relations and respected the decisions of the civil government on political matters. Thus, while no normative change was observed with respect to the military's approach to conflict resolution, the military appears to have internalized the norms of democratic civil-military relations.

From these findings, this thesis concludes that the democratization of civil-military relations has contributed to the demilitarization of approaches to the Kurdish question in Turkey through institutional reforms that have altered civil-military relations, allowing for civilian leaders to introduce accommodative strategies to the overall counterterrorism approach, and the military's normative acceptance of demilitarization, which established the conditions necessary for the military's de facto acceptance of an accommodative approach to terrorism.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1. Demilitarization**

Democratization is defined in three stages: (1) the end of authoritarian rule, (2) the transition to democratic governance, and (3) the consolidation of democracy (Huntington, 1991, p. 35; Encarnación, 2000, p. 479). Although they may overlap in practice, the processes of democratic transition and consolidation are conceptually distinct. Democratic transition refers to the dismantlement of authoritarian regimes and the creation of democratic institutions (Huntington 1991), while democratic consolidation is the process by which democratic institutions become the sole legitimate political actors (Linz & Stepan, 1996). Democratic consolidation is the institutionalization of democratic structures and the internalization of democratic norms of political behavior (Gunther, Nikiforos & Puhle, 1995; Diamond & Lipset, 1999).

Early scholars of democratization theory highlight a number of “social requisites” (Lipset, 1959) necessary for democratic transition, including economic development, industrialization, and urbanization, presenting a linear model of progression (Rostow, 1960). Huntington (1991) builds upon this work in his seminal text describing a

“third wave” of democratic transition, defined in procedural terms according to electoral results. Later theorists, however, have rejected deterministic understandings of democracy, arguing that democratization is neither linear nor rational (O’Donnell & Schmitter, 1986) and that democratic consolidation “requires much more than elections and markets” (Linz & Stepan 1996, p. 7). Empirical evidence suggests that most states stall, reverse, or deviate during the process of democratic consolidation, leading to the articulation of “partial regimes” (Schmitter, 1995) and “democracy with adjectives” (Collier and Levitsky, 1997). These states are referred to by a variety of labels, including hybrid regimes (Diamond, 2002), semi-democracies (Albritton, 2006), and illiberal democracies (Zakaria, 1997).

While many scholars have characterized Turkey as a consolidated democracy, others have questioned the applicability of the term, noting that the model of democratic consolidation does not fit the particulars of the Turkish case (Şatana 2008). Other scholars have rejected the term democratization, preferring instead to characterize the reform in Turkey as demilitarization (Özpek, 2014; Duman & Tsarouhas, 2006) or civilianization (Toktaş & Kurt, 2010). Özpek (2014) argues that Turkey has undergone a process of demilitarization but that this process should not be conflated with democratic consolidation because political power is concentrated in the hands of a new elite class rather than distributed throughout democratic institutions.

Other scholars have suggested that the process of democratic consolidation in Turkey is incomplete. Yıldız (2014) argues that, while the process of democratization with respect to civil-military relations in Turkey has removed the military’s ability to intervene in politics, Turkey continues to face challenges to democratic governance

in its defense and security sectors, which remain largely controlled by the Turkish Armed Forces. Specifically, Yıldız highlights the need for more effective defense policy-making structures through institutional reforms to the Ministry of the National Defense and greater parliamentary oversight of defense and security issues, particularly the defense budget. Yıldız also suggests that higher levels of civil-society participation in the defense and security sectors would lead to greater levels of demilitarization in terms of civil-military relations.

In describing the lack of demilitarization with respect to the defense and security sectors, Yıldız (2014) employs the phrase “second generational problems,” a term borrowed from Cottey, Edmunds, and Forster (2002). Second generational problems of democratization refer not to issues of establishing political control over the military but to issues involving the formation of effective structures and systems of democratic governance related to issues of defense and security. From their research on Central and Eastern European countries, Cottey et al. (2002) suggest that a second wave of demilitarizing reforms is necessary to complete processes of democratic consolidation in areas typically controlled by the military.

Similarly, Toktaş and Kurt (2010) argue that EU reforms have produced democratic change but are insufficient to formalize democratic control of the armed forces in Turkey. Rather than attribute democratic consolidation to EU reforms, Şatana (2008) suggests that democratic consolidation is occurring in Turkey due to institutional transformation taking place within the military itself.

In light of the research described above, which highlights the role of the armed forces in Turkey's democratization processes, this thesis focuses its understanding of democratic consolidation on lasting democratizing reforms to civil-military relations. With respect to its empirical case study, when analyzing and referring to democratic consolidation in Turkey, this thesis evaluates the extent to which the military has adopted, internalized, and reproduced the norms of demilitarized civil-military relations. As such, when this thesis refers to democratization, it is referring to processes of demilitarization (the decrease of the military's political power) and civilianization (the increase of the civilian government's political power). The former of these two terms is employed in this thesis and is meant to define the processes of democratization under investigation. Given the focus on demilitarization, the following section explores the role of the military in democratic consolidation.

### **2.1.1. The Military and Democratic Consolidation**

Democratic consolidation necessitates the expansion of political participation into areas previously reserved for the security apparatus (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986). The politicization of security issues is often met with resistance from military leaders, who seek to avoid civil violence and regime collapse. Nevertheless, the military can be induced to favor democratic transitions of power if democratization is seen "as the best way to avoid disorder" (Hinnebusch, 2006, p. 387). O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) distinguish between hard-liners and soft-liners within the military, the former of whom seek to preserve authoritarian rule while the latter favor the legitimization of a democratic regime. Elite-led democratic consolidation requires a division within the military apparatus that enables soft-liners and civilian politicians to form pacts, marginalizing hard-liners while incorporating public support (O'Donnell *et al.*, 1986;

Hinnebusch, 2006, p. 387). Aydın (2009; 2013) identifies similar groups within the Turkish military, referring to absolutists and gradualists, although he argues that both groups support the goal of democratic governance (p. 588), suggesting the absence of true hard-liners while nevertheless noting discord in terms of approaches to democratic consolidation. Gürsoy (2012) further suggests that the Ergenekon trials have revealed divisions within the Turkish military, demonstrating that the entire military neither supported nor rejected the authority of the AKP government in the early 2000s. Conceptually, this is significant for the analysis of changing civil-military relations in Turkey as it suggests that the military may have been more open to pact-making with civilian politicians. Furthermore, divisions within military leadership and the absence of true hard-liners may suggest that the military was predisposed to support processes of democratic consolidation, thus suggesting that it may have played a facilitative rather than hindering role in the process of demilitarization in Turkey.

The divisions between absolutists and gradualists are a recent phenomenon in the Turkish armed forces (Aydın, 2009; 2013), suggesting that further research is needed to understand the effects of this development on the military's approach to its role in politics and national security. The Turkish military has coordinated the country's social, economic, and political development since Ottoman times (Karabelias, 1999). However, elite decision-making also seems to have stalled the process of demilitarization, as the same forces that contributed to the creation of democratic institutions have prevented the legitimization of those institutions. The Turkish military operates as an elite-making institution responsible for the internal indoctrination of its members (Aydın, 2009, p. 586). It has traditionally maintained



unity within its ranks by eliminating subversive elements. Aydınlı (2010; 2013) points to the effects of *Aydemir Syndrome* in preserving obedience within the military structure and *Menderes Syndrome* in reinforcing the protectorate role of the military against the civilian government.

While the majority of the literature on democratic consolidation and demilitarization in Turkey has focused on exogenous factors, particularly on the role of EU reforms (Yıldız, 2014; Gürsoy, 2011; Toktaş & Kurt, 2010), Sarıgil (2011) suggests that the military's ideology and attitude toward civilian politicians are two key endogenous factors that should not be ignored in the evaluation of democratic change. This thesis aims to contribute to the literature by examining endogenous factors, including the military's approach to security issues in the context of democratic consolidation.

### **2.1.2. Demilitarization in Turkey**

The process of democratic consolidation in Turkey has not followed a linear trajectory but has been characterized by periods of military intervention, followed by brief military rule and the controlled transition of power back to democratically elected civilian governments. Demirel (2005) argues that a benign perception of military intervention in Turkey has made it difficult for both soldiers and civilians to accept the supremacy of democratic institutions. Civilian governments have traditionally been reluctant to challenge military authority, in part because the military possesses widespread public support (Demirel, 2004).

Aydınlı (2010) argues that a dual-governance structure has emerged in Turkey, by which the military operates as an “inner state” responsible for addressing security

threats, including the threat of Kurdish separatism (p. 698). Referring to the same structure of dual-governance, Phillips (2008) describes Turkey's military as a "vested part of the deep state" (p. 75), a network of ultranationalist interest groups that serves as a shadow government, particularly on issues related to national security. The presence of a dual-governance structure produces a security-reform dilemma, in which security concerns are privileged above democratization (Aydınlı, 2013). The militarization of the Kurdish question has impeded democratic reform (Larabee, 2013), as the power of the military has surpassed that of the civilian government with respect to security issues (Demirel, 2004). The discourse on terrorism allows the Turkish state to "prioritize military preparedness over reform" by invoking the national security concept (Cizre, 2004, p. 115). As such, the Turkish military's response to the PKK has been characterized by violent counterterrorism strategies (Jacoby, 2010) and policies of deterrence rather than accommodation (Gurcan, 2014; McDowall 1992; Unal, 2012), discussed later in this chapter. By controlling the security discourse, the Turkish military has legitimized its approach to the Kurdish question.

It has been suggested that the consolidation of democracy in Turkey would be signaled by "democratic control over the securitization process" (Aydınlı, 2013, p. 1156). Under the AKP government, a shift in civil-military relations can be observed following the 2007 "e-memorandum" (Aydınlı, 2013). Challenging Abdullah Gül's presidential nomination, a statement appeared on the armed forces' website implying that the military would not hesitate to interfere in politics. The threat proved insubstantial, as Gül became President and the AKP proceeded to call for and win early elections.

Commenting on the election of Abdullah Gül in 2007, a retired military official interviewed for the research of this thesis suggested that the election of Gül was problematic for the Turkish military because Gül's election represented a break from the traditional profile of the president as unaffiliated with any particular political party: "In 2007, a partisan president was elected, and this put the TSK in a difficult position because they knew that a partisan president was going to be elected. This is important because the president had always been impartial (*tarafsız*), not affiliated with any party" (*Participant 5*). These sentiments were echoed by another interviewee who stated: "The problem in 2007 was that the president came from a political party. Gül was not impartial (*tarafsız*). The TSK has always respected elected officials, but the election of a partisan president was problematic because it changed political power structures" (*Participant 7*). From these statements, it can be understood that the election of Gül in 2007 altered the political balance in favor of the ruling party, diminishing the military's role.

Although Jenkins (2007) predicts that the appointment of General Yaşar Büyükanıt as Chief of Staff in 2006 signifies the beginning of an era of heightened military involvement in political affairs, military leadership has appeared more cooperative with the civilian government since 2007. Büyükanıt's term was characterized by increased deferment to civilian rule (Aydınlı, 2009). In a statement issued prior to operations against the PKK in Northern Iraq in 2008, Büyükanıt stated, "Now, the authority resides with the government. They will assess. If they deem that an operation is necessary, then they will say that 'such operations should be made.'" (cited in Aydınlı, 2013, p. 591). This discourse, which underscores the legitimacy of

the civilian government to determine policy, signals a shift in civil-military relations with respect to security issues.

Along with changes in civil-military relations, government policy under the AKP has hinted at the politicization of the Kurdish issue. Kurdish citizens have benefitted from democratic reforms initiated by the AKP allowing for Kurdish language rights and the broadcasting of Kurdish-language programming (Larabee, 2013). The government resisted a strong military response to the PKK in 2008 (Aydınlı, 2013) and launched the Kurdish Opening (*açılım*) in 2009. Although its success was limited due to reasons of mismanagement (Larabee, 2013, p. 135) and political division (Pusane 2014), the Kurdish Opening signals a reframing of the Kurdish question by the government in a manner that extends beyond PKK violence. By framing the Kurdish question as a political concern rather than a security threat, the government has attempted to address the problem through strategies of accommodation (Aydınlı & Özcan, 2011).

The change in civil-military relations following the 2007 “e-memorandum” suggests a process of demilitarization, by which the military is subordinate to the civil government, and has implications for the security structure. In light of the Peace Process begun in 2012, this thesis attempts to analysis the relationship between demilitarization and conflict resolution in Turkey by examining the extent to which the demilitarization of civil-military relations has contributed to the reformulation of counterterrorism approaches to security issues.

## **2.2. Civil-Military Relations**

The literature on democratization and civil-military relations begins with the normative assumption that it is better for civilians to control the military than for the military to control the state (Burk, 2002, p. 7). Implicit in this literature is the belief that democratic values are best preserved when the military is subordinate to the civil government. Given this starting point, the literature on civil-military relations examines the extent to which the military supports democratic institutions. The two leading theories of democratic civil-military relations are formulated by Huntington (1957) and Janowitz (1960).

Huntington (1957) proposes a theory of “objective civilian control” in which civilians determine the security policy of the state but the military is responsible for its operational execution, similar to what Aydın (2009) calls the “American paradigm.” Finan (1962) criticizes Huntington’s model of objective control, arguing that professionalism can encourage military intervention in politics. Heper (2011) suggests that Finan’s critique explains civil-military relations in Turkey prior to 2002: low confidence in the civil government and a perceived lack of professionalism among politicians encouraged the military to exert a greater role in politics, thus preventing objective control of the military (p. 248). To prevent the military’s involvement in politics, a strong civil government capable of objective control is necessary. As such, the strength of the AKP government, in contrast to the weak coalition governments that preceded it, has been cited as a contributing factor to the demilitarization of civil-military relations in Turkey, discussed later in this chapter. This corroborates Sarıgil’s (2012) assertion that the Turkish military has been

transitioning to a period of objective control, characterized by a higher level of professionalism, since 2001.

Whereas Huntington's formulation presupposes a professional military, Janowitz (1960) proposes the theory of the "citizen-soldier," in which military service is conceptualized as an obligation of citizenship and civic participation. In Huntington's model, the military protects democratic values from external threats while in Janowitz's model the military is responsible for sustaining democratic values within the polity (Burk, 2002, p. 12). When faced with external threats, the military is more likely to be involved in politics, thus preventing its professionalization, while in the absence of external threats, the military must internalize the professional ethos, or the idea that the civilian government has ultimate control (Janowitz, 1960, cited in Heper, 2011, p. 248).

Janowitz's (1960) suggestion that the presence of external threats alters the role and behavior of the military has important implications for the military's role in developing counter-terrorism strategies. The idea of threat perception as a determinant of civil-military relations has been further developed by Desch (2001, p. 11), who states that the strength of civilian control over the military is shaped by structural factors, including internal and external threats. When internal threats are perceived as greater than external threats, civilian control of the military is weak. However, civilian control is stronger when external threats are greater than internal threats.

Desch (2001) develops his theory by critiquing Lasswell's (1941) concept of the garrison state, or a political structure in which the specialists of violence are the most powerful group in society. In Lasswell's model, the garrison state is maintained by military power and organized in such a way to ensure the protection of the military and its influence. In effect, Lasswell's argument suggests that the specialization of the military encourages a form of civil-military relations that privileges the military on issues of security, for military specialists possess knowledge related to national defense and war-making that civilian specialists do not. Lasswell (1941) suggests that during times of threat, greater power is given to the military due to its specialist expertise with new weapons technology. Desch (2001), however, suggests that the opposite is true because attitudes and preferences of decision-makers are shaped by the nature of the structural threat environment: high threats in the external (international) environment lead to higher levels of civilian control of the military.

Desch (2001) suggests that the assessment of civil-military relations should not be evaluated in terms of coups or interventions. He argues that this is a simplistic approach that fails to consider the complexity of everyday decision making. Rather, the best indicator of civil-military relations, according to Desch (2001), is what occurs when civil and military preferences diverge (p. 4-5). The nature of civil-military relations can be understood by evaluating processes of compromise and negotiation (or lack thereof) between civilian and military institutions. Desch thus assesses civilian "control" of the military under various structural circumstances in the threat environment, suggesting that it is easiest for the civilian government to control the military when the state faces external (international) threats and most difficult for the civilian government to control the military when the state faces

internal (domestic) threats. Desch structural threat-based theory of civil-military relations is summarized in Table 1 below.

*Table 1: Threat perception and civil-military relations*

|                                 |                             | <b>Level of Internal Threat</b>   |   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
|                                 |                             | <b><i>HIGH Internal</i></b>   | <b><i>LOW Internal</i></b>  |
| <b>Level of External Threat</b> | <b><i>HIGH External</i></b> | (2) Bad civil military relations: tends to result in weak civilian control of the military                                  | (1) Best option for civil-military relations: strong civilian control of the military |
|                                 | <b><i>LOW External</i></b>  | (3) Worst option of civil-military relations: military plays a strong role in politics; no civilian control of the military | (4) Ambiguous for civil-military relations  |

According to Desch's theory, a decrease in internal threats results in more democratic civil-military relations. This is because domestic violence can lead to the breakdown of civil-military relations more easily than external violence can. Desch argues that while external threats target everyone in the polity equally, internal threats have more complex effects on various actors, making internal threats more likely to exaggerate cleavages within the state. In contrast, external threats often unite civilian and military institutions against a common, external enemy, creating more cohesion within the state. With greater cohesion, argues Desch, the military is more easily controlled by the civil government.

Thus, the most stable conditions for proper civil-military relations in a democratic state occur under conditions of high external threats and low internal threats (Table 1, Quadrant 1). In such a threat environment, civilian, military, and societal actors are united against a common external enemy, allowing them to rally together against an



external threat and reducing internal cleavages. The civilian government is more likely to play a larger role in determining the security agenda, and objective control mechanisms are more likely to be utilized by the civilian government in tempering the military's influence in politics if the internal threats are perceived as low, particularly in comparison to external threats.

In contrast, civil-military relations are at their weakest under conditions of low external threats and high internal threats (Table 1, Quadrant 3). With high internal threats, leaders within the civil government are less attuned to national security affairs because civil institutions are weak and divided. Furthermore, if the military perceives an internal threat to itself, it is more likely to intervene in politics to eliminate the threat. Under conditions of high internal threat, subjective control mechanisms are more likely to be utilized, as civilian institutions will attempt to gain military support against the internal threat. This is likely to exacerbate tensions between military and civilian leadership, making it more difficult for civilian institutions to control the military. The absence of an external threat alongside the presence of an internal threat lessens the imperative for unity among civilian and military institutions, providing more potential for friction.

The descriptions above are offered by Desch as the best and worst scenarios for civil-military relations. If both external and internal threats are perceived as high (Table 1, Quadrant 2), or if neither external nor internal threats are perceived to a high degree (Table 1, Quadrant 4), Desch suggests that the nature of civil-military relations is less decisive. He suggests that high internal threats continue to result in poor civil-military relations (Table 1, Quadrant 2) but that the results of low internal and

external threats are more ambiguous (Table 1, Quadrant 4). In such cases of less structurally determinate situations, Desch suggests that other factors such as military doctrine and military leadership should be evaluated to understand the nature of civil-military relations.

Desch's (2001) model can be used to explain civil-military relations in Turkey in the 1990s, during which PKK violence was at its peak, and in the early 2000s, following the capture of Abdullah Öcalan and the decline of PKK activity in Turkey.

According to the threat perception model, civilian control of the military increased with the decline of domestic terrorism. Although the model seems to account for a transformation in civil-military relations in the early 2000s, its application is problematic for the late-2000s and present day situation in Turkey, in which the PKK has introduced a strategy of "strategic lunge" (Unal, 2013) and the government's legitimacy has been challenged by the Gezi Park Protests and the December 17 corruption scandals. The absence of military intervention despite moments of internal threat may suggest that institutional changes have solidified the authority of the civilian government, and that the military has internalized those changes.

The method of control exerted by the civilian government over the military can be understood as either objective or subjective. Under objective control mechanisms, the military has greater levels of autonomy within its technical sphere but is subordinate to the civil government. In contrast, under subjective control mechanisms, civilian institutions attempt to control the military at all levels, meaning that the military does not exercise a degree of autonomy within its own specialist realm but is continually under civilian supervision. Huntington's model of military

professionalism suggests that objective military control is better than subjective control because it facilitates the professionalization of the military, by which the military is removed from the realm of politics. In contrast, subjective controls lessen the distinction between military and civilian institutions by making the military politically dependent—and thus intertwined—with civilian power. This serves to politicize the military, making it more likely to intervene in politics. Janowitz's model, however, rejects Huntington's idea of military professionalism, suggesting instead that the military should be integrated into civilian society to ensure that it shares society's common values, which would reduce the likelihood of the military undermining democratic institutions.

Although they describe different control mechanisms, both Huntington and Janowitz assume that the military is co-opted by and subordinate to the democratic state: the military is a participant in the reproduction of democratic practices. In states undergoing processes of democratic consolidation, however, the assumption that civilian governments are preferable to military regimes is not necessarily applicable. In consolidating democracies, the military is often seen as the guarantor of stability and security. The Turkish military has traditionally been the most trusted institution and the guardian of the country's modernization project (Aydınlı, 2009). Thus, the traditional assumption of civil-military relations is inverted: the military was historically seen as more trustworthy than civilian politicians—a phenomenon that Atlı (2010) refers to as societal legitimacy of the military. Despite its history of political intervention, the Turkish military continues to enjoy a position of prestige and respect at the societal level (Demirel, 2004; Atlı, 2010). An examination of the demilitarization of civil-military relations in Turkey, therefore, should not negate

transformation within the military that has facilitated the consolidation of democratic institutions.

### **2.2.1 Civil-Military Relations in Turkey**

Traditional depictions of the Turkish military describe it as strong institution endowed with the protection of the state and nation. The Turkish military has been an active player in politics since the founding of the Republic in 1923. According to Samuel Finer's (1962) early seminal text on civil-military relations, *The Man on Horseback*, the Turkish Armed Forces would be classified as a "self-important" military inclined to intervention through the imagination of its role as protector of the nation (p. 63). Gareth Jenkins (2007) describes the military's perception of its own role as "the embodiment of the soul of the Turkish nation" (p. 339), suggesting that the Turkish military does not perceive itself peripheral to mainstream society but imagines itself as a representation of it. Scholars have commonly pointed to the military's guardian role as a factor engendering its involvement in politics (Finer, 1962; Toktaş & Kurt, 2010). In this vein, the military's involvement in politics has primarily been described as maintaining stability and the status quo. Evidence to this end includes the fact that the military has consistently returned the country to civilian authority following intervention in the form of coups, suggesting that the military is a reactionary political player set on restoring balance rather than reform.

Nonetheless, the military has traditionally maintained its role in politics through formal and informal channels. Yıldız (2014) suggests that, prior to the demilitarization of civil-military relations, the Turkish Armed Forces indirectly intervened in politics through press releases and statements given by high-ranking

officials (p. 387). Further, as it was initially established according to the 1961 Constitution drafted after the military coup, the National Security Council (MGK) institutionalized the military's influence on issues of security by establishing a military-led council to assist in the decision-making process and planning of national security policy (Yıldız 2014, p. 389). Reforms to demilitarize the MGK began in 2001 with regulations that increased civilian membership and continued until 2003 with changes that reduced the role of the MGK to an advisory board. Institutional reforms to the MGK are discussed in more detail at the beginning of Chapter 4.

Toktaş and Kurt (2010) suggest that the military has maintained its role as a political actor by securitizing domestic and international problems. Because the military defines national security threats and has historically controlled the discourse on security, it has been able to determine which issues belong on the security agenda. That is, it has been able to determine which issues demand military rather than civilian responses. This dilemma is suggestive of the civil-military problematique described by Peter Feaver (1996). According to Feaver (1996), the fear of violence from other states demands that a state create its own institution of violence to protect itself. While this institution—the military—offers protection against invasion and attack from other groups, it creates its own source of insecurity, as society must now protect itself against the power of the military institution it created. As such, Feaver implies that the state must be protected by and from its own military.

In the Turkish case, the military serves to protect against domestic and foreign threats. Historically, the two main security threats identified by the security discourse in Turkey have been political Islam and Kurdish separatism. Because the military has

historically been capable of determining these threats, it has had authority over the civil government in addressing them, thus legitimizing military intervention by deeming the civil government incapable of responding to security threats. The military's guardianship role and its authority to define and control the security agenda have complicated the demilitarization of civil-military relations in Turkey.

Aydınlı (2009) suggests that the character of civil-military relations in Turkey reflects historical experiences dating back to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the War of Independence. With the exception of the single-party period prior to 1950, the Turkish military has remained independent of and distinct from political parties. Even after the military interventions in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997, the military sought to return power to civilian leaders. However, although the military returned control of the state to elected civilian officials, it worked to expand its political authority through legal changes and constitutional amendments reinforcing its autonomous position after each intervention (Karaosmanoglu, 2011). Such changes have included the creation of State Security Courts (*Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri, DGM*) following the 1971 intervention and their expansion after the 1980 intervention. The courts were designed to handle cases related to national security involving either internal or external threats. The scope of the DGM was limited through Europe Union (EU) reforms after 1999, suggesting a shift toward the demilitarization of civil-military relations.

The military also sought to expand its reach in civilian institutions through post-intervention legal reforms that allowed it the right to select a member to the board of the Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu, YÖK*) and to the Radio and

Television Supreme Council (*Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu, RTÜK*). As such, the military played an active role in higher education and media. As with the DGM, military representation on these civilian institutions was revised through reforms following Turkey's acceptance as an EU candidate. As seen through these and other post-intervention legal changes, while the military returned political power to civilian leaders, it was not subordinate to the civil government during or after processes of transition but actively sought to shape the nature of politics by ensuring its position within key institutions.

While such depictions of a strong and politically assertive Turkish military predate the timeframe of analysis for this thesis, they are useful for understanding traditional scholarly depictions and classifications of the Turkish military. Thus, they provide a caricature against which to measure changes in the military's approach to politics. The following section evaluates changes to civil-military relations after 2000 and the factors commonly identified in the literature as affecting those changes.

### **2.2.2. Changing Civil-Military Relations, Post-2000**

Scholars have argued that civil-military relations in Turkey changed beginning in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Evidence of demilitarization can be found in key events that challenged the military's ability to intervene in politics, such as the e-memorandum and the election of President Abdullah Gül. Court cases brought against key military leaders accused of plotting to overthrow the government tarnished the military's public image and raised questions about its role in politics (Gürsoy, 2012). During the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials, an unprecedented number of military personnel were arrested and prosecuted under allegations of conspiring against the state. The

presence of high-ranking generals among those accused contributed to the decline of the military's public image. As this thesis seeks to examine the role that changing civil-military relations had on the shift in counterterrorism strategy in Turkey, this section examines common explanations for changing civil-military relations.

#### **2.2.3.1. European Union (EU) Accession Process**

Turkey was declared a candidate country for EU membership in December 1999 at the European Council's Helsinki Summit. The Copenhagen Criteria, as outlined by the European Council in 1993, states that candidate countries must have functioning democratic institutions guaranteeing the rule of law, human rights, and minority protections for all citizens (European Commission, 2003, p. 12; Müftüler-Bac, 2005, p. 18). The EU Commission in its 1998 Regular Report on Turkey—that is, one year before Turkey was granted candidacy status—highlighted the lack of civilian control of the military and the military's role in public life as concerns hindering Turkey's EU candidacy process (European Commission 2003, p. 12). Furthermore, alluding to the issue of Kurdish separatism and Kurdish minority rights, the EU Commission stated that non-military efforts led by civilian leaders must be carried out in response to the situation in Turkey's southeastern region. In line with these recommendations, a series of reforms were carried out in Turkey following its acceptance as a candidate country in 1999.

Following the Helsinki Summit in 1999, military judges and public prosecutors were removed from the DGM. This was an important step in the demilitarization of the judicial system (Özbudun, 2007, p. 186). More reforms to the judicial system followed, including provisions in 2003 stating that civilians would not be tried in



military courts during times of peace. The DGM system was abolished through constitutional amendments in 2004. Further changes to the court system occurred in 2010 with reforms that allowed military officers to be tried in civilian rather than military courts for crimes committed against the state, thus effectively ending the military's informal influence in politics without legal repercussion (Yıldız, 2014, 387).

In 2001, constitutional changes altered the scope of the National Security Council (MGK), discussed in detail in Chapter 4. The following year, in 2002, major legal steps were taken to abolish the death penalty, revise anti-terror laws, and allow broadcasting in languages other than Turkish. That same year, revisions were also made with respect to the security sector of the state. In 2004, the 8<sup>th</sup> harmonization package was introduced. Like reforms made in the previous year, these reforms sought to reduce the autonomy of the armed forces and underscore the civil government's control over the military in accordance with EU standards. Reforms introduced with the 8<sup>th</sup> harmonization package increased the civil government's supervision of defense expenditures and budgetary practices. Although reforms to military expenditure were introduced with the 7<sup>th</sup> harmonization package in 2003 (Çagaptay, 2003), the reforms in 2004 further subjugated military expenditure to civil review. The reforms stipulated that civil institutions would have the power to oversee and audit the defense budget. Such reforms eliminated the independence of military spending and subordinated the defense budget to civilian oversight. These reforms served to further diminish the independence of the armed forces from civilian institutions.

Furthermore, in 2004, significant changes were made to reduce the military's representation in civilian institutions. Although previous reforms had reduced the military's membership on a variety of institutions, the military maintained a presence on institutions regulating media and higher education. In alignment with EU criteria for membership, reforms were introduced to eliminate the military's right to appoint a representative member to YÖK and RTÜK. Additional reforms affiliated with the EU accession process in 2006 ended the right of the military to hear trials against civilians during times of peace, a significant legal change to the anti-terrorism legislation that served to reduce the judicial autonomy of the armed forces.

The EU reforms primarily focused on reforming Turkey's legal system and political institutions. Broadly, the reforms sought to guarantee human rights and align Turkey's legal system with EU standards, such as by abolishing the death penalty. In accordance with the criteria for full membership, the reforms eliminated the military's position as an autonomous political actor by strengthening the civilian government's power over defense issues and security planning, reducing the military's influence in the judiciary and restructuring the MGK. The majority of these reforms came as amendments to the 1982 Constitution, which was prepared by military leaders following the 1980 intervention; as such the Constitution in its original form reflects the statist values of the military leaders who drafted it (Özbudun 2007). In addition to constitutional reform, EU reforms included provisions to increase democratic liberties and minority rights by amending anti-terror laws and expanding Kurdish language rights to include certain educational rights and the right to broadcast in Kurdish. Following the legal and political reforms described above,

the European Commission's Progress Report in October 2004 recommended opening Turkey's accession negotiations, a major step toward EU membership.

An important starting point for analyzing the effect that EU reforms had on demilitarization in Turkey is to understand the widespread support for EU accession across the political spectrum. Politicians and the general public alike believed that EU membership would have positive ramifications for Turkey (Çağaptay, 2003). Zeki Sarıgil (2007) suggests that the decline of the Turkish military's power is rooted in the declaration of the country's EU candidacy status, since the decline of the military's power began after the Helsinki Summit in 1999. Thus, an explanation involving EU reforms represents an institutional model to explain changing civil-military relations in Turkey, as the demilitarization of civil-military relations is understood as the product of legal reform and institutional change (Sarıgil, 2007). Soner Çağaptay (2003) argues that by 2003, as a result of EU reform legislation, the Turkish military was "stripped of its role as a decision-making body" (p. 214). Simply put, EU reforms eliminated the structural means by which the military influenced politics.

Similarly, Müftüler-Bac (2005) argues that the political and legal reforms after 1999 are a direct result of Turkey's EU candidacy status, suggesting that the EU was a powerful external actor for internal change. Reflecting on the nature of Turkey's democratizing reforms, which included expanding democratic freedoms in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeastern provinces, Müftüler-Bac (2005) credits the enticement of EU accession as the primary factor for change: "The fact that the government was able to promote a reform package dealing with extremely sensitive issues while a

[nationalist] party that has the most radical views on these was a coalition partner, was directly due to the EU and the urgency of meeting the political criteria” (p. 24). Analyzing the impact of EU reforms, Toktaş and Kurt (2010) have suggested that the institutional framework imposed by EU reforms functioned as an exogenous control mechanism for the demilitarization of civil-military affairs. In effect, by removing the military from civil institutions, EU reforms served to facilitate democratic consolidation.

This explanation offers an exogenous factor as the impotence for change and largely ignores the agency of the military to accept, reject, or negotiate change. This argument is premised on the assumption that the military is an organization resistant to change and largely excluded from the reform-making process. That is to say, the role of the military is largely absent from explanations for civil-military change focusing on EU reforms. When the military is incorporated into these arguments, the potential for its role as a proponent of change is diminished. Soner Çagaptay (2003) states that the 7<sup>th</sup> harmonization package passed with “the military voicing only a few quite reservations” (p. 214), thus painting the military as inherently opposed but reluctant to publicly dismiss democratic reform. Çagaptay (2003) further suggests that due to the popularity of Turkey’s prospective EU membership, even if the Turkish military opposed certain reforms, it did not want to hinder Turkey’s EU accession process.

Similarly, other scholars have suggested that the military supported EU reforms due to a position of “rhetoric entrapment” (Sarigil, 2007). Sarigil (2007) suggests that because the military has long been a proponent of Westernization and modernization

in Turkey, it was forced to support Turkey's EU candidacy and the affiliated reforms. Müftüler-Bac (2005) suggests that Turkey's membership to the EU would finally settle the question of whether or not Turkey was a European state. As the military has been associated with Westernization and Modernization since the foundation of the Republic, this line of thinking suggests that the military, wanting to assert Turkey's status as a European country, would not be in a position to oppose reforms necessary for its EU accession process. Again, this argument assumes that demilitarizing change happened in spite of the military rather than with the military's support, as the argument seems to suggest that the military supported reforms for face-saving purposes rather than with a genuine desire for democratic reform by implying that opposing the EU reforms would have harmed the military's credibility and rhetorical legitimacy in the eye of the public.

While the EU reforms argument offers a compelling explanation for the commencement of demilitarization in Turkey, other scholars have criticized it for its simplicity and reductionist explanation. Karaosmanoğlu (2011) suggests that the EU reforms argument is insufficient to explain the breadth of changing civil-military relations in Turkey, particularly in the period following the year 2007. Although the EU reforms argument explains the motivation for reform between the years 2002-2006, it fails to account for the post-2007 period, when Turkey's EU accession process slowed down but civil-military relations continued to follow a pattern of demilitarization. If the EU was the anchor for democratic change in Turkey, how are civil-military relations explained after the stalling of Turkey's EU accession process?

The limits of the EU as an impetuous for demilitarization were supported by interview results with former AKP parliament members, who highlighted the importance of institutional reform but noted the decline in importance of EU reforms after the 2007:

The EU played an important role in changing civil-military relations in Turkey. The EU was used to push reforms through, but the EU's role was more pronounced before 2007. If we look at the period after 2007, we should consider the constitutional reforms. There was a new team in power after Gül's election. This team was able to carry out more reforms and had more influence in politics. (*Participant 10*)

Thus, while the EU was a significant incentive for democratic reform, its effect on demilitarization process had waned by 2007 and was less pronounced during this thesis' timeframe of analysis.

Recognizing the role that EU reforms played in restructuring the institutional nature of the military's role in politics, I argue that EU reforms alone are insufficient to explain civil-military relations. As Müftüler-Bac (2005) points out, the military has historically been one of the most trusted institutions in the country, and the removal of the military from political institutions through legal reform is insufficient to remove the military from its respected status within Turkey's political culture. Özbudun (2007) makes a similar argument, suggesting that while constitutional reforms between 1999 and 2004 significantly altered civil-military relations, the foundation of the military's influence in politics is rooted in historical, sociological, and political factors rather than legal regulations (p. 195). Removing the military from civilian politics requires a longer process of political socialization in Turkey (Müftüler-Bac 2005, p. 26).

Although neither Müftüler-Bac nor Özbudun specifically comment on the military's role within this re-socialization process, I suggest that the military has the potential to be a collaborative force for demilitarization. Neither the reforms nor the ensuing institutional and political changes were strongly opposed by the military; rather than dismiss this as a moment of "rhetoric entrapment," I intend to examine the extent to which the military supported, resisted, and/or internalized these changes. Hale Akay (2009) suggests that some generals within the military's leadership disfavored the institutional reforms, perceiving the legal changes as a mistake for the country. However, Akay (2009) argues that because public opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of EU membership, the military was not in a position to object to the reforms, let alone intervene in politics. Thus, Akay (2009) acknowledges a diversity of opinion within the armed forces, although he ultimately believes that external circumstances determined military action. In doing so, such arguments reduce the military's decision-making process to a product of external conditions, omitting the possibility that the military may have had its own incentives for accepting and even supporting demilitarizing change. I suggest that an examination of the role of EU reforms on civil-military relations is incomplete if it omits the perspective and agency of military leadership.

#### **2.2.3.2. Election of the AKP Government**

In addition to reforms associated with Turkey's EU accession process, scholars have suggested that the election of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP*) as a majority-party government in 2002 served to demilitarize civil-military relations. It should be noted that the AKP adamantly supported Turkey's EU candidacy during its first term from 2002-2007. Thus, the

literature may sometimes conflate the election of the AKP government with Turkey's EU reforms and accession process as a factor facilitating the demilitarization of civil-military relations. Furthermore, the election of the AKP coincided with a variety of other exogenous factors that have been cited as sources of demilitarization. As Unal (2013) suggests, "The main reason for AKP's success in adopting [reforms] ... is the AKP's political power in the assembly, counter elites that it supports in the party and parliament, and more importantly, a new discourse that mobilized support from both Turkish and Kurdish populations" (18). Thus, it is difficult to isolate the election of the AKP from the myriad of political and social changes that accompanied its ascension to power. In this section, however, I attempt to separate the election of the AKP from EU reforms and other political changes in order to highlight the role that the AKP played as a single-party majority government in demilitarizing civil-military affairs in Turkey.

Here, it should be noted that the AKP benefitted from previous reforms initiated under its predecessors, including both early EU reforms that demilitarized political institutions and, more broadly, economic reforms that contributed to the country's stable growth (Müftüler-Bac 2005, p. 24). Because the AKP won enough seats to form a majority government, it was spared from the constraints that had impeded the democratic reform efforts of previous governments, including the limitations of negotiations and internal politics that effected coalition governments. As such, with the majority of parliament, it was able to pass democratizing reforms more quickly than previous governments had done—although it also benefitted from the reform momentum begun under these governments. While it faced fewer restraints than previous governments, the AKP was not immune to the pressure of internal politics:



the AKP faced opposition from political elite, specifically Kemalist elite, who accused the party of possessing a secret Islamic agenda. In other words, Kemalist elite suspected that the demilitarization attempts brought about by the AKP government, including those introduced in connection with Turkey's EU bid, were an excuse to pass legislation that would weaken the secular underpinnings of the Turkish state in favor of more pro-Islamic institutions (Müftüler-Bac 2005, p. 24).

Arguments attributing the demilitarization of civil-military relations in Turkey to the election of the AKP government consist of two large components. First, many of the arguments highlight the characteristics of a majority government rather than a coalition government. Specifically, as discussed above, the AKP government was not hindered by constraints typically found in coalition governments. Rather, the AKP was able to act as a strong, unified, single party government. This not only facilitated the passage of reforms in the legislature but it also provided for increased stability in domestic politics. Thus, an argument can be made suggesting that the stability of the AKP period reduced the need for military involvement in politics.

Founded in 2001, the AKP was elected to parliament in 2002 with 34.3% of the vote. Due to Turkish electoral procedures, which require a political party to receive at least 10 percent of the general vote in order to win seats in parliament, only one other party, the People's Republican Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP*), was able to win representation in parliament. This reduced the number of parties present in the legislature from five to two. As a result, the AKP's election victory provided it with 363 seats out of a total of 550 seats, giving it a majority presence and allowing it

form a single-party government. This represented the first single party government in Turkey since 1987.

Although Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the party's founder and leader, he was initially unable to serve as Prime Minister due to a parliamentary ban resulting from a previous criminal conviction for inciting religious intolerance. Under these circumstances, Abdullah Gül was elected Prime Minister in 2002 and served in this role until a constitutional amendment was passed allowing for Erdoğan to become Prime Minister in 2003. The AKP increased its share of the vote in every successive election from 2002 to 2011. Significant for the time frame of analysis in this thesis, the AKP increased its share of the vote from 46.6 percent in 2007 to 49.8 percent in 2011. Although it lost seats in the June 2015 elections, it regained its majority position in the November 2015 snap elections following the government's failure to form a coalition government after the June elections.

The single-party nature of the AKP government represents a period of stability in Turkish politics that can be understood in contrast to the weak coalition governments that preceded it. The stability of a single-party government restricted the role of the military in politics by providing for stronger civilian institutions, thus creating an environment conducive for democratic consolidation. In other words, given the strength of the AKP in civilian institutions, the military was forced to accept the authority of the civilian government and was dis-incentivized from intervening. With a stable civilian government, the military had no legitimate excuse to intervene in politics. This not only contributed to a shift in civil-military relations but also

facilitated the AKP's ability to pass demilitarizing reforms that altered civil-military relations.

Such arguments are premised on the assumption that a negative correlation exists between the strength of the civilian government and the influence of the military in politics. In other words, these arguments assume that a strong civilian government would naturally result in demilitarized civil-military relations, whereas a weak civilian government tends result in greater military influence in politics. This assumes a zero-sum game in politics in which civilian gains of power automatically detract from the military's power; if the civilian government is weak, a strong military must emerge to fill the political void, but a strong civilian government results in the inevitable decline of military power.

In addition to emphasizing the nature of the AKP's majority political rule, some scholars have suggested that AKP leaders themselves can be credited with bringing about change to civil-military relations in Turkey due to the characteristics of the AKP as a political party. Soner Çağaptay (2003) characterizes the AKP as a "self-styled 'conservative democratic' party with an identifiable 'Islamist pedigree'" (p. 213) and suggests that during the early years of its administration, the AKP worked to compromise with the military rather than resist it. For example, Çağaptay (2003) points out that although the new laws in 2003 allowed for a civilian to be appointed as the Secretary General of the MGK, the AKP agreed to appoint a military general as the head of the MGK for a transitional period following the reforms (p. 215). It was not until August 2004, a year after the reforms went into effect, that a civilian was appointed Secretary General of the MGK. Thus, during the early years of its

administration, the AKP government did not aggressively work to erase the military's presence from political institutions entirely; rather, the AKP government seemed to pursue a controlled implantation of change with respect to the military's role in politics. The pragmatism that characterized the early period of AKP rule suggests that the party was able to control and successfully implement changes to civil-military relations.

Arguments pointing to the AKP government as a catalyst for change in civil-military relations ignore the complexity with which legal reforms began and were carried out. The Constitution was amended six times prior to the election of the AKP government: in 1987, 1993, 1995, twice in 1999, and in 2001, constitutional amendments were passed to reform the 1982 Constitution drafted by military leaders, including sweeping changes to the composition and function of the MGK through the 2001 amendments that revised Article 118. Although the AKP continued to pass constitutional reforms, the momentum for constitutional change had arguably begun prior to its election. Additionally, Özbudun (2007) points out that the constitutional amendments of the AKP period were adopted through processes of inter-party agreement, as the AKP lacked the two-thirds majority of parliament necessary for the ratification of constitutional amendments (p. 180). Thus, while the AKP led a period of great legal and social change in Turkey in the early 2000s, it was arguably not the only actor responsible for those changes. A wider look at Turkey's social and political landscape during this time is necessary to fully understand the currents responsible for the demilitarization of politics.

As with arguments suggesting that the EU was a catalyst for democratic reform in Turkey, arguments pointing to the single-party government of the AKP attribute the demilitarization of civil-military relations in Turkey to an exogenous factor and suggest that change occurred in spite of the military. The arguments outlined above assume that the primary factors for demilitarization are exogenous to the military, although an evaluation of the military's role in, perception of, and attitude toward demilitarizing change is omitted from the argument. In other words, these arguments fail to provide a convincing explanation as to why the military would accept the supremacy of the civil government purely on the bases of it being a single party. Again, this assumes a zero-sum game of politics and an inverse relationship between the role of the military and the civilian government in terms of power.

Furthermore, this argument fails to provide convincing explanations for the lack of military involvement during moments of political crisis for the AKP government. In particular, during the Gezi Park protests of 2013 and the corruption scandals of 17 and 25 December 2013, the AKP government's authority was drawn into question. However, the military remained absent from politics during these period. Again, during the summer of 2015 following the AKP's loss of majority seats in parliament and the government's inability to form a coalition during a period of increased domestic terror activity, the military did not emerge as a significant political actor. Should an inverse relationship exist between the strength of the civil government and the military in politics, one would expect the military to be more active during moments of political weakness or scandal. However, the simplicity of a majority politics explanation that examines only exogenous factors cannot account for the military's silence during recent periods of political crisis. As such, I suggest that

while the stability of the single-party AKP government contributed to the initial momentum of democratic consolidation, it is insufficient to explain the entirety of changing civil-military relations in Turkey.

#### **2.2.3.3. Emergence of New Political Elite**

In addition to arguments outlining the contributions that the election of the AKP as a single-party government has had on changing civil-military relations, other arguments have suggested that the emergence of a new class of political elite contributed to demilitarization in Turkey. With the rise of the AKP, a new class of conservative elite came to power. These individuals were typically more religiously devote than the old elite and came from Central Anatolia, often referred to as “Anatolian Tigers.” Unlike the old Kemalist elite, which were sympathetic to the military as a safeguard for the state, the new elite did not represent the same statist values. As the new elite began to replace the Kemalists in positions of civil officers and state bureaucrats, the political power of the military decreased. Support for the military was gradually reduced within civilian political institutions with the rise of a new elite class.

This argument draws on a center-periphery model to explain domestic politics in Turkey. Şerif Mardin (1975) categorizes two prominent groups within Turkish society: secularists (also known as Kemalists) and Islamists. He suggested that the secularists dominated the center of Turkish politics since the founding of the Republic in 1923, pushing the Islamist segments of the population to the periphery. The secularists are characterized by their support for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, and the six arrows of his founding ideology

(republicanism, nationalism, populism, secularism, statism, and reformism). As Kemalist ideology has historically been closely linked to the military, this argument suggests that while the secularists occupied the center of Turkish politics, the military enjoyed certain privileges offered to it through good relations and support from secularist circles within civilian institutions.

However, since the 1990s, an Islamist elite class has gained traction in Turkey, moving from the periphery to the center. Because this group largely supported the AKP during its rise to power, it benefitted from the election of the AKP by receiving important positions and appointments in political institutions. Gradually, members of the new Islamist elite replaced members of the old secular elite in civil institutions.

With the emergence of the new elite, military officers were isolated in civilian-led institutions, since their traditional supporters had been pushed more toward the periphery of politics. When the secularists dominated Turkish politics, the military had found allies in the judiciary, the media, and in the leaders of political parties. Once a new elite class emerged, the military's old allies were pushed out of their positions of civilian leadership (Kuru, 2012). Thus, the decline of the military in politics can be correlated with the decline of its political civilian allies, particularly in the period following 2007 (Kuru, 2012).

This argument broadens its approach to civil-military relations through the inclusion of the changing Turkish political and social landscape by examining demilitarization in terms of factors other than legal reform or political processes. The strength of the new-elite argument is that it attempts to consider the underlying currents of social

change in Turkey, thus allowing it to contextualize civil-military relations within the broader socio-political and economic changes taking place in the country. However, this argument is simplistic in that it classifies Turkish society, particularly Turkish elite, in terms of binaries. It assumes that both Kemalist and Islamist circles are single, uniform groups, and it does not allow for variation outside these two categories. As such, this argument is incapable of capturing the complexity of the Turkish socio-political landscape. For example, it fails to consider the heterogeneity of the new emerging elite, which was not simply an Islamist group but which included liberal intellectuals and cleavages within conservative segments of society.

The classification of elites into binary groups also fails to consider the division between liberal, pro-EU elites and staunch AKP supporters, the former of which initially supported the AKP and its EU reform packages during the early 2000s. After 2010, however, the divisions between these two groups grew greater and more apparent (Gurcan, 2016). Further divisions could also be seen within the conservative segments of the new elite, in particular between supporters of Fethullah Gülen, an Islamic preacher living in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania, and supporters of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Although the emergence of a new elite class has served to isolate the military within political institutions by altering the composition of those institutions, this argument alone fails to provide a nuanced depiction of the nature of the new elite. By overgeneralizing the characteristics of the new civilian elite as well as the old Kemalist secular elite, the argument fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity of each group and the complex dynamics governing the replacement of one elite political



group with another. In doing so, it also fails to provide an examination of the military and its leaders, instead assuming that the military is unable to act in politics without the support of its civilian allies; furthermore, it denies the military agency to reject or oppose these changes.

#### **2.2.3.4. Changing Threat Perception**

Another argument put forth in the literature suggests that changing threat perceptions in Turkey have contributed to the demilitarization of political institutions. This argument begins with the assumption that civil-military relations are shaped by structural factors, including threats in the internal and external threat environment (Desch, 2001). Changes to the external environment alter the nature of civil-military relations, which is a product of threat perception in the internal and external environment.

This argument begins with the military's role in addressing security issues. It assumes that the military's main source of political power is its ability to determine the security agenda of the state. The military's political power, therefore, is tied to the existence of security threats in the domestic or international environment. With respect to the Turkish context, because of its position of authority on the National Security Council (MGK), the military historically determined the course of action that would be pursued in response to security threats. As discussed earlier with respect to EU reforms, a great deal of the military's institutional political power was contingent on its dominant position in the MGK. With the constitutional reforms carried out in the early 2000s as part of Turkey's bid for EU candidacy, regulations concerning the MGK were revised to increase the presence and authority of civilian leaders on the council. In particular, reforms made to Article 118 of the Constitution

in 2001 helped to curb the military's authority in defining the security, national defense, and foreign policy agendas. While proponents of the EU reforms argument suggest that legislative changes to the institutional structure of the Turkish state helped to curb the influence of the military, the changing threat perception argument takes a different approach. Rather than examine change from an institutional perspective, proponents of this argument suggest that changes in the perception of threats in Turkey has decreased the need for military involvement in politics, thus facilitating reform and allowing the civil government to play a larger role.

Arguments based on threat-perception are derived from Michael Desch's (2001) theory to explain the relationship between the structure of the threat environment and the nature of civil-military relations. Desch suggests that changes to the structural threat environment shape the attitudes and preferences of decision-makers: high threats in the external (international) environment lead to higher levels of civilian control of the military.

To illuminate the Turkish context, Desch's theory can be applied to assess changing civil-military relations in the early 2000s. Prior to the year 2000, as has been noted in the various sections above, the military was a strong institution that enjoyed a steady role in politics. However, in the early 2000s, this began to change as the military was brought under the control of the civilian government in political institutions and as the military's political power was reduced. According to the structural threat-based model, this can be understood in terms changing threat perceptions in the environment. Historically, Turkey's security concerns can be described as low external and high internal threats. Since the founding of the Republic, Turkey has

actively worked to avoid involvement in international wars, with the exception of the Korean War. At the same time, Turkey's greatest threats have included internal instability, political violence, and Kurdish separatism. With specific reference to the issue of Kurdish separatism, Turkey experienced its worst threat of terrorism and internal violence during the 1990s, at which time the military exercised influence in politics.

However, following the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 and the unilateral ceasefire issued by the PKK that same year, the threat of domestic conflict decreased, thus altering the structural determinants of civil-military relations. During the height of the conflict with the PKK in the 1990s, the structural conditions in Turkey could be described as high internal threat, resulting in poor civil-military relations. The end of the armed conflict with the PKK in 1999 would signal a significant decrease in the internal threat perception in Turkey, thus allowing for more democratic relations between civil and military institutions. Changing structural determinants in the threat environment could thus have contributed to the demilitarization of civil-military relations.

The primary weakness of the threat perception model is that it simplifies the threat environment, particularly in the Turkish context, by creating a false dichotomy between internal and external threats. As Lyon (2004) notes, in an age of transnational terrorism, threats can be simultaneously internal and external. This provides a challenge to Desch's model in that threats of terrorism are often both internal and external, for example when the target is internal but the terrorist network is transnational, thus complicating the categorization of perceived threats. With

respect to the issue of PKK terrorism, the distinction between internal and external threat is less blurred, since the PKK trains in bordering countries such as Iraq and Syria.

Furthermore, this argument fails to account for the development of the PKK conflict following the capture of Öcalan. While the PKK issued a unilateral ceasefire in 1999, it resumed its violent attacks in the period following the year 2002, albeit to a lesser degree. Since July 2015, the conflict with the PKK has re-emerged with intensity. Although the threat of domestic terrorism has resurfaced, Turkey's civil-military relations have remained demilitarized, thus weakening the applicability of the structural threat-based model to explain changing civil-military relations without a more thorough analysis of the security situation and threat perception throughout this period. In other words, the nature of the structural threat environment alone is efficient to account for civil-military relations, as civil-military relations have remained stable despite changes to Turkey's security environment in recent years. This suggests an element of permanency to civil-military that cannot be accounted for with the threat-perception argument alone.

#### **2.2.3.5. Changing Security Discourse**

The argument on security discourse presented in this section is similar to the argument on threat perception. However, by looking at security discourse, this argument focuses on the language used to construct security threats rather than on the (perceived) existence of threats in the domestic or external environment.

For the Turkish case, this argument begins with a similar starting point as the threat perception argument: with the assumption that the military's primary source of political power rests in its ability to determine what qualifies as a security threat to the state. In other words, the military's ability to define the security agenda reinforces its position of privilege within the political system, as the military would be able to define which issues require a military rather than a civilian response.

As was addressed in previous sections, the military's position of power on the National Security Council (MGK) reinforced its role in civilian politics. Proponents of the EU reforms argument have suggested an institutional model for understanding change, while proponents of the threat perceptions model have suggested that structural factors in the environment contributed to demilitarization. While the security discourse argument also suggests the importance of the military's position on the MGK as a factor determining its political influence, it offers an alternative to both institutional reform and threat perception to explain the demilitarization of Turkish politics.

Because of its position on the MGK, the Turkish military had the ability to determine the nature of the security agenda. That is, the military had the ability to securitize or militarize certain issues, thus removing them from the realm of politics and designating them as threats requiring a military approach (see Weaver, 1998). What is important to this argument is that the military had the ability to determine the security discourse used to classify threats. With this power, the military traditionally labelled political Islam and Kurdish separatism as the two primary threats facing the

state (Cizre, 2004), and the military had the ability to determine national security discourse with respect to these two threats.

The threat perception argument is premised on a change in the security environment whereas the security discourse argument focuses more on an actor's ability to control the security discourse. The security discourse argument presented here is less about the process of securitization (see Waever, 1995) and more concerned with the actors capable of determining what qualifies as a security issue. By articulating a new, democratic discourse with respect to issues such as political Islam and the Kurdish question, the AKP challenged the military's authority over the security sector. Thus, the institutional and political authority of the AKP alone is insufficient to understand the demilitarization of security issues: the changing national security discourse introduced by the AKP government has contributed to the demilitarization of security issues. Changing national security discourse on political Islam and Kurdish separatism following 2003 has contributed to a change in civil-military relations. Kuru (2012) suggests that, in the early 2000s, civilian leaders replaced the old Islamist rhetoric with "conservative democratic" discourse that was conducive to EU membership and integration in the world economy. By redefining Islamists politics outside the realm of security threats, new discourse gained support among liberal intellectuals, a huge feat that signifies a break from older Islamist rhetoric. Similarly, the discourse on a democratic Kurdish opening redefined the Kurdish issue by expanding its scope beyond security threats (Larabee 2013, p. 136; Unal, 2013, p. 18).

Changes in the security discourse can be understood through two theories. First, civilian leaders captured the security discourse and were able to introduce a new discourse that was accepted by the audience. Thus, the strength of civilian leaders over the military allowed for transformation in the security sector through the introduction of a new discourse that the military was forced to accept. Alternatively, the introduction of a new security discourse could have been embraced by and internalized by the armed forces, thus transforming the discourse into a shared approach by both civil and military leaders. This thesis attempts to investigate the dynamics of security discourse through the analysis of MGK and TSK press releases.

It should be noted that the sharp contrast of a change presented in this argument contributes to its weakness, as the argument assumes that civilian leaders had no previous control of or contribution to the security discourse. Such an assumption is an oversimplification of civil-military relations that reduces the authority of each actor into a binary, zero-sum game in which power cannot be mutually shared. In examining security discourse, this thesis seeks to avoid oversimplification or the binary classification of civilian and military power.

#### **2.2.3.6. Changing Public Opinion**

Another explanation provided for changing civil-military relations in Turkey suggests that public opinion toward the military, particularly toward the military's role in politics, has become less positive. This argument takes into account societal and cultural factors, examining changing trends in the public. While the military is still highly respected by the public, the public disapproves of military intervention in

politics, eliminating the possibility of a coup and altering the tools at the military's disposal to exert its role as guardian of the state.

This argument further suggests that because the military perceives itself as the representative of the nation, public opinion is of extreme importance to the military. Military interventions were consistently justified as necessary for the well-being of the nation. While the military's respect for politicians and political parties has been disputed, the military is seen as valuing the nation, a sentiment that is underscored in the strong bond imagined between the military and the people (Sarigil, 2011; Narlı, 2011). Narlı (2011) suggests that along with the institutional reforms of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the mindset of the public with respect to democratic values and the role of the military has also changed, challenging the military's long-held position as guardian of the nation (p. 224). Because the public no longer supports military intervention in politics, the military has lost the core of its political support and, respecting the opinion of the nation, the military has refrained from intervening in politics.

In examining changing public opinion, scholars have pointed to various examples of both subtle and overt changes in the public's attitude to civil-military relations and democratic governance. The public's "yes" vote to the 2010 referendum, which approved substantial changes to the judiciary system, including changes that weakened the role of the military, serves to validate the public's preference against military involvement in politics. Cizre (2004) suggests that the military's passive stance to the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials is a direct result of this changing public opinion. Gürsoy (2012) also suggests that the trials served as a catalyst for changing



civil-military relations by highlighting a change in public opinion toward the military following criminal accusations against military leaders.

Although the significance of public opinion for military officials is asserted in the literature, the impact of public opinion on the demilitarization of civil-military relations in Turkey remains underdeveloped. Specifically, the argument does not elaborate on the casual link between public opinion and military decision making; the mechanism by which public opinion affects military decision-making remains undeveloped. Instead, the military is reduced to a reactionary organization, limited to responding to the public's preferences while its own preferences remain understudied. Public opinion also requires further explanation, as it would be an oversimplification to assume the entirety of the Turkish public supported a single view. Rather, a more nuanced investigation of the military's self-perception of its public image and the processes through which it evaluates public opinion in its decision-making is required in order to understand fully the relationship between public opinion and demilitarization.

### **2.2.3. Factors Contributing To Changing Civil-Military Relations**

The literature on civil-military relations in Turkey commonly asserts that a change favoring the demilitarization of civil-military relations occurred at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In my examination of this change, I have identified six factors (listed below) commonly cited in the literature as contributing to the demilitarization of civil-military relations. This section outlines the factors and the arguments commonly made in their defense, highlighting the limitations or shortcomings of

each argument. As will be seen from the sections below, the literature predominantly contributes demilitarization to exogenous factors outside and independent of the Turkish armed forces, a phenomenon that is evaluated at the end of this section. The six factors to be examined in this section include: (1) EU candidacy; (2) election of AKP government; (3) emergence of new political elite; (4) changing threat perception; (5) changing security discourse; and (6) changing public opinion. The end of this section offers a table summarizing the common arguments found in the literature.

#### **2.2.4. Evaluation of Factors**

The following table summarizes the six exogenous factors that have contributed to changing civil-military relations in Turkey. The arguments outlined in the table represent exogenous factors contributing to changing civil-military relations in Turkey. Although each one highlights a different factor, they represent common themes, assumptions, and shortcoming. Each argument characterizes the civil government and the military as binary opposites. Rather than assume the potential for compromise and mutual change, the arguments are limited in that they assume strengthening the civil government inevitably weakens the military, portraying a zero-sum game in which a gain for the civilian side represents a loss for the military side. As such, “gains” for the civilian side are examined without thorough consideration of the military’s perception or response. In other words, these arguments focus on the strength of the civilians to “out do” the military without considering military’s preferences.

Table 2: Overview of six exogenous factors

|   | <b>Exogenous Factor:</b>    | <b>Argument:</b>  | <b>Example:</b>  | <b>Limitation:</b>  |
|---|-----------------------------|---|--|---|
| 1 | EU reforms                  | Reforms introduced to meet the criteria for EU membership resulted in democratizing and demilitarizing institutional changes that decreased the military's role in politics.                          | Reforms strengthening civilian control of defense issues and military spending; reforms to the judiciary; reforms that limited the military's presence in civilian institutions.   | These arguments typically assume that reforms occurred despite military preferences without thoroughly considering the military's support for the EU accession process.   |
| 2 | AKP government              | The election of the AKP as a majority government provided greater stability in politics and allowed for greater democratizing reform to civil-military relations.                                     | Unlike previous coalition governments, which were unable to pass reforms due to internal political differences, the AKP was able to pass reforms quickly through the legislature. This represented a period of stability in Turkish politics and reduced the role of the military. | Many of the reforms carried out under AKP rule, including the majority of EU reforms, were started before the election of the AKP. This argument does not take into consideration the nuances of relations between the military and the AKP government. |
| 3 | New political elite         | The emergence of a new political elite class alters the composition of civilian institutions. The military's influence is reduced because its civilian allies are replaced in political institutions. | The argument suggests a center-periphery model of politics. The new conservative elite replace the old Kemalist elite, who had supported the military.   | This argument oversimplifies the social composition of Turkey's political elite. It assumes two homogenous groups, ignoring the diversity of opinion within each.   |
| 4 | Changing threat perception  | Civil-military relations are shaped by structural factors, including threats in the environment. A decrease in internal threats resulted in more democratic civil-military relations.                 | As the threat of PKK violence in Turkish southeastern region decreased, the structural factors favoring military involvement in politics also changed.   | This argument oversimplifies the nature of security threats by drawing a sharp and unrealistic dichotomy between internal and external threats.   |
| 5 | Changing security discourse | Changing national security discourse has contributed to the demilitarization of political institutions.   | The discourse on national security issues changed, particular with respect to political Islam and Kurdish separatism. This altered the role of the military in politics.   | In examining the articulation of security discourse, the argument creates a binary between military and civilian that assumes a zero-sum game of politics and excludes the possibility of mutual cooperation.   |
| 6 | Changing public opinion     | Changing public opinion toward the military's role in politics altered civil-military relations in Turkey.  | The public no longer favored military intervention in political institutions, thus limiting the military's ability of act in politics.   | The causal relationship between public opinion and military decision-making remains underdeveloped.   |

I suggest that, while these arguments successfully note important political, social, and legal developments in Turkey that have contributed to changing civil-military relations, they do not go far enough in analyzing change; none of the arguments presented above answers the questions of whether and why the military has accepted demilitarizing change to civil-military relations. Rather, arguments focusing on exogenous factors assume the military was forced to accept changes and reforms. While the military may have been forced to do so, I suggest that this claim requires further evaluation. Why did the military accept EU reforms, or the legitimacy of the new political elite? When 10 years early, on 28 February 1997, the military was able to remove the civilian government from power, why did the e-memorandum fail in 2007? Was the military worried about losing its prestige by opposing democratic development, or did it internally believe that demilitarization was beneficial for the state? This thesis attempts to contribute to the literature on changing civil-military relations in Turkey by examining the role that changing civil-military relations have on approaches to counterterrorism and conflict resolution.

### **2.3. Conceptualizing Terrorism**

The term “terrorism” is a highly charged label, the precise definition of which is difficult to determine. Unal (2012) notes, “Terrorism is one the most contentious terms and it is highly subjective and ideological as opposed to being normative and analytical” (p. 434). The pejorative connotations affiliated with the term terrorism prevent it from being applied objectively in both political and academic contexts: “since the events of September 2001 it has been employed so widely and carelessly in public and political discourse that there appears to be a wholesale disregard for any serious endeavor to treat terrorism as an analytical concept” (Richards, 2014, p.

214). Although research on terrorism has gained prominence since September 2001, the study of terrorism can be traced back to the work of David Rapoport (1971), who defined terrorism as a distinct form of political violence, and Paul Wilkinson (1976), who examined the relationship between terrorism and democracy (see Crenshaw, 2014).

Crenshaw (2014) suggests that there is great multiplicity in the conceptualization of terrorism, pointing to the diversity of individual motivations of terrorists and the mixed conclusions concerning the effectiveness of terrorism as a political tool. To address the conceptual breadth of terror found in the literature, Richards (2014) defines terrorism as “the intent to generate a psychologic impact beyond the immediate victims” (p. 213), implying that terrorism harms not only those physically affected by its activities but also the broader community that is impacted psychologically. Richard outlines three assumptions inherent to the definition of terrorism: (1) violence is not inherently an act of terrorism; (2) terrorism is a method of political violence rather than an ideology; and (3) terrorism can target non-civilians and combatants. Implicit in these assumptions is the understanding that a diverse range of actors—including organizations, guerilla groups, and even states—can employ terrorism as a method of violence, regardless of their ideological profile.

While the research on terrorism is immense, the lack of a shared definition has led to abuses of the term terrorism by political leaders, who seek to use the term as a means of delegitimizing their enemies, and “foundationally weak” academic research that fails to properly conceptualize the phenomenon it seeks to understand (Richards, 2014, p. 215-216). In conceptualizing the phenomenon, Schmid (2004) suggests that

terrorism can be framed within five different contexts: crime, politics, war, communication, and religious fundamentalism; the framework that one utilizes to conceptualize terrorism affects the manner in which terrorism is interpreted by emphasizing certain motivations and operations of terrorism while omitting others. Thus, the perspective from which one approaches the study of terrorism influences its theorization.

The difficulty in defining terrorism, in part, is the product of its nature as a socially constructed concept: “Its social construction means that in theory terrorism can indeed be whatever one says it is and that it therefore comes down to who has the power to define or who ‘is heard the loudest’” (Richards, 2014, p. 218). Power inequalities are thus also inherent to terrorism, as the label of terrorism requires a powerful speaker for its application. American foreign policy illustrates the constructive nature of the concept of terrorism. Boyle (2011) investigates the discursive link between counterterrorism and the promotion of democracy, as found in U.S. foreign policy, concluding that the “binary distinction between freedom and fear” (p. 412) that frames American political ideology and preference encourages the construction of democracy and terrorism as antithetical, despite little empirical evidence supporting a link between democracy and terrorism. Rather, the political discourse on terrorism is often tied to ideological beliefs rather than empirical evidence, the impact of which is that the counterterrorism strategies preferred by the state are also determined by a variety of ideological and political factors related to the perception of terrorism and the constraints of the political environment. As such, the approaches to terrorism preferred in a specific context are not inevitable but are

the consequences of a variety of factors, including the conceptualization of terrorism and domestic political ideology.

Despite the lack of consensus on a single definition, terrorism is commonly conceptualized as violence perpetrated by non-state actors. For instance, the Global Terrorism Database defines terrorism as “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation” (cited by Choi & Piazza, 2014, p. 3). The conceptualization of terrorism as a tool primarily used by non-state actors is significant in that non-state actors are autonomous groups with the capacity to influence the policy-making decisions of states, thus making them rival actors (Chong, 2002) that challenge the state’s monopoly on violence (Schmid, 2004, p. 200) and present new obstacles to state security (Boyle, 2011, p. 416). Bauman and Stengel (2014) argue that, due to the forces of globalization, a degree of authority has shifted from states to non-state actors. International politics is characterized by “the fading dominance of nation-states and the concomitant rise of problem-solving rivalries with non-state actors” (Chong, 2002, p. 784). Many governments have begun cooperating with non-state actors and involving them in their decision-making processes (Stengel & Weller, 2010; Stoddard, 2006; Paul & Paul, 2009). In fact, in some instances, non-state actors are stronger than local governments and more capable of executing policy (Debiel & Sticht, 2005). Additionally, conflicts between states and non-state actors have become increasingly common, particularly as the allocation of resources to combat terrorism increases.

As a non-state actor, the PKK possess a global network to sustain its funding and recruitment efforts. The transnational links of the PKK have long been acknowledged in the literature, with authors such as Regas (1999) and Casier (2010) highlighting the organization of the PKK in Europe. However, the PKK primarily remains an issue of terrorism for the Turkish state that in turn impacts its relations with neighboring states (Olson, 1992, 2000; Ataman, 2002; Tezcür, 2010).

The expansion of the PKK as a transnational network is not uncommon among terrorist groups. As Schmid (2004) suggests, “International terrorism is either an externalization of domestic terrorism of another state or is linked to state terrorism or state-sponsored terrorism” (p. 200), underlining that the distinction between domestic and international terrorism is not self-apparent but often a matter of perspective. Highlighting the complexity of analyzing transnational terrorist organizations, Öcal and Yıldırım (2010) argue that a country-specific approach to understanding the impact of terrorism on economic growth is necessary to avoid the heterogenous bias that occurs in cross-country analysis. Following this logic, while this thesis does not seek to diminish the significance of the PKK’s connection to a larger, transnational terrorist network, it conceptualizes the PKK as a domestic terrorist organization, as the focal point of its terrorist activity is confined to Turkey.

#### **2.4. Approaches to Counterterrorism**

Significant to this thesis is the literature on how states respond to terrorist activity. Bueno de Mesquita (2005) argues that governments respond to violent domestic groups in a number of ways, ranging from concessions to armed crack down. Terrorists, in turn, respond to these government strategies differently. Moderate



terrorists are more likely to accept concessions from governments, although this has the adverse effect of leaving extremists in control of the terrorist network. Indridason (2008) argues that terrorism influences domestic politics, particularly the formation of coalition governments. During times of heightened terrorist activity, the priorities of voters and politicians shift to issues of national security; as a result, the coalition governments formed during times of increased terror activity are more likely to be surplus coalitions and less likely to be highly polarized.

In addressing the issue of terrorism, states employ a variety of counterterrorism strategies to eliminate the threat of terrorist activity. Many models describing the resolution of a terrorist conflict have been theorized, the most prominent of which is Martha Crenshaw's (1999) model of "how terrorism ends," which outlines five alternative outcomes for the end of a terrorist conflict: (1) success for the terrorists in accomplishing their goals; (2) preliminary success for the terrorists, whereby the group receives public recognition of its goals; (3) organizational breakdown of the terrorist group, whereby it ceases to maintain support through recruiting or funding; (4) decline in public support, whereby the terrorist group ceases to receive the support of the population it represents; and (5) development of new alternatives, whereby the political climate changes. It should be noted that the decline of terrorism does not necessarily precipitate the end of terrorism, implying that the two concepts should be understood separately (Kim & Yun, 2008).

The failure of states to consider the specific motives of a terrorist organization results in the implementation of ineffective counterterrorism measures. Kim and Yun (2008) suggest that the effectiveness of a particular counterterrorism strategy depends on the

specific conditions and circumstances of the actors involved. In their evaluation of the effects of five different strategies employed by the Turkish state against PKK terrorism, they found mixed results in terms of the effect of each strategy on reducing the likelihood of PKK terror activity. These findings further suggest the ability of both the state and the terror organization to adapt and learn, again highlighting that the decline of a terrorist group does not signal its end.

The literature has suggested a variety of counterterrorism strategies, which are typically categorized into two approaches: deterrence-based approaches and accommodative approaches (Abrahms, 2008; Gurcan, 2014, Guelke, 2007; Unal, 2012;), both of which is discussed below.

#### **2.4.1 Deterrence-Based Approach**

Deterrence-based strategies have traditionally been a pillar of the counterterrorism approaches preferred by states (Ross & Gurr, 1989; Morral & Jackson, 2009) and, in recent years, have gained significance as the core of U.S. counterterrorism strategy following the terrorist attacks of September 11 (Davis & Jenkins, 2002; Knopf, 2008). Deterrence-based approaches include strategies such as the use of force, military action, economic sanctions, and the instatement of emergency rule.

Deterrence strategies are based on rational actor theory, which presumes that individuals act to maximize their own utility or personal benefit. From this premise, proponents of deterrence-based strategies suggest that terror activity can be deterred through the imposition of high costs to participation in terrorist activity, thus altering the cost-benefit analysis away from incentives for violence (Morral & Jackson, 2009). As such, deterrence strategies seek to punish militants and their sympathizers

through repressive measures, including military action and the possibility of death for those engaging in terrorist activities. Unal (2013) refers to deterrence-based strategies as security policies that focus on maintaining public order and suggests that the Turkish government primarily followed these strategies up until the election of the AKP in the early 2000s.

Deterrence strategies can be further divided in two sub-categories: punishment strategies and denial strategies (Gurcan, 2014; Morral & Jackson, 2009). Punishment strategies seek to impose a high cost on terror activity, thus punishing those who support or join the terrorist organization. Some authors have suggested that punishment strategies may be ineffective against terrorists who are willing to take great risks, including risking their lives (Pape, 2005), to impose damage on their targets, noting that some terrorists even act to attract punishments that will highlight their cause or organization (Morral & Jackson, 2009, p. 7; National Research Council, 2002). Denial strategies increase the impracticality and difficulty of an attack on specific targets, such as by strengthening those targets and decreasing the perceived payoff value or chance of success. Morall and Jackson (2009) identify three types of denial strategies: (1) strategic deterrence, which decrease the perceived utility of an attack, (2) operational deterrence, which alter the utility, cost, or uncertainty of terrorist operations, and (3) tactical deterrence, which alter the parameters necessary for the completion of a terrorist attack. The village guard system in Turkey, for example, would be considered a denial deterrence-based strategy as it increased the difficulty of targeting villages by arming a local militia.

In his evaluation of the village guard system (*köy koruculuğu sistemi*), Gurcan (2014) suggests that the village guards were an effective counterterrorism strategy from 1985-1999, although their effectiveness decreased after 1999 due to changes in the nature of the conflict. As a counterterrorism tool, the village guards were a deterrence-based, territory-focused strategy. The system, which started in 1985 and later expanded to include a salary for the participating guards, was a strategy of arming local militias to defend rural areas against PKK insurgents. By 1993, the program has expanded to include 22 provinces and, at its height, included 60,000 armed forces, some of whom were voluntary, unpaid guards (Gurcan, 2014).

For the majority of the conflict against the PKK, particularly during the height of the conflict in the late 1980s and 1990s, the counterterrorism strategies employed by the Turkish government could be described as a deterrence-based approach lead through military efforts aimed at rooting out and eliminating PKK insurgents. The Turkish government relied on tactics such as military operations, martial law, and the declaration of a State of Emergency in multiple provinces to maintain control of the southeastern region. The military also conducted large-scale operations during this period. Unal (2012) suggests that the focus of Turkey's deterrence-based strategies was "put on terrorists rather than terrorism at large" (p. 437; see also Aydınli & Özcan, 2011). That is, the deterrence-based strategies of the Turkish state aimed to punish, injure, or kill individuals engaging in terrorist activity rather than address the underlying motives of the terrorist group. Evaluating the Turkish government's counterterrorism policies toward the PKK through election results to gauge popular support, Unal (2012) concludes that the deterrence-based strategies employed by the Turkish government were largely effective at reducing terrorist activity between

1990-2010, although deterrence-based strategies alone were insufficient for ending the conflict, as it continues today.

As mentioned previously, the village guard system is an example of a deterrence-based strategy that aimed at isolating the PKK from the local Kurdish population and impeding the ability of the PKK to mobilize and amass resources. Gurcan (2014) describes the success of the village guard system as “one of the main pillars of counterterrorism strategy... [without which] the state authority in the region would have eventually collapsed” (p. 7). The strong emphasis on the village guard system, large-scale military operations, and the implementation of martial law characterize the military-led, deterrence-based approaches to PKK violence in Turkey.

Opponents of deterrence-based strategies argue that terrorists are irrational actors who do not evaluate the material cost of their terrorist activities, thus invalidating the fundamental premise of deterrence strategies (Unal, 2012, p. 436). The deterrence-based approach is further criticized for its risk of collateral damage, injury, or death to the civilian population in the region. Scholars have suggested that, in this way, deterrence-based approaches may prove counter-productive by galvanizing the local population against the state, thus facilitating the recruitment and legitimacy of the terrorist organization (Byman, 1998; Kim & Yun, 2008).

Given the community-based nature of ethnic terrorism, deterrence-based strategies may increase popular support for an ethnic terrorist group among members of its own community. Byman (1998) suggests that military-led, deterrence-based counterterrorism measures are often ineffective against ethnic terrorism because they

contribute to the creation of an ethnic identity through repressive measures aimed at the target community, reinforcing an us/them dichotomy between the subnational group and the larger community. Bacik and Coskun (2011) suggest that Turkey's emphasize on military-led deterrence-based strategies has attributed to the prolonged nature of the conflict with the PKK, as it has prevented the realization of a political solution while contributing to greater social divisions that augment support of the PKK. Turkey's emphasis on military-led strategies "precluded the possibility of moderate Kurdish politics" by isolating the Kurdish community, thus inadvertently strengthening public support for the PKK and preventing the possibility of a political solution (Bacik & Coskun, 2011, p. 252). Similarly, Eccarius-Kelly (2012) suggests that weak democratic institutions and an overemphasis on military strategies have contributed to the prolonged nature of the conflict with the PKK, as the organization has adapted to survive the implementation of various military strategies by the Turkish state.

For the majority of the conflict, negotiating with the PKK was equated with weakness and submission to the terrorists' demands, thus preventing the possibility of non-military-based strategies. In contrast to the military focus of deterrence-based approaches, accommodative approaches to counterterrorism favor winning public support for government policies in order to undermine the legitimacy of terrorist groups.

#### **2.4.2. Accommodative Approach**

Unlike the deterrence-based approach, the accommodative approach relies on social, political, and economic reforms to address the grievances of the insurgency group,

thereby removing the incentives for terrorism or violence (Unal, 2013; Gurcan, 2014). The accommodative approach is based on defiance theory (or legitimacy theory) and focused on the perceptions of civil society, which contribute to the labelling of a cause as legitimate or illegitimate. As such, the accommodative approach contends that the actions of a terrorist organization and the counterterrorism strategies used to avert them are more effective when society perceives them as legitimate. When the grievances of a terrorist organization are perceived as illegitimate, the organization loses its local support, its access to resources, and its ability to recruit. Thus, the accommodative approach conceptualizes the problem of terrorism beyond the use of violence and seeks to eliminate legitimate grievances through policies aimed at rooting out the causes and lifeline of terrorist activity.

In the Turkish context, the accommodative approach separates the issue of PKK terrorism from the larger Kurdish question. Significant to accommodative approaches of counterterrorism is the distinction between “countering terrorists and countering terrorism,” with accommodative approaches aiming to eliminate the latter by focusing on the “root causes of the social mobilization that produced the offending terrorists” (Aydınlı & Özcan, 2011, p. 441). Whereas deterrence-based approaches focus solely on the issue of PKK terrorism and aim to eliminate terrorist activity, accommodative approaches broaden the scope of the issue to include the social and political grievances connected with the broader Kurdish community. Authors such as Pusane (2014) and Unal (2012) argue that, for the majority of the conflict, Turkey has conceptualized the problem with the PKK exclusively as a terrorist problem, leading it to pursue deterrence-based strategies of counterterrorism. In doing so, Turkey has ignored the insurgency nature of the conflict and the

legitimate grievances of its ethnically Kurdish population, which are not address through deterrence-based strategies. In contrast, an accommodative approach does not conflate PKK terrorism with the Kurdish question but perceives addressing the social and political grievance of the Kurdish community as a means of delegitimizing the terrorist activity of the PKK.

A shift away from deterrence-based to accommodative approaches to the PKK and the Kurdish question in Turkey can be seen following the election of the AKP in early 2000s, culminating in the commencement of the Peace Process announced in late 2012. The accommodative strategies introduced in Turkey “revolve around democratization and recognition of the cultural and ethnic values of the Kurdish people” (Unal, 2012, p. 438). The AKP’s rise to power was fueled by the support of Kurds in Turkey’s southeast region. In the early years of its government, the AKP invested in infrastructure, schools, and public services in the southeastern provinces. The AKP also expanded Kurdish language rights, including education rights at private schools, the opening of Kurdish language departments at select universities, and broadcasting rights in Kurdish (Olson 2009, p. 225; Aydınli, 2002). The reforms initiated by the AKP have signaled a shift in Turkey’s approach to the Kurdish question away from military-based approaches focusing on the issue of terrorism. Instead, Turkey has embraced non-military, accommodative approaches.

Rather than highlight the election of the AKP, Gurcan (2014) suggests that a shift in the PKK’s strategy has produced a shift in the counter-terrorism strategies employed by the Turkish government: since the late 2000s, the PKK has focused less on military efforts to claim and control physical territory but has rather relied on



political efforts that seek to control “psychological territory” to justify the legitimacy of its grievances. In recent years, the political branches of the PKK have grown more autonomous, suggesting that the democratization process in Turkey has provided opportunities for Kurdish political parties to operate increasingly outside the structure of PKK leadership, challenging its central authority (Kelly-Eccarius, 2012, p. 251). To address this rise of the PKK’s political strategy, the Turkish government has switched to accommodative approaches in the form of democratic reforms beginning in 2005 that include language rights and economic development projects (Gurcan, 2014, p. 15).

Announced at the end of 2012, the Kurdish Peace Process signals the end of the armed conflict, following extensive negotiations between PKK leaders and the Turkish government. A letter from Ocalan read by his lawyers at the Nevruz celebrations in Diyarbakir on 21 March 2013 called for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of PKK insurgents from Turkish territory. Soon after, the AKP government announced the withdrawal of Turkish armed forces from Northern Iraq. In addition to the withdrawal of troops, the agreement also included reforms and legal changes for the expansion of cultural and human rights in Turkey (Larabee, 2013; Pusane, 2014).

Even before its counterterrorism strategy shifted to an accommodative approach, the Turkish government sought to invest in economic development efforts in the country’s southeastern provinces. The most significant economic development project in the region is the GAP Project (Southeastern Anatolia Project, *Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi*), which focuses on harnessing the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers for a

sustainable irrigation and hydroelectric power production system. The project involved the construction of several dams, the largest of which was the Atatürk Dam. From 1982-1992, the Turkish government invested more the \$20 billion in the GAP Project to assist in regional development (Phillips, 2008, p. 74). In 1991, President Turgut Ozal lifted the ban on the Kurdish language, although he passed away before he could realize the full extent of his proposed accommodative plan to the Kurdish question (Phillips, 2008, p. 76).

Phillips (2008) recommends against a deterrence-based approach to the PKK in Turkey, suggesting that military operations against the PKK in Northern Iraq serve to undermine democratic development and radicalize the Kurdish community, thus facilitating recruitment efforts of the PKK. Instead, Phillips (2008) advocates for accommodative approaches to the conflict, including international cooperation to pressure the PKK into accepting a permanent ceasefire and investment for the improvement of the political and socioeconomic conditions that serve to perpetuate support for the PKK among Kurds living in Turkey's southeast region. As such, Phillips favors democratic solutions to the Kurdish question in Turkey. Specifically, Phillips advocates for expanded minority rights and legal reforms aimed at ensuring the political and cultural rights of Turkey's Kurdish population. Furthermore, Phillips advocates for the improvement of economic conditions in Turkey's southeastern provinces through privatization and land reforms aimed at addressing the issue of unemployment and through greater investment in infrastructure. Finally Phillips suggests that amnesty should be offered to all PKK members through a gradual, regulated system aimed at encouraging long-term reconciliation.

#### **2.4.3 Significance of Changing Approaches**

As described above, a significant shift from deterrence-based strategies to accommodative strategies has been observed in Turkey since the early 2000s with respect to the Kurdish question. Of the changes that have occurred in the Turkish government's approach to the PKK, Unal (2013) writes: "the PKK problem has been redirected from a solely military approach. The primary responsibility in dealing with the PKK has been devoted to the frame of civilian rule of law. The Turkish army has had a supplementary role as opposed to a leading role in the countermeasures of the Turkish state" (p. 17). As such, changing civil-military relations appear to be at the heart of changing approaches to the Kurdish question, as demilitarization has allowed the civil government to exercise more authority over issues traditionally reserved for the military in the security realm. This thesis seeks to explore the relationship between civil-military relations and approaches to the Kurdish question in depth through the analysis of TSK and MGK press releases. The following section builds upon the themes presented in this section by exploring the development of the PKK and the Kurdish question in Turkey.

## **2.5. The PKK and the Kurdish Question**

With a total estimated population of 30 million people worldwide, the Kurds are the largest stateless minority in the world (Phillips, 2008, p. 72). The Kurdish population is primarily concentrated in the territories belonging to four countries: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, with the largest population residing in Turkey. Statistics suggests that approximately 20 percent of Turkey's population is ethnically Kurdish, making it a non-negligible minority group with a turbulent past, including uprisings that date back to the Ottoman Empire (Aydınlı, 2002; Phillips, 2008, p. 72; Pusane, 2014).

Despite its large population, the Kurdish minority is not legally recognized according to Turkish law, which does not distinguish communities along ethnic lines.

In his mission to construct the Republic of Turkey as a modern nation-state, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk sought to unify the remaining lands of the Ottoman Empire through centralized, top-down initiatives aimed at establishing a Turkish national identity that focused on the singular and unitary nature of the state. To secure the success of the young Republic, Atatürk responded firmly to uprisings, including the first Kurdish rebellion in 1925 in Diyarbakir and later in 1937. As part of the Turkish nation-building project, the ethnic identity of the Kurds was rejected, the Kurdish language was banned, and the Kurds were referred to as “Mountain Turks” (Phillips, 2008, p. 73).

In the context of this ethno-political environment, the PKK emerged as an ethnically Kurdish separatist group. The organization was first founded with a traditional leftist ideology that later shifted to include an ethno-nationalist focus that would appeal to the broader Kurdish population, facilitating the ability of the PKK to recruit, garner public support, and expand its network in the region (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012, p. 237). In addition to its label of terrorism, the PKK has been described in a number of ways, including as a national-separatist group with aims for territorial autonomy (Bacik & Coskun, 2011), an insurgency group employing guerilla tactics (Unal, 2012), and a guerilla group involved in illicit drug trade (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012). The PKK has demonstrated the ability to adapt and transform to changes in its environment, thus contributing its longevity as an organization (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012). The following

sections offer an overview of the development of the PKK, highlighting the Turkish government's approach to PKK terrorism at various phases throughout the conflict.

### **2.5.1. Development of the PKK**

The Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) has a long and complex history in Turkey, as the group has undergone many changes since its founding in 1978 under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan in the province of Diyarbakir-Lice. At the time of its founding, the Kurdish separatist group represented the left-wing, marginalized elements of Kurdish society (McDowall, 1992; Barkey & Fuller, 1998). It initially sought to establish an independent Kurdish state in Turkey's southeast region, which would be achieved through a Maoist-strategy of proletarian revolution and later united with areas in the surrounding territories for the establishment of a "Greater Kurdistan" (Phillips, 2008, p. 73). The PKK was established with a rigid hierarchical structure, with Öcalan firmly at the top. Öcalan reinforced his position through a Stalinist organizational structure (Ergil, 2000; Unal, 2013, p. 7) that included disciplinary techniques such as purging opponents within the organization and arranging for the assassination of defectors. It is estimated that in 1986, up to 60 percent of PKK members were executed on the commands of Öcalan's leadership (Phillips, 2008, p. 73).

Later, the PKK emerged as a security threat to the Turkish state in 1984 when it began carrying out terrorist attacks in the country's southeast region. Although the PKK is classified as a terrorist organization, it possesses features of an insurgency movement that employs tactics of terrorism and guerilla warfare (Olson, 1992; Unal, 2012, p. 43). Initially, the Turkish government dismissed the strength of the PKK,

referring to it as a “few bandits” in the rural areas of the country (Gurcan, 2014, p. 9). The PKK insurgency increased in intensity in the 1990s, leading to higher rates of civilian casualties, mass arrests, and a strict enforcement of martial law. During this period, the PKK targeted Kurdish civilians who worked for or supported the Turkish state, including teachers, doctors, nurses, and imams (Phillips, 2008, p. 73). The PKK primarily targeted Turkish security forces in the region with the aim of removing the authority and presence of the Turkish state (Olson, 1992; Gurcan, 2014, p. 9).

Although its ideology has evolved from a Marxists, leftist ideology to include a concept of ethno-nationalism that emphasizes the right to self-determination, the strength of its ideological appeal has played a central role in its insurgency tactics. Eccarius-Kelly (2012) uses a typology that includes four categories to measure the activities of guerrilla groups. According to her analysis, the PKK was an ideologically-oriented group from 1980-2002, as approximately one-third of its activity could be classified as “Category I,” which includes suicide bombings and requires a high ideological commitment from its members (p. 243), who must be willing to sacrifice their own physical well-being for the cause of the organization.

Among its first responses to the PKK, the Turkish government imposed a law prohibiting the use of the Kurdish language in 1983, a regulation that remained in effect until 1991 when it was repealed by President Turgut Özal. The aim of the language ban was to integrate the Kurdish population into Turkish society through methods of assimilation (Kim & Yun, 2008). As will be seen in the following section,

the response of the Turkish state continued to be repressive throughout the height of the conflict.

### **2.5.2. Increased Terror Activity: 1990-1994**

The violence between PKK insurgents and the Turkish armed forces increased in the early 1990s, peaking in 1993, as the strategy of the PKK shifted: rather than aim to remove the presence of Turkish security forces in the region, the PKK attempted to seize control of territory (Gurcan, 2014, p. 9). During the height of the conflict, the government responded with military-led counterterrorism measures, often including military force and the implementation martial law in the country's southeastern provinces (McDowall, 1992; Phillips, 2008). Leading political figures supported military and police efforts to eliminate suspected PKK members, and the government invoked strict anti-terror regulations, including Article 14 of the Constitution, Article 125 of the penal code, and Article 8 of the "Law for Fighting against Terrorism," which collectively expanded the definition of those guilty of terrorist activity and facilitated the arrest and detention of suspected terrorists (Phillips, 2008, p. 73). The government imposed forced evacuations on many villages in Turkey's southeast provinces (Kim & Yun, 2008), resulting in high unemployment and poverty in urban areas like Diyarbakir (Phillips, 2008, p. 73).

Through the legislative decisions described above, leading political figures supported military-led, deterrence-based strategies of counterterrorism. Bacik and Coskun (2011) suggest that civilian leaders supported military responses to PKK activity in part because Turkey's strong state tradition and history of responding to insurgency

with military force, which the authors imply prevented civilian leaders from considering non-military options. The scale of the conflict commanded commitment of substantial military and economic resources. McDowall (1992) argues that the Kurdish question was Turkey's largest domestic concern in the 1990s. Since the 1980s, the Turkish state has allocated significant resources to combating the PKK insurgency, with an estimated total of \$100 billion dollars in military expenditure dedicated to suppressing the violence (Sezgin, 2002).

Beginning in 1991, the Turkish military employed a strategy of large-scale military operations supported by land aviation units and village guards to maintain control of rural areas (Gurcan, 2014, p. 10). The strategy resulted in the Turkish military's victory in 1993, which was acknowledged by Öcalan in 1994. The military victory of the Turkish state, however, did not result in political victory, as the PKK reorganized itself into a political campaign, including branches in Europe. In 1994, following its military defeat, PKK leadership suggested for the first time the possibility of a political solution of the Kurdish question (Gurcan, 2014, p. 10).

### **2.5.3. Shift to a Political Campaign: 1994-1999**

In an analysis of the evolution of the PKK's strategy from 1973-2012, Unal (2013) argues that the PKK is primarily pragmatic in its strategic objectives, responding to emergent conditions rather than pursuing a pre-determined, long-term strategy linked to a firm ideology. When the PKK was forced to acknowledge its military defeat in 1994 and therefore lacked the strength to coordinate large-scale strategy, it initiated a political campaign to reach its goals and relied on the intermittent use of strategic violence to advance its political campaign (Aydınlı, 2002; Unal, 2013, p. 28).

Evaluating the PKK's shift to a political campaign, Aydınlı (2002) suggests that the



PKK may have been “attempting with their calls for a democratic solution to turn military defeat into political victory” (p. 212). Although the PKK’s political campaign is an integral component of its current organizational identity, Unal (2013) argues that the PKK “opted solely for military victory” through the implementation of guerilla warfare strategies prior to 1994 (p. 10). Thus, the year 1994 is a significant turning point not only because it represents the military victory of the Turkish state over the PKK but because it signaled a transformation in the PKK’s organizational strategy with the introduction of a political campaign to compensate for its military weakness.

In conjunction with its political campaign, the PKK expanded its international reach into Europe, where it has operated branches since the mid-1980s and where it advocates for financial and political support for the “promotion of the Kurdish cause” (Casier, 2010, p. 399). Emphasizing the centralized nature of the PKK’s control structure, Eccarius-Kelly (2012) describes the PKK’s transnational network as “an octopus that extends its numerous, probing tentacles into neighboring countries” (p. 238). The international scope of the PKK, including its political campaigns for support in Europe and its military bases and training facilities operated in Northern Iraq, have become an integral component of its organizational structure and have shaped the nature of the conflict since the PKK’s military defeat in 1994.

With respect to its international structure, the operations of the PKK straddle the line between terrorism and organized crime. In addition to amassing financial and political support through its transnational network, the PKK is involved in criminal

activity that includes illegal drug trade, money laundering, and extortion (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012). Through these operations, the PKK has amassed funding to sustain its armed conflict.

The period from 1994-1999 was characterized by a decrease in violence, during which time the Turkish military employed a strategy of “area control” to secure its territory in the southeast (Gurcan, 2014, p. 10). Following its military defeat in 1994, the PKK has shifted its strategy away from guerilla warfare, favoring instead terror tactics, primarily in urban areas targeting police and security forces. As such, terrorism is used as a tool by the PKK to achieve its political goals. Unal (2012) suggests that the PKK has increasingly shifted to terror tactics because guerilla warfare proved insufficient for military victory (p. 434).

As the majority of the PKK’s infrastructure and activity were transplanted across the Turkish border into countries such as Syria and Iraq following its military defeat, the Turkish government’s primary response to PKK terrorism during this time intersected with its foreign policy and bilateral relations with countries harboring (or suspected of supporting) PKK members. Öcalan escaped to Syria, where he remained in hiding until 1998 and established PKK training camps. Tensions between Turkey and Syria peaked in 1998 “when Turkey warned Syria of its imminent recourse to military force and began to mass troops along the Syrian border” (Bacik & Coskun, 2011). Tensions eased after Turkey forced Syria into signing the Adana Agreement, which recognized the PKK as a terrorist organization and committed Syria to the removal of PKK insurgents from its territory (Phillips, 2008, p. 76).

Following the signing of the Adana Agreement, Öcalan fled Syria and was eventually captured in Kenya in 1999. Because reforms made in conjunction with Turkey's application for EU membership prohibited the use of capital punishment, Öcalan could not receive the death penalty as he was originally sentenced but rather was committed to life in prison on the island of İmralı in Bursa province, from where he continues to direct the PKK organization through statements released by his lawyers.

#### **2.5.4. Following the Capture of Öcalan: 1999-2012**

While the intensity of the conflict with the PKK has ebbed since the arrest of Öcalan in 1999 (Ergil, 2000), the conflict continues to exist today. In the period immediately following the capture of Öcalan, the PKK reimagined its organization as a political movement. In doing so, it changed its name twice, although the organization did not change in terms of leadership, objectives, and structure (Kim & Yun, 2008, p. 66). In 2002, it disbanded and rebranded itself as the Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK), which was later renamed as the Kurdistan Society Congress (KONGRA-GEL) in 2004. The same year, the PKK ended its self-declared ceasefire, which had been established in 1999 (Phillips, 2008, p. 77). Gurcan (2014) suggests that the return to violence in the early 2000s was sparked by the AKP's success in winning the support of Turkey's Kurdish population, thus threatening the perceived authority of the PKK as the self-proclaimed legitimate representation of the Kurds in Turkey.

The PKK has solidified its support among Turkey's Kurds by preventing the rise of an alternative Kurdish political rival (Bacik & Coskun, 2011, p. 258). However,

despite the PKK's claims to Turkey's Kurdish population, it would be wrong to characterize the PKK as unanimously representing the Kurds in Turkey, as polls suggest that most of Turkey's Kurdish population does not desire a separate state but prefers to advance its grievances through existing political processes (Phillips, 2008, p. 76). Furthermore, even at the height of the conflict, the number of ethnically Kurdish village guards employed by the Turkish state outnumbered the number of PKK insurgents, demonstrating low levels of support for the PKK among Turkey's Kurdish population (Gurcan, 2014, p. 7).

Even after the capture of Öcalan and the retreat of PKK forces from Turkish territory, PKK insurgents have continued to organize attacks from the Kandil Mountains in Northern Iraq. There was an increase in violence from 2007-2012, the timeframe of analysis in this thesis. Unal (2013) describes the strategy of the PKK during this period as a strategy of "strategic lunge" that aims to establish de-facto autonomy in Turkey's southeast region and primarily targets police forces (p. 20). Despite its increase in violent insurgency activity, this period did not mark significant gains for the PKK. The violence was temporarily halted with a ceasefire and the announcement of the Peace Process in late 2012 and early 2013.

As Turkey commenced its bid for EU accession during this period, the government was committed to democratizing reforms, from which the Kurds benefitted directly and indirectly, such as though the expansion of language rights and the elimination of military courts. Although Turkey was pressured by the EU to carry out political reforms, Aydın (2002) argues that the Turkish government responded to the increased politicization of the PKK by arresting several leading Kurdish political figures on charges of having connections with the PKK (p. 213). During this time,

“the Turkish state establishment remain[ed] convinced that the PKK exist[ed] to divide Turkey” (Aydınlı, 2002), implying that Turkish political leaders had yet to consider the issue of PKK terrorism resolved. Thus, although the military conflict had ended, the Turkish government continued to perceive the PKK as a significant internal security threat.

#### **2.5.5. Opening of a Peace Process in 2012**

While the 1990s were characterized by a military approach to the Kurdish question, Olson (2009) argues that there has been a significant shift in Turkish policy toward the PKK since the election of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). He contends that the Islamic political identity of the AKP challenges the Kemalist concepts of nationalism that have long suppressed the expression of a Kurdish national identity in Turkey. In addition to economic development projects, AKP reforms have granted certain language rights to the Kurds, including public broadcasts in Kurdish and the opening of Kurdish language departments at select universities (Aydınlı, 2002; Olson, 2009, p. 225). In 2009, a fully-Kurdish language channel was approved for television broadcasting (Unal, 2013, p. 17). Such reforms are significant in that they signal a shift toward political resolution rather than military force in combating the PKK. The AKP’s democratizing approach, known as the Kurdish Opening, led to tenuous peace talks that opened in 2012 (Gunter, 2013; Larabee, 2013; Pusane, 2014).

The PKK provides an insightful case study for analysis due to its long history of conflict with the Turkish state, which has had negative consequences for Turkey. Most notably, the conflict has “impeded Turkey’s democratization, affected

economic development negatively, kept the army a strong actor in politics, and damaged Turkey's international profile" (Bacik & Coskun, 2011, p. 249). The issue of Kurdish separatism has historically been a security concern of the Turkish state and has been a particularly sensitive issue for the military (Cizre, 2004). Various scholars have highlighted the significance that the Kurdish question and PKK violence have had not only on Turkey's security policy but also on its democratic consolidation, particularly during the height of PKK terrorist activity in the 1990s. The present study aims to add to this literature by examining the potential relationship between changing civil-military relations in Turkey and approaches to the Kurdish question.

#### **2.5.6. Significance of the Peace Process**

The introduction of the Kurdish Opening and the Peace Process has expanded the conceptualization of Kurdish question to issues beyond terrorism, thus highlighting the difference between legitimate grievance of the Kurdish community and the terrorist activity of the PKK. The strength of the reform efforts associated with the Kurdish Opening has been the ability of political leaders to separate the activities of the PKK from the larger Kurdish community. Nonetheless, "Despite the paradigm shift toward the Kurdish issue in 2002 and subsequent democratic openings, certain segments of society perceived these reforms on the Kurdish issue as a concession to PKK demands because the PKK is stigmatized with terror attacks" (Unal, 2013, p. 19). Thus, the effectiveness of accommodative approaches has been limited by the conflation of the PKK and the Kurdish issue and by sensitivities of the Turkish population to democratic concessions along ethnic lines.

The Kurdish question continues to be a salient issue for government leaders due to the unresolved political nature of the conflict and continued security concerns in certain parts of the country where terrorist activity against military and police targets is not uncommon. During its rise to power in the early 2000s, the AKP government was initially elected through the support of Turkey's Kurdish population (Semple & Arango, 2014). As Prime Minister, Erdoğan pursued closer relations with the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq and allowed for a democratic opening at home, which granted linguistic rights to Kurds. The Peace Process, which was opened in 2012 through negotiations with the PKK, was a product of AKP policies that emphasized political tools rather than military force in addressing the Kurdish issue. For these democratic efforts aimed at resolving the Kurdish question, Erdoğan enjoyed the political backing of large segments of Turkey's Kurdish population (Abdulla, 2014). However, in recent years, the success of the Kurdish Opening and negotiation talks with Öcalan have stalled, leading some to suggest a failure of the conflict resolution process. Nonetheless, the AKP-led democratic opening represents an important shift in the Turkish government's approach to the Kurdish question.

Since the summer of 2015, PKK terrorist activity in Turkey's southeastern region has increased, aimed primarily at police and military targets. Despite the opening of negotiations as part of the Peace Process, many Turks continue to view the PKK as a threat. Some have suggested that memories of violence from the 1990s prevent the mainstream Turkish population from supporting the PKK in any capacity, including in its efforts to ward off ISIS in Syria (Aydıntaşbaş, 2014), and have led to the conflation of Kurdish political organizations and PKK representation. Additionally,

the Turkish state continues to view the PKK as its foremost threat to stability (Nazish, 2014).

|            | <i>AKP</i>  | <i>CHP</i>  | <i>MHP</i>  | <i>HDP</i>  | <i>Overall</i> |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| <i>Yes</i> | <i>86.0</i> | <i>27.8</i> | <i>24.0</i> | <i>70.8</i> | <i>59.2</i>    |
| <i>No</i>  | <i>14.0</i> | <i>72.2</i> | <i>76.0</i> | <i>29.1</i> | <i>40.8</i>    |

Figure 1: Support for the Solution Process (A&G Araştırma Şirketi, 2014)

According to public opinion poll data from 2014, over half of the Turkish population (59.2%) supports the Solution Process to the Kurdish question (Figure 1; A&G Araştırma Şirketi, 2014). These findings are polarized across political parties, however, with AKP and HDP supporters strongly favoring the process and CHP and MHP supports strongly opposing it (Figure 1), suggesting that the Peace Process is both a sensitive and divisive political issue.

In a 2012 public opinion poll, 61.8% of respondents believed that an autonomous Kurdish entity in Syria would join with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq to formed a unified Kurdish state (BILGESAM, 2012), suggesting that Kurdish separatism and autonomy is a regional security concern in the mind of the Turkish



public. In the same poll, when asked to identify Turkey's greatest threat of war, 41.9% of respondents stated that a Turkish-Kurdish civil war is the most likely threat (BILGESAM, 2012). These findings suggest that the Turkish public views the potential for domestic conflict erupting across ethnic line as greater threat than the potential for violent international conflict.

Given the ongoing nature of the Kurdish question and the revival of PKK terrorist activity since July 2015, this thesis seeks to contribute to the literature on civil-military relations and strategies of conflict resolution by examining the factors that contributed to a shift in counterterrorism strategy in 2012. By investigating the role of the demilitarization of civil-military relations on approaches to counterterrorism, this thesis aims to provide insight on the processes of countering PKK terrorism in Turkey and, more broadly, on countering terrorism in countries with consolidating democratic systems of governance.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study utilizes a mixed research methods approach that combines qualitative discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews with quantitative content analysis for the collection and analysis of data. Data were collected in three steps: through the analysis of National Security Council (MGK) press releases to examining the impact of institutional changes to civil-military relations on approaches to conflict resolution; through the analysis of TSK press releases to examine normative change to the military's approach to politics, counterterrorism strategy, and the Kurdish question; and through semi-structured interviews with retired military officers and AKP parliament members to supplement the findings of the research. Through its analysis, this thesis seeks to understand whether the demilitarization of civil-military relations has contributed to a shift in the perceptions and practices of military leaders with respect to the Kurdish question. In investigating this phenomenon, the study poses the following hypotheses, which are examined in light of the findings of its analysis:

*Hypothesis 1:* The military accepted changing approaches to conflict resolution because top military officials believed in accommodative approaches.

*Hypothesis 2:* The military accepted changing approaches to conflict resolution because it was forced to do so due to institutional changes in politics.

*Hypothesis 3:* The military accepted changing approaches to conflict resolution because it was forced to do so by the civil government or other non-military actors.

*Hypothesis 4:* The military did not accept changing approaches to conflict resolution, despite demilitarizing changes to civil-military relations.

With respect to the hypotheses above, the findings of the data are analyzed to suggest under what conditions a shift in civil-military relations impacted approaches to conflict resolution, specifically counterterrorism strategy. The data are analyzed to determine how military officials perceive the military's role in politics and whether their perceptions changed from 2007-2012. Data are also analyzed to determine to what extent and in what capacity those changes to civil-military relations were connected to issues of counterterrorism policy.

The independent variable (IV) in this study is civil-military relations in Turkey, and the dependent variable (DV) is the Turkish military's approach to the Kurdish question, specifically the demilitarization of that approach. In examining the effects of changing civil-military relations, the Kurdish question serves as a "reflecting board" off which to analyze change. Because Turkey's Kurdish question has

traditionally been a security issue addressed by the military through strategies of counterterrorism (Aydınlı & Özcan, 2011; Cizre 2004; Larabee, 2013), the deference of the military to the civil government with respect to the Kurdish question would likely indicate broader trends of demilitarization in terms of conflict resolution across a variety of issues and contexts.

In an interview conducted for the data collection of this thesis, a former AKP member of parliament suggested that terrorism has been an obstacle to democratization in Turkey:

No country in Europe has a terrorist problem like Turkey's. So Turkey has had special obstacles to its democratization process that other EU countries have not had to deal with. It's easy for the EU to look at Turkey and say 'do this,' but when you are dealing with a terrorist problem, it's much harder to make those reforms. The military has been dealing with the terrorist problem, and they say 'do this' to the government but the EU is saying do something different. It creates obstacles to democratization. (*Participant 11*)

Building from the premise that terrorism has served as an obstacle to democratization in Turkey, this thesis examines the impact of changing civil-military relations on approaches to the Kurdish question in order to understand the relationship between democratization and counterterrorism approaches.

Civil-military relations comprise a broad term encompassing many aspects of the polity. It includes many components of the dynamic relationship between the civil government and the armed forces. For conceptual purpose, civil-military relations can be understood in terms of a military and a non-military context. The non-military context can be further divided into the political, economic, and socio-cultural realms, which can be measured at the domestic, regional, and international level. The totality of civil-military relations is determined by the military context, the non-military

context, and the hybrid dynamics from the interaction of both. As the military is traditionally entrusted with securing the protection of the polity, the nature of civil-military relations affects approaches to conflict resolution, such as the military's approach to the Kurdish question and PKK terrorism in Turkey. Figure 2 depicts this relationship below.

In Figure 2, three determinants of civil-military relations that affect the military's approach to conflict resolution have been identified and labelled according to the numbered arrows. In this study, approaches to conflict resolution are examined with respect to the military's approach to the Kurdish question, looking particularly at formations of the Kurdish question in terms of PKK terrorism or broader socio-political grievances of the Kurdish minority. The three determinants identified in Figure 2 can be understood as follows:

1. Exogenous factors from the non-military context – these include political, economic, and socio-cultural factors at the domestic, regional, and international level.
2. Hybrid of exogenous and endogenous factors – institutional factors effecting the relationship and interaction between the military and non-military contexts.
3. Endogenous factors from the military context – normative factors effecting the perceptions, practices, and ideological beliefs of military leaders.

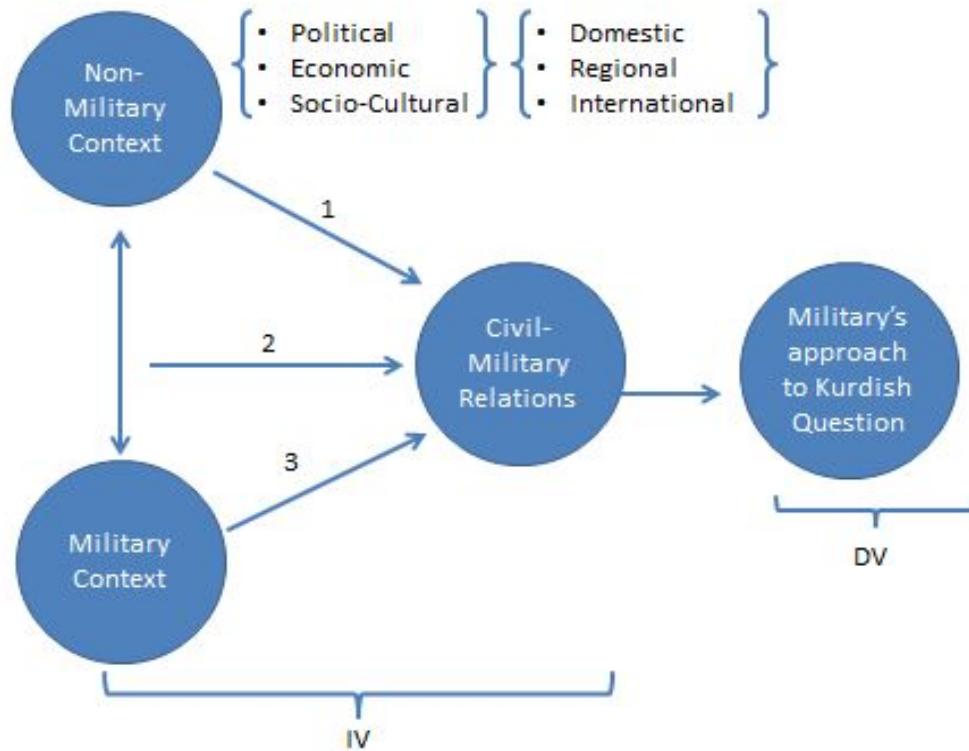


Figure 2: Research Design: Understanding Civil-military relations

Exogenous factors originating from the non-military context (Figure 2, Arrow 1) have been excluded from the scope of this thesis' empirical analysis for two reasons. First, the research question posed in this thesis is concerned with the practices and perceptions of military leaders. As such, determinants exogenous to the military are beyond the scope of this thesis and do not facilitate the researcher in answering the research question. Second, a great deal of attention in the literature has focused on the exogenous factors contributing to the demilitarization of civil-military relations in Turkey. This research has highlighted the influence of EU reforms (Toktaş & Kurt, 2010; Cizre, 2008; Sarıgil, 2007), the election of the AKP government (Gürsoy, 2012), the emergence of new political elites (Kuru, 2010), and changing public opinion toward the role of the military in politics (Sarıgil, 2011). In order to properly contextualize this study, an in-depth analysis of this literature is presented in Chapter

2. Acknowledging the significance of these and other exogenous factors shaping civil-military relations in Turkey, this thesis seeks to contribute to the literature by examining the demilitarization of civil-military relations from the perspective of the military. That is, this thesis seeks to understand the scope and nature of endogenous factors, an area underdeveloped in the literature. In doing so, it omits Arrow 1 from its empirical study research design, although it explores these factors in its theoretical framework.

In examining the role of endogenous factors in shaping the military's approach to the Kurdish question, this thesis focuses on the determinants of Arrows 2 and 3 in Figure 2. Arrow 2, the hybrid of endogenous and exogenous factors, can be understood as institutional or "forced" military change and suggests that, due to democratic reform, the military was forced to accept its subordinate role with respect to the civil government. As such, the military would be forced to change its approach to the Kurdish question, reducing its reliance on military tactics in favor of political approaches lead by the civil government. According to this hypothesis, military leaders did not willing favor demilitarization but were forced to accept changes brought about by external factors.

Alternatively, Arrow 3 can be understood as normative or "voluntary" change emerging from within the military context. Arrow 3 suggests that the perceptions and attitudes of military leaders have changed such that these military leaders support the demilitarization of civil-military relations and the reduction of the military's role in politics. Therefore, under these circumstances, changing civil-military relations could be attributed to endogenous factors. A change in the military's own self-perception

of its role in politics and its relationship with the civil government, in turn, would influence its approach to the Kurdish question. According to this hypothesis, along with changes to civil-military relations, the military would willingly have altered its approach to the Kurdish question, favoring accommodative strategies.

This thesis seeks to examine the determinants of Arrow 2 (institutional or “forced” military change) and Arrow 3 (normative or “voluntary” military change) in order to understand changing approaches to the Kurdish question. It aims to determine to what extent change followed the path of Arrow 2 or Arrow 3. In doing so, it hopes to suggest more broadly how changes in civil-military relations affect approaches to conflict resolution. The empirical analysis of this thesis therefore includes comparative analyses of institutional and normative changes with a chapter that evaluates the impact that institutional changes to civil-military relations have had on approaches to conflict resolution by examining MGK press releases from 2007-2012 (Chapter 4) and a chapter that evaluates the impact that normative changes in the practices and perceptions of military leaders have had on approaches to conflict resolution by examining TSK press releases from 2007-2012 (Chapter 5). The relationship between institutional and normative changes affecting the perceptions and practices of military leaders is discussed in a concluding chapter (Chapter 6).

These chapters seek to establish whether a shift has occurred in the military’s approach to the Kurdish question and examine the extent to which such a shift is connected to changing civil-military relations. By comparing the analyses produced from each set of data, this thesis seeks to determine first whether changes in the approach to conflict resolution are evident in the discourse, and secondly whether



those changes were normative, occurring through the voluntary preference of military leaders (Arrow 3), or institutional, accepted by and/or forced upon military leaders due to demilitarizing reforms of civil-military relations (Arrow 2). To understand the extent to which military leaders voluntarily supported this change, data analysis will focus on perceptions and presentations of the military's role in politics, its relationship with the civil government, and approaches to the Kurdish question.

### **3.2. Data Collection**

Primary source data were collected from National Security Council (MGK) and Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) press releases from the timeframe of analysis of this thesis, 2007-2012. The MGK meets bi-monthly and issues a press release after each meeting, meaning that a total of six (6) press releases were available for each year of analysis. These press releases were downloaded from the electronic archive of press releases available on the MGK website (<http://www.mgk.gov.tr/index.php/milliguvencilik-kurulu/mgk-basin-aciklamalari>).

Although TSK press releases are published on the Turkish Armed Forces' website (<http://www.tsk.tr/>), the electronic archive of TSK press releases from 2007-2012 is not available to the public. The researcher requested access the electronic archive of the press releases by submitting a written petition for knowledge acquisition (*bilgi edinme*). However, the research's request was denied. As such, data were collected from press releases published in newspapers and available through the electronic archives of those newspapers. A variety of newspaper archive databases were used and cross referenced, the foremost of which were the electronic archives of Hürriyet

(<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/>), Millet (<http://www.millet.com.tr/>), and Zaman (<http://www.zaman.com.tr/>) newspapers. A total of ten (10) press releases were collected from the electronic archives of online newspapers for each year of analysis. The number ten was selected as the sample size because it represented the lowest common denominator of press releases identified per year (for the year 2009, only 10 TSK press releases could be located). In collecting data from online newspaper archives, the researcher's aim was to select a representative sample of press releases published in their full entirety rather than as media summaries.

In addition to data collected from press releases, semi-structured interviews were conducted with retired military officers to triangulate the findings of the discourse and content analyses, thereby offering a more in-depth evaluation of the relationship between demilitarization and approaches to conflict resolution. The objective of the interviews was to identify whether, when, and how a normative shift in the military's self-perception of its role in politics occurred. The findings of these interviews are incorporated into the results of the empirical analysis chapters.

The interviews were conducted in Turkish and recorded by the interviewer, who took detailed notes by hand to protect the identity and anonymity of the interviewees. The quotations attributed to interview participants in this thesis were translated by the researcher and represent paraphrased quotations from the researcher's interview notes. The interviews were conducted following the analysis of MGK and TSK press releases to ensure the questions corresponded with the findings of the data. The interviewees have been assigned random numbers by which they are referred in this thesis.

### **3.3. Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method commonly used in the field of International Relations (IR) and Political Science. Salter and Mutlu (2013) suggest that the study of discourse entered IR through the works of Foucault and Derrida (p. 113). Discourse analysis studies spoken and written language, as well as other forms of communication including pictorial representations, to understand how meaning is constructed in the social world. Discourse analysis begins with the premise that language is both social and political. Language can be understood as a series of signs that ascribe meaning to material and non-material objects. However, Foucault (1972) suggests that language should not be understood as simply a grouping of signs but that language consists of “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). In this sense, language is a social practice that simultaneously comprises and composes the social world (Salter & Mutlu, 2013, p. 113).

Within the field of IR, the works of Austin (1975) have been prominent in developing the notion of the speech act. Austin (1975) suggests that words have action in their utterance, suggesting that the act of speech is a critical site for analysis. By incorporating the concept of the speech act into security studies, IR scholars have developed securitization theory, which suggests that problems are removed from the realm of normal politics and designated as security issues through speech acts that label them as existential threats (Buzan et al., 1998; Weaver, 1995). Securitization theory seeks to understand who can securitize what issues for whom and under what conditions (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 32). As such, security acquires meaning through social construction and political practice. As Waever (1995) states, “security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance itself is the act” (p.

55). The concept of the speech act allows IR scholarship to examine the role that language plays in the construction of security threats. Although securitization theory does not serve as the theoretical framework for this thesis, I begin my analysis by focusing on the construction of meaning through language, employing the tools of discourse analysis to understand the relationship between language and political practice.

Discourse analysis examines representations, which become institutionalized and normalized through their reproduction over time. The task of the researcher is to highlight similarities and differences between representations in order to understand how social reality is constructed from discourse (Neumann, 2008). Salter and Mutlu (2013, pp. 113-114) identify three types of discourse analysis, focusing on continuity, change, and rupture. They suggest that 'plastic discourse analysis' focuses on continuities within a particular discourse by looking at intertextuality and identifying common metaphorical tropes that contribute to a master narrative. 'Elastic discourse analysis' examines the emergence or disappearance of certain linguistic features or practices to understand the processes by which discourses change. The third type of discourse analysis, genealogical discourse analysis, identifies ruptures, silences and breaks in the discourse; in doing so, it seeks to highlight marginalized voices or subjugated knowledge. Discourse analysis can also be used to study absences in the discourse. A single representation within a particular discourse signifies that the discourse is closed and suggests a hegemonic representation, as the absence of alternative representations is political (Neumann, 2008, p. 70).

Neumann (2008) identifies three steps of discourse analysis. The researcher must first select the appropriate texts for examination. At this stage, the researcher should specify a timeframe, mediums of publication, speakers or participants of the discourse, and specific representations appropriate for examination based on the nature of the research question. Neumann (2008) suggests selecting text around “monuments,” or works commonly cited in the literature (p. 67). For the discourse analysis of this thesis, I have selected press releases from the MGK and TSK from the time period of 2007-2012. For both analyses, the timeframe and medium of publication are the same, as are the specific representations under examination, allowing me as the researcher to highlight differences produced from the nature of the speaker.

According to Neumann (2008), the researcher should next map dominant and alternative representations appearing in the discourse to examine where power is maintained or challenged (p. 71). Hansen (2006) also suggests mapping the discourse around key issues in order to reveal processes of continuity and change (p. 27). In this thesis, I map representations of common themes in the discourse, including terrorism, security, democracy, and the nation, as presented in the ensuing chapters.

Finally, the third step of discourse analysis requires layering discourses, or categorizing information to make sense of its meaning (Neumann, 2008). Discourses vary in terms of their historical legacy, dominance, degree of variation, marginalization, and fluidity. The final task of the researcher is to make sense of these layers. As Hansen (2006) suggests, facts do not produce automatic conclusions but require interpretation (p. 28). Through discourse analysis, the research provides

interpretations by examining the depth, significance, and presentation of discursive representations in the discourse.

Discourse analysis has been used by researchers for a variety of aims in the field of IR. Andrew Neal (2012) uses discourse analysis to examine legislative practices in the British parliament with respect to issues of national security and terrorism. Juha Vuori (2012) employs speech act theory to examine the political use of language in the construction of security issues in the People's Republic of China. Lene Hansen (2006) employs discourse analysis to understand the foreign policies of Western states during the Bosnian War. Iver Neumann (1996) examines depictions of a European "other" in the construction of a Russian "self" through the use of discourse analysis. These and other scholars have utilized discourse analysis to understand how meaning is constructed, conveyed, and reproduced, although each does so with different aims and research objectives. Their ability to do so speaks to the high degree utility and flexibility of discourse analysis within the field of IR.

Epstein (2011) suggests that discourse analysis is a theoretically parsimonious and empirically grounded means of studying identity in IR that can be utilized at multiple levels of analysis. Epstein suggests that the strength of discourse analysis for IR is that it allows the researcher to examine state identities without treating the state as an individual human. In other words, Epstein (2011) criticizes traditional practices in IR that assume that what is true for the individual must be true for the state. Rather, through discourse analysis the concept of identity can travel through levels of analysis including the individual, the institution, and the state without personify the state as a 'self' (p. 328), which has significant applications for the present study. As

this thesis aims to understand changes in civil-military relations through discourse analysis, it must approach multiple levels of analysis without conflict the institutional identity of the Turkish military with the individual identity of a single leader; moreover, it must refrain from personifying the military in reductionist terms. The strength of discourse analysis is that it allows the research to examine identity at multiple levels of analysis.

In addition to studying identity, discourse analysis is a useful tool for analyzing policy and policy documents. Discourse establishes the preconditions for action, and discourse analysis demonstrates the relationship between these preconditions and their outcomes (Neumann, 2008). This is not to imply that preconditions have pre-determined outcomes, but that discourse analysis allows the research to study the relationship between discourse and policy outcomes by examining the groundwork from which action emerges.

In a study utilizing discourse analysis to examine the link between identity and policy, Hansen (2006) employs a poststructuralist framework to understand how meaning and identity are constructed through language. Conceptualized in this manner, language is a system of signs that produces meaning “through a simultaneous construction of identity and difference” (Hansen, 2006, p. 15). Hansen (2006) suggests that, because language is political, it is “a site for the production and reproduction of particular subjectivities and identities” (p. 16). While the ontological and epistemological basis of this thesis are not poststructuralist, the thesis benefits from Hansen’s framework. Specifically, this thesis borrows Hansen’s (2006) assertion that language is fundamentally political in that it contributes to the

production and reproduction of certain identities and predications while rejecting others (p. 36). The conceptual understanding of the role that discourse plays in the production and reproduction of policy and identity, as borrowed from Hansen's (2006) framework, is presented below in Figure 3:

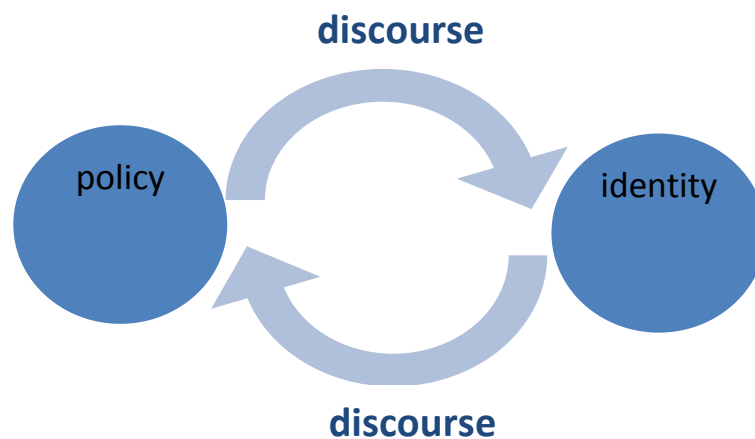


Figure 3: Relationship between discourse, identity, and policy

According to Hansen's (2006) framework, discourse forms the link between identity and policy. However, discourse analysis does not seek to establish causal relationships. Rather, it begins from the theoretical assumption that representations and policies are discursively connected (Hansen, 2006, p. 25), meaning that neither is a cause of the other but they are mutually constructed. As such, the discursive link between identity (or representations of identity) and policy must be consistent and balanced. The discourse becomes less stable if the state or institutional identity is internally inconsistent. The discourse provides connects policy and identity by reproducing the values and characteristics of one within the other.

While in an ideal situation the political discourse would provide a stable link between policy and identity, the construction of discourse is limited by external variables, including material capabilities, institutional practices, and the expectations



of other actors. As such, the relationship between policy and identity is complex.

While the presence of external constraints may limit the extent to which the military's identity may be distilled from its discourse, I will attempt to consider the influence of social and historical contexts in my discourse analysis. As such, I hope to examining the military's identity and changes to that identity as manifested through its discourse on terrorism and the Kurdish question.

Critical to the process of discourse analysis is the means and methods by which concepts are analyzed. Ido Oren (1995) suggests that democracy is a concept constructed through the American political experience that reflects certain norms of behavior. As such, Oren argues that democracy can be understood as a discourse and not as an independent variable or material object. In other words, democracy, both as understood in the realm of academia and as commonly used to refer to a political ideal, is not an objective endpoint but a social construction that reflects the norms and ideals of a particular time and context. During the process of discourse analysis for this thesis, I will study how democracy and democratic norms are articulated by the armed forces, rather than the extent to which the ideal of democratic governance is reached in material terms. A similar approach will be carried out for concepts such as terrorism and the nation, all of which will be understood as discursive productions rather than material objects during the process of discourse analysis.

To examine security through discourse is not to deny the existence of material threats but to look at how those threats are constructed linguistically. As such, it is not enough to state that the threats of terrorism or Kurdish separatism were institutionally resolved in Turkey through democratic legislation; instead, I seek to

explore how meaning is ascribed to threats of terrorism, democracy, and civil-military relations in the discourse. Hansen (2006) and other scholars have highlighted the usefulness of discourse analysis in studying the relationship between identity and policy. In this thesis, I am examining the evolution of TSK discourse toward the Kurdish question with respect to changing civil-military relations. Using Hansen's (2006) framework to connect identity, discourse, and policy, I examine whether and how a change in the discourse used by the military to describe security threats is accompanied by a more democratic identity favoring civilian control of security issues. The discourse analysis for this thesis thus incorporates Hansen's (2006) model of the relationship between discourse and identity in order to explore whether, to what extent, and under what circumstances the armed forces changed during the period of analysis.

Discourse analysis was carried out on National Security Council (MGK) and Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) press releases from 2007-2012. For purposes of analysis, the texts were classified according to their year and order of publication. In this classification system, the texts were named by two numbers, the first of which refers to their year of publication (e.g. 2007 is shortened to '07') and the second of which indicates their order of publication (e.g. 1-6 indicating the first through sixth press releases). As such, Text 10/4 would refer to the fourth press releases of 2010. When texts are referenced in this chapter, they are referred to by these classifications.

The texts were reviewed and annotated in chronological order. During this process, discourses, themes, and linguistic structures were identified. Following the initial review of the press releases, the notes were compiled and compared to highlight

reoccurring discourses, themes, and linguistics structures. The findings of the discourse analyses are presented in Chapters 4-5.

### **3.4. Content Analysis**

In addition to using discourse analysis, this thesis employs formal content analysis as a secondary tool to analyze the data from press releases. Content analysis is a systematic and rigorous approach to studying documents for quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods research (White & Marsh, 2006). It is a systematic and replicable research method that describes communication and draws inferences about meaning (Riffe, 2005). While content analysis is commonly used as a leading research method in its own right, Salter and Mutlu (2013) suggest that content analysis may be a useful tool used alongside discourse analysis to assist in extracting meaning from a text (p. 116). Content analysis is used in this thesis to measure the appearance and frequency of certain words and phrases in a particular discourse. Content analysis allows the researcher to move from the level of the text to the research question by making inferences between the text and its content (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 27). By tracking the (dis)appearance of particular linguistic units in the discourse, the researcher is able to trace the development of a linguistic practice. In this way, the content analysis of this thesis supports the discourse analysis by allowing the researcher to identify and trace the development of change and continuity in the texts by measuring keywords and phrases.

Content analysis works by coding data according to a particular schema. For quantitative research methods, the coding schema is determined a priori and the data are coded according to this schema for analysis, increasing the reproducibility of the

content analysis (White & Marsh, 2006). The procedures used for content analysis in this thesis are taken from the procedures outlined by White and Marsh (2006, p. 30). Each individual document is analyzed and coded according to a pre-established schema. The documents are then grouped according to year of publication, and the coding results for each year are grouped together. The coding units are limited to individual words or phrases exceeding no more than three words. Synonyms are initially coded separately and then later combined under a larger category of discourse for thematic analysis.

The data were coded by hand by the researcher. Each document was analyzed according to a coding schema that was established a priori and included an exhaustive list of relevant, valid, and mutually exclusive categories. In cases where new categories were found to exist and/or when the existing categories were deemed insufficient or inappropriate, a new coding schema was devised and the data were re-coded from the beginning. Later, the results were compiled into a table to facilitate data analysis. The coding system was designed to be replicable, and the coding results were double-checked by the researcher to increase reliability before analysis. The coding results and an interpretation of the analysis are presented in Chapters 4-5.

### **3.5. Limitations**

Access to military (TSK) press releases was limited in this thesis. Because the researcher's request for access was denied and because the archive is not made available to the public, it is difficult to determine the total number of press releases per year, let alone obtain access to those press releases. To overcome issues of access, the researcher relied on electronic newspaper media archives for the collection of

TSK press releases. As such, the entirety of the TSK press releases for the timeframe of analysis could not be accessed and evaluated for the purposes of this thesis. This issue of data collection limits the generalizability and reliability of the findings with respect to the TSK press releases.

In collecting data from online newspaper archives, the researcher's aim was to select a representative sample, although without access to the entirety of the statements—including information such as the number of total press releases per year—the researcher cannot be confident that the contents of these statements reflect the general or broader trends for each year and across the period of analysis. In part, the statements were selected using a convenience sampling method: the research accessed the online archives of various media sources and collected statements as available in their entirety.

Though the research sought objectivity from her sample sets, given the limitations to data collection, the selected texts do not represent a truly random sample but rather include the sample of texts that were given the greatest importance in the media. The drawbacks of this limitation are that certain discourse (e.g. the media) are likely to be over-represented while more mundane events are likely to be under-represented. The collective result of this limitation is that the findings of this analysis are likely to disproportionately reveal the more “controversial” elements of TSK press releases while omitting more average press releases.

In addition to the issue of data collection, the content analysis of MGK and TSK Press Releases from 2007-2012 presented in Chapters 4-5 is limited in that it

measures the frequency of keywords and phrases by looking at the raw number of appearances rather than calculating those frequencies as a percentage of total words. Thus, while the frequency of a keyword may have increased in a certain year, the keyword may actual appear in a smaller percentage of the overall text if the total number of words within that text has also increased. In other words, an increase or decreases in the frequency of a particular keyword does not necessarily reflect the overall importance of that word within the text. Changes in frequency may be contributed to changes in the overall length of the press releases, which are not included in the content analysis. Despite this limitation, the content analysis is still useful in that provides a map of individual words and phrases used within the discourse and allows the researcher to focus on the frequency of these particular words. In doing so, the findings of the discourse analysis are augmented through a close examination of the recurrence of keywords.

Finally, the scope of this study is limited to the military's perspective on demilitarization and the Kurdish question. As such, I have omitted the evaluation of government and Kurdish sources in order to focus my research question specifically on the military. While an analysis of the civil government's and Kurdish groups' approaches to a democratic solution process would provide a valuable contribution to the literature, they are beyond the scope of this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: ANALYSIS OF MGK PRESS RELEASES**

The most comprehensive changes to the 1982 Constitution were carried out in 2001 and included changes to a total of 34 articles. Because it was drafted following the 1980 military intervention, the 1982 Constitution in its original form provided political privileges to the military, specifically via the influence of the MGK. Although the Constitution was amended multiple times following its enactment in 1982, the 2001 amendments “can be seen as a crucial step towards the elimination of non-liberal, non-democratic elements from the 1982 Constitution” (Gönenç 2004). Of the eight waves of amendments carried out to the 1982 Constitution, the 2001 amendments can be seen as having “the most far-reaching effects on fundamental rights and liberties” (Özbudun, 2007). The significance of the constitutional reforms was echoed a former AKP parliament member, who described the 1982 Constitution as follows:

The nation-state of Turkey was founded by the military. As such, the law and institutional structure of the Turkish state were all developed by military leaders. If we look at constitutional law in Turkey, we see that all of Turkey’s constitutions were written by military leaders. The current constitution was written after the 1980 coup and period of military law in Turkey. As such, the Turkish constitution is essentially a military document. (*Participant 10*)

Thus, the reforms served to demilitarize the Constitution and remove the military's influence in politics.

Authors such as Gönenç (2004) and Örüçü (2011) have suggested that the Turkish government, in preparing the Constitutional amendment package, prioritized the importance of Turkey's EU candidacy status over domestic political considerations. In other words, while attempts to amend the Constitution for reasons of domestic consideration, such as expanding the term limit of the presidency or reducing restrictions on political party participation, had failed in previous years to pass a parliamentary vote, reforms in line with the EU framework of accession were supported and prioritized with urgency across the political spectrum. In line with EU standards, the 2001 Constitutional amendments expanded the scope of individual rights and freedoms, revised state institutions, and contributed to the demilitarization of the civil-military relations in Turkey.

As part of the 2001 Constitutional reform package, Article 118 of the Constitution, under the heading of "National Security Council," was amended to favor the demilitarization of politics. First, amendments to Article 118 increased the number of civilian representatives present at MGK meetings, thus leveling the count of civil and military leaders to five representatives each by adding the Minister of Justice to the MGK. Prior to this amendment, the MGK included five military representatives, the Chief of General Staff and the four commanders of each branch of the armed forces; however, the MGK included only four civilian members, specifically the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the



Minister of Defense (Gurcan, 2016). The addition of the Minister of Justice effectively eliminated the military's dominance of the MGK.

Additionally, Article 118 was reworded to underscore the authority of the civil government. In its original wording, Article 118 stated:

The Council of Ministers shall give priority consideration to the decisions of the National Security Council concerning measures that it deems necessary for the preservation of the existence and independence of the state, the integrity and indivisibility of the country, and the peace and security of society. (Cited in Özbudun 2007, p. 193)

In its original language, Article 118 emphasized the “priority” that should be given to the MGK. Furthermore, it implied that the MGK was a decision-making body on issues of national security. In contrast, the article was rewritten in 2001 as follows:

The National Security Council submits to the Council of Ministers its advisory decisions and its views on ensuring the necessary coordination with regard to the formulation, determination, and implementation of the national security policy of the State. (cited in Özbudun, 2007, p. 193-194)

The rewording emphasized the advisory role of the MGK, thus suggesting that while the MGK could advise the Council of Ministers, decision-making ultimately resided with the civil government. This is significant because it implies that the MGK would no longer be the sole institution responsible for drafting Turkey's security and foreign policy agenda (Çağaptay, 2003). Further, the article was amended to specify that the Cabinet would “evaluate” any decision made by the MGK, rather than “give priority consideration” (Özbudun, 2007, p. 194), again underlining the advisory nature of the MGK.

In addition to changes to the structure of the MGK, Article 15 of the Constitution was amended to allow for decrees issued during the period of military rule from 1980-1982 to be opened to constitutional review (Gönenç, 2004; Özücü, 2011). After

the military coup in 1980, Turkey was governed by MGK decrees until the 1982 Constitution came into effect. Due to provisions within the constitution, those decrees, known as the “12 September Laws,” had been immune to constitutional review. The 2001 amendments to Article 15 removed the special status of these decrees and thus enabled them to be declared unconstitutional (Gönenç, 2004; Özbudun, 2007). As such, the influence and authority of the MGK as well as the legal legacy of military rule was reduced through constitutional reforms.

The 2001 Constitutional amendments are significant because, prior to its reform, the MGK had influenced government policy on issues outside the realm of national security, including foreign policy, human rights, education, and economic policy (Gönenç, 2004, p. 107). Because the decisions of the MGK were traditionally respected and upheld by the civil government, the MGK served as an obstacle for demilitarization, as it was an undemocratic institution with disproportionate influence in politics. The constitutional amendments had the effect of decreasing the military’s institutional role and influence in politics.

In 2003, the 7<sup>th</sup> EU harmonization package was introduced, the reforms of which included further revisions to the MGK, including provisions for electing the Council’s Secretary General from civilian members. Prior to these reforms, the Chief of General Staff had the power to select a three-star general as the MGK’s Secretary General, thus reinforcing the military’s control over the MGK: the military not only had the authority to lead the MGK but it had the ability to select its leader, who was to be a member of the armed forces. The 2003 reforms transferred that power to the Prime Minister, who would be able to recommend a civilian bureaucrat to the

position of Secretary General. These reforms were fully realized in August 2004 when a civilian, Yiğit Alpogan, a former Turkish ambassador to Greece, was appointed as MGK Secretary General for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic (Müftüler-Bac, 2005, p. 26; Özbudun, 2007, p. 194).

Furthermore, in line with these reforms and revisions to Article 118 of the Constitution in 2001, the scope of the Secretary General's role was limited to an advisory role under the Prime Minister and his cabinet on issues of national security policy making. The executive powers of the Secretary General were largely removed, leaving primarily secretarial duties. Along with the reduction of the MGK's capacity to dictate government policy, the frequency of MGK meetings was reduced from once a month to once every two months (European Commission 2003). These changes in leadership selection, frequency of meeting, and the scope of the MGK's political authority limited the military's ability to set the "political tempo" in Ankara (Çagaptay, 2003, p. 214).

In light of these reforms, this section evaluates the impact of institutional changes to civil-military relations on approaches to conflict resolution by evaluating the press releases of the National Security Council (MGK) from 2007-2012.

#### **4.1. Discourse Analysis of MGK Press Releases**

Discourse analysis was conducted on the National Security Council (MGK) press releases from 2007-2012. A total of six press releases were issued each year, in accordance with the bi-monthly meetings of the MGK. Discourse analysis was carried out following the procedures discussed in Chapter 3 to examine

intertextuality and interdiscursivity, the findings of which are presented below. The section begins by presenting the findings on a variety of themes, including the construction of dichotomies such as in/out and us/them and a discussion of important omissions from the MGK press releases. Next, a brief description and overview of each identified theme is presented. Finally, it concludes with a summary discussion of the significance of these findings.

Overall, an expansion of the discourse on democracy can be observed throughout the timeframe of analysis, as democracy figures more prominently and centrally in the texts from 2007-2012, including through the introduction of a multi-directional approach to counterterrorism. However, along with the expansion of the discourse on democracy, an increase in the use of the on national unity can also be observed, particularly with respect to issues of terrorism. That is to say, the expansion of the discourse on democratic ideals and institutions occurs alongside an expansion of the discourse on national unity. Thus, the discourse on democracy within the MGK press releases from 2007-2012 is expanded to include approaches to counterterrorism but does not emphasize diversity within the nation; instead, it remains grounded in the concept of a single national identity. This is significant in that it may suggest agreement between military and civilian members of the MGK.

#### **4.1.1. Themes and Linguistic Structures**

##### **4.1.1.1. Construction of “In/Out” Dichotomy**

The structure of the press releases issued by the National Security Council (MGK) reflects a dichotomy of in/out that is reproduced through the discourse. The statements are commonly divided to include two main sections: an internal security

section, which usually comes first, and an external security section, which typically occurs in the latter part of the press releases. The internal section addresses problems within the borders of the Turkish Republic whereas the external section identifies security threats outside the borders. The statements are physically structured to create a dichotomy of in/out, which is reinforced in the discourse used to describe threats.

Although both the structure of the texts and the nature of the discourse construct a dichotomy of in/out, a tension sometimes emerges within this dichotomy, as when, for example, a clear division between internal and external threats cannot be drawn. This issue is often seen with respect to issues of terrorism and Turkey's relations with Iraq. The discourse attempts to draw a stern line between in/out, classifying Iraq and any terrorist activity originating outside of Turkey as external. However, this classification is challenged when the "external" activities cause an "internal" challenge for Turkey.

Initially, in the early statements, terrorism is discussed more explicitly in the external section of the statements, where the need for Iraq's stability and territorial integrity are repeatedly emphasized, than in the internal sections, where terrorism is referenced in the abstract. The need for Iraq's stability and territorial integrity are never explicitly connected to separatist terrorists in Turkey. Similarly, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq is not addressed directly by name but only referenced as "northern Iraq" or "Iraq's northern region." In doing so, the MGK press releases avoid using direct language to refer to "Kurdishness" or a Kurdish problem.

With respect to Turkey's foreign relations with Iraq, the texts include repeated assertions of the need to maintain Iraq's political and territorial integrity. In the political-historical context, this assertion can be tied to the Kurdish question, particularly through Turkish concerns over the strength of a semi-autonomous Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq. However, the link between the need for Iraq's territorial integrity and the threat of Kurdish separatists in Turkey is never made explicit in the MGK press releases. Moreover, in the first year of analysis (2007), Iraq's unity and territorial integrity are emphasized, but there is no mention of Turkey's territorial integrity. That is to say, references to national unity in the early texts appear with respect to Iraq rather than Turkey; later, the discourse on national unity shifts to include a strong emphasis on the need for "our nation's" unity or the indivisibility of "our country."

The discourse on unity is presented differently when discussing internal and external threats. Unity is the aim or the goal with respect to external threats, as in statements that Iraq's political and territorial unity should be preserved; here, unity is the end result. However, when discussing internal security threats, particularly terrorism, unity is ascribed to the nation and described as threatened by terrorism. Thus, unity is a concept to be protected rather than created; it is not an end result but a justification for counterterrorism, as terrorism is constructed as a threat to 'our' national unity.

Democracy is presented as the antithesis of terrorism within the construction of both internal and external threats. However, democracy is described in more concrete and tangible terms with respect to external rather than internal threats. For example, specific election procedures and results are discussed in Iraq (Text 10/01), while

democratic practices in Turkey are mentioned largely in the abstract, such as emphasizing the need for cooperation between institutions without specifying the mechanisms through which this cooperation is achieved or the end results to be obtained from such cooperation. This begins to change, however, with later texts that introduce the importance of education in the fight against terrorism, a surprising element initially introduced in Text 12/1 without additional explanation.

Text 12/1 describes the need for better education in eastern and southeastern Anatolia. Although no explicit connection is established in Text 12/1, education can be seen as an issue of development for Turkey's southeast, where terrorist activity is concentrated. Education resurfaces in Text 12/5, although this time it is placed within the context of regional development and explicitly connected to terrorism, both as threatened by and a solution to terrorism. That regional development and education in Turkey's southeastern provinces are explicitly mentioned in discussions on terrorism represents the emergence of a new theme in the discourse. However, it should be noted that these references to education and development are directly preceded by assessments of military operations against terrorism. Thus, new efforts in terms of development and education are not constructed as replacements to military operations but as supplemental to ongoing military efforts. This suggests a change rather than a rupture in the overall discourse by which democracy is emphasized but military efforts are not rejected.

#### **4.1.1.2. Omissions from MGK Press Releases**

The omission of information, events, and the names of important political actors and organizations from the press releases is striking. The PKK is only directly referred to

by name once in the entirety of the press releases from 2007-2012. This reference occurs in the final statement of 2008 (Text 08/6) when the PKK is named within a discussion of the need for security cooperation in Iraq. Thus, in this context, the PKK is referenced while discussing external security threats. Elsewhere, the PKK is referred to as a separatist terrorist organization or a terrorist network. Likewise, its leaders and members are neither named nor referenced; the group is described as a single collective, which serves both to dehumanize and marginalize it, particularly within the context of domestic security. This serves to present the PKK as an amorphous and abstract threat, rather than a tangible, homegrown insurgency.

Additionally, the election of Abdullah Gul in 2007 is not mentioned in the press releases, nor is the e-memorandum issued by the Armed Forces referred to within the texts. Similarly, trials against military officials are absent from the texts. Overall, domestic events and developments are omitted from the press releases, with the exception of the General Parliamentary elections in 2011, which are referenced within the discourse on security. The omission of domestic politics—particularly controversial events challenging civil-military relations— from the press releases is significant in that it appears to suggest an agreement within the MGK whereby civil and military leaders construct a mutual description of national security, void of political issues sensitive to either party.

Finally, references to a peace or solution process are absent from the discourse, although a mutli-dimensional approach is increasingly emphasized throughout the timeframe of analysis and tied to cooperation among democratic institutions. Despite references to a multi-dimensional approach, the Peace Process or specific elements



pertaining to it are never mentioned. For example, while Kurdish language rights are an integral part of the Peace Process, language appears only once in the statements and serves to reinforce the importance of Turkish as the only language in Turkey. As with the omission of controversial domestic politics, this is significant in that it seems to imply a compromise in the MGK by which security discourse is mutually constructed.

#### **4.1.1.3. Construction of “Us/Them” Dichotomy**

In addition to the construction of an in/out dichotomy, a dichotomy of us/them is constructed in the texts through the use of the first person plural, most commonly presented as the first person plural possessive. In doing so, the discourse describes an “us” defined in contrast to an amorphous and unspecified them. The first person plural is most commonly utilized when describing the country, nation, or state, as in, “our country,” “our nation,” and “our state,” to justify actions against the terrorist threat. The use of the first person creates a situation in which “we” or “our nation” are directly threatened by terrorism, and in which strong action must be taken against the terrorist organization for the protection and preservation of “us” and “our nation.” Thus, “we” are the targets of terrorism, although “we” are never defined more specifically than the nation or its citizens. As such, the nation appears as a threatened entity in need of protection, justifying the fight against terrorism.

The dichotomy of us/them is also used to describe Turkey’s foreign policy.

Regarding Turkey’s counter-terrorism efforts in 2008, Turkish military operations in Iraq are described as beneficial “not only for our country but for the whole region” (Text 08/2). The use of the first person plural to discuss Turkey in the international

realm reinforces the unity of the nation and distinguishes it from other countries and nations: in the international arena, “we” are a single group in contrast to “them.”

#### **4.1.1.4. On-going Nature of the Fight against Terrorism**

The discourse emphasizes the ongoing nature of the struggle against terrorism. Despite changes in the discourse—such as the expansion of the discourse on democracy or a new emphasis on a multi-directional approach to terrorism—the discourse underscores the continuing nature of the conflict against terrorism. This serves to create continuity between the texts and within the discourse through phrases such as “once more,” “as always,” and “continuing.” These phrases serve to link the discourse while minimizing the appearance of change; new discursive features are presented as a continuation of the old rather than a break in the discourse. Thus, changes in the discourse are buried underneath a layer of language that serves to connect the texts, suggesting that they build upon the other. This is significant in that it suggest that the MGK sought continuity rather than change in its discourse on terrorism.

#### **4.1.1.5. Length and Style of the Press Releases**

The length of the press releases expands considerably in the years 2010-2011, when the average length of the statements doubles compared to earlier statements from 2007-2009. (For an example of a longer statement, see Text 10/4.) As the length of the statements expands, so does the nature of the discourse and the quantity of the topics discussed. Notably, foreign policy issues appear more frequently in the press releases in 2010-2011. However, it should also be noted that it was during this time

that the Arab Spring became a foreign policy concern, and a significant portion of the added length is reserved for Arab Spring countries.

Along with the expanded length and the increase in topics, the texts contain an increase in democratic language overall. While the need for regional stability continues to appear within the texts, the discourse on democracy figures more prominently and surpasses references to stability in terms of emphasis in the later texts (2010-2012). Again, it should be noted that the enlargement of the discourse on democracy occurs in hand with the Arab Spring. However, significant for this analysis, it should also be noted that alongside the proliferation of the discourse on democracy, the discourse on terrorism is also expanded to include new words and concepts, such as a “comprehensive approach” that includes “the principle of cooperation between institutions” in the struggle against terrorism (Text 10/02). Thus, the discourses on terrorism and democracy expand simultaneously and overlap within the texts. This overlap is significant in that it presents democracy as a solution to terrorism. While in earlier texts (2007-2009) democracy was described as threatened by terrorism, democracy is framed as a solution to terrorism in 2010 through an expanded approach to counterterrorism. The implementation of a democratic approach is explicitly presented as an integral part of the struggle against terrorism, and a diversity of new fields, such as social, psychological, and cultural, are referenced within a multi-dimensional approach (Text 10/3). The overlap between the discourses on terrorism and democracy is also evident in references to communal peace (Text 10/4) and individual rights and freedoms (Text 10/6). Thus, while the length of the texts increases, so does the overlap of discourses.

With respect to the style of the press releases, a new ending is added to the texts beginning with the fifth text of 2011 and continuing until the final statement analyzed in 2012. The phrase, “announced respectfully to the public” (*kamuoyuna saygila duyurulur*) is added to the press releases (for example, see Text 11/5). As this phrase is typically associated with the press releases of the Turkish Armed Forces, it is significant that it is added to the MGK press releases toward the end of the timeframe of analysis and alongside an increase in the use of the discourse on democracy.

#### **4.1.2. Discourses**

In addition to the linguistic constructs described above, the following discourses were identified in the press releases. Each discourse is discussed briefly below, highlighting elements of interdiscursivity.

##### **4.1.2.1. Discourse 1: Terrorism**

The discourse on terrorism includes few specific details mentioned with respect to the nature of the threat or the terrorist organization. Rather, terrorism is discussed in broad, abstract terms. The struggle against terrorism is commonly evoked, and it is justified in terms of the need to protect “our” national unity. As mentioned above, the PKK is only named once throughout the time frame of analysis; in all other instances, it is described as a separatist organization without mention of ethnicity.

While terrorism is described broadly throughout the timeframe of analysis, the final MGK statement analyzed, Text 12/6, presents a noteworthy departure from these trends. In Text 12/6, military operations against terrorist targets are assessed and

found successful despite the harsh conditions of winter, an interesting addition to the otherwise terse nature of the MGK press releases. Furthermore, Text 12/6 references terrorists as individuals within an organization, rather than simply describing an abstract terrorist network, as in each of the proceeding texts. However, references to democracy and democratic ideals are absent from the discourse on terrorism in the final text.

Throughout the timeframe of analysis, terrorism is frequently connected to other discourses, thus expanding the scope of the discourse on terrorism. These connections and their implications are discussed in detail below with respect to a variety of discourses, including the discourse on democracy.

#### **4.1.2.2. Discourse 2: Democracy**

Within the MGK press releases, the concept of democracy is constructed in a variety of ways, including in terms of democratic political practices, ideals, institutions, and a democratic approach to terrorism. Overall, the discourse on democracy expands throughout the timeframe of analysis and becomes more closely linked with the discourse on terrorism. In particular, democracy is described as threatened by terrorism and also essential to counter-terrorism efforts. The connection between the discourses on democracy and terrorism establishes a high degree of interdiscursivity that is reproduced throughout the texts.

As the discourse on democracy expands, the connections made between democracy and the fight against terrorism become more overt. Specifically, the discourse constructs terrorism as a threat to democracy and the rule of law (Text 09/2).

Similarly, a growing emphasis is also placed on democratic ideals such as peace, brotherhood, and human rights (Text 11/1) and concepts such as “the right to life,” “peace,” and “prosperity” that are threatened by terrorism. The fight against terrorism, therefore, becomes a fight to protect democracy. In such constructions, democracy is not presented as a solution to terrorism but is threatened by terrorism. Similar constructions are present in the discourse on unity through which the unity of the nation is threatened by terrorism. As such, a degree of interdiscursivity can be observed between the discourses on democracy, terrorism, and unity. Despite the overt connections drawn between the discourses, a democratic approach to conflict resolution remains absent from the discourse of the early texts.

A multi-dimensional approach to terrorism emerges during the second half of the timeframe of analysis (2010-2012; for example, see Text 10/1) and is often explicitly tied to democracy and legal principles. With respect to a multi-dimensional approach, this is also when an “approach” or “strategy” against terrorism is explicitly introduced in the discourse. When military operations are employed against terrorism, a “strategy” is not explicitly discussed, but rather the discourse seems to assume that military operations represent counterterrorism strategy. However, when a multi-dimensional approach is introduced, it is explicitly framed as a strategy, meaning that there is a conscious effort in the discourse to connect expanded democratic efforts with counter-terrorism by emphasizing the danger of terrorism to democratic law and practice. In Text 10/01, citizens are called upon to demonstrate and reinforce sentiments of brotherhood in an age of democracy and democratic principles in direct opposition to terrorism. Thus, democracy, its practices, and its ideals are constructed as the antithesis to terrorism.

The discourse on a democratic approach stems from the construction of democracy and terrorism as antitheses: by reinforcing democratic ideals, terrorism can be eradicated. Interestingly, nationalistic language—such as “our citizens,” “the unity of our country” and “the peace and security of our nation”—are invoked alongside the discourse on democracy. Thus, democracy is constructed as a civic duty, and citizens have an obligation to their country to reinforce good democratic ideals and practice. This is striking in that it represents a statist and more conservative expansion of the discourse on democracy. Differences within the nation, including ethnic differences, are notably absent from the discourse on democracy, which instead maintains a connection to discourses emphasizing national unity. Such discursive constructions might suggest agreement within the MGK through which the military is not undermined but perhaps actively contributing to the construction of the discourse—or, to re-phrase, civilian leaders are not radically altering the national security discourse but maintaining traditional emphasis on national unity.

As the discourse on democracy expands, it emphasizes institutional cooperation for the application of counter-terrorism measures. A new strategy to counter terrorism is clearly specified in Texts 11/1 and 11/4, the first time that a strategy against terrorism is named in the discourse. Furthermore, the texts state that the new strategy will be carried out by the Ministry of the Interior, thus delegating counterterrorism efforts to an organization other than the military. It should be noted that the delegation of responsibility to the Ministry of the Interior complicates the in/out dichotomy reinforced in the security discourse: delegating the fight against terrorism to the Ministry of the Interior seems to imply that terrorism is an internal threat,

although the discourse on terrorism figures prominently in topics related to foreign policy and relations with Iraq.

In addition to cooperation, democratic institutions are cited in the discourse to justify military actions (Text 07/6), implying that military operations against terrorist targets are conducted with the approval of civil institutions. Furthermore, cooperation between democratic institutions is framed as essential to the fight against terrorism. The emphasis on cooperation reinforces an expansion of the counterterrorism discourse to include non-military sectors, thus linking the discourses on democracy and terrorism. However, this expansion to new sectors is constructed as an element of the ongoing struggle against terrorism, thus constructing discursive continuity rather than change.

Despite the emergence of a democratic approach to terrorism involving democratic institutions, changes in the discourse are dampened by repeated emphasis on the ongoing nature of the struggle against terrorism and the importance of national unity in the texts. Thus, the discourse on a (new) democratic approach to terrorism is presented as a continuity of rather than a change or rupture from the discourse on terrorism. As such, the discourse on democracy seems to develop in connection with the discourses on terrorism, unity, and the nation. This promotes interdiscursive continuity in the text, whereby the discourses seem to support rather than conflict with one another. Similarly, while the emergence of a democratic approach to terrorism, particularly with respect to aspects such as culture and psychology, appears new within the discourse, it is tempered by references to the ongoing nature of the fight against terrorism. Thus, the introduction of a democratic approach is



presented as a continuation rather than a change in the discourse. In other words, the expansion of the discourse on democracy does not represent a “new voice” in the texts but a continuation of the discourse from previous texts, which might suggest compromise in the MGK.

Finally, the discourse on democracy is also applied to issues of foreign policy, whereby democratic practices are promoted in neighboring countries such as Cyprus or in connection with the Arab Spring. In this sense, the expansion of the discourse on democracy with respect to terrorism is in line with an overall expansion of the discourse, making it difficult to determine whether the discourse on democracy emerges organically in connection to the discourse on terrorism or whether this overlap is the by-product of an overall expansion of the democratic discourse in the texts.

#### **4.1.2.3. Discourse 3: Security**

As described earlier in this chapter, a distinction is drawn between in/out with respect to security threats, although the line between in/out is often blurred in practice, particularly with respect to Iraq and the issue of terrorism. Despite the distinction often being blurred, the discourse works to maintain the dichotomy between internal and external threats through the use of the first person plural to reinforce the internal through the construct of an “us” in opposition to “them”. The other “them” is sometimes constructed as other states, such as when invoking regional security, or the terrorist organization challenging “our nation.”

Overlaps between the discourse on security and other discourses, such as the discourses on terrorism and democracy, challenge the in/out dichotomy established by the discourse on security. The discourse on terrorism includes threats coming from Iraq, and the discourse on democracy includes democratic ideals and institutions abroad. When these discourses overlap, the discourse on security is expanded to include new forms of security threats. For example, Text 11/2 explicitly states that terror is not just a security problem but an issue that requires a multi-dimensional approach. This same text applies the discourse on security to the 2011 General Parliamentary elections in Turkey through language that constructs terrorism as a threat to democratic elections. This is noteworthy because it represents an overlap between the discourses on security, terrorism, and democratic politics: specifically, terrorism is presented as an existential threat to the state, although not in terms of the state's territorial integrity, which is more commonly mentioned elsewhere in the press releases with respect to both Turkey's unity and the unity of other countries such as Iraq. Instead, this connection between terrorism, security, and democracy implies that terrorism is threatening the security of the state by challenging the stability of its democratic practices and institutions. In this sense, democracy is positively ascribed to the state but hindered by terrorist activity.

While the discourses on democracy and security were previously linked with respect to elections in Iraq, the reference to elections in Turkey in Text 11/2 signals the first time that terrorism is presented as a security threat to domestic democratic politics. The General Parliament elections are also referenced in the following text, Text 11/3, in which "our people" are praised for their use of common sense, and the MGK expresses satisfaction that no security issues arose during the election, reinforcing the

connection between democratic governance and security established by the overlapping discourses.

Along with references to election security in Texts 11/2 and 11/3, the texts provide more explicit connections between the discourses on democracy, terrorism, and security throughout the timeframe of analysis through the use of language pertaining to democratic ideals, such as brotherhood, freedom, and human rights, within the discourses of security and terrorism.

#### **4.1.2.4. Discourse 4: the Nation**

As alluded to in earlier portions of this chapter, an us/them dichotomy is constructed in the discourse of the MGK press releases; this dichotomy is most prevalent in the discourse on the nation, particularly with respect to national unity. Through this discourse, the nation is described as belonging to “us,” and by nature of it being in “our” possession, “we” are must work to eradicate threats to the nation. The construction of an us/them dichotomy relies primarily on the use of the first person plural possessive, providing virtually no insight into the boundaries defining “us” and “them.”

Specifically with respect to the issue of national unity, the discourse on the nation comes to be tied to the discourse on terrorism. The use of the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural reifies an us/them dichotomy through which the unity of “our” nation is challenged by terrorism. Within this construct, “we” are discursively positioned in opposition to “them” through which “we” are defined as belonging to the same nation and “they” are defined as those (terrorists) seeking to undermine our unity. It should be noted

that no further descriptive adjectives are used; the nation is described only as belonging to “us” and the terrorist organization is defined only as wanting to destroy “our” unity. The discourses on terrorism and unity are thus bound and reinforced through the dichotomy of us/them that is magnified and strengthened throughout the timeframe of analysis.

The interdiscursivity between the discourses on terrorism and the nation is solidified through the repetition of terrorism as a threat to “our” nation. The connection between the two discourses is so strong that the discourse on the nation is employed in connection with terrorism even when terrorism is not explicitly mentioned, as in Text 09/3 when the only reference to terrorism is through the use of the word “struggle,” which features prominently in the anti-terrorism discourse.

As has been stated in early portions of this chapter, the discourse on democracy expands throughout the timeframe of analysis and becomes explicitly linked to the struggle against terrorism. Significantly, the discourse on the nation is also strengthened and bound to the discourses on both democracy and terrorism during this time period. The expansion of the discourse on the nation can be most clearly seen in the later texts of the year 2010, when the phrase “one flag, one nation, one homeland, one state” is invoked alongside the discourse on democracy in connection with counter-terrorism efforts (Text 10/6). In the same text, the status of Turkish as the only official language in Turkey is asserted and reinforced:

In this regard, it should be known that no attempts aimed at changing the understanding of ‘one flag, one nation, one homeland, one state’ or the reality of Turkish as the official language of the Republic of Turkey, which constitutes one of our foremost common denominators, will be accepted” (Text 10/6).

The assertion of single flag and a single language are new to the discourse on the nation and suggest a shift in the discourse through which the singularity of a Turkish national identity is upheld. Thus, while democracy and human rights overlap with the discourse on terrorism, the discourse on national unity is amplified to suggest that the expanded discourse on democracy is not to be interpreted as challenging the singularity of the Turkish nation.

#### **4.1.2.5. Discourse 5: Unity**

The discourse on the nation and the discourse on unity are often intertwined in the text through the construction of an us/them dichotomy, as described above. Moreover, the discourse on unity is linked to the discourse on terrorism, which is characterized as a threat to unity. The overlapping nature of these discourses can be further note in the MGK press releases' praise of the display of national unity following the earthquake in Van in 2011 (Text 11/06). Interestingly, the display of national unity following the earthquake is constructed as having counterterrorism effects, and Text 11/06 states that displays of national unity have the effect of undermining the goals of terrorist organizations. Thus, national unity is characterized as deterring terrorism.

The discourse on unity is also used to describe other nations, as when the text repeatedly underscores the need for the political unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. While the importance of Iraq's territorial integrity for Turkey can be linked to the issue of Kurdish separatism, it is discursively presented as distinct from the threat of terrorism in the text. Iraq's territorial integrity is not included in the discourse on terrorism, particularly with respect to domestic terrorism. Rather, through the construction of an in/out dichotomy, it is described as a foreign policy issue whereby

territorial integrity is presented as a prerequisite for regional stability. Thus, although references to the unity of Iraq are commonly made in the discourse, it is the domestic unity of Turkey that is threatened by a separatist terrorist organization.

#### **4.1.2.6. Discourse 6: Military**

The word “martyr” is only used in the year 2011 (Text 11/4), although Turkish soldiers were killed due to terrorist activity in every year throughout the timeframe of analysis. Thus, while martyrs occurred every year, they were only mentioned in one particular year throughout the timeframe of analysis. In the text, the mention of martyrs is embedded between discussions on an expanded approach to terrorism and the importance of democracy in the fight against terror. This is significant in that it serves to overlap several discourses: the use of the term martyr refers to military personnel and carries strong nationalist sentiment. That this concept is invoked within the construction of democracy as a solution to terrorism serves to connect the discourses on the military and democratic approaches to terrorism.

Thus, by combining the discourses on the nation, the military, and democracy, the text creates a high degree of interdiscursivity: the expansion of a democratic approach to terrorism is not presented as conflicting with military efforts or strong sentiments of national unity. Rather, the high degree of interdiscursivity implies harmony between military approaches and democratic approaches to terrorism.

A significant change can be observed in the discourse on the military throughout the time frame of analysis. While early references to the military included formal summations of military operations, the discourse expands to include more personal

and humanistic elements. Condolences are presented to the families of fallen soldiers, providing a more personalized construction of the loss inflicted on the nation through acts of terrorism (Text 11/4). In Text 11/5, the term “martyr” is mentioned along with descriptions of women and children as victims of terrorism, and martyrs are characterized as heroes.

A further note can be made about the farewell statements to military commanders retiring from the MGK, such as the departure of the Chief of General Staff (Text 09/4; Text 10/4). Military leaders are acknowledged and thanked by name, although no reference to the changing nature of civilian representation is made in the texts. The farewell to military leaders seems to privilege the military within the MGK while also suggesting that the voice of the MGK press releases is not entirely of the military.

#### **4.1.3. Discussion of Discourse Analysis**

Overall, an increase in the discourse on democracy can be observed in connection to the discourse on terrorism. However, this increase is presented as a continuation of the fight against terrorism rather than a rupture from it. Furthermore, the increased use of democratic language occurs in conjunction with an increase in the use of the discourse on national unity. Thus, while democracy figures more prominently in the texts throughout the timeframe of analysis, a greater emphasis on the unity of the nation can also be observed. The concurrence of these two expanding discourses (on democracy and national unity) suggests a compromise in the nature of the overall discourse that values both democratic ideals and institutions without sacrificing the identity or importance of the nation.

A high degree of interdiscursivity can be observed within the MGK press releases. The interdiscursivity seems to increase throughout the time frame of analysis, as the discourses on terrorism, democracy, the nation, and unity seem to overlap more frequently within the text. That multiple discourses are invoked to discuss a single topic implies that the discourses support rather than contradict each other, which may suggest that the texts are offered by a single “voice.” Should this be the case, it would imply unity and compromise in the MGK, suggesting harmonious civil-military relations.

When evaluated with respect to the question of the effect of institutional change on civil-military relations, the findings of the discourse analysis suggest that institutional change may have contributed to a more accommodative approach to conflict resolution through the introduction of a multi-directional approach to terrorism that includes social and cultural factors as well as an emphasis on democratic values. However, the impact of institutional change to the MGK should not be overstated, as a “Kurdish question” or even references to “Kurdishness” are absent from the texts, implying that the challenge presented by the PKK is still primarily framed as a terrorist problem. Thus, the discourse has not openly shifted to a discussion of the root causes of violence, although they are implied in discussions of education and economic development.

While the emergence of an accommodative approach may be evident in the MGK press releases, military-led counterterrorism efforts continue to reoccur in the texts, suggesting that institutional changes to civil-military relations may have contributed



to the emergence of an accommodative approach but have not resulted in the abandonment of military operations. This may suggest that, while civilian leaders have played a greater role in determining the security agenda, the effects of a shift in civil-military relations as a result of institutional reforms are not immediate: institutional reforms do not appear to have produced an immediate change in approaches to counterterrorism but rather have contributed to a gradual transformation, as through the emergence of a multi-directional approach. Gradual change may be seen as a strength of the institutional reforms to the MGK. Continuity appears as a theme in the discourse, and the use of the first person plural contributes to a sense of harmony and agreement between the military and civilian leaders.

#### **4.2. Content Analysis of MGK Press Releases**

Content analysis was conducted on the National Security Council (MGK) press releases from 2007-2012. For each year, a total of six texts were released, one following each of the MGK's bi-monthly meetings. The content analysis was carried out in order to examine the individual words and phrases used in the texts to understand trends and themes. The findings of the content analysis supplement those of the discourse analysis by offering quantitative data in terms of word count and frequency. The data was graphed to provide a visual representation of the changes in frequency for each discourse over the timeframe of analysis. The line graphs representing the data and the analyses of each are discussed below. It should be noted that the numbered discourses refer to the discourses identified in the discourse analysis of the MGK press releases. The corresponding numbers have been kept for this portion of the analysis, although the discourses do not appear in numerical order.

#### **4.2.1. Discourse 1: Terrorism**

The frequency of key words related to the discourse on terrorism increases steadily from 2009 to 2011, although it declines sharply from 2011 to 2012. Despite its rise in 2011, the frequency of terror-related keywords falls to 2007-levels in 2012. This finding is interesting in that it seems to contradict the seeming change in discourse from 2009 to 2011, suggesting that the rise was anomalous for the year rather than a permanent shift. The sharp decline from 2008-2009 is also significant. Combined with the decline from 2011-2012, these findings seem to suggest that the discourse on terrorism is volatile rather than consistent in that it is subject to change, with drastic increases and decreases between years of analysis.

Figure 5: MGK Discourse 1: Terrorism

Of particular significance within this discourse is the frequency of the term “PKK,” which is only used once throughout the timeframe of analysis, in 2008. Although the PKK is the implied subject in references to terrorism, particularly references to a “separatist terror organization,” which appears frequently throughout the texts, the

PKK is only named once. In all other instances, the group is referred to indirectly. Similarly, the term “Kurdish” does not appearance within the texts.

#### **4.2.2. Discourse 3: Security**

This graph shows the frequency of key words related to security or a security approach to terrorism and the Kurdish Question from 2007-2012. The frequency of security-related words is at its lowest in 2009, although—like the discourse on terrorism—it rises steadily to reach its highest in 2011 before sharply declining again in 2012. These findings mirror those related to the discourse on terrorism and, combined, suggest that while the frequency of keywords increases in 2010 and 2012, it does not represent a permanent change in the discourse, as for both discourses the frequency of key words falls sharply in 2012.

Additionally, as with the discourse on terrorism, a few key words dominate the discourse while many other key words appear an average of less than once per year in the MGK press releases. These findings are significant in that they suggest certain keywords carry more weight than others. While one or two keywords fluctuate throughout the time frame of analysis, the majority of the keywords identified do not vary greatly in frequency. Thus, while collectively there appears to be a change in the discourse from 2009-2011, closer analysis suggests that these changes might be relatively minor and in isolation.

Figure 6: MGK Discourse 3: Security

#### **4.2.3. Discourse 4: the Nation**

As with the discourses on terrorism and on security, the analysis of the discourse on the nation found that the frequency of keywords increases sharply from 2009-2011. The frequency of keywords then declines sharply in 2012, although the levels of keyword frequency remain higher than their pre-2009 levels, which was not the case for the discourses on terrorism. Again, this suggests a change or an expansion of the discourse in 2010 and 2011. However, the decline in 2012 suggests that this change was not permanent as the frequency of keywords seems to return to earlier levels.

Whereas the frequency of keywords for the previously analyzed discourses on terrorism and security reached its lowest in the year 2009, the lowest frequency of keywords for discourse on the nation occurred in the year 2007. Overall, there is a clear increase in the frequency of keywords related to the nation from 2007 to 2011,

and then a decline in 2012, although these numbers remain higher than their pre-2009 levels.

Figure 7: MGK Discourse 4: The Nation

Significant to this content analysis is the appearance of keywords in the first-person plural possessive. A high frequency was found in the recurring use of the third-person plural possessive to describe keywords related to the nation, as in “our country” or “our nation.” The bar graph below compares the total frequency of four key terms along with the occurrence of those terms in the first-person plural possessive. As can be seen from the graph, a majority of time, the keywords appear in the possessed form, revealing the strength of the construction of an “us” in the discourse.

Figure 8: Total Frequency v. 1st Person Plural

Effectively, these findings convert the study of the “nation” to the study of “our nation,” thus implying that they also represent a certain nationalistic ideology.

Viewed in this light, the trends in the frequency of keywords suggests that nationalist sentiment grew increasingly more overt from 2007 to 2011, although there was a decline in the use of nationalist language from 2011 to 2012.

#### **4.2.4. Discourse 5: Unity**

The frequency of keywords related to the discourse on unity, specifically with respect to the unity of Turkey, follows similar trends as the other discourses outlined above. The frequency of the keywords declines slightly from 2007 to 2009 but then increases sharply between 2009 and 2011, after which there is a decrease in 2012.

The degree to which the frequency declines in 2012 is particularly striking, as the frequency nearly reaches its lowest level for the timeframe of analysis (2009, n=7; 2012, n=8).

Figure 9: MGK Discourse 5: Unity

Particular to the discourse on unity is the nature with which individual keywords mirror the overall total trends. Three terms (unity/*birlik*, integrity/*bütünlük*, and brotherhood/*kardeşlik*) appear in the discourse with similar frequency and parallel the trends of the overall discourse.

#### **4.2.5. Discourse 6: Military**

Explicit references to the military were rare in the MGK press releases. Although the military may be indirectly linked to other discourses, this analysis focuses specifically on overt references to the Turkish Armed Forces. As such, it presents a smaller sample of data as compared to the content analyses for other discourses. Strikingly, it does not follow the trends of the previously analyzed discourses.

Given the non-uniform nature of the data, a dashed line was used to represent the total sum of the frequency of the keywords in the graph below. As can be seen from

the graph, the keywords are not connected in terms of the frequency or appearance. Striking among this data set is the disconnected trends of the terms. The term “Turkish Armed Forces” appears in press releases from 2007-2009 but does not appear after that in the period from 2010-2012. The terms “martyr” (*şehit*) and “injured” used to refer to Turkish soldiers appear only in the year 2011 and are absent from press releases in other years. In the entirety of the MGK Press Releases from 2007-2012, the word “martyr” (*şehit*) appears only twice.

Figure 10: MGK Discourse 6: Military

#### **4.2.6. Discourse 2: Democracy**

The concept of democracy is integral to the research question presented in this thesis and thus invaluable in its data analysis. However, given the multitude of definitions, usages, and discourses related to the concept of democracy. The broad discourse on democracy was broken down into four sub-discourses: (a) democracy as a political system, (b) democracy as an ideal, (c) democracy as an approach to conflict resolution, and (d) democratic institutions belonging to the state. Given the diverse



and distinct definitions assigned to democracy within each of these four sub-discourses, the content analysis for each sub-discourse was analyzed individually. The results of the content analyses are presented below.

#### **4.2.6.1. Discourse 2a: Democracy as a Political System**

The frequency of keywords related to the discourse on democracy as a political system was analyzed to calculate the appearance of terms pertaining to democratic political practices. The results reveal that there was an overall steady increase in the appearance of keywords from 2007-2011, with a sharp increase from 2010 to 2011. These findings parallel the general trend of the overall findings, although the increase in the frequency of keywords on democracy in 2009 is distinct from the discourses on terrorism, security, and unity in which there was a drop in frequency in 2009. Following 2011, there is a sharp decline in 2012 as the frequency of keywords falls dramatically. This decrease is also similar to the findings of other discourses.

Figure 11: MGK Discourse 2a: Democratic politics

#### **4.2.6.2. Discourse 2b: Democracy as an Ideal**

The second sub-discourse on democracy pertains to the use of keywords related to democratic ideals, such as peace, prosperity, and freedom. A total of 11 keywords were identified and analyzed for this sub-discourse. Given the high number of individual keywords, the overall total frequency of the discourse is rather higher. Looking at the overall trend, however, it is striking that this sub-discourse follows many of the patterns of the other previously described discourses, including an increase from 2007-2011 with a particularly dramatic increase in 2011 and then a decline in 2012. As with the frequency of the sub-discourse on democratic politics (Discourse 2a), there is a consistent increase from 2007-2011.

Figure 12: MGK Discourse 2b: Democratic ideals

Of particular interest is the increase in the frequency of the word “rights” over the timeframe of analysis, as well as the words “community” and “human” which often

appeared in connection with the term “rights.” These three terms experienced the greatest increase in frequency of use from 2007-2012 and reached their highest levels in 2011, in conjunction with the overall highest level of the sub-discourse that year. The appearance of the term “rights” became more prominent in the discourse on democratic ideals throughout the timeframe of analysis. In contrast, in the early years of analysis (2007-2009), words such as “calm” and “commonsense” appear most commonly in the discourse. While these words continue to appear in the later years of analysis (2011-2012), they are surpassed in numbers by words referring to rights. Thus, while the discourse on democratic ideals expands during the timeframe of analysis, the nature of discourse also changes to place greater emphasis on human and communal rights.

#### **4.2.6.3. Discourse 2c: Democracy as an Approach to Conflict Resolution**

Figure 13: MGK Discourse 2c: Democratic approach

The frequency of keywords related to the sub-discourse on democracy as an approach to conflict resolution was analyzed to reveal the appearance of key terms throughout the timeframe of analysis. As with the sub-discourse on democratic ideals (Discourse 2b), a large number of keyword were identified for the discourse on a democratic approach, 12 in total. Despite the large number of keyword analyzed, the overall total frequency of the keywords remained relatively low, with a maximum frequency of  $n=25$  in 2011, suggesting that individual keywords do not recur with great frequency per year, although their appearance in certain years and their absence in others is suggestive.

Of particular interest are words related to development (*gelişmişlik* and *kalkınma*) which appear once in 2011 and 2012 each for a total of two times overall throughout the timeframe of analysis. Thus, while there is an overall increase in the sub-discourse on a democratic approach, the content analysis reveals that development is rarely mentioned. However, the appearance of these terms in the last two years of analysis might suggest that words related to development were emerging in the discourse toward the end of the timeframe of analysis.

The terms “multi-directional” and “multi-dimensional” are significant within the findings of this content analysis. They appear of combined total of 15 times throughout the period of analysis, first appearing in 2008 and reaching a maximum of  $n=6$  in 2010, averaging an appearance of once per press release that year.

#### **4.2.6.4. Discourse 2d: Democratic Institutions**

The final sub-discourse analyzed was the use of keywords related to democratic institutions. Although this was a smaller sub-discourse than the others, it was selected for analysis because it highlights institutional aspects of democracy, including cooperation and coordination between democratic institutions. The findings for this analysis are presented in the line graph below.

Figure 14: MGK Discourse 2d: Democratic institutions

While this is a smaller sub-discourse both in terms of frequency and the number of keywords identified, its findings are significant in that they do not follow the overall trends presented in the discourses above. The frequency of keywords related to the sub-discourse on democratic institutions increases steadily until the year 2010, after which it decreases. The sharp decline from 2011-2012, found in the previous discourses, is absent in this sub-discourse. Although there is a decline from 2011-2012, it appears as a steady continuation of the decline begun the previous year. The maximum value for this discourse appears in the year 2010, rather than in the year 2011 as with the other discourses.

While the overall curve for this discourse rises from 2007-2010 and falls from 2010-2012, there is no consistency between the individual keywords analyzed for this discourse. Only the term “council” follows the general overall trend; the other keywords present no pattern or uniformity among their frequencies in the discourse. This is significant in that it suggests that this sub-discourse is less comprehensive and less cohesive as compared to other sub-discourses in which the individual keywords followed similar trends in frequency.

#### **4.2.7. Discussion of Content Analysis**

This chapter has presented the findings for the content analysis of MGK press releases from 2007-2012. Keywords were identified within the text and grouped according the discourses that they represent. The findings of the content analyses have revealed general trends across discourses as well as significant exceptions to be noted.

In the data from the content analysis, there is an overall increase in the use of keywords related to discourses on democracy, specifically related to democratic politics, ideals, and a democratic approach to conflict resolution. However, we also see an increase in the use of nationalist language, including words that describe the indivisibility of the Turkish state and the use of the first person plural to refer to the state and its people. That these increases occur simultaneously is striking in that it suggests a relationship between democracy and national identity in the discourse: while democracy emerges more prominently, it is accompanied by a strong discourse on the nation, which may historically be considered more in line with military discursive strategies and approaches to understanding the Kurdish question. Indeed,

discussion of a democratic approach occurs alongside language emphasizing “our nation” as a single and indivisible whole, suggesting that the expansion of democracy should not be considered at the expense of national unity.

The discourses on terrorism and security seem to parallel each other, increasing and decreasing in the same years and to roughly the same degree. The frequency of the keywords related to both the discourse on terrorism, security, and unity decrease from the year 2008-2009 and then increase sharply before falling again from 2011-2012. However, the discourse on the nation does not decrease in 2009; it rises steadily from 2007-2011 and then decreases in 2012. This suggests that while there appears to be a level of harmony between the discourses on security, terrorism, and unity, the discourse on the nation appears to be distinct from these other discourses in that it experiences greater expansion in the overall text.

Rather, the discourse on the nation follows the pattern of the discourse on democracy, specifically with respect to democratic ideals and democratic practices. For each of these discourses, there is an overall increase from 2007-2011 and a decline only in 2012, although this decline is present across discourses. The discourses on the nation and democracy are expanded within the text throughout the timeframe of analysis.

It should also be noted that the discourse on the military does not follow the same general patterns or trends as the other discourses. Although this is a smaller discourse compared to the others in terms of overall frequency and number of keywords analyzed, it suggests that a strong and consistent discourse on the military is absent from the MGK press releases. The absence of such a discourse is noteworthy in that

it may suggest the power of civilian leaders over military members of the MGK, suggesting the demilitarization of civil-military relations on the MGK.

Like the discourse on the military, the discourse on democratic institutions is also internally inconsistent between keywords. Again, like the discourse on the military, it is a smaller discourse in terms of frequency and number of keywords analyzed. Together, the patterns of the discourses on the military and democratic (civilian) institutions may suggest a transformation or aversion within the MGK to discussing these discourses, which could imply that the mixed civilian-military council was developing a means of discursively constructing military and civilian institutions in its press releases, suggesting compromise among its members.

Moreover, the discourse on the military is revealing in terms of a compromise between democratic and nationalist forces. While specific references to the Turkish Armed Forces vanish after 2009, the terms “martyr” and “injured” are used to refer to soldiers and security personnel killed by terrorist activities in the year 2011. As these terms, specifically the term “martyr,” can be considered nationalist terminology, their appearance in the discourse is significant and suggests an emotional element to the MGK press releases that was previously absent.

The use of the term “martyr” can be viewed alongside the use of the first person plural possessive to describe keywords such as nation, state, and country. Each of these terms is predominantly used in the possessive to discuss “our nation” instead of the nation. Collectively, the use of these terms increases after 2009, reaching its highest point in 2012. Also of significance, the word “citizen” or the phrase “our



citizens” appears more prominently in the text in the years 2011-2012. The word “citizen” is first used in the year 2009, although its frequency increases dramatically in 2011, the same year that “martyr” appears in the discourse. Together, these words suggest the emergence of more nationalist language in 2011.

Given Dersch’s (2001) definition of civil-military relations as the ability of the military or the civilian government to achieve its desired outcome when the two parties do not agree, these findings suggest a form of civil-military relations in which one party does not entirely dominate the other; there appears to be a compromise between statist or nationalist ideals, which could be attributed to the military’s discursive approach, and democratic ideals, which could be attributed to the civil-government’s discursive approach and conflict resolution efforts. Viewed collectively, these findings suggest that the military was not absent from the drafting of MGK press releases, nor was its voice entirely silenced, although it certainly was not a dominate force. Instead, there appears to be an element of compromise which may suggest that the military supported the expansion of democratic discourse within the limits of national and territorial unity.

The omission of key events from the MGK press releases is noteworthy. The Ergenekon other trials brought against military officers, for example, are not mentioned in the press releases, and the election of Abdullah Gül as the President of the Republic of Turkey is also absent from the texts. While parliamentary elections are mentioned in the context of security, the election of Gül is not. Although the procedures for electing Gül were not the same as those of parliament elections, that the election of Gül did not appear in the MGK press releases reflects a strategic

decision made by the MGK to avoid mentioning domestic politics in its press releases. This may imply that the military's strength on the mixed council was ineffective in deeming it a security issue, or that the military members chose not to classify it as such. Regardless, it speaks to the power of civilian political leaders in determining the discourse of the MGK as well as to the sense of compromise in the press releases.

#### **4.3. Evaluation of Institutional Change**

This section evaluates institutional change by looking at the discourse of the National Security Council (MGK), an institution with both military and civilian members that underwent significant change to its structure, scope, and organization as a result of reform processes described earlier in this thesis. Changes in the composition and decision-making power of the MGK can be understood as institutional reforms that affected the nature of civil-military relations in Turkey. As such, this empirical section aims to understand the impact that institutional changes to civil-military relations via changes to the MGK may have had on approaches to the Kurdish question. The findings of both the discourse and content analyses of the MGK press releases from 2007-2012 are presented in a comparative manner in order to draw conclusions about the relationship between civil-military relations and approaches to conflict resolution.

Prior to the analysis of data, the researcher expected to find that as civil-military relations became more demilitarized during the timeframe of analysis, the security discourse would become more democratic. This hypothesis has been confirmed with the following qualifications:

- The construction of the concept of democracy is limited to include democratic practices and institutions but not necessarily ethnic or minority diversity within the nation.
- The discourse has become more democratic but it has also placed stronger emphasize on the concept of national unity.
- The discourse has expanded to include more democratic language but it has also expanded overall both in terms of structure and content, suggesting that the focus of the discourse has not necessarily shifted toward democracy.

#### **4.3.1. Expansion as Continuity**

As Salter and Mutlu (2013) state, plastic discourse analysis focuses on continuity and intertextuality within a discourse. Together, these linkages form a master narrative within the text. Although the data analysis of MGK press releases from 2007-2012 did not begin with the expectation of identifying continuities and intertextualities, the results of the analysis have suggested that the ‘plastic’ features of the discourse are more dominant than the ‘elastic’ features. Although the discourse changes and expands in scope throughout the time frame of analysis, the findings of both the discourse and content analyses suggest that these ‘changes’ could more accurately be describes as continuities rather than ruptures. While it seems contradictory to state that changes suggest continuity, the findings of the discourse analysis suggest that the expansion of the discourse on democracy is an example of interdiscursivity rather than rupture. A common theme in the discourse is the emphasis on the ongoing nature of the struggle against terrorism and the emergence of a discourse on a multi-directional approach to conflict resolution. The discourse works actively to establish intertextuality that contributes to a larger narrative.

Furthermore, the changes found in the content analysis, such as the increase in the frequency of keywords leading up to 2011, occurred simultaneously across discourses. Together with the discourse analysis, the increase in the frequency of keywords suggests an expansion of multiple discourses that contribute to an overarching master narrative with increased emphasize on democratic ideals and practices but which does not abandoned traditional notions of national security and unity. The interdiscursivity and intertextuality found throughout the timeframe of analysis suggests slow, measured change rather than rupture.

#### **4.3.2. Stability through Strategic Omission**

With respect to silences and omissions within the discourse, it should be noted that despite the controversy surrounding civil-military relations during this timeframe of analysis as a result of military trials and the election of President Gül, references to domestic politics remains largely absent from the discourse of the text. Similarly, the ethnic nature of the PKK is omitted from the texts, and the PKK is addressed only once by name. The omission of significant political events and actors from the texts serve to create an air of vagueness that strengthens the authority of the press releases. By never defining terrorism, democracy, or the nation, the texts benefit from a hegemonic voice that asserts that terrorism is a threat to the nation without justifying that claim beyond its continual reiteration throughout the texts.

Nonetheless, the combination of vagueness and omission in the texts suggests that the discourse is one of continuity rather than change. Change to the discourse is gradual and measured, embedded within language that denies itself as change. This

creates a sense of stability in the discourse. According to Hansen's (2006) understanding of the relationship between identity and discourse, the discourse is stable when the institutional identity is consistent. The high degree of interdiscursivity contributes to a stable discourse, which suggests a stable identity within the MGK. As the MGK comprises civil and military leaders, the consistency of its discourse suggests stability in civil-military relations, even if this stability is at the expense of eliminating controversial elements. In fact, the omission of these elements may suggest that military leadership prefers stable, democratic civil-military relations to a volatile or uncertain relationship.

#### **4.3.3. Democracy and Terrorism**

In the MGK press releases, the Kurdish question is dealt with through omission: ethnicity is not mentioned. The construction of the Kurdish question is therefore nonexistent: in the press releases, there is no Kurdish question, only a terrorist problem that threatens the unity of the nation. At the same time, democracy is valued in the statements, both as an ideal (such as peace, brotherhood, and freedom) and a political practice (such as elections and institutions). Democracy is presented in the statements as an antidote to terrorism, such as through the promotion of a multi-dimensional approach, although explicit references to a Kurdish opening are absent from the discourse, as there is no conceptualization of ethnic diversity or minority language rights within the construction of democracy in the texts.

Applying Hansen's (2006) framework on the relationship between discourse and identity and Oren's (1995) notion of democracy as a social construct, the findings of the analyses may suggest limitations to the definition of democracy with reference to

terrorism. Using this framework, we may suggest that the military supports demilitarization to the extent that it is constructed in the MGK press releases. As the MGK is composed of both civilian and military leaders, it may be assumed that the MGK press releases represent a compromise of the civilian and military forces on the council. Thus, the discourse of the MGK press releases is a microcosm of civil-military relations in Turkey. As has been stated earlier, the discourse of the texts, both in terms of content and interdiscursivity, seems to suggest a compromise within the MGK. As such, the construction of terrorism and democracy within the texts may be understood as mutually accepted by civilian and military leaders.

The elements of compromise found in the analysis of MGK press releases may suggest the mechanism through which the Kurdish Opening was introduced, as the military appears willing to accept the introduction of accommodative approaches. To this effect, in an interview for the data of this thesis, a former AKP member of parliament suggested that the military's willingness to compromise with the civil-government was confirmed through its acceptance of the Kurdish Opening. Characterizing the Kurdish Opening as an important event for civil-military relations, the interviewee stated that while the military had been "moved to the sidelines" through institutional reform, "the function of the military was brought back into question with discussion of finding a solution to the Kurdish question. With the Kurdish Opening in 2012, the military accepted its role on the sidelines" (*Participant 10*). Thus, the military's willingness to compromise with civilian leaders, as suggested by the analysis of MGK press releases, extends into its acceptance of non-military approach to conflict resolution.

Furthermore, the same parliamentarian suggested that the military had accepted democratic reforms limiting its influence in politics:

The military has accepted these democratic reforms; they accepted democratization. Of course, there's a side of the military that is still *Atatürkçü*, but there's also a side of the military that wants to be a more modern country that follows modern democratic rules. The military had to accept democratization for the benefit of the whole country. (*Participant 10*)

In addition to highlighting the military's acceptance of democratic reform, the interview results also imply division within the military in terms of political ideology and approach to democratization. If the military were divided on issues of democratic reform, it is likely that certain members of the military also supported a shift in counterterrorism approaches

Developing from this premise, the discourse analysis suggests that the military supported a multi-directional democratic approach to counter-terrorism that included delegating authority to democratic institutions and investing in economic, cultural, and social development of the region. However, the military would not support an approach that compromised its understanding of the singularity of the nation, as national unity remains a strong value throughout the texts.

While the discourse of the MGK press releases from 2007-2012 suggest that the military is not opposed to the demilitarization of civil-military relations, they also shed light on the military's understanding of the boundaries of democratic rule. In particular, the expansion of democratic discourse is not predicated on the removal the unitary nation-state. Democracy is constructed as a solution to terrorism, but not at the expense of national unity. As such, an analysis based on institutional change seems to suggest that reforms increasing the authority of the civil government to

determine security policy—as examined here with respect to the MGK—have resulted in the introduction of a democratic, multi-directional approach to counterterrorism, the development of which has been gradual, rather than an immediate departure. The introduction of an accommodative approach does not appear to have invalidated military-led strategies. Thus, the effects of institutional reforms on approaches to conflict resolution appear to have been gradual and accepted by military leadership.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **NORMATIVE CHANGE: ANALYSIS OF TSK PRESS RELEASES**

To understand normative change within the military, this section attempts to examine endogenous factors originating from within the military structure, including features of military leadership and division within the military. As described in Chapter 2, the majority of the literature on changing civil-military relations in Turkey has focused on factors exogenous to the military such as the AKP government and EU reforms. The literature examining endogenous factors contributing to the demilitarization of civil-military relations has assumed what Gurcan (2016) refers to as a “pessimistic perspective” on the military’s approach to the demilitarization of politics in Turkey. In other words, the literature predominantly assumes that military officials resist processes of demilitarization. Few researchers take a more “optimistic perspective” by acknowledging the potential for endogenous factors to contribute to the demilitarization of the military’s role in politics. In examining normative change, this chapter attempts to evaluate the extent to which the military underwent internal, normative change in accordance with its socio-political context.

The identity of the Turkish military is an essential component of its understanding of its role in civil-military relations. In addition to its role as the guardian of the nation,

the Turkish military has “built up insulating practices and mechanisms to both maintain its symbiotic relationship with society while keeping itself immune from society’s fragmentive potential,” such as through means of internal indoctrination and the recruitment of its members from “the heart of society” (Aydınlı, 2009, p. 586). In other words, the army does not draw from elite classes of society but rather recruits from rural Anatolian areas and shapes its recruits into an elite class of officers. Thus, the military is both of society—via the origins of its members—and distinct from society—via the training process undergone by its members (Aydınlı, Özcan & Akyaz, 2006).

While the description above serves to provide a broad characterization of the military as an institution, the individual preferences and personality characteristics of military leaders have been cited as determinant factors of change within the military structure. In his doctoral thesis, Gurcan (2016) suggests that the individual personality traits of the Chiefs of General Staff have contributed to the shaping of civil-military relations in Turkey. Gurcan focuses specifically on the leadership Hilmi Özkök (2002-2006) and Yaşar Büyükanıt (2006-2008), each of whom served as Chief of General Staff in the early 2000s. Under Özkök, the military maintained a low political profile and expressed willingness to negotiate with the newly elected AKP government on security issues, thus facilitating the demilitarization of civil-military relations (Gurcan, 2016). Aydınlı (2009) describes Özkök as a progressive in his approach to democratic change, noting that Özkök sought to “speed up Turkey’s global engagement and integration with the EU” (p. 588). Because Özkök openly supported Turkey’s EU accession process, even suggesting the immediate resolution of conflicts impeding Turkey’s accession (Aydınlı, 2009), he may have been more

willing and intrinsically motivated to support demilitarizing reforms in Turkey. At least in part, the lack of confrontation between the military and the civil government during the early stages of Turkey's EU reform process can be attributed to "the particular accommodative personality and beliefs" of Özkök (Aydınlı, 2013, p. 1154), who embraced a critical perspective of civil-military relations and considered the military's traditional Kemalist thinking as a "guiding light" rather than an ideology (Heper, 2011, p. 242). Under Özkök's leadership, therefore, the military was more supportive of demilitarizing change and more trusting of civilian rule.

In contrast, civil-military relations were more nuanced under the leadership of Büyükanıt, who embraced the military's guardianship role of the Turkish state more overtly than Özkök had (Gurcan, 2016). Aydınlı (2009) states that gradualists within the Turkish Armed Forces hoped that Büyükanıt, a conservative, would "reverse the progressive momentum initiated by his predecessor, Hilmi Özkök" (p. 591). Because of Büyükanıt's more traditional understanding of the military's role in society, Gurcan (2016) describes civil-military relations as less harmonious under Büyükanıt. Whereas Özkök had attempted to subdue the concerns of military leaders regarding the Islamic identity of the AKP, Büyükanıt was more confrontational in his opposition to AKP rule, as evident from the e-memorandum and friction in civil-military relations during the presidential elections of 2007. However, this analysis is contested by other authors, including Aydınlı (2009), who states that Büyükanıt became increasingly more progressive throughout his term as Chief of Staff and pursued cooperative relations with civilian leaders (p. 591). Despite his commitment to the role of the military as guardian of the state, Büyükanıt acknowledged the ultimate supremacy of decisions made by civilian leaders (Heper, 2011, p. 243).

Büyükanıt even stated publicly that the nature and scale of counterterrorism operations was determined by the government rather than the military, thus displaying a willingness to follow civilian directives and serve as a subordinate to political leaders (Aydınlı, 2009, p. 592). In contrast to Gurcan's assessment, Aydınlı (2009) suggests that, under the leadership of Büyükanıt, the Turkish Armed Forces reached "unprecedented" levels of harmony and cooperation in its relationship with the civil government (p. 592). Thus, the individual characteristics of military leaders as well as their capacity for change seem to serve as important indicators of the nature of civil-military relations.

Although only a small snapshot of civil-military relations, the case study of Özkök and Büyükanıt in the early 2000s suggests that the individual preferences and personality characteristics of military leaders may contribute to the nature of civil-military relations by encouraging or discouraging demilitarizing reform. The contrast between of Özkök and Büyükanıt can be supplemented by examining their predecessor and successor, Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu (2000-2002) and İlker Başbuğ (2008-2010), respectively. Kıvrıkoğlu embodied a conservative, gradualist perspective, as by expressing concerns over the ramifications that EU reforms would have on Turkish national security, particularly given speculation of the EU's support for Kurdish nationalism (Aydınlı, 2009, p. 589). In contrast, Başbuğ, who commenced his term amidst the backdrop of the Ergenekon trials, focused on improving public relations with society and refrained from discussing political matters in public, stating instead that the military would express its opinions as necessary on the National Security Council (Aydınlı, 2009, p. 593).

In addition to individual personality and preferences, changes within the military organization may contribute to changes in civil-military relations (Desch 2001).

Under Janowitz's (1960) model of civil-military relations, reforms to the military's organization affect the nature of civil-military relations. Similarly, Huntington (1957) evaluates the level of professionalism within the military to determine its relationship with the civilian government, particularly its distance from or proximity to civilian leadership. As such, the structural characteristics of military leadership impact the nature of civil-military relations.

The characteristics of the military act as determinants of civil-military relations and should not be understood as immutable but subject to change. Military doctrine contributes to the interpretation of threats and the formation of civil-military relations (Desch 2001). Thus, changes in the structure of military leadership may impact military doctrine and thought, with repercussions for civil-military relations.

Acknowledging the capacity of the military for change, Heper (2011) suggests that military leadership decided against intervening in politics in the period after 2002 due to a change in the thinking of top military officials. That the primary impotence for change was military thinking implies that military leadership had internalized norms of democratic practices and intrinsically preferred demilitarizing change with respect to civil-military relations. As evidence to this effect, Heper (2011) points to the military's support of Turkey's EU process, suggesting that military leadership must have been aware that EU reforms would alter civil-military relations; thus, military leadership must have been innately willing to forfeit its own political power for the sake of reform. Evaluating the military's commitment to EU reforms, Aydınli et al. (2006) suggest that it is unlikely that the military would withdraw its support

for the reform process, implying that a permanent shift has occurred in the military's understanding of its role in politics.

As such, Heper (2011) concludes that “critical thinking on the part of the post-2002 Chiefs of General Staff rendered them open to change” (251). In this articulation of demilitarization, the primary factor for change is not exogenous to the military but inherent to military thought. In the post-2002 period, military leaders at the highest level appeared less likely than their predecessors to favor direct intervention in politics due to an acceptance that “civilians have the right to be wrong” (Heper, 2011, p. 250). The military's capacity for change, particularly in terms of military doctrine and ideology, suggests that endogenous factors may contribute to the demilitarization of civil-military relations.

A limitation of the theories attributing exogenous factors to changing civil-military relations in Turkey is their presentation of the military as a single, unitary structure. Aydınli, Özcan, and Akyaz (2006) suggest that the Turkish Armed Forces “basically makes decisions as a unitary, rational actor and speaks with one voice” (p. 82). However, the conceptualization of the military as a uniform entity leads to generalizations of military preferences and ignores the internal dynamics contributing to transformation and change within the military itself. To this end, Aydınli et al. (2006) also acknowledge that the military has proved flexible in redefining its Kemalist ideology to meet the particular societal context of the time (p. 87). Rather than characterize the military as a black box, theories evaluating change in civil-military relations should allow for the possibility of agency and negotiation within the military structure.

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) identify two types of military leaders, hard-liners and soft-liners, during the process of democratic consolidation. Aydınli (2009; 2013) suggests that a similar division exists within the Turkish military between absolutists and gradualists, each of whom represents a different ideological preference in terms of the rate with which demilitarization should occur. While both gradualists and absolutists strive for the same goal of a modern, Westernized Turkey, the gradualists take a more conservative approach to change, preferring a slow rate with less risk, in comparison to absolutists (or progressives) who actively favor rapid modernizing and democratic change. The presence of gradualists and absolutists within the military suggests that the TSK is not a homogenous institution but that processes of negotiation are continually occurring within the military structure. The victory of the gradualists over the absolutists within the leadership of the TSK would suggest that certain elements of the armed forces favored demilitarizing reforms and encouraged military support of the democratization process.

Further evidence of division within the armed forces can be found in Hale Akay's (2009) assessment of military support for Turkey's EU accession process. Akay (2009) suggests that some military generals disfavored the legal reforms associated with the accession process, implying that support for EU reforms was not unanimous within the armed forces—but neither was rejection of the reform process. Aydınli (2009) suggests that gradualists may have been more hesitant about the implications of certain EU requirements, particularly with respect to issues of terrorism and Kurdish nationalism (p. 589), although both gradualists and absolutists ultimately supported Turkey's EU accession process, even at the expense of the military's own political power (Aydınli et al., 2006). By conceptualizing the armed forces as a

dynamic organization possessing diversity within its membership, explanations of changing civil-military relations become more nuanced by allowing for the possibility of negotiation, support, and rejection within the military structure.

In this chapter, the findings of the discourse and content analyses of TSK press releases from 2007-2012 are presented. The chapter concludes with a side-by-side comparison of the results and an evaluation of normative change resulting from demilitarization as a factor contributing to changing approaches to conflict resolution.

### **5.1. Discourse Analysis of TSK Press Releases**

Discourse analysis was conducted on a sample of press releases from the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) for the period of analysis, from 2007-2012. Given the limitations to data collection discussed in Chapter 3, the researcher could not access the entirety of archived press releases. To overcome this limitation, a sample of ten (10) press releases per year were collected and analyzed according to the procedures outlined in Chapter 3, highlighting themes of intertextuality and interdiscursivity.

Overall, the findings of the discourse analysis of TSK press releases suggest that the TSK is committed to a deterrence-based approach to counterterrorism. While the TSK perceives democracy as an inherent feature of the Turkish state, the definition of democracy is narrowly defined. Threats to the military's public image are evident in the texts, raising concern over its privileged relationship with the public. These and other findings are presented in detail below.

#### **5.1.1. Themes and Linguistic Structures**



#### **5.1.1.1. Construction of an “Us/Them” Dichotomy**

The construction of a dichotomy between “us” and “them” was found in the discourse of the TSK press releases through references to an undefined “other” and the ambiguous use of the first person plural possessive. Combined, these two features of the discourse suggest a potentially unstable identity of the TSK, particularly with respect to its relationship with the public.

The TSK press releases include references to an unspecified “them” whose actions are described as dangerous. It should be noted that this “other” does not refer to a terrorist organization, which is defined in clearer and more specific terms. Rather, this “other” seems to refer to an actor with political aims, who, for example, intends to use religion to undermine the nation (Text 07/1) or who threatens order within the military (Text 07/2). The vague nature of a threatening “other” described by the TSK contributes to a dichotomy of us/them through which the TSK is constructed in contrast to an enemy force inherently distinct from itself.

That these “others” appear amorphous while the discourse on terrorism is explicit in naming and describing its enemy suggests that the identity of the TSK is constructed more clearly in terms of its role in the fight against terrorism. The discourse on terrorism allows the TSK to position itself firmly as an actor fighting an enemy through military means. However, when describing non-terrorist, non-military threats, the TSK discourse is more opaque, suggesting a less defined identity.

The use of the first person plural pronoun (“us”) and the first person plural possessive (“our”) creates a dichotomy of us/them that complicates the military’s

identity with respect to the public. Often, when the first person plural is invoked, it is unclear whether the TSK is referring to itself as an institution or to Turkey as a whole, meaning that it is unclear to what extent the audience—the Turkish public—is included in the use of first person plural. Frequently, the first person plural appears limited in scope, referring to the military as an institution rather than the nation as a whole. For example, the TSK asserts that “our strength comes from being the army of the Turkish nation” (Text 09/4). While underscoring the esteem with which the military holds the nation, the use of the first person plural eclipses the inclusion of the nation. Thus, the voice of the military refers to the TSK as an institution, drawing a distinction between it and the civilian public. This distinction serves to segregate the military from the general public, framing the military and its personnel as a separate social group. However, the TSK also strategically employs the first person plural to encompass the nation as a whole, as when discussing “our language” and “our constitution” (Text 10/4).

The ambiguity of the first personal plural is further illustrated in Text 07/5, where it is used in two distinct ways: to describe “our unity” and “our military personnel.” When compared, it is unclear whether the “our” refers to the nation as a whole or the Turkish military alone. While the first instance (“our unity”) seems to imply that the nation as a whole, the second instance (“our military personnel”) is less clear. Again, the first person plural could refer to the nation as a whole, implying that the military belongs to the nation. However, in the context of describing the outcome of a specific military operation, the details of which the civilian public is not privy to except through the TSK press releases, the distinction becomes less clear. The first person plural is used in the context of an operation carried out by the military,

implying that the “our” may refer to the military, rather than the general public. Similarly, “our casualties” (Text 08/7) and “our martyrs” (Text 11/4) are referred to in the press releases, although it is unclear whether the first person plural is in reference to the military or the nation. The opaque nature with which the first person plural pronoun is used implies an uncertainty in the military’s identity, particularly with respect to the civilian public. Specifically, the discourse implies a tension through which the TSK selectively chooses when to define itself alongside the civilian public and when to define itself as distinct from the public. These findings appear to echo descriptions in the literature of the military being of and distinct from Turkish society (Aydınli, 2009; Aydınli et al., 2006).

Overall, the first person plural is used sparingly in the TSK press releases. More commonly, the TSK refers to itself in the third person, using departmental or individual names to refer to different aspects of its institutional self. For example, the TSK commonly refers to the Chief of Staff or the Turkish Armed Forces as such rather than with the first person plural pronoun. Furthermore, the TSK refers to individual members of its organization by name, most commonly in reference to high-ranking officials. The use of the third person enhances the authoritative nature of the TSK’s voice in the press releases, providing an illusion of impartiality to the text: rather than expressing its own opinion, the TSK appears to be stating an indisputable fact in an objective manner.

#### **5.1.1.2. Construction of an “In/Out” Dichotomy**

The TSK press releases mention military operations conducted on both sides of the Turkish border, thus suggesting a dichotomy of in/out. However, rather than explicitly discussing these activities in terms of an in/out dynamic centered on the importance of the border, the TSK provides information about the border as a technical detail concerning the location and nature of the operation. The issue of within or outside the borders is provided along with other precise details pertaining to the operation, thus diminishing the significance of a dichotomy between in/out. Furthermore, the TSK does not seem limited by the existence of the border, as the TSK describes its cross-border operations in Northern Iraq using the same language as it does to describe attacks in Turkey (Texts 07/10, 08/2, 08/7). While a division between in/out is evident in the text, it is constructed less for explanatory than discursive purposes.

The fluidity with which cross-border movement is described, by means of constructing the border as a detail in a larger military narrative, serves to reinforce the authority of the TSK. The discourse used in the TSK press releases emphasizes that the opposite side of the border should not be understood as a safe-zone (Text 08/7). Instead, the border does not limit the scope of the TSK's military power. The TSK asserts this simply by stating, "The fight against terrorism will continue to be carried out on both sides of the border" (Text 08/7), implying that the TSK is not limited by borders.

#### **5.1.1.3. On-going Nature of the Conflict**

The TSK states in its press releases that military operations against terrorist cells “will continue” (Text 07/10, 10/2). As such, the TSK not only asserts that the conflict against the PKK is ongoing but its discourse implies that the TSK controls the outcome of the struggle. The future tense of the verb “continue” is critical, as it underlines the authority of the TSK to determine the nature of the conflict: the fight against terrorism will continue because the TSK has said it will continue to carry out operations. Thus, the military is in control of the conflict.

The TSK establishes intertextuality in its press releases by referencing previous press releases or the events described in them (Text 08/1). As such, new statements are framed as continuations of previous statements. In addition to connecting press releases, the references within the texts serve to emphasize the ongoing nature of the struggle against terrorism.

#### **5.1.1.4. Construction of a “Part/Whole” Dichotomy**

The TSK refers to both itself (the military) and the terrorist organization against which it is fighting as individual parts and a collective whole. That is, the TSK refers to the military as a single institution and to specific members, either by giving their name or rank. Likewise, it refers to the terrorist organization as whole when characterizing it as a threat but to individual terrorists when recounting the outcome of an event.

This raises questions about the nature of the military’s identity: while the TSK press releases represent the official institutional voice of the Turkish Armed Forces, the ability of the TSK to distinguish individual members from the whole suggests that

the identity of the whole may be divisible. In other words, if the discourse of the TSK press releases allows for discussion of both the TSK as a singular unit and its members as individuals, the TSK's institutional identity may be divisible and distinct from the individual identities of its members. This is significant in that it allows for the possibility of division within the TSK in terms of identity, value, and ideology. That a distinction between the institution as a whole and its individual members is present with respect to other organizations, like the press or a terrorist group, suggests that the TSK discourse does not conceptualize the member and the institution as one in the same, which would allow for the possibility of multiple identities within the Turkish military structure.

#### **5.1.1.5. Precision**

Many of the TSK press releases, specifically those pertaining to a military event, follow a set structure that emphasizes precision and objectivity. This structure is applicable to texts describing military operations or clashes with the terrorist group. The text begins by referencing a previous event, if applicable, and then describes the details of the recent event or operation. Here, the text provides precise details, including date, time, location, and nature of the operation (Texts 08/7, Text 11/1). The text then offers an evaluation of the outcome of the event, which normally emphasizes the success of the TSK and provides detailed numbers in terms of enemy loss. The text then includes an assertion that only terrorists and terrorist sites were targeted, insisting that civilians were not harmed. (For an example of this structure, see Text 08/1.)

That this structure is primarily used to describe military operations against terrorists implies that it often overlaps with the TSK's discourses on the military and terrorism. The formulaic and mechanical style of the press releases combined with their precision to detail reinforces the professional identity of the TSK as a technical expert, possessing facts and presenting information in an objective manner on issues related to the military realm. This serves to segregate the military from the general public as a source of privileged information. The precision the TSK's rhetoric contributes to its public image and identity as a reliable and honest institution. For example, the TSK often provides detailed information to counter what it claims are false media reports and emphasizes the careful planning and analysis that goes into its operations to ensure that "only sites used by the terrorist network" (Texts 07/10, 11/3) are targeted. Combined with the discourse on ethics (discussed below), this serves to create a high standard of professionalism that the TSK presents as inherent to its identity.

#### **5.1.1.6. Civil-Military Relations**

Occasionally in the TSK press releases, civil-military relations are referenced by acknowledging the dynamic between military and civilian leaders. The relationship is constructed as one of deference to civilian leadership through which the TSK acknowledges a relationship that favors civilian leaders (Texts 08/6, 12/4). In Text 08/6, for example, the TSK states, "Because an announcement by the Prime Minister's Office has been made on this topic, the Office of the General Staff does not find it necessary to make a separate announcement." The implications of such a statement for civil-military relations suggest that the leadership of the TSK respects

the authority of civilian leaders. Civil-military relations, as constructed in the discourse of the TSK press releases, describe a relationship favoring civilian rule.

### **5.1.2. Discourses**

#### **5.1.2.1. Discourse 1: Terrorism**

The TSK press releases rely on technical terminology when reporting the outcomes of their military operations, thus enhancing the perceived authority and objectivity of the text. For example, when reporting the number of terrorists killed in an operation, which the TSK does with exacting detail, the TSK does not use common terms such as “killed” or “died” but rather states that the terrorists have been “rendered ineffective” (Text 07/6). The technical nature of this terminology serves to enhance the authority of the TSK by presenting the results of the operation as belonging to a special field of work reserved for the TSK rather than accessible to the general public. It also serves to dehumanize the terrorists killed in the operations by euphemizing their deaths.

In contrast, however, the term “terrorist” is often invoked to refer to individuals acting within the larger terror organization. That is, the TSK presents a nuanced rather than sweeping portrayal of those committing terrorist acts: it is not simply an amorphous terror organization but specific individual terrorists acting of their own volition. This simultaneously increases the culpability of the terrorists, for they are described as individuals partaking in terrorist acts, while empowering them as autonomous actors.



In its press releases, the TSK does not justify its operations against terrorist targets other than to describe them as members of a terrorist organization. The terrorists are described as the “common enemy” of mankind (Text 07/4) and acting against “our unity” (Text 07/5, 07/7), presumably implying the unity of the Turkish nation. Other times, the terrorists are described as “against Turkey” (Text 08/4). These descriptions serve as justification for military action against terrorism. Further justification is offered by ensuring the public that proper analysis was conducted to guarantee that the targets were only sites belonging to the terrorist group (Text 08/7). Thus, the assumption that terrorism is unequivocally abominable and must be eradicated is implied within the discourse on terrorism, as no further justification for military operations is provided.

The TSK repeatedly notes that “only terrorists” (see Text 07/4) were targeted in its operations, thus underscoring that civilians were not targeted or harmed by military operations. While this element of the discourse is essential for reproducing the military’s role as protector of civilian lives—in contrast to the terrorists who threaten them—it also serves to reinforce the segregation between the military and its civilian public, as the civilian is removed from the military realm. The discourse on the military asserts a distinction between the military and the civilian public.

Moreover, the TSK characterizes itself as fighting the war on terror on the nation’s behalf and for the nation’s benefit. Thus, the discourses on terrorism and the nation are linked through a discursive construction that asserts terrorism as a threat to the nation. The nation’s relationship with the military is also implied in this construction, by which the nation should appreciate the military’s struggle on its behalf (Text 08/8).

The PKK is specifically referred to by name in the early years of analysis, although this explicit reference is replaced in the later years, during which time the PKK is referred to as a “separatist terrorist organization” (Text 11/1, 11/3). Significantly, when the PKK is referred to by name in the early years of analysis, it is commonly called PKK/KONGRA-GEL (Text 08/1, 08/10). The decision to address the PKK by both names suggests that the TSK does not see an ideological or organization distinction between the two organizations, despite the organization’s claim that there is one. Nonetheless, it does signal recognition of the group’s name change. The decision to omit the name “PKK” from TSK press releases in the later years of analysis represents a rupture from early discursive practices in the TSK press releases.

#### **5.1.2.2. Discourse 2: Democracy**

In the TSK press releases, Turkey is described as a “modern democracy” (Text 07/1), the foundations of which can be traced back to Atatürk’s founding of the Republic (Texts 09/5, 10/4). Thus, the democratic nature of the Turkish state is taken for granted, although the particulars of the term democracy are not defined beyond “modern.” Through its assumption of democracy as an inherent feature of the Turkish state, the TSK asserts its commitment to democracy, albeit neither widely developed nor actively promoted. That is to say, while the TSK conceptualizes Turkey as a democracy, the definition of democracy constructed in the discourse is narrow and does not necessarily include a multicultural, pluralistic identity. Rather, democracy as constructed by the discourse aligns with the values of the TSK. This construction of the Turkish Republic is significant in that it reveals that the TSK is

not only supportive of democracy but takes democratic governance for granted. A closer examination of the term “modern” used to describe democracy in Text 07/1 suggests that the TSK limits democracy within a dichotomy of modern/religious, meaning that while the TSK supports Turkey as a democratic state, it believes that democracies should be inherently secular by nature.

#### **5.1.2.3. Discourse 3: Security**

The discourse on security is closely linked to the discourses on terrorism and the military. While specific references to the security of the nation are rare, security is contrasted with respect to the military and the absence of terrorism. Military operations are described as successful with the safe return of military personnel, and operations are justified as establishing a secure and stable area void of terrorist cells (Text 08/7). The discourse on security is subsumed within the discourses of terrorism and the military. While this contributes to the interdiscursivity of the texts, it implies that security is established through military means of eliminating terrorist groups, omitting the possibility for accommodative approaches to security issues.

#### **5.1.2.4. Discourse 4: Nation**

The discourse on the nation in the TSK press releases is characterized by the construction of national symbols and an explicit discussion of the importance of national unity. The degree to which national unity is emphasized suggests a strong overlap between the discourse on the nation and the discourse on unity.

The discourse on the nation can be described as impassioned. The first person plural is repeatedly used in connection with the nation, thus describing it as “our nation”

and underlining the connection between the TSK and the nation. Furthermore, the term “nation” is often preceded by an exalting term praising the nation, such as “honorable” or “sacred” (Text 08/3). The TSK’s praise of the nation and its invocation of a special relationship with the public are often constructed within a self-defense of its character. In asserting its credibility against defiling media claims, the TSK asserts, “this must be known by our honorable nation” (Text 08/3). In such a construction, the nation is praised by the TSK but also expected to return the praise by placing its trust in the TSK. The appeals to the nation found in the discourse of the TSK serve to raise questions about the foundation of its relationship with the public: a formidable relationship based on mutual, unquestioned respect should require less justification.

The discourse on the nation includes great reverence for the legacy of Atatürk, who is praised for his victory in securing the nation. The assertion that Turkey is secular and democratic country is traced backed to the legacy of Atatürk in the TSK press releases (Text 09/5, 10/4). Implied from this connection is the assumption that the military works to uphold Turkey’s secular democratic values for the sake of preserving Atatürk’s principles. Significant here is the overlap of the discourse on democracy and the discourse on the nation. Turkey is inherently assumed to have been a democracy since its foundation; however, the definition of democracy is limited in that it is associated with a particular time and the qualification of the adjective “secular.” Thus, while the armed forces uphold Turkish democracy, it does so a particular form.

Furthermore, in the same text, the unitary nature of the Turkish state is emphasized in an assertion of its indivisibility and national identity:

As expressed in the Third Article of the Constitution, which cannot even be offered to be changed, ‘The Turkish State, with its country and nation, is an indivisible whole. Its language is Turkish.’ The Turkish Armed Force favors and will continue to favor the protection of the Turkish Republic as a nation-state and a unitary-state, as entrusted to us by Atatürk and as it is expressed in the Third Article of the Constitution. (Text 09/5)

In addition to defining the identity of the Turkish state as indivisible, the TSK defines it as immutable, dating back to the legacy of Atatürk. Thus, the discourses of the nation and unity overlap through the construction of the Turkish state’s identity. It should be noted that this articulation of national identity refers explicitly to the identity of the state without specific mention of its people. The discourse on the military, particularly in terms of the military’s self-identity, overlaps with the discourses on the nation and unity in terms of constructing the military’s role as protector of the unitary-state. The discourse on the nation conceptualizes the nation-state as an indivisible aspect of the nation itself. Thus, through the construction of the indivisible nation-state as an inherent feature of the Turkish Republic dating back to the principles of Atatürk, the TSK justifies its military operations against the separatist terror organization (Text 10/4).

#### **5.1.2.5. Discourse 5: Unity**

As stated above, a high degree of interdiscursivity was found between the discourse on unity and the discourse on the nation. The importance of national unity and the inherent nature of the Turkish Republic as a unitary state were found in the discourse. The value on national unity served as an implicit justification for military action against terrorist targets: because the terrorists were described as acting with separatist aims, the military was justified in its operations to eliminate the organization and its members. No further explanation or elaboration was provided, implying that the TSK

perceived this justification to be self-evident, sufficient, and widely-shared amongst its audience.

#### **5.1.2.6. Discourse 6: Military**

Aspects of the discourse on the military as presented in the TSK press releases have already been discussed in this chapter in connection with the discourse on security, terrorism, and the structure of the TSK releases, specifically the focus on detail. In justifying military operations, the TSK emphasizes the unacceptability of terrorist attacks in its press releases, thus providing ground for the use of military force in response to terrorist activity. The unacceptable nature of the terror activity is assumed to be common knowledge shared with the public and is explained in terms of the terrorists' aims to divide the nation. The unacceptability of terrorist activity warrants a military response, which the military is obligated to provide for the safety of the nation (Text 07/9). That the discourses on the nation, security, and terrorism intersect with the discourse on the military demonstrates the extent to which these discourses play a formative role in the construction of the military's self-identity.

#### **5.1.2.7. Discourse 7: Legal System**

In its press releases, the TSK asserts its support for the legal system and the principles of the rule of law. However, deference to these general principles is more commonly expressed in the discourse on the legal system rather than the discourse on democracy. The discourse on the legal system includes repeated statements of the TSK's respect for the rule of law, support for ongoing legal investigations, and trust that the legal system will arrive at the proper conclusions (Text 09/1, 09/8, 09/10).

In its discussion of the legal investigations involving members of the armed forces, the TSK provides specific details pertaining to dates, locations, and law numbers (Text 09/1), similar to the details provided in other aspects of its press releases; however, the press releases do not explicitly provide information related the cases in terms of allegations and accusations. In this way, the TSK circumvents direct confrontation with issues of civil-military relations and its role in the democratic state. Through this omission, the TSK is able to assert its trust and deference to the legal system without explicitly raising the larger issue of the trials, demonstrating the degree of sensitivity this issue holds for the TSK. Further, in this way, the TSK avoids discussion of political issues, thus suggesting that the TSK has internalizes the capacity of its power in demilitarized civil-military relations.

The TSK reiterates its supports for the rule of law and the democratic and legal principles of the state, going so far as to assert that military personnel “who do not comply with the principles of democracy and the legal state in behavior and thought will not be harbored in the [TSK’s] organizational structure” (Text 09/2; see also Texts 09/4, 09/6). This assertion is significant in that it represents the TSK’s most explicit denunciation of military personnel under legal investigation. By positioning itself as disavowing the actions of military personnel under legal investigation, the TSK suggests division with its ranks (Texts 11/10, 12/4). Furthermore, through its assertion, the TSK aims to affirm the singularity of the military in terms of thought and action by overtly defining unacceptable behavior. However, in doing so, the TSK implies ideological diversity among its members: in stating that certain behaviors and beliefs will not be tolerated, it implies that some of its members possess those beliefs. In this way, the desire for a homogenous identity is evident in the discourse of the

TSK while the reality of a diversity of opinions is implied. Although the TSK claims a uniform identity in its texts, the construction of its discourse implies a degree of dissension within its ranks, the extent to which cannot be ascertained from the text.

#### **5.1.2.8. Discourse 8: Media**

Relations with the media are a reoccurring theme in the TSK press releases.

Throughout the analyzed texts, the TSK repeatedly justifies or clarifies its actions in light of defaming media reports, described by the TSK as “fake,” “unfounded,” or “baseless” (Texts 08/3, 08/6). During the timeframe of analysis, the TSK’s relations with the media seem hostile, as the TSK repeatedly defends the honor and trustworthiness of its character against media claims.

In its discourse on the media, the TSK appears reactionary, as it continuously responds to and denounces media claims (Texts 11/6, 11/7). The tone of the discourse on the media is defensive, with the TSK denying media accusations (Texts 09/4, 09/9). This raises questions about the nature of the TSK’s public image, which appears to be negatively portrayed by the media, thus threatening public opinion of the TSK. Given the TSK’s esteem for the public as constructed through its discourse on the nation, threats to its public image would damage not only its perceived relationship with the nation but also its identity as constructed through the discourse of its press releases. To deflect threats to its identity, the TSK portrays itself as honest to the public by correcting false information presented by the media (Text 10/3) and appeals to the public for support against those claims (Text 11/7). Thus, in responding to media reports, the TSK frames its role as informing the public of the



truth, although this construction is challenged by repeated, negative accusations in the media.

In addition to denying media reports, the TSK also explains why the reports are false (Text 8/10). These explanations are constructed with extreme detail and precision, similar to the TSK's recounting of military operations, reinforcing the professional identity of the TSK constructed through the discourse on the military.

#### **5.1.2.9. Discourse 9: Ethics**

The discourse on ethics, particularly the ethics of the military, is closely related to the discourse on the media and the media's portrayal of the TSK. The TSK constructs its self-image as committed to strong ethical values, in part, in response to negative media portrayals. The TSK repeatedly describes itself by emphasizing values such as respect, loyalty, and fidelity (Text 07/2), which justify the public's support and trust.

Related to the discourse on ethics are the reoccurring themes of deceit and trust in the TSK press releases. The TSK accuses a variety of actors, some named more specifically than others, of deceiving the public for disastrous ends. The media is often characterized as untrustworthy and its reports denounced by the TSK (Text 08/3, 10/3); an unnamed actor is accused of using religion to subvert the nation (Text 07/1); and terrorists are blamed for deceiving innocent people (Text 08/2). Against these deceitful actors, the TSK constructs itself as honest and trustworthy, deserving of the public's confidence. This discursive theme reinforces the dichotomy of

us/them through which the TSK constructs an ethnical, trustworthy identity in contrast to a deceitful “other.”

### **5.1.3. Discussion of Discourse Analysis**

The results of the discourse analysis of TSK press releases from 2007-2012 suggest that, while the TSK perceives democracy as an inherent feature of the Turkish state, its understanding of democracy is strongly linked to the discourse on the nation. In particular, Turkey’s democratic nature is attributed to the principles of Atatürk.

While the discourse on democracy is limited, the discourse on the nation is connected to the discourses on terrorism, security, and the military, as military operations against terrorist targets are justified because of the terrorists’ aim to divide the nation. In this sense, the discourse on the nation serves as justification for military action.

The military defines its role as protector of the nation, both in terms of its military operations against terrorist targets and in terms of providing truthful information to the public. Although the military emphasizes its relationship with and esteem for the nation, its relationship with the public is complicated through ambiguous discursive features that create a distinction between the military and the public. Furthermore, the defensive tone of the TSK’s discourse on the media suggests that public opinion of the military may be tainted or jeopardized by negative media reports.

These features of the TSK press releases serve to underscore the military’s commitment to fighting terrorism through military means and to construct an identity of the military that perceives itself as honorable but threatened by external actors.

## **5.2. Content Analysis of TSK Press Releases**

Content analysis of the Turkish Armed Forces' (TSK) press releases was conducted for the period from 2007-2012 to examine the keywords and phrases used in the texts in order to understand linguistic and thematic trends of the TSK discourse. The findings of the content analysis are intended to supplement the discourse analysis by offering quantitative data measuring word count and frequency in the press releases.

During content analysis, the researcher examined the frequencies of the keywords pertaining to each discourse. The analysis considers both changes in the frequencies of individual keywords as well as the overall change in the frequency of keywords related to that discourse. The data from the content analysis is presented below in the form of line graphs, offered to provide visual representation of the data.

### **5.2.1. Discourse 1: Terrorism**

The frequency of keywords related to the discourse on terrorism in TSK press releases from 2007-2012 reveals no generalizable trend for the period of analysis. A high frequency of keywords was found in the years 2007, 2008, and 2011, although significantly lower frequencies were found in the years 2009, 2010, and 2012. The variability of the frequency of keywords could be the result of the sample texts analyzed, which may not have been representative and which may have included and/or excluded texts related to terrorism disproportionately throughout the timeframe of analysis.

Although the overall content analysis of the discourse on terrorism revealed no significant trends, the language used to address and describe terrorism within the

discourse is significant. In 2007-2008, the PKK is referred to directly by name, and the term PKK occurs with high frequency in both of those years. The organization is also often referred to as PKK/KONGRA-GEL. It is significant that both names (PKK and KONGRA-GEL) are used, as this represents a decision made by the TSK to refer to the group both by its original name (PKK) as well as by the more recent term that the group has assigned itself. This language choice signifies that the TSK does not see an institutional or ideological difference between the PKK and KONGRA-GEL, although the TSK recognizes the name change.

#### Figure 15: TSK Discourse 1: Terrorism

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and KONGRA-GEL) are used, as this represents a decision made by the TSK to refer to the group both by its original name (PKK) as well as by the more recent term that the group has assigned itself. This language choice signifies that the TSK does not see an institutional or ideological difference between the PKK and KONGRA-GEL, although the TSK recognizes the name change.

Furthermore, while the name “PKK/KONGRA-GEL” is used in the early years of analysis (2007-2008), the TSK does not refer to the PKK by name after the year 2008. From 2009-2012, the PKK is referred to as a “terrorist network” and, despite the consistency with which the name “PKK/KONGRA-GEL” is used during the early years of analysis, this name does not reappear in the later year of analysis.

Additionally, significant to the content analysis of the discourse on terrorism is the frequency with which the term “terrorist” is used to refer to single individuals rather than the organization as a whole. The TSK commonly refers to “terrorists” or “terrorist members” in its discourse. Rather than broadly characterize the organization as a whole, the TSK highlights individuals who have joined the terrorist network or carry out terrorist activity. This provides a level of nuance to the TSK’s discourse and suggests that the TSK is focused on eliminating individuals within the organization, or the recruitment of individuals to the organization, as part of its counter-terrorism strategy.

### **5.2.2. Discourse 3: Security**

It is difficult to assess an overall trend in the analysis of the frequency of keywords related to the discourse on security. The frequency of keywords decreases

considerably from 2008-2009, although it remains at a low frequency from 2009-2010, with an increase in 2011 and a slight decrease in 2012. Looking at the trend, the frequency of keywords in 2009-2010 appears abnormally low when compared to the other years of analysis. In part, this parallels the data from the discourse on terrorism, in which a sharp decrease in the frequency of keywords can be observed for the years 2009-2010. This suggests either that the sample is not representative or the TSK's use of a discourse on terrorism decreased during this two-year period.

Figure 16: TSK Discourse 3: Security

### **5.2.3. Discourse 4: the Nation**

Unlike the discourses on terrorism and security, the discourse on the nation does not experience a sharp decline in the frequency of keywords from the period 2009-2010. Instead, there is a significant increase in the frequency of keywords related to the discourse on national sentiment in 2009. With the exception of 2009, the discourse on national sentiment remains relatively consistent throughout the period of analysis,

with a slight drop from 2007-2008 and minor fluctuates from 2010-2012. This is notably in that the discourse on the nation does not seem to follow the same pattern as the discourses on terrorism and security, suggesting that the discourse on national sentiment is independent from these discourses and there appears to be little interdiscursivity between them in terms of the frequency of keywords.

Figure 17: TSK Discourse 4: The Nation

Within the discourse on national sentiment, the adjectives ascribed to keywords are revealing of the tone used throughout the press releases. The graphic below demonstrates the nature of adjectives with respect to the term “nation” (*millet*). As demonstrated in the graphic, the term is described in various ways throughout the timeframe of analysis. Of note are the years 2008, 2011, and 2012. In 2008, the nation is described respectfully as “sacred/beloved nation” (*aziz millet*) and in 2011-2012, the nation is described as “exalted nation” (*yüce millet*). In both these characterizations, the nation is possessed using the first person plural, describing it as “our nation” or “our honorable nation.” In other years of analysis, notably the years of 2009-2010, the nation is not described with an honorable adjective, nor is it

described using the first person possessive, suggesting a change in the discourse favoring both the first person plural possessive and exalting adjectives toward the end of the timeframe of analysis.

Figure 18: Variations of "Nation" (millet) in TSK Press Releases

Furthermore, the division between internal and external, or the construction of a dichotomy between in/out with respect to the country, is examined in the graphic below, which measures the frequency with which the terms ‘internal/domestic’ (*yurt içi*) and ‘external’ (*yurt dışı*) are used. As the graphic demonstrates, ‘internal’ (*yurt içi*) is used more commonly than ‘external’ (*yurt dışı*). It should be noted that term “country” or references to in/out of country do not appear in the years 2010 and 2012. While the term “country” appears in 2009, it is not described in terms of in/out of country. The infrequency with which the terms in/out of country are used suggests that the dichotomy between in/out is minor in the discourse, as it does not appear with regular consistency.



Figure 19: Comparison of the Frequency of In/Out of Country

#### **5.2.4. Discourse 5: Unity**

The discourse on national unity is constructed in terms of a dichotomy between unity and division. As presented in the graph above, the frequency of keywords with respect to the discourse on unity appears relatively constant throughout the timeframe of analysis with the exception of the year 2011, in which there is a sharp increase in the frequency of keywords. The discourse on unity appears far more prevalent in the year 2011 due to the increased frequency of certain keywords, particularly of the words “unity” and “dividing/separatist,” the latter of which is used to describe the aims of the terrorist organization. These findings appear partially to support trends of the discourses on terrorism and security, which both experience increases in the frequency of keywords in 2011. Although the overall trends of these three discourses cannot be described as coinciding or displaying similar trends overall throughout the timeframe of analysis, the discourse on terrorism, security, and unity appear to increase in the year 2011.

Figure 20: TSK Discourse 5: Unity

#### **5.2.5. Discourse 6: the Military**

As might be expected given the nature of the TSK press releases, the discourse on the military is a prominent discourse in the analyzed texts. The findings from the analysis of the frequency of keywords are presented below. As the graph shows, the number of keywords identified in connection with the discourse on the military is significantly higher than the number of keywords identified for the other discourses in this analysis. As such, the total frequency of the keywords is also higher for the discourse on the military than it is for the other discourses in this analysis. At the surface level, this highlights the prominent nature of the discourse on the military in the TSK press releases. For purposes of analysis, the frequency of the keywords is not examined proportionately in reference to other discourses but the overall trend of the discourse is analyzed and compared with other discourses to suggest interdiscursivity within the texts. Thus, while it cannot be said that the discourse on the military is significant or more important than the other discourses, the findings do reveal the high frequency of keywords related to the military. Of note, the TSK press releases refer to the Turkish military, its branches, and its commanders by name.

Figure 21: TSK Discourse 6: Military

The frequency of keywords related to the discourse on the military drops steadily from 2007-2010, although it increases sharply in 2011 before decreasing again in 2012. These findings are similar, although not identical, to the trends of other discourses, specifically the discourse on terrorism, which also declines from 2007-2010 and increases sharply in 2011. Additionally, the discourse on security reaches a low point in 2010 and increases sharply in 2011, and the discourse on unity also reaches its highest frequency in 2011. These commonality suggest a degree of interdiscursivity between the discourses on terrorism, security, unity, and the military, all of which sharply increase from 2010-2011, reaching a peak in 2011. The differences in the overall trends of these discourses suggest that the level of interdiscursivity is modest, as there is not a high degree of uniformity between these discourses. Nonetheless, the trends from 2010-2012 with a peak in 2011 are significant for understanding the overall discursive nature of the TSK press releases.

The high frequency of the discourse on the military in the TSK press releases is not surprising, given that the voice of the texts is the institutional voice of the military. A closer analysis of the discourse on the military suggests self-referencing in the TSK press releases throughout the timeframe of analysis. The graph below demonstrates the frequency with which four keywords are mentioned throughout the timeframe of analysis. The four words analyzed are General Staff (*Genelkurmay*), Turkish Armed Forces, commander, and military personnel. These four words have been selected as they can be described as self-referencing terms through which the TSK refers to itself, its leadership, or its members.

Figure 22: Military Self-Referencing in Press Releases

The results suggest that the TSK refers to itself with relative consistency throughout the timeframe of analysis with the exception of the year 2010, in which the frequency of self-referencing keywords decreases significantly. The frequency of self-referencing keywords also decreases in 2012, although as dramatically. The frequency of self-referencing keywords occurs with little fluctuation from 2007-2009

and in 2011. These changes mirrors the trends of other discourses, such as terrorism, security, unity, and the military, which also decrease in 2010 and increase sharply in 2011.

#### **5.2.6. Discourse 2: Democracy**

As with the content analysis of MGK press releases, the discourse on democracy has been divided into four sub-discourses for analysis in the TSK press releases. These four sub-discourses are the same as the sub-discourses analyzed in the MGK press releases: (a) democracy as a political system, (b) democracy as an ideal, (c) democracy as an approach to conflict resolution, and (d) democratic institutions belonging to the state. While the categorization of these four sub-discourses remains the same, the primary difference from the MGK content analysis is the number and nature of keywords identified, which is significantly less for the sub-discourses of democracy as an ideal and democracy as an approach to conflict resolution when compared to the analysis of MGK press releases. The sub-discourse of a democratic approach is particularly striking when compared to the MGK press releases, as the number of keywords and their frequencies are notably lower.

##### **5.2.6.1. Discourse 2a: Democratic Politics**

The frequency of keywords related to the discourse on democratic politics decreases from 2007-2008 and then sharply increases from 2008-2009. This increase is mirrored by a sharp decrease from 2009-2010, following by a slight decrease from 2011-2012. The degree of fluctuation in the frequency of keywords related to the discourse suggest that, while democratic politics is a reoccurring theme in the TSK press releases, it is not a well-developed discourse with a high degree of

intertextuality throughout the period of analysis. Instead, the frequency of keywords seems to vary from year to year.

Figure 23: TSK Discourse 2a: Democratic politics

#### **5.2.6.2. Discourse 2b: Democratic Ideals**

As with the frequency of keywords related to the discourse on democratic politics, the frequency of keywords related to the discourse on democratic ideals displays no uniform trend to suggest a well-developed discourse in the texts throughout the timeframe of analysis. The frequency of keywords is relatively stable from 2007-2009 and then decreases sharply in 2010. It rises again in 2011 and decreases slightly in 2012. Despite these fluctuations, however, the total number of keywords related to the discourse on democratic ideals does not reach or exceed ten words per year, suggesting that the discourse is neither well-developed nor prominent in the TSK press releases. Although keywords related to the discourse appear every year, they occur infrequently in the text. This suggests that the discourse of the TSK as an institution does not give prominence to the sub-discourse of democratic ideals in its

press releases, as its keywords do not figure prominently in the TSK press releases analyzed.

Figure 24: TSK Discourse 2b: Democratic ideals

#### **5.2.6.3. Discourse 2c: Democratic Approach**

As with the discourse on democracy as an ideal, the findings of the content analysis suggest that the discourse on a democratic approach to conflict resolution is undeveloped both in terms of its frequency and intertextuality. Only three keywords were identified in relation to the discourse on a democratic approach: economy, culture, and social. Collectively, these words do not form a cohesive or clearly defined understanding of a democratic approach, particularly in comparison to the discourse identified in the MGK press releases. The combined frequency of the keywords does not exceed ten occurrences for any year throughout the timeframe of analysis. Furthermore, the discourse is notably absent in the final two years of analysis, 2011-2012.

Figure 25: TSK Discourse 2c: Democratic approach

The analysis suggests that a discourse on a democratic approach to conflict resolution is largely absent from the TSK press releases throughout the timeframe of analysis. This finding is significant with respect to the research question of this thesis as it implies that the TSK were not intrinsically concerned with establishing a discourse on a democratic approach to Kurdish question in their press releases. While the discourse on security, terrorism, and the military figure prominently in the TSK press releases, the discourse on democracy as an approach and democracy as an ideal (as presented in the section above) remain largely absent from the analyzed texts.

#### **5.2.6.4. Discourse 2d: Democratic Institutions**

The frequency of keywords related to the discourse on democratic institutions experiences a decrease throughout the timeframe of analysis, with minor increases from 2008-2010 and 2011-2012. When compared to the other sub-discourses on democracy, the sub-discourse on democratic institutions occurs with more frequency than the sub-discourses on democratic ideals or a democratic approach. However, the overall decrease punctuated with increases in the middle years of analysis suggests



that the discourse on democratic institutions should not be considered prominent in the TSK press releases. Only in two years of analysis (2007 and 2010) did the total number of keywords related to the discourse exceed 15 times per year.

Figure 26: TSK Discourse 2d: Democratic institutions

A limitation to the analysis of this discourse is the decision made by the author to classify and examine a separate discourse on the legal system and legal practices. While the judicial system represents an element of democratic institutions or civil institutions in a democracy, given the number, frequency and reoccurring nature of keywords related to the judicial system in the TSK press releases, the researcher decided to categorize those keywords as a separate discourse, the analysis of which is presented below. Thus, had that discourse on the judicial system been included within the broad discourse on democratic institutions, the frequency of keywords related to democratic institutions would have been significantly greater and the analysis would have suggested that the discourse played a more prominent role in the TSK press releases. Nonetheless, from the researcher's analysis of the texts, the discourse on the judicial system represents a separate and distinct discourse from the

one analyzed in this section, which focuses more on the legislative and governing nature of democratic institutions. The following section presents the content analysis of the discourse on the legal system.

#### **5.2.7. Discourse 7: Legal System**

The discourse on the legal system, including the judicial system and legal practices, was identified by the researcher as a key discourse in the TSK press releases throughout the timeframe of analysis due to the prevalence of keywords related to the discourse and their reoccurring frequency. The frequency of keywords related to the discourse on the legal system increased sharply from 2008-2009 before falling in 2010. With the exception of the year 2009, the frequency of keywords remained relatively constant with a slight increase throughout the timeframe of analysis. The year 2009 is noteworthy due to the dramatic increase in the frequency of keywords. A closer analysis of the keywords occurring most often in the year 2009 reveals that three keywords account for the majority of the total frequency of keywords related to the discourse: law, investigation, and ruling (*hukuk*, *sorusturma*, and *yargi*).

Figure 27: TSK Discourse 7: Legal System

Given the political context surrounding these years of analysis, particularly the historical nature of the trials against military officials and the impact those trials had on civil-military relations in Turkey, it is not necessarily surprising that the discourse on the legal system figures prominently in the discourse of the TSK press releases. Nonetheless, the discourse suggests the TSK's willingness or need to discuss legal proceedings before the public. The prevalence of the discourse on the judicial system suggests that the trials of military officials had a significant impact on TSK leadership.

#### **5.2.8. Discourse 8: the Media**

The frequency of keywords related to the media increases slightly from 2007-2009. The frequency drops dramatically in 2010, reaching a low point for the timeframe of analysis. It then increases in 2011 and decreases slightly in 2012. The frequency of keywords related to the discourse on the media is significantly higher in the first half of the period of analysis (2007-2009) than in the second half (2010-2012), suggesting that the frequency and prominence of the discourse decreases in the second half of the timeframe of analysis. This trend is significant in that it distinguishes the discourse on the media from the other discourses analyzed in the TSK press releases, which do not demonstrate a clear division in terms of frequency in the first half and second half of the time period. This finding suggests low interdiscursivity between the discourse on the media and the other discourses analyzed in the TSK press releases.

Figure 28: TSK Discourse 8: Media

Also of note is the nature of the adjectives associated with the discourse on the media. In particular, adjectives such as unfounded, unwarranted, and fake (*asılsız*, *mesnetsiz*, and *sahte*) were used to describe media reports or elements related to the discourse on the media in the TSK press releases, suggesting that the TSK did not maintain positive relations with the press, particularly during the first half of the timeframe of analysis. These findings may offer insights into the public image of the TSK, as presented by the media, and raise concerns about the public's perception of the TSK during the period, as least with respect to media portrayals. Given the negative adjectives used by the TSK with respect to its discourse on the media, it is unlikely that the TSK had good relations with the media or a positive media image during this period.

#### **5.2.9. Discourse 9: Ethics**

The final discourse analyzed for the content analysis of TSK press releases is the discourse on ethics, specifically with respect to descriptions of the military. Overall, the frequency of keywords related to the discourse on ethics increases throughout the

timeframe of analysis. The total frequency of keywords plummets sharply in 2010, although it rises dramatically in 2011 and continues to rise slightly in 2012.

It should be noted that the total number of keywords identified with respect to the discourse on ethics is high (n=13), although the total frequency of keywords is significantly lower, with the highest total frequency of keywords (n=12) in 2012. Thus, while the variety of words used to construct the discourse on ethics is diverse, the overall frequency of those words is relatively low, although it does increase throughout the timeframe of analysis. The plethora of keywords is significant in that it suggests the breadth of the discourse on ethics, while the overall relatively low frequency of the keywords suggests that the discourse plays a minor role within the TSK press releases.

Figure 29: TSK Discourse 9: Ethics

The sharp decrease in the frequency of keywords from 2009-2010 followed by a rapid rise from 2010-2011 is similar to the pattern noted for other discourses during

these same years (2009-2011). In particular, the discourse on terrorism, security, and the military follow a similar pattern of change from 2010-2011. This finding suggests a degree of interdiscursivity for these discourses from 2010-2011.

### **5.2.3. Discussion of Content Analysis**

Overall, the findings of the content analysis suggest low levels of interdiscursivity between the discourses analyzed in the TSK press releases from 2007-2012. The ten discourses analyzed in this section share limited trends or common patterns of change throughout the timeframe of analysis. The high diversity and variation in the frequency of keywords related to each discourse is revealing of the discursive nature of the TSK press releases, which in turn suggests implications for the identity of the TSK during this timeframe of analysis.

First, a low degree of intertextuality was observed in the TSK press releases. A majority of the discourses analyzed do not display a common trend across the years of analysis, suggesting that these discourses are not well established. While this could be the product of the sample of texts used, it could also suggest that the discourses implied by TSK leadership were unstable, which would suggest that the TSK's identity was also undergoing change or was also undefined in some respects. Thus, the results of the content analysis do not suggest a strong, firm institutional identity of the TSK during the timeframe of analysis.

Similarly, the degree of interdiscursivity, or the relationships between the discourses, was weak throughout the timeframe of analysis. With notable exceptions that are discussed later in this section, the general trends of each discourse were not

interconnected, nor did they mirror common trends through the timeframe of analysis. That the discourses employed by the TSK in its press releases lacked unity or a common trajectory further suggests that the TSK lacked a strong, well-articulated identity during the timeframe of analysis.

Additionally, the lack of a strong discourse on democracy, as measured by the frequency of keywords related to the discourse and sub-discourses, suggests that the TSK did not prioritize democracy in its press releases. If the press releases are to be understood as the institutional voice of the TSK, this suggests that the TSK did not place a strong emphasis on democratic change or a democratic approach to conflict resolution. In contrast, the discourses on security, terrorism, and the military each occur with far greater frequency than the discourses on democracy or democratic institutions. This suggests that the military largely conceives its role as limited to the realm of military-related security issues. The discourse on democracy does not appear to be interrelated to the discourses on terrorism and security, suggesting that democracy is not framed as a solution to terrorism or other security problems. Furthermore, there does not appear to be a connection between the discourse on democracy and the discourse on the military, in which the TSK uses self-referencing terms with reoccurring frequency. Again, this suggests that the military does not discursively frame its identity in terms of democratic politics.

Although the TSK press releases do not include a strong, well-established discourse on democracy, the discourse on the judicial system occurs with more frequency in the analyzed texts. The discourse itself is unique to the TSK press releases when compared to the MGK press releases, as a discourse on the legal system did not

appear in the MGK press releases. The occurrence of an established discourse on the legal system but not necessarily on democracy within the TSK press releases is significant and cannot simply be ascribed to historical circumstances. While the military did face monumental legal trials during the timeframe of analysis to which the emergence of a discourse on the legal system can be attributed, this raises questions regarding the absence of a strong discourse on democratically elected institutions, as the military was simultaneously undergoing changes in its relationship with the executive and legislative branches of government. The reoccurring discourse on the legal system suggests an acknowledgement from the TSK of the legal authority of the civil judicial system; it also suggests the degree to which the military was impacted by the court cases during this period.

Notable interdiscursive trends in the content analysis of TSK press releases from 2007-2012 include the discourses on terrorism, security, unity, and the military (and the media to a lesser extent) from the years 2010-2012, during which years the discourse experienced similar trends. While the overall occurrences in the frequency of keywords related to these discourses cannot be described as interconnected, each discourse experiences a low in 2010 followed by a sharp increase in 2011 and a decline again in 2012. The drop in 2010 followed by a sharp rise in 2011 is significant in that it suggests that the construction of these discourses may have been partly related, at least during the second half of the timeframe of analysis. If these discourses can be described as interrelated from 2010-2012, the results are interesting in that they represent a sharp decline in 2010, suggesting that the discourses on security, terrorism, unity, and the military were less prominent in this year. However, the discourses reemerge



with a sharp increase in the frequency of keyword in 2011, suggesting that they were given prominence in this year.

Overall, the year 2010 appears to be a common “low” year for many discourses, with eight (8) of the thirteen discourses, including the sub-discourses individually, experiencing their lowest value in the overall frequency of keywords in the year 2010. The high number of discourse identified in the analysis of TSK press releases is also significant. When compared to MGK press releases, a greater number of discourses relevant to the research question of this thesis were identified. The broad range of discourses but lack of interconnectivity between the discourse, both with respect to years of analysis and discourses analyzed, further suggests that the institutional voice—and thus the institutional identity—of the TSK were not well-defined and potentially in a state of turbulence during this timeframe of analysis.

### **5.3. Evaluation of Normative Change**

This section evaluates the findings of the discourse and content analyses of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) press releases from 2007-2012 in a comparative manner, supplement with interview results. In doing so, it assesses the findings of the analyses with respect to the research question investigated in this thesis and seeks to understand the relationship between civil-military relations and approaches to conflict resolution.

Prior to analysis, the hypothesis presented in this thesis suggested that as civil-military relations became more democratic during the timeframe of analysis, the military’s discourse would be become more democratic as well; that is, the demilitarization of civil-military relations would be reflected in the findings of the

discourse and content analyses. However, the findings of the analyses of the TSK press releases from 2007-2012 do not support this hypothesis. Instead, the findings suggest that little evidence of demilitarization can be in the discourse of the TSK throughout the timeframe of analysis. To this end, the following points should be considered:

- While the discourse of the TSK press releases constructs democracy as an inherent feature of the Turkish state, the definition of democracy presented in the discourse is static and limited in scope.
- The TSK's approach to terrorism throughout the timeframe of analysis remains consistent in its focus on military operations to eliminate terrorist activity. The discourse does not expand to include a multi-dimensional or democratic approach, and there is mention of a Kurdish question.
- There is little connection or evidence of interdiscursivity between the discourses on democracy and terrorism, implying that the TSK does not construct the former as a solution to the latter.

### **5.3.1. Discourse and Identity**

The findings of the content analysis and the findings of the discourse analysis contradict each other in significant ways, which are expanded upon below. While the content analysis suggests a low of consistency within and between texts, as evident from the lack of trends in the data across years of analysis, the discourse analysis found greater degrees of intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Despite these differences, both analyses found the discourse on democracy to be limited but the discourses on terrorism, the military, and the nation to be well-developed. Following Hansen's (2006) framework on the interconnectivity between discourse and identity,

these findings would suggest that the identity of the TSK is more closely linked to the discourses on terrorism, the military, and the nation, suggesting that these elements figure more prominently into its self-identity construction than democracy or democratic values.

### **5.3.2. Democracy and Terrorism**

Constructions of democracy as well as approaches to terrorism do not seem to change in the discourse of the TSK over the period of analysis. Democracy is valued by the TSK, although the definition of democracy constructed through its discourse is limited to democratic institutions and the rule of law: a strong discourse on democratic ideals or democratic approaches to conflict resolution is absent from the text, as are minority rights and the expansion of human rights as a universal ideal. Instead, the unitary state and a strong national identity are prominent features of the understanding of democracy constructed in the TSK press releases. This is significant in that it suggests that, while the TSK supports democracy in Turkey, it does not necessarily support formalizing ethnic diversity in its understanding of national identity.

Furthermore, by constructing democracy in terms of governance rather than minority representation, there does not appear to be a tension in the discourse with respect to the TSK's support for democracy and its military approach to terrorism. Terror is constructed as a security issue for the state, unrelated to issues of democratic governance. Terrorism is neither a threat to democracy nor a solution to it, and counterterrorism approaches focus on manifestations of the conflict rather than its root causes. This distinguishes the discourse in the TSK press releases from that of

the MGK, a comparison of which is presented in Chapter 6. The consistency with which terrorism and democracy are constructed in the discourse suggests that the TSK's perception of conflict resolution remains largely unchanged throughout the timeframe of analysis.

However, the continuity of the TSK press releases is challenged by a rupture in the terminology of the discourse on terrorism and the general results of the content analysis. The name used to refer to the terrorist organization changes: while the PKK is referenced as PKK/KONGRA-GEL in 2007-2008, after 2009 the TSK press releases refer to the group as a separatist terror organization but do not mention it specifically by name. This rupture in nomenclature appears abnormal when compared to the overall consistency of the discourse on terrorism.

Furthermore, the findings of the content analysis did not suggest high levels of interdiscursivity or intertextuality in the press releases. Rather, the findings revealed divergent trends both within discourses and between them. Despite these inconsistencies, the findings of the content analysis do suggest a limited discourse on democracy and stronger discourses on terrorism, the nation, and the military.

### **5.3.3. Production of and Challenges to Identity**

According to Hansen (2006), a stable discourse suggests a stable institutional identity. In assessing the stability of the TSK's identity through the discourse of its press releases, the issue of stability is drawn into question by inconsistent findings between the content and discourse analyses, as suggested earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, while the TSK appears to construct its identity through the discourses of terrorism,

the military, and the nation, challenges from other discourses to the public image of the TSK suggest weakness and instability in the overarching narrative of the TSK press releases. Applying Hansen's (2006) framework, challenges to the overarching narrative suggest that the identity of the TSK was unstable, challenged, or changing during this period.

Challenges to the identity of the TSK come primarily from the discourses on the legal system and the media. Significantly, both of the discourses represent institutions removed from the military realm, suggesting that changes in civil-military relations may have challenged the stability of the military's identity during this time. The discourse on the legal system emerges within the press releases as a distinct discourse from the discourse on democracy. Given the Ergenekon trials of this period, it is not surprising that the legal system emerges as a prominent discourse. However, while the judicial system could be understood as an integral aspect of democratic governance, the discourse on the legal system is constructed separately and distinctly from the discourse on democracy. Furthermore, the discourse on the legal system suggests not only division within the military structure but also the need for the military to defend itself. Whereas as the strength of the military is highlighted in the discourses on terrorism, the military appears deferential and defensive in its discourse on the legal system.

The prominence of the legal system in the TSK press releases is supported by interview findings that highlighted the negative impact of the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials on the military. One interviewee stated, "Because of the court cases that were opening against the military, I think that the military and the civil-government came not to

trust each other” (*Participant 4*). The significance of the court cases was also highlighted by another interviewee who emphasized the “sensitive” nature of the cases for the TSK, concluding that the court cases “made it a very difficult time for the TSK because they were pushed into a corner with these trials” (*Participant 9*).

In particular, one interviewee described the court cases as an influential factor in limiting the military’s ability to oppose governmental reforms, including legislation associated with the Kurdish Opening: “During this time period, when the government implemented changes, the military didn’t come out against the government; it couldn’t come out against the government. The court cases had affected the public and demotivated the TSK” (*Participant 9*). Interviews with former members of parliament also suggested the court cases were influential in reshaping civil-military relations as the court cases reveal “another side” of the military and damaged public opinion (*Participant 10*). Another participant suggested that the military’s prestige decreased following the court cases and adversely affected its ability to recruit qualified personnel, thus contributing to a decrease in the overall quality of military leadership and effectiveness:

As a result [of the court cases], the military couldn’t recruit qualified people. For example, the quality of its military generals decreased. The quality of the students enrolled in military schools also decreased. This contributed to an overall reduction in the effectiveness of the military. (*Participant 1*)

Collectively, the analyses of the TSK press releases and the interview findings suggest that the court cases adversely affected the military during this time.

Challenges to the TSK’s identity emerge also in the discourse on the media. The TSK’s public image appears under attack by media claims defaming the actions and integrity of the military. While the construction of its own self-identity presents the

TSK as defending the nation, the discourse on the media suggests that the public image of the TSK may have differed from its own self-image during this period. The contrast between the TSK's construction of its self-identity and its defense of its public image challenges the stability of its identity during the timeframe of analysis, as its self-identity and public image appear in conflict with one another. In the interviews conducted for this these, the media was also cited as having played a role in the weakening of the military's power and prestige through reports that were "made up to discredit the TSK and portray it as untrustworthy by creating suspicion and doubt in the eye of the public" (*Participant 2*).

#### **5.4. Supplementary Interview Findings**

The findings presented above suggest that the identity of the TSK was in a state of flux during this period are supported by interview results with retired military officials highlighting the demoralization and demotivation of the military during this period. As one interviewee states, "The regulations directed at the military during this period negatively affected the psychological and social morale and motivation of the military" (*Participant 3*). Another interviewee noted, "In addition to civil-military relations, the military itself also changed during this time period. ... Military personnel were demoralized because of these changes" (*Participant 4*). Another interviewee suggested that the demoralization of the military had the effect of discouraging it from openly opposing the civil-government: "During this time period, when the government implemented changes, the military didn't come out against the government; it couldn't come out against the government. The court cases had affected the public and demotivated the TSK" (*Participant 9*). The demotivation described in the interview results could account for the instability of the TSK's

identity found in the analyses for this thesis, presented above. Thus, the legal reforms and court cases not only negatively impacted the morale of the armed forces, but the tangible result of this change within the military was its withdrawal from the political sphere.

Interview results further suggest that, through institutional reforms and as a result of the legal investigations against military officials, military leaders were pressured into retiring early, resulting in a new generation of top military leadership who were more willing to compromise with the government. The interviewees assessed this situation differently, with some suggesting that the new military leadership was less effective (*Participant 1*) and others stating that it contributed to the normalization of civil-military relations (*Participant 2*). Another interviewee underlined that the military officers “did not resign; they were forced out” due to political pressure at this time (*Participant 6*).

The interview results suggest that these changes, particularly the demotivation of the TSK, contributed to the implementation of the Kurdish Opening. “The Kurdish Opening was presented in the wake of the military trials. The trials had quieted the TSK and put them in a position where they could not publically oppose the government on the Solution Process” (*Participant 9*). Thus, the weakening of the TSK had the effect of allowing the government to take command of security issues and implement a new approach to conflict resolution. The operational mechanism linking the factors described above and changing approaches to conflict is presented in the following chapter.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

This chapter considers the conclusions and findings of the previous data analysis chapters on both the MGK and TSK press releases from 2007-2012 in a comparative manner. In doing so, it evaluates the findings with respect to the research question at hand in order to understand the relationship, if any, between changing civil-military relations and approaches to terrorism in Turkey. This chapter begins with an overview of the findings, discussed with respect to the research question and the literature review presented at the beginning of this thesis, and ends with conclusions based on the findings of the research.

The findings of this research suggest that while the discourse of the MGK press releases favors a multi-dimensional and democratic approach to the issue of terrorism, the discourse of the TSK press releases constructs terrorism as a security issue requiring military expertise. A link between terrorism and democracy is not constructed in the TSK press releases, although democracy is presented as a solution to issues of terrorism in the MGK press releases. Thus, in its conclusion, this thesis finds that changing civil-military relations in Turkey have affected approaches to

terrorism, as the increased influence of the civil government has allowed for a more multi-dimensional, democratic approach to the Kurdish question to occur, despite a lack of normative change favoring a shift to accommodative approaches from within the military. These findings and conclusions are discussed below in detail.

### **6.1. Comparison of MGK and TSK Press Releases**

The findings of this research suggest significant differences in the discourse of the MGK and TSK press releases. The MGK press releases emphasize democracy more than the TSK press releases. In the MGK press releases, a multi-dimensional approach to terrorism is presented, including concerns for economic, social, and cultural development. Although a democratic opening is not explicitly specified in the MGK press releases, cooperation between government institutions and a connection between terrorism and democracy is emphasized. The discourses on democracy and terrorism overlap, framing democracy both as threatened by terrorism and as a solution to terrorism. Throughout the timeframe of analysis, the emphasis on democracy and democratic values increases in the MGK press releases, suggesting that democracy grew in importance with respect to security issues.

In contrast, similar developments with respect to the discourse on democracy were not found in the TSK press releases. Instead, democracy was described as an inherent feature of the Turkish state but not expanded upon to include adjectives other than “modern” and “secular.” These findings were supported by interview results that suggest that the military conceptualized Turkey as a modern, democratic state and supported democratizing reforms to advance this identity. While democracy is ascribed as an inherent feature of Turkey’s identity, no link is established in the TSK

discourse between democracy and terrorism. Rather, terrorism is constructed as a security issue requiring military expertise, reflected in both the content and structure of the press releases, which emphasized the precision and professionalism with which the military approached terrorism. In the TSK press releases, the issue of terrorism is confined to the military realm and addressed only through military-based counterterrorism approaches.

In both sets of press releases, a narrow definition of democracy is presented which does not challenge the unitary nature of the state or include a multi-ethnic identity. Although both representations are limited, they are constructed and employed to different ends. The MGK constructs democracy in relation to terrorism, first as threatened by terrorism and then as a solution to terrorism through a multi-dimensional approach including political, social, and economic reforms. In contrast, democracy is not tied to terrorism in the TSK press releases but is constructed as an inherent feature of the Turkish state contributing to its “modern” identity. While the construction of democracy in the MGK press releases allows room for accommodative approaches to counterterrorism, the construction of democracy in the TSK press releases does not associate democracy with terrorism or the Kurdish question. This significant difference suggests that the demilitarization of civil-military relations did not contribute to normative changes in the military’s approach to counterterrorism strategy.

Viewed in comparison, these findings suggest significant differences in the construction of terrorism and democracy in the press releases of the TSK and MGK. While the press releases share certain commonalities, including an emphasis on

national identity and unity, the contrast in the construction of democracy and terrorism are significant for the investigation of this thesis.

## **6.2. Significance of the Comparison**

As suggested earlier in this thesis, the MGK is composed of both civil and military leaders. Thus, the discourse of its press releases can be described as a reflection of civil-military relations in Turkey since it represents a compromise between its civilian and military members, who must reach an agreement before the press release is published. Although the discussions that went into composing the press releases cannot be known, the press releases symbolize the end product of those negotiations. In contrast, the TSK press releases represent the discourse of the military and are a reflection of military thinking.

Thus, a comparison of the two discourses should reveal the effects that civil-military relations have had on approaches to the Kurdish question and issues of terrorism in Turkey. Similarities between the discourses would suggest that the military independently supports, has internalized, or has “won” a compromise with civilian leaders, as elements of its internally produced discourse would also be evident in the joint discourse of the MGK. However, differences between the discourses would suggest gaps between civil-military compromises and the preferences of military leadership. In other words, differences between the discourses would suggest that the military does not internally support a policy but has accepted that policy due to the exogenous factor of demilitarized civil-military relations favoring the civil government. The strength of the civil government over the military can be seen in

areas where the military has compromised with civilian leaders in the discourse of the MGK press releases.

### **6.3. Discussion of Interview Results**

Combined with the findings of the MGK and TSK press releases, the interview results suggest that demilitarized civil-military relations, which were the result of exogenous factors but the norms of which were internalized by the TSK, contributed to the shift toward accommodative approaches to conflict resolution. The operational mechanism through which this change occurred is presented in Figure 4. As evident from Figure 4, a number of contributing factors were highlighted in the interview results; they are discussed below as an explanation of operational mechanism described in Figure 4.

In the interview results, the military officers suggested that changing civil-military relations contributed to the implementation of the Kurdish Opening due to institutional changes that limited the ability of the military to oppose government policy. Comparing the position of the military before and after the time period of analysis, one interviewee stated:

When the TSK felt strong enough to act alone, it was able to act without consulting anyone else. But after these changes, its power and influence were weakened and the political power of civilian leaders increased, so the TSK needed to cooperate with the government, including on issues of security.  
(Participant 5)

Although the institutional changes that limited the influence and authority of the TSK in politics also prevented it from acting unilaterally on security issues, the interview results provide a more nuanced representation of the military's response to the Kurdish Opening.

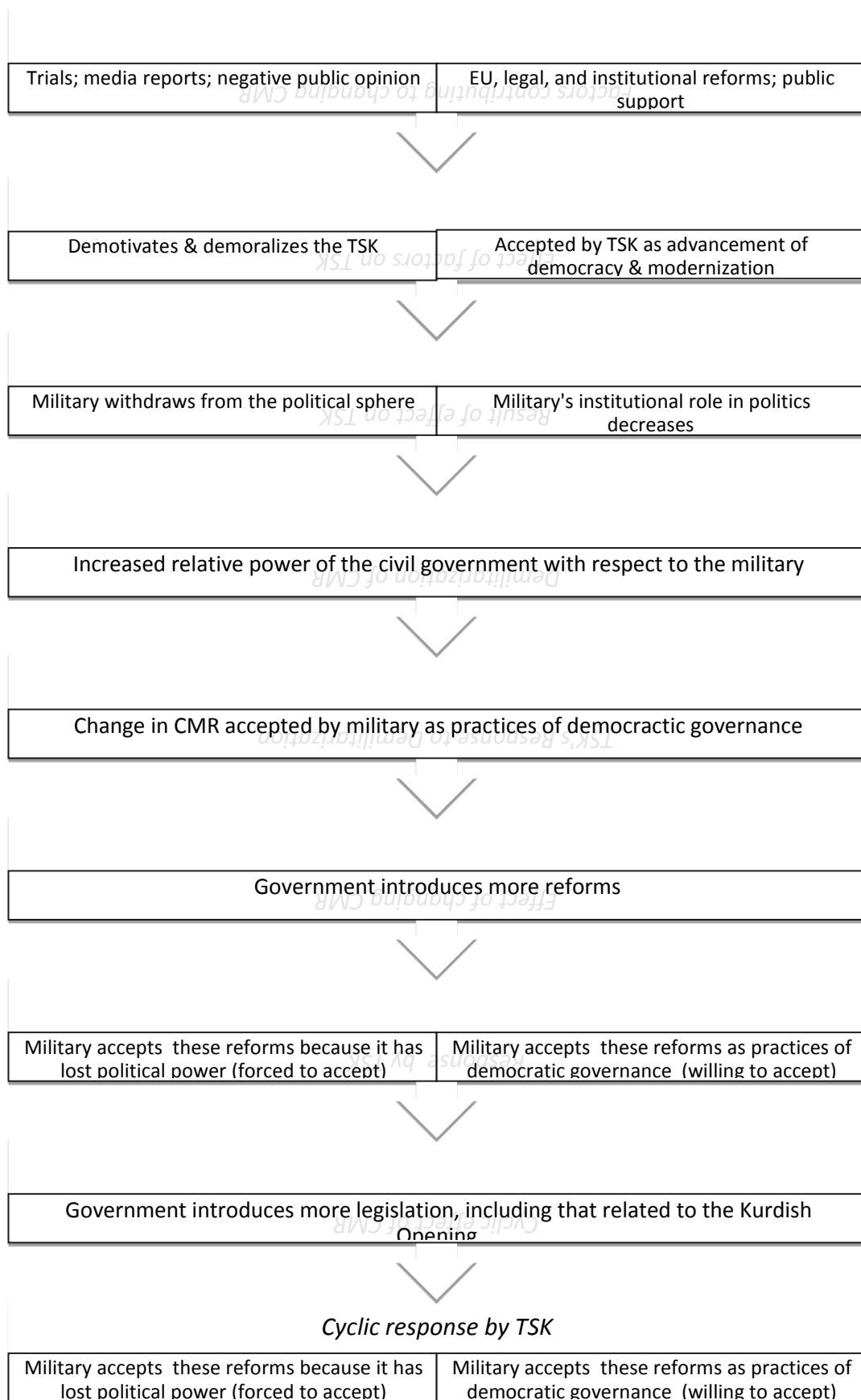


Figure 4: Operational Mechanism linking Civil-Military Relations (CMR) and Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Essentially, two assessments were provided regarding the military's perception of and response to the Kurdish Opening. In the first assessment, many interviewees stated that the military knew the Kurdish Opening would be an unsuccessful policy but that the final decision ultimately rested with the civil government. This suggests that the military had internalized the norms of demilitarized civil-military relations and accepted the civilians' "right to be wrong" (Heper 2011). One participant summarized the situation as follows:

If the military's silence on the Kurdish Question means that it didn't go before the public and denounce these policies, well, that's not the job of the military. It's the job of the politicians to manage the country. As I said before, the military had opinions about the Kurdish Opening, and I think they shared those opinions in the proper places. (*Participant 4*)

Similar comments were made by another participant, who also mentioned public support for the Kurdish Opening as a factor contributing to the military's silence:

Even though the military knew that the Kurdish Opening was a wrong policy, it was a policy that was decided by the government, which had great support from a large segment of the public. Because of this, the military couldn't make any kind of statement opposing it. (*Participant 2*)

These comments were further echoed by other interview participants who described the Kurdish Opening and the military's relationship to it by stating that, "in its essence, [the Kurdish Opening] is the government's policies and the government's ability to realize those policies. The military just carries out the tasks that are assigned to it within the framework of government policies" (*Participant 4*).

Similar comments highlighting the political authority of the civil government were made by another interviewee who stated, "the final decision was a political decision, and because this is democratic country, you have to accept the political decisions of the elected government" (*Participant 5*). Implicit in these statements is the understanding that it is not the role of the military to determine political policy.

Rather, interviewees described the role of the military as deferent to the civil government. One interviewee highlighted the extent to which the military was bound to accept the decisions of the civil government as follows:

The TSK is a state institution. It has to respect the decisions and power of the civil government. So when the government started the Kurdish Opening and offered amnesty to PKK members, the military stood on the side of the street and waved at the terrorists as they came down from the mountains because it couldn't do anything else. (*Participant 6*)

Such interview results suggest that, even without institutional reforms, members of the military appeared willing to support a demilitarized model of civil-military relations on the basis of democratic norms and displayed a respect for democratic practices, particularly the right of the civil government to make administrative decisions for the county. What appears to have changed is not the military's perception of its role—which it appears to understand as executing the decisions made by political leaders—but rather the ability of civilian leaders to formulate and execute policy. As such, the findings of this thesis could be supplemented by future research examining the extent to which civilian leaders had attempted to introduce political solutions to the Kurdish question. By comparing the military's reactions to those efforts and to the Kurdish Opening, the effect of demilitarization would be more apparent.

The second explanation provided by the interviewees was that the military could not oppose the Kurdish Opening because the primary objective of this legislation was to end the conflict in a bloodless manner. Since the military had spent decades committed to ending the conflict with the PKK, the interviewees stated that it could not oppose a policy whose primary objective was to end terrorism. One participant described the situation by stating that the government and the military were seeking



similar goals through different means; these sentiments were echoed by another interviewee who summarized the situation as follows: “It’s a solution process. The goal is to find a solution to end the conflict. Both the TSK and the government were working for this. They selected different methods, but their aims were the same: a solution. The TSK can’t oppose a solution to the conflict” (*Participant 9*). Thus, the distinction between military and government policy is one of strategy rather than objective. While the Peace Process signaled a shift in approach to conflict resolution, the military was not in a position to oppose the government’s policies as their objectives were in line with military goals.

The benefits of a non-military solution were emphasized by other participants, one of whom stated:

With the Kurdish Opening, because the main idea was a gun-less, bloodless solution, it is undeniable that the military had the same idea as the civil government. In this case, the military’s silence was because they shared the same idea with the civilians. Finally this country could be a country in which both the civilian public and the military could live peacefully. (*Participant 3*)

Similarly, another interviewee noted that “the military was happy that there were fewer clashes with the PKK, but they knew that the PKK was still a separatist organization” (*Participant 1*), suggesting that the introduction of the Kurdish Opening did not correlate with a shift in military perception of the conflict as a terrorist problem. Another interviewee suggested that TSK could not oppose the Kurdish Opening because it was committed to the good of nation. Explaining the TSK’s motivation, the interviewee stated: “Even during this period, with all the political changes, the TSK was committed to its love of country, and we see that hasn’t changed. This love for country is an inherent part of the TSK’s identity” (*Participant 9*). Thus, because the military’s primary objective was to end violence

and ensure peace for the country, it was not in the military's interest to oppose the Kurdish Opening. While the interviewees disagreed over the extent to which the military supported the Kurdish Opening and the Peace Process, they agreed that the military respected and supported the government's decision to end violent conflict in Turkey.

Thus, while the interviewees cited institutional reforms as the primary determinants of civil-military change allowing for the implementation of the Kurdish Opening, the military's acquiescence with the government's accommodative approach to counterterrorism policy appears not to be entirely a matter of institutional reform. Both explanations presented above—the military accepting the authority of the civil government and the military supporting the possibility of a peaceful end to the conflict—suggest that normative, endogenous characteristics of the military facilitated its acceptance of the shift in counterterrorism approach. While the implementation of an accommodative approach would not have been possible without institutional reforms formalizing the demilitarization of civil-military relations—and while the interview results suggest that the military would not have implemented an accommodative approach of its own accord—the military appears willing to support the social and political efforts of civilian leaders aimed to end.

#### **6.4. Civil-Military Relations and Approaches to Terrorism**

In the analysis of MGK and TSK press releases in this thesis, a gap was found in the construction of democracy, terrorism, and approaches to terrorism. The military's discourse does not include democratic approaches to terrorism, although this is a prominent theme in the MGK press releases, suggesting a compromise between civil

and military leaders in which the preferences of civil leaders triumphed over those of military leaders. While militaries and security institutions are not necessarily expected to refer to democratic governance in their public statements, it is striking that the Turkish military does so with considerable consistency in its press releases, although without reference to issues of terrorism. This suggests that the military has internalized democratic practices in Turkey and potentially sees itself as a supporter of democratization, although it suggests that the military does not inherently support accommodative approaches of counterterrorism.

What this suggests is that a democratic approach to terrorism or the Kurdish question was not independently preferred or internally supported by military leadership—nor was it explicitly opposed, as the military does support democratic institutions.

Although a democratic approach was not endogenous to the military, the TSK has accepted the preferences of civilian leaders, perhaps because of its inclination for modernization. Thus, factors exogenous rather than endogenous to the military were found to have contributed to a change in Turkey's approach to counterterrorism, resulting in a democratic opening, although endogenous factors were found to have contributed to the military's acceptance of that change. This change appears to have been the result of a strong civilian government, widespread public support, and a weakening of the military's image as a result of damaging court cases. These findings support arguments presented in the literature review that suggest exogenous factors contributed to changing civil-military relations in Turkey, as factors exogenous to the military appear to have been determinants of compromise with the civilian government.

However, these exogenous factors—the foremost of which this thesis has found to be institutional reforms and changing public opinion—should not be understood as eclipsing the agency of the military throughout the period of change. The discourse on the military is weak in the MGK press releases but the discourse on the military is well-developed, detailed, and emphasizes professionalism in the TSK press releases. While it may seem self-evident that the military would figure prominently in TSK press releases, the military's presentation of its self-identity suggests a form of demilitarization whereby the role of the military is limited to the military realm and whereby civil institutions such as the MGK are given greater authority in determining political aspects of the security agenda. That this is evident in the analyses suggests that the military has internalized its role within the context of demilitarized civil-military relations.

The interview results suggest that exogenous factors contributing to the demilitarization of civil-military relations also facilitated the implementation of the Kurdish Opening. A decrease in the military's political authority ensured that the military could not oppose the government's plan to implement the Kurdish Opening. The Kurdish Opening was thus carried out in the wake of changing civil-military relations because demilitarizing change allowed the government more freedom in executing its policies. One interviewee stated:

The TSK sensed that the government had made this decision [to carry out the Kurdish Opening] a long time ago and was determined to execute it. Moreover, to prevent the TSK from objecting to it, the government had put pressure on the TSK before even announcing the policy. By silencing the TSK, the government shut down the possibility of any negative thoughts.  
(Participant 2)

As such, demilitarized civil-military relations were a precondition for a shift in conflict resolution to occur. Furthermore, interviews with former AKP parliament

members suggested that the Kurdish Opening could be viewed as an example of the democratic reforms introduced by the AKP government during this period. An interviewee stated:

Following [its earlier] reforms, the AKP was able to introduce other social reforms related to the Kurdish Opening. With its talk of brotherhood and a shared identity between Turks and Kurds, these changes were tied to earlier social reforms, and the solution process was sped up because of these reforms. (*Participant 11*)

Thus, the Kurdish Opening should be seen as a continuation of the demilitarizing reforms carried out by the AKP government during this period. To this effect, the Kurdish Opening could be seen as a by-product of demilitarization, whereby the military's response to the Kurdish Opening mirrored larger trends of its interactions with the civil-government.

Furthermore, describing the result of changing civil-military relations, one interviewee noted that "the highest levels of military leadership were pushed into a corner" (*Participant 2*) as a result of the arrests and legal investigations brought against military personnel in connection with the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases. The military was limited in the extent to which it was willing to oppose publically the policies of the civil-government. The ramifications of the trials are evident in the interview results:

Through the cooperation of the parallel organization and the government, some military personnel were arrested, and I would evaluate the source of this [civil-military] change as coming from threats and intimidation that were the result of the political pressure and manipulative politics that members of the TSK were under. (*Participant 2*)

Because of the authority of the military had decreased relative to the government, the military was not in a position to oppose the civil government or its political legislation.

While the political strength of the civil government relative to the military increased during this period, it should be noted that, in the interviews for this thesis, a number of retired military officers suggested that it was not the strength of the AKP government alone that contributed to the marginalization of the military from politics. Rather, it was the strength of the partnership between the AKP government and “the group now referred to as a ‘parallel organization’” that contributed to the weakening and “discrediting of the TSK in the public’s eye” (*Participant 2*). One interviewee suggested that, if the relationship between the AKP government and the ‘parallel organization’ had not collapsed, the court cases against military officers would still be on-going today: “The *cemaat* and government alliance pushed these court cases against the TSK; they [the *cemaat*] were instrumental in bringing these cases forward. And if the alliance between the *cemaat* and the government hadn’t fallen apart, these case would still be on-going” (*Participant 9*). Thus, the combined influence of these two allied groups was essential for executing the institutional and legal reforms that weakened the political power of the military.

Furthermore, another interviewee suggested that the strength of the alliance between the government and the religious organization contributed not only to changing civil-military relations but prevented the military from openly opposing legislation related to the Kurdish question; this interviewee stated: “The government and the *cemaat* put pressure on the military and had pushed it out of political power. The military was not able to oppose the government even though it did not support [the Kurdish Opening]” (*Participant 1*). In this sense, the military’s deferential response to the Kurdish Opening reflects broader changes in the military’s relationship with the

civil-government, in which the military's role become more passive with minimal engagement.

### **6.5. Significance of Democracy**

Although the military's definition of democracy is limited, its commitment to democracy is significant in that it suggests evidence of endogenous factors contributing to the military's willingness to compromise. The analysis of the TSK press releases suggests that, while democracy is not a prominent discourse used by the TSK in its press releases, the Turkish military ascribes democracy as an inherent feature of the Turkish state and expresses confidence in the legal system and the rule of law. These discursive features of the TSK discourse suggest that the military was willing to defer to civilian rule during the timeframe of analysis. Further, these findings support Heper's (2011) argument that military leadership has accepted that "civilians have the right to be wrong" (p. 25). The military's assumption of Turkey's democratic nature in its press releases is significant in that it suggests endogenous support for demilitarization.

The interview findings also suggest that members of the military conceptualize democracy as an inherent feature of the Turkish state and a component of its modern identity. A common theme throughout the interviews was the emphasis on Turkey's democratic identity. The interview findings suggest that military leadership has internalized norms of democratic governance and favors further democratic change in Turkey, including demilitarizing reforms that negatively impact the political power of the military. These findings are supported by the analysis of MGK press releases, in which a multi-directional approach to counterterrorism emerges

alongside military strategies of counterterrorism, and the TSK press releases, in which the military appears to define its role in terms of technical expertise rather than domestic politics. Describing the impact of institutional reforms on civil-military relations, one interviewee notes:

If not all the changes, many of the changes that occurred were necessary.... Even if some of the legislative changes that occurred during this period came at the expense of the TSK, they were still necessary changes. To give an example, putting operations under the authority to the governors and the police had a negative effect on the TSK but was necessary. (*Participant 2*)

Such comments suggest that some TSK officers support democratizing reform, even if the result is a decrease in the scope of the military's authority within the state.

Furthermore, these comments suggest that the military has internalized and supports a division of civil and military power in accordance with democratic norms. An interviewee described civil-military relations as follows: "Of course, the nature of civil-military relations in a democratic country is obvious. The role and responsibility of the military are clear and of course the military carries out its duties under the command of those who administer the country" (*Participant 4*). Thus military leaders appear to display normative support for demilitarization.

One interview participant suggested that the military's commitment to democracy contributed to its acceptance of the institutional changes and reforms introduced by the AKP government, including the reforms that reduced the influence of the armed forces. In describing the military's response to such changes, including the court cases brought against military officials, he stated: "It's possible that they [the military] wanted to believe that the law and legal process would be carried out around democratic principles" (*Participant 4*). However, while the findings suggest



that the military perceived Turkey as a democracy, some military officers did not perceive the reforms carried out by the AKP government as inherently democratic:

Turkey was already a democratic country. It has democratic institutions, democratic elections, and a democratic government. It's not that Turkey became more democratic but, rather, the political power of the military was lost after these institutional changes to the political system. (*Participant 5*)

In addition to defining Turkey as a democracy, as described in the quotation above, the interview results suggest that the TSK's understanding of Turkish democracy is tied to its development as a modern state. One interviewee commented as follows:

Turkey is a modern state and the TSK has always supported Turkey to be a modern state. In modern states, there is a division between the civil government and the military; this is true everywhere. Modern states have political institutions with certain roles and responsibilities; this is the same everywhere. (*Participant 7*)

These findings support the analysis of TSK press releases and suggest that, in conceptualizing Turkey as a modern, democratic state, the military also defined its role within the state according to international norms of democratic practice. That the TSK understands its role in this context suggests that the TSK was not opposed to democratizing reform in Turkey, even at the expense of its own political power. One interviewee offered the example of the military's support for Turkey's EU accession process: "The TSK has always worked for a liberal, Western country. And so the military has always supported democratic reform in Turkey. For example, you can't join the EU without having an EU-model of civil-military relations. The military knew this when it supported Turkey's EU accession" (*Participant 9*). These comments were supported by the responses of other interviewees who suggested that the institutional reforms were "necessary" even if they occurred at the expense of the TSK (*Participant 2*). Thus, the interview results suggest that TSK seems to have supported demilitarizing reform in Turkey to advance the country's identity as a modern democracy. To better understand this process, further research could expand

the timeframe of analysis studied in this thesis to examine the evaluation of normative support for democratization within the military.

Given the TSK's support for democratization in Turkey, it is therefore not surprising that the discourse of the MGK press releases appears to represent a compromise between TSK and civilian leaders. Although the dominance of civilian leaders on the MGK is evident from the discourse of the press releases, which emphasize democracy as a counterterrorism tool and favor the implementation of a multi-dimensional approach to counterterrorism, a compromise between military and civilian leaders should not necessarily be interpreted as "forced" (Arrow 2 of research design) upon by military leaders. While the lack of evidence for support of accommodative approaches in the TSK discourse disfavors the possibility of endogenous factors contributing to a shift in counterterrorism strategy, the TSK's commitment to democracy suggests its willingness to defer to civilian leaders on political issues, particularly if the government and its policies are supported by the public.

#### **6.6. Public Opinion as an Exogenous Factor**

The analysis of TSK press releases could be criticized as reflecting the public face of the Turkish military rather than its internal—and therefore true—preferences. However, the analysis of TSK press releases suggests that the TSK's concern for its public image may have contributed to a shift in approaches to the Kurdish question in Turkey, allowing for a democratic opening.

In its press releases, the military focuses heavily on media claims defaming its actions and public image, describing such media reports as ‘fake,’ ‘unfounded,’ and ‘baseless.’ In doing so, the TSK defends its public image, often appealing directly to the public for support in accepting that the TSK is truthful in its statements. That the TSK dedicates a significant portion of its press releases to addressing media claims and correcting false reports implies that the TSK values its public image. It further suggests that the TSK fears its public image may be jeopardized or tainted by media claims and that the TSK is deeply concerned about how the public perceives it. Thus, changes in public opinion—or perceived changes in public opinion—are likely determinants of the TSK’s actions. In other words, the TSK may have been willing to accept a democratic approach to the Kurdish question in order to avoid losing public support. This finding suggests public opinion served as an exogenous factor contributing to the demilitarization of approaches to counterterrorism, similar to the theory presented in the literature that changing public opinion contributed to the demilitarization of civil-military relations.

The interview results further suggest that public opinion played an important role in the decision making processes of the military. Specifically, the interview results suggest that the military accepted and respected the preferences of the public, including support for the AKP government and the Kurdish Opening. “Because the Kurdish Opening was so strongly supported by the public, the TSK was forced to accept the decision even though it knew it was the wrong decision” (*Participant 1*). Furthermore, interviews with former AKP parliament members suggest that there was shift in public opinion after 2007 away from military involvement in politics: “The people were ready for more democracy; they had had enough of military rule

and military authority” (*Participant 11*). Given this shift in public opinion, the military was unlikely to oppose government policy.

The military’s respect for public opinion can be understood from the importance it places on its relationship with the public. One interviewee described the relationship between the military and the nation as follows:

The military is like a little laboratory of the nation. Look at the military and you’ll see the nation. This is why the role of the TSK is different from Western models of civil-military relations. The role of the Turkish armed forces is not just to protect the nation from outside threats, as the West traditionally defines it. The TSK has always been closed to the nation and worked to help the people. (*Participant 9*)

As such, an understanding of civil-military relations in Turkey requires an inclusion of the public and public opinion, as the military defines its role in relationship to the public. Given this understanding, public opinion likely weighed heavily on the decisions of military leaders. Thus, public support for demilitarizing reform and accommodative approaches to conflict resolution likely influenced the military’s acceptance of government policies.

The emphasis on public opinion in the findings of this thesis support theories suggested by other authors, particularly with respect to Turkey’s EU accession process and demilitarizing reforms. Sarıgil (2007) and Müftüler-Bac (2005) suggest that the military supported EU reforms for face-saving purposes, as the military did not want to risk its public image. Although the EU reforms described by Sarıgil and Müftüler-Bac differ from the policy shift investigated in this thesis, the conclusions are similar: the TSK appears to be an institution that values its public image and prefers to accept policies implemented by the civil government rather than risk its public image by opposing them. In other words, if the TSK perceived the public as

supporting democratic approaches to the Kurdish question, it would respect the legitimacy of such civilian-led initiatives. These conclusions are similar to Hale Akay's (2009) suggestion that public opinion was a strong determinant of the TSK's acceptance of EU reforms.

Sarigil's (2007) notion of "rhetorical entrapment," used to describe the military's support for EU reforms, appears applicable to the military's reaction to the Kurdish Opening: after fighting to end terrorism for several decades, the TSK could not oppose social reforms aimed at resolving the conflict. Moreover, given the sensitivity of public opinion—as expressed through the tension of the TSK's discourse on the media and repeated defense of its public image—the TSK would not have been in a position to jeopardize its public image. Thus, although the TSK leadership does not appear to endorse a democratic opening in its public discourse, it is willing to compromise with civilian leaders to avoid damaging public opinion.

## **6.7. Review of the Research Question**

The research question of this thesis asked:

*What effect (if any) has changing civil-military relations in Turkey had on the practices and perceptions of military leaders with respect to the Kurdish question?*

This section considers the findings with respect to practices and perceptions, as framed by the research question.

### **6.7.1. Military Practices**

When reviewed with respect to practices, the findings of this thesis suggest little evidence of internal change other than the willingness of the TSK to compromise on issues of security and defer to the authority of the civil government. In terms of counterterrorism strategy, the military continues to carry out operations against terrorist targets with technical precision, and these military operations figure prominently in the TSK press releases from 2007-2012. The on-going nature of military operations conducted by the TSK and the TSK's discursive construction of this continuity, which emphasizes with certainty that operations will continue, suggest that the practices of the TSK with respect to counterterrorism strategy have not changed due to demilitarized civil-military relations. That is, demilitarization is not evident in the practices of the TSK except through the compromise suggested in the MGK press releases.

The significance of this compromise should not be overlooked, as it suggests the success of institutional reforms in demilitarizing civil-military relations and, in turn, favoring the introduction of accommodative approaches to the Kurdish question, suggesting that institutional change to civil-military relations has the potential to alter approaches to conflict resolution.

### **6.7.2. Military Perceptions**

With respect to the perception of military leaders, there is little evidence in the findings of this thesis to suggest that the military's perceptions of the Kurdish question changed during the time frame of analysis, at least at the levels of top leadership or in public discourse. References to the conflict as anything other than

PKK terrorism are absent from the TSK discourse, meaning that the socio-cultural and political aspects of the Kurdish question are omitted. This would seem to imply that the military perceives the issues primarily as one of terrorism.

However, evidence of an accommodative approach and a democratic solution are found in the MGK press releases, suggesting that military leaders may perceive the issue as one of terrorism in the military realm but may accept different framings in a non-military context. As such, the absence of an accommodative approach in the TSK discourse could be attributed to the military's perception of socio-cultural and economic reforms belonging to the realm of civilian leaders, not the military. While the military statements do not emphasize economic or political solutions, the MGK press releases, issued by a joint civil-military council, appear to favor democratic solutions. Thus, in a political context requiring cooperation between civilian and military leaders, the findings of this study suggest that the military acknowledges the conflict as an issue expanding beyond PKK terrorism but sees political aspects of the conflict residing beyond its area of expertise and authority, as evidenced by its willingness to compromise on a multi-directional approach.

These findings are further supported by interview results demonstrating military perceptions of the Kurdish Opening, which is described by military officers as “a political decision, and so it was the government's decision, not the TSK's” (*Participant 6*). Drawing a distinction between PKK terrorism and the Kurdish question, one interviewee stated: “Terrorism is a military issue. But the Kurdish question is a political problem for the civil government. The military didn't see it as their job, and they didn't see it as their position to oppose the government”

(*Participant 9*). While this interviewee appeared willing to distinguish between the problem of PKK terrorism and the Kurdish question, the interview findings suggest that other members of the armed forces do not conceptual the existence of a Kurdish problem, instead viewing the issue purely in term of PKK terrorism. One participant stated: “There is no Kurdish Problem. There is a terrorist problem” (*Participant 6*). While the extent to which these interviewees acknowledge the existence of a Kurdish problem varies, they share the belief that the conflict with the PKK is not an ethnic problem. The interviewee cited above elaborated on this distinction as follows:

There’s a big difference here. There isn’t an ethnic problem in Turkey. The majority of the Kurdish population in Turkey, 90 percent of the Kurdish population, does not support the PKK. They do not accept the PKK as legitimate Kurdish representation. It’s not a problem of ethnic conflict; it’s a terrorist problem because we are fighting a terrorist organization, not an ethnic group. (*Participant 6*)

Thus, the military does not appear to perceive the conflict with the PKK in ethnic terms, although it appears willing to acknowledge that socio-cultural aspects of the problem belong to the non-military realm and are thus the jurisdiction of civilians.

Interview findings also suggest that while the military has internalized a demilitarized model of civil-military relations and has displayed a willingness to defer to the decision of the civil government, the military’s preference for deterrence-based approaches to counterterrorism has not changed. In other words, although the military did not oppose the government’s implementation of an accommodative approach, the findings of this thesis suggest that the military continues to prefer military-led, deterrence-based strategies, including operations against terrorist targets. This attitude can be seen in the following military excerpt, in which an interviewee describes the military’s assessment of the effectiveness of the Kurdish question:



Members of the armed forces knew we were headed for another conflict with the PKK 5-10 years ago. I knew this and I said it; others said it too. I wish I had been wrong, but when we look at the current state, we see this is the case. But it was a political decision, and so it was the government's decision, not the TSK's.... After 2012, the PKK prepared itself; it started amassing weapons, stockpiling guns, training. Now civilian leaders see this and are starting to go back on their strategy, go back to military operations to address this problem. (*Participant 6*)

Furthermore, the changes during this period, including the introduction of government-led accommodative approaches, do not appear to have hampered the military's commitment to the fight against terrorism. One interviewee states:

You would have expected the TSK to be demotivated on the issue of the Kurdish question, especially following the reforms and policies of this period. But we don't see that; the TSK wasn't demotivated in its fight against PKK terrorism. If you look at the military operations today, you see that the TSK isn't demotivated in its struggle against terrorism. Why is this? Because of the military's love for this country, their love for the homeland. This might be a difficult thing to explain, and this might be a difficult thing for a Westerner to understand, but the TSK loves this country and that is what motivates it in its fight against terrorism. Even during this period, with all the political changes, the TSK was committed to its love of country, and we see that hasn't changed. The love for country is an inherent part of the TSK's identity. (*Participant 9*)

Similarly, the interview results suggest that military has not altered its commitment to deterrence-based approaches. The interviewees stated that while the changes in civil-military relations are likely to be permanent because of institutional reforms and laws securing their legacy, the shift to accommodative approaches of counterterrorism is unlikely to have a lasting effect. Evidence supporting this claim can be found in the period after July 2015, which the interviewees alluded to by commenting on the return to military operations in the current security climate:

“Through the government's Peace Process propaganda, the military's role decreased. But now, we see a need for military actions against the PKK” (*Participant 1*). Thus, the military's perception of effective counterterrorism strategy does not appear to have changed, and the military appears to continue to prefer deterrence-based

approaches to counterterrorism. This findings are revealing in that they suggest that the military does not need to support accommodative approaches internally or alter its perception of counterterrorism strategy in order for demilitarized, accommodative strategies of conflict resolution to be implemented, as the military respects its duty to follow the directives of elected officials.

### **6.7.3. Conclusions**

The practices and perceptions of military leadership with respect to counterterrorism strategies do not appear to have changed and do not appear to include elements of a democratic solution or a broader, sociocultural-based Kurdish question when framed in a military context. However, the practices and perceptions of military leaders on the MGK suggest the military's willingness to compromise with civilian decision makers in implementing non-military strategies to counterterrorism. Further, the military's willingness to compromise suggests that it perceives social and political reforms as the responsibility of civilian institutions, a conclusion supported by the findings of the interview data.

The TSK's commitment to military operations against PKK targets suggests that it perceives its role in terms of military expertise and military practices of counterterrorism. This could signal the professionalization of the military by which its role is limited to the military realm. Thus, the demilitarization of civil-military relations appear to have impacted approaches to conflict resolution through institutional reform, as examined in this thesis with respect to the structure of the MGK, providing civil leaders with greater decision-making power on security issues.

Of the 11 participants interviewed for the research of this thesis, all suggested that institutional reforms were the cause of demilitarizing changes to civil-military relations in Turkey from 2007-2012. One interviewee described the change as follows:

Systemic control of political institutions changed. For example, the changes to the constitution affected the systems of control in political institutions. Pro-government people were also put in positions of power in civil institutions, ranging from Ministerial Departments to other institutions like the Council of Higher Education or the Rectors of universities. The government replaced the people in these institutions with their own supporters. ...This gave the government more power and put the TSK in a position where it couldn't oppose the government. (*Participant 5*)

Another interview describes the situation by emphasizing the role that legal reforms and constitutional changes played in consolidating the power of the AKP government:

The government came to power through the legal means, and they used the law to help them. The TSK was the strongest and most trusted institution in the country, but they cleaned out the TSK to change the balance of power and secure their political power. And they did this by changing the laws. (*Participant 8*)

Thus, while the strength of the civil government should not be disregarded when assessing changes to civil-military relations, demilitarization was guaranteed and actualized through legal and institutional reforms that consolidated the power of the civil government.

Although a number of interviewees suggested that the military could not oppose the civil government's policies because of institutional reforms and public opinion that prevented it from doing so, the interview results suggest that the military should not be seen as lacking agency throughout this process. Rather, the findings suggest that the military played a role in shaping the outcome of changing civil-military relations through its acceptance of institutional reform. One interviewee described the military's position as follows:

If you're a democratic country and you oppose the government, you have two options: you can either accept the changes—even though you don't agree with them, you can accept them because the government has the political power to pass laws and make decisions—or you can use your power to oppose the government's decisions. [Early on,] the TSK did not use the political power it had in its hands to oppose the government. It waited, and then later it became too late to act. (*Participant 5*)

When reviewed with respect to the research design of this thesis, the evidence seems to suggest that Arrow 2 (hybrid of exogenous and endogenous factors) contributed to the demilitarization of approaches to the Kurdish question. Although there is evidence of the military's willingness to comprise with civilian leaders, the evidence supporting Arrow 3 (endogenous factors) appears limited as institutional reforms appear to have played a determinative role in facilitating the implementation of an accommodative approach. Thus, Arrow 2 describing institutional change could be reconsidered not as “forced” change but as a willingness to cooperate with government-led reform processes.

## **6.8. Evaluation of Hypotheses**

With respect to the four hypotheses presented in the research design, the findings of this study suggest partial support for Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4, although none of the hypotheses are sufficient to account for the operational mechanism found in this thesis. Each of the hypotheses is evaluated below:

*Hypothesis 1: The military changed its approach to conflict resolution because top military officials believed in accommodative approaches.* – While military officials appear to have supported the democratization of civil-military relations, there does not appear to be evidence supporting the military's commitment to accommodative

approaches of counterterrorism, as the military continues to emphasize military operations and the use of force against terrorist targets.

*Hypothesis 2: The military changed its approach to conflict resolution because it was forced to do so due to institutional changes in politics.* – The findings of this study suggest that institutional changes to the MGK and other institutions favored cooperation between military and civilian leaders by tipping the balance of power in favor of civilian leaders, thus allowing for the promulgation of accommodative, multi-dimensional approaches to counterterrorism. However, Hypothesis 2 is insufficient to account for the process of normative acceptance by the military that facilitated the introduction of the Kurdish Opening.

*Hypothesis 3: The military changed its approach to conflict resolution because it was forced to do so by the civil government or other non-military actors.* – The results of this study find partial support for Hypothesis 3 by suggesting that pressure to compromise with civilian leaders due to legal changes and overwhelming public support, as well as the fear of damaging public opinion, contributed to the acceptance of accommodative approaches to counterterrorism by military leaders. These findings suggest that the civil government and the public exercise influence over the armed forces, although the findings suggest that change may not have been “forced” upon military leaders but “voluntarily” accepted.

*Hypothesis 4: The military did not change its approach to conflict resolution, despite demilitarized civil-military relations.* – The findings of this thesis suggest partial support for Hypothesis 4. Evidence of change in the military’s approach to conflict

resolution is not apparent, given the military's emphasis on military-led counterterrorism operations. However, the military does appear to accept compromise with the civilian leaders for the implementation of accommodative approaches, as in the form of multi-directional, democratic reforms.

## **6.9. Conclusion**

Collectively, the findings of the thesis suggest that the military did not intrinsically support accommodative approaches to the question of terrorism in Turkey but rather compromised with civilian leadership to accept changes favoring the demilitarization of approaches to conflict resolution due to exogenous factors such as a strong civilian government and concerns for its public image. In sum, the military appears conscious of its position within the broader frame of civil-military relations in Turkey. While it continues to support deterrence-based counterterrorism approaches, the TSK seems to have internalized demilitarized civil-military relations and appears willing to compromise with civilian leaders on security issues.

The military's identity, as expressed through the discourse of its press releases, seems largely reserved to the military realm, as the discourse of the TSK press releases emphasizes the technical expertise of the TSK in military operations. This is supported by interview data suggesting that military officials perceived a clear division of responsibility between the military and the civil government. Furthermore, the discourses in the TSK press releases centered on issues related to the identity of the TSK (the discourse on ethics) and its public image (the discourses on the media and the legal system). The TSK's preoccupation with defending its identity suggests that the identity of the TSK may have been unstable or threatened during the

timeframe of analysis, thus limiting the ability of the TSK to oppose the reform efforts of a strong government. These findings are further supported by interview results suggesting that the court cases brought against military officials and the portrayals of the military in the media contributed to the demoralization of the military during this period.

Furthermore, the discourse on democracy in TSK press releases does not present democracy as a solution to terrorism. The discourse on democracy describes democracy as an inherent feature of the Republic of Turkey since its founding. As such, the TSK could be understood as supporting democracy by virtue of its connection to Atatürk's principles. The findings from both TSK press releases and interview data suggest that the military is not willing to compromise the unitary nation of the Turkish state for the expansion of democratic reform. Moreover, the importance of democracy as a tool of conflict resolution figures more prominently in the discourse of the MGK.

Given these findings, this thesis concludes that the demilitarization of civil-military relations in Turkey contributed to the implementation of a democratic approach to the Kurdish question through institutional reforms strengthening the ability of the civil government to initiate accommodative approaches of conflict resolution. Furthermore, the findings also suggest that normative factors contributed to the military's acquiescence of a democratic approach. Strong evidence of an intrinsically motivated shift by the military away from military approaches to terrorism was not found in the data. Nonetheless, the military appears to have deferred to the authority of civilian leaders to implement political legislation on a security issue due to an

inherent understanding of democratic norms. Given the military's description of Turkey as a democratic state, factors endogenous to the military should not be disregarded, as military leadership does not appear opposed to processes of democratization.

Institutional changes, such as those to the structure of the MGK, appear to have resulted in changes in counterterrorism strategy and control of security policy decision-making. Thus, while the findings of this study are not generalizable to other contexts but are derived from the political, social, and historical context in which they exist, they offer potential insights on the relationship between institutional demilitarization and approaches to conflict resolution. In the Turkish context, reformation of state institutions favoring civilian leadership appears to have allowed for the emergence of security discourse favoring democratic solutions and multi-dimensional approaches to counterterrorism. The findings of this thesis suggest that institutional reforms to security apparatuses have the potential to demilitarize counterterrorism approaches by advancing civilian control of security issues, although the findings also suggest that the military's normative acceptance of demilitarization is essential to facilitate the implementation of accommodative approaches.

#### **6.10. Implications and Policy Recommendations**

With the renewed threat of terrorist activity and armed conflict with the PKK that has emerged since July 2015, the Peace Process and accommodative-approach efforts of the Kurdish Opening have ceased, and the government has reverted to deterrence-based strategies involving primarily military operations against terrorist targets.



Despite these changes in the security landscape, civil-military relations appear to have been permanently demilitarized in Turkey, as the military does not appear to be reemerging as a political actor nor does the political power of the civil government appear to be in question. The implications of this situation are significant in light of the findings of this thesis for both theory and practice.

This thesis examined the impact of institutional and normative change to demilitarized civil-military relations on approaches to conflict resolution. The findings suggest that institutional and normative transformation have work in tandem to produce the conditions necessary for the implementation of accommodative approaches. Institutional reforms appear to have accounted for changes in civil-military relations that made possible further reform efforts like the Kurdish Opening; however, the normative acceptance of demilitarization by the Turkish Armed Forces should be underlined. The military's willingness to accept demilitarized civil-military relations as normal practices of democratic governance paved the way for the introduction of accommodative approaches to counterterrorism by the civil government.

Significant to theoretical understandings of institutional and normative change, the findings of this thesis suggest that a shift in counterterrorism approach can occur without a normative change to military perceptions of counterterrorism, provided that the military accepts and internalizes conditions of demilitarized civil-military relations. In other words, the military appears willing to execute policies of the civil government because it has internalized democratic norms, regardless of whether or not it agrees with those policies. Thus, institutional and normative change are

interconnected: institutional reform produces change, but normative acceptance of that change results in lasting transformations to the political and security sectors.

Methodological issues offer limitations to the findings of this thesis. While the mixed methods approach strengthened the findings of this thesis by offering more layered analyses and a breadth of data, this thesis is limited in terms of access to data and number of interviews. The findings of this thesis could be strengthened with more qualitative interview results to supplement the discourse and content analyses. Further, an expansion of the timeframe of analysis to include previous phases of the conflict would offer more insight into the changes discussed in this thesis.

As stated at the beginning of this section, with the increase in PKK terrorist activity, the Solution Process to the Kurdish question has collapsed. The findings of this thesis suggest that the government has great potential to shape the security agenda. As such, policymakers should continue to focus on advancing democratic efforts while balancing the need to address imminent threats of terrorist activity through military means. While policymakers should not abandon the security needs of the current situation, they also should not abandon their efforts to advance democracy and introduce accommodative approaches that address the root cause of the conflict. The democratizing reforms highlighted in this thesis helped to consolidate political power in the hands of the civil government. Now that demilitarization appears to have been achieved, policymakers should focus less on consolidating political power and more on implementing democratic reforms that advance multi-party democratic politics and human rights.

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