1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

This thesis will likely be the first scholarly publication to attempt combining all domestic and systemic variables that construct a CMR model in a Muslim majority country, because there is almost no scholarly publication aiming to analyze the indirect influences of Islam on the CMR (civil-military relations). This approach to religious influences also applies to western countries. According to Snyder, for instance, “mainstream international relations scholars find it difficult to integrate religious subject matter into their normal conceptual frameworks.”

Even “the index of Wendt’s field-defining book does not have a single entry for religion,” while his theory revolves around identity and culture.

Furthermore, as Turkey has many peculiarities unknown to non-Turks, I intend to provide Western audiences with a more nuanced view of the CMR in Turkey, and its consequences for discussing democracy from the perspective of Turkey’s aspiration to membership in the EU. As the present debates over the defective Turkish democracy have deep historical and cultural roots, behind which lies a triple identity clash, it is essential to explain these to Western audiences, in particular the EU, to better inform them of the societal dynamics they are confronted with.

![Picture 1: A photo taken during a protest held on 23 October 2003 in Ankara](image)

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The picture in the previous page provides a striking example of Turkish democracy. The banners say ‘Ordu göreve!’ – ‘Military do your duty!’ Hundreds of thousands of academicians and university students took to the streets, holding these banners to protest against the government that had allegedly attempted to establish religious rules over education. One can pose many questions about the presence of such a banner, such as:

(1) Why do such well-educated people need to remind the army of its duty, rather than pressuring the government by ordinary democratic means;
(2) What exactly is the army’s duty, and what role does it play in Turkish politics and society;
(3) If this role is unusual, what kind of historical and cultural factors have given this role to the Turkish Army; and
(4) As Turkey aspires to be an EU member, does this unusual role of the army match the standard practices of the EU? If not, to what extent can it be aligned? In case of full alignment what may happen in Turkey?

These are the fundamental questions to be answered in this thesis, the questions from which a research question will be derived and presented in the following part of the introduction.

1.2 DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS

The demonstration in Ankara implies that the actual role of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) differs from the definition of their role given by the EU model of CMR. Under the scope of the EU, militaries are distinct from civilian power, but they are indisputably subordinated to civilians, as well as completely depoliticized. Because Turkey’s CMR practices do not conform to this outlook, many believe that Turkey cannot acquire EU membership, due to the poor quality of her democracy, especially from the perspective of the CMR and the army’s immense and excessive political as well as societal power.

On the other hand, most Turks believe that Turkey has been governed by a sui generis democracy for almost ninety years. To underpin this view, they refer to her long-lasting membership in many democratic international organizations, such as her nearly six-decade-old membership in NATO, which also requires meeting certain democratic criteria. Besides, some Turks also argue that democracy in Turkey should ineluctably differ from the Western practices, as her population is 98.6 % Muslim, and the first condition

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of democracy, separation of state and mosque, has not yet been sufficiently implemented, or internalized by the majority of society. Because of this, they believe that Turkey is vulnerable to the threat of rising political Islam. Adding to this her unfavorable geography, they also claim that her CMR model should be distinct from that of traditional Western democracies in order to contain the above threats.

What makes the issue even more complex and interesting is that this odd model is perceived as normal not only by the military, but also by most Turks, including majority of the civilian elite. Although the seemingly anti-militarist AKP\(^5\) has always had about fifty percent popular support, according to public surveys most Turks seem to have no problem with Turkey’s military flavoured democracy.\(^6\) This is partly because, while most Turks view their army as the ‘Founder of the Republic’ and ‘Saviour of the Nation’, the westernized Turks claim that Turkey has tried an exceptional democratization model, peculiar to the Muslim majority countries. They also believe that the army’s guardianship over her non-consolidated democracy is an interim model, and it will end when the wall separating state and mosque is sufficiently erected, and the democratic culture of devout and less educated people also sufficiently flourishing.

To respond to its nation’s support and confidence, the military seems to struggle to do its best for its nation within its means and capabilities, and especially within the culture and understandings of its generals. In spite of its immense societal support as well as political power, the TAF has tended to be unwilling to rule Turkey directly, whereas other world juntas have directly ruled their countries for decades. The fact that the TAF has directly ruled Turkey for a total of about five years after four coups underpins this postulation.

As noted, the role of TAF in Turkish politics and society differs from traditional roles and liberal-democratic practices outlined by the EU, while its approach to intervention in the political realm differs from the Southeast American, Asian and African juntas, most of which have for decades demonstrated their hunger for power by directly ruling their countries. Furthermore, a considerable gap seems to exist between the perceptions of EU circles and the Turkish elite, as well as the majority of Turks. Thus, in the followings

\(^5\) The Justice Development Party, named JDP by most foreign sources, was founded in 2001, having ruled Turkey since 2002; hereafter named AKP.

\(^6\) In a survey commonly conducted by Bilkent and Bilgi Universities in 2011, 67.2\% of respondents expressed their full or partial concurrence to the question: ‘should the governments consider the opinions of the military while making decisions, even in matters other than security.’ Just below 30 percent disagreed. Available at: https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2011/11/25/bilmedikleri-vicdani-rete-karsilar-541933811612, and https://slideplayer.biz.tr/slide/2781161/ (Slide no. 16), accessed on 20 August 2019, translated by author.
paragraphs I will present the positions of both sides to shed light on all aspects of the problem considered to be a major obstacle with which Turkey must cope to realize her EU membership goal.

1.3 TURKISH PERSPECTIVE

One of the most prominent experts on Turkey, Andrew Mango, compares the country to an onion; one may peel off a layer of skin, hoping to get to the core, but will only come across yet another skin. He implies that Turks exhibit behaviors that may seem quite complex and uncanny, especially for those who have little experience living in the midst of Turkish society. This complexity causes confusion and even suspicion, especially among Western scholars and politicians. For that reason, when Turkey signed an association agreement in 1963 with the European Economic Community (EEC) few people in Europe believed Turkey could someday achieve this aim. The dominant belief was that the crisis of Turkey’s identity, torn between the East and the West, would make it difficult for her to meet adequately the criteria of Western culture for a consolidated democracy. Looking at the current picture of Turkey, one may find sufficient evidence to bolster this prediction. Thus, to reveal the factors responsible for the impasse of the Turkish democracy and one of its sub-systems, the CMR structure, I will focus primarily on the historical and cultural roots of the variables that have shaped the Turkish identities.

Regarding the specific role of the TAF, it is evident that it played a significant part in the political system of the late Ottoman era and throughout most of the Republican era. At the present time (01.01.2011), the role and duties of the TAF are defined in several legal provisions. Depending on their interpretation, some of these provisions taken together could potentially provide the military with a wide margin of maneuver. This is particularly the case for Article 35 of the Internal Service Law (ISL), which defines the duties of the TAF: “to protect and preserve the Turkish Republic on the basis of the principles referred to in the preamble of the Constitution, including territorial integrity, secularism and republicanism.” Article 85/1 of the standing rule that specifies the TAF ISL

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details this mission by expressing the threat; “the mission of the TAF is to protect the Turkish Republic against internal and external threats by using arms, if necessary.”

To be able to achieve these tasks, the TAF was substantially represented in the National Security Council (NSC) and many other governmental institutions. It was also made answerable to the Prime Minister (PM) instead of to the Minister of Defense (MoD). By using its political and societal powers, as well as citing its legal right, interpreted by the TAF as its ‘mission,’ the TAF managed to topple elected governments in 1960, 1971 and 1980. In 1997, pressure from the TAF compelled the Islamist government to resign by a ‘post-modern’ coup. By utilizing the threat of coups to its advantage, the TAF has continued to enjoy its position as primary decision maker in politics until recent times.

There are still various anti-democratic rules and practices in the TAF’s structure, just as in almost all fields of the Turkish political structure. One may argue that, due to its special mission and its legal monopoly on violence in the state system, no army can be a fully liberal institution. However, there should be tolerable margins. To keep the TAF within these margins does not seem to be easy, as these anti-democratic ideational and material structures have shaped Turkish generals, who have simultaneously shaped the structures. In the past, this mutual process has created a vicious cycle from which there was no way out.

This picture has gradually changed since the EU’s decision, granting Turkey candidate status in 1999. Due largely to the norm imposition by the EU as an external power, Turkey has taken notable steps to align her CMR with European practice through the enactment of numerous legal amendments. The essential changes included modifying the composition and the function of the NSC, ensuring further transparency in the defense budget, removing military representatives from some civilian boards, and abolishing the authorization of military courts over civilians. The most striking point was the TAF’s support for the reformatory steps, despite the dramatic constraint of its institutional power during the pre-AKP era, as well as its compliance during the early AKP era.

After the AKP’s second election victory in 2007, in tandem with the police forces the judiciary initiated a series of lawsuits against thousands of active soldiers, resulting for many in their imprisonment. These unexpected court cases, combined with the intensive institutional reformation, caused a significant reduction in the TAF’s ideational power as well. Recently, the TAF has not visibly intervened in the political realms and seems almost to have withdrawn from the political arena. Nevertheless, although it remains to be seen,

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there are some indications that the political vacuum left by the TAF has not been filled by
democratic powers, as was expected by the over-optimistic EU and Turkish liberals.
Instead, it appears that religious orders and communities, mainly the Gülen movement,
have gradually filled the vacuum.

On the other hand, despite the significant erosion of the TAF’s institutional and
ideational powers, some EU circle still express their criticism that Turkey’s CMR has yet to
fully align itself with common European practices. Thus, the EU’s position needs further
clarification.

1.4 EU’S POSITION

The beginning of official relations between the EU and Turkey dates back to 1959,
when Turkey first applied for membership following the establishment of the EEC by six
countries. After negotiations lasting four years, the EEC’s Council of Ministers endorsed
the application and created association by signing an agreement in Ankara in 1963. The
relations that had been temporarily frozen after the 1980 military coup resumed at an
accelerated pace after Turkey’s application for full membership in April 1987. As argued
by Huntington, “[o]ne incentive was the desire of Turkish leaders to reinforce modernizing
and democratic tendencies in Turkey and to contain and isolate the forces in Turkey
supporting Islamic fundamentalism.”

EU-Turkey relations gained a new dimension in 1996 when the Customs Union (CU) between Turkey and the EU took effect. At the Helsinki
Summit in 1999, Turkey was granted the status of candidacy. Finally, in 2004, the European
Council decided to open accession talks with Turkey, which began in October 2005. After
just a few short-screening processes, negotiations of the chapters have already been
underway, but very slowly.

As predicted, CMR is one of the most problematic areas in the application and
ongoing negotiation phases. In fact, one major reason that makes the issue problematic is
the lack of specific articles to define EU-CMR practice in the EU’s Acquis Communautaire.
Generally, once a country is given candidate status, it is supposed to meet the Copenhagen
political criteria, in which a candidate state must achieve “stability of institutions
guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of
minorities.” However, due to the subjectivity of this article and the lack of any specific

10 Huntington, S.P., Democracy's Third Wave, Journal of Democracy, Volume 2, Number 2, Spring
11 European Council in Copenhagen, 21 - 22 June 1993, Conclusions of the Presidency, available at:
acquis regarding the CMR, what the EU expects from Turkey is mostly evaluated as a ‘full alignment of civil-military relations on EU standards,’ as stated by one of the former presidents of the EU, Romani Prodi.\textsuperscript{12} Nevertheless, alignment with European practice also carries some ambiguities because there is no uniform European practice, but rather a plethora of different practices; these will be clarified in chapter III. In spite of this vagueness, the EU still expects from Turkey further alignment of her CMR structure, based on a preconceived notion of democracy.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{diagram.png}
\caption{Worldview clash in Turkey}
\end{figure}

In order to meet the EU’s expectation, Turkey has recently made considerable reformations in the CMR realm. However, as seen in the figure above, since some

Kemalist\textsuperscript{13} institutions, mainly TAF, High Court judges and most of the academicians, were against fast and excessive democratization, supporting the EU aspiration in principle but citing some peculiarities of Turkey, tension has escalated between the two poles advocating liberal and realist world views. This clash will be analyzed through a constructivist lens, by going to the cultural roots of the clash and treating both worldviews equally. Moreover, Social Constructivism provides a promising basis to analyze the different logics involved. The EU’s mode of reasoning, unlike that of Turkey, is embedded in institutional practices. Both modes make sense on their own terms, but they clash when they meet, a confusion of tongues with harsh consequences.

The objective of this study is to highlight why the EU should take a different view on CMR in general and on Turkey in particular. To achieve this, the central research question is:

Which peculiar factors have constructed the present state of the CMR structure in Turkey, which is in turn considered a major impediment to Turkey’s EU aspiration?

The five main questions derived from this basic problem are listed below. Each will be answered in the following chapters:

1. What theoretical framework could define the postures of the two sides, as well as the role of the military in politics and society?
2. What are the EU criteria and common practices for a democratic CMR, and the cultural roots underlying these common practices?
3. What are the present roles and the duties of the TAF in the institutional framework, vis-a-vis civilian institutions that have direct or indirect effects on shaping CMR structure?
4. What is the history behind the identity clash, as well as behind the military intervention in politics, and how have these factors shaped the CMR model?

\textsuperscript{13} Kemalist is the general name describing a person or institution defending the Turkish revolution of Atatürk. The Kemalist worldview, or Kemalism, consists of six principles: etatism, nationalism, secularism, republicanism, populism, and revolutionism. Even if some of these are open to different interpretations and subject to change over time, Kemalists still stick to two core messages: secularism, which aims at state control over religion, until reaching a level of Western practice of full separation of religion and state; and nationalism, which aims at creating a unified Turkish nation. Many Turkish scholars accept Kemalism as an ideology serving to pave the way to a modern and democratic nation, changing it from a highly devout and uneducated ummah. Kemalism’s rigid interpretation of secularism exhibits some similarities to the French \textit{laïcité} model. However, due to Turkey’s particularities, it is a \textit{sui generis} model aiming mainly at temporary control of the population’s religious beliefs until secularism is fully internalized by the devout population. As this requires taking some autocratic measures, it inevitably contradicts some liberal democratic rules.
What are Turkey’s peculiarities, on which are based its norms of democracy and CMR?

1.5 CHAPTER OUTLINES

The thesis consists of five main chapters, in addition to an introduction and conclusion.

The second chapter presents the theoretical framework, briefly reviewing the theoretical perspectives of the research topic. In this context, due to their direct relevance to the topic, theories of democratic CMR will be elucidated in detail. The chapter will also address the question of whether Western production of CMR theories is appropriate for non-Western countries to establish democratic CMR. Furthermore, the theories of some scholars regarding the dilemma between the degrees of civilian or military control over armies will be briefly included in this chapter. In addition, selected International Relations (IR) theories providing insight into the specific Turkish case will be touched upon. In this context, mainly constructivism will be explored, as it allows overarching insight into both poles. The definition of democracy and its sine qua non elements in terms of participation and consolidation will be elaborated. The minimalist and maximalist approaches to democracy will also be concisely examined.

Chapter 3 will clarify the first side of the controversy, the position of the EU. In this context, while the EU’s political conditionality and the formal aspects of CMR will be the primary focus of this chapter, the roots of European identity, from which European democracy has evolved, will also be examined. Additionally, criticisms made by the EU in official documents will be reviewed from the CMR perspective, as well as the EU’s expectations from Turkey. Because they provide additional valuable views on the subject, the approaches of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will also be briefly included. While mainly analyzing the EU approach to democratic CMR, by reviewing four democratic models, I intend to show the ignored complexities of CMR, as well as biased Western approaches to the issue. As will be seen, the British, French, and German CMR models are contrasted with the Israeli model, which shares many peculiarities with the Turkish model.

To provide basic material knowledge for the following chapters, the fourth chapter will explore the major actors of Turkey’s CMR structure, as these have had great influence on the construction of today’s controversial model. This chapter will discuss the definitions of the civilian actors, and the material and ideational structures of the TAF. In this context, the constitutional, legal, institutional provisions, and issues of adequacy of democratic
control, democratic oversight and control over defense, transparency and accountability will be reviewed. Special attention will be paid to revealing the genuine impediments to following the way of the EU, not only in the legal framework, such as the Constitution, National Security Council (NSC) Law, political party laws, and TAF Internal Service Law, but also in their practices.

Chapter 5 will, from a historical point of view, elaborate the conditions that have shaped the Turks’ present identity. In this context, the historical roots of the harsh triple identity clash (Turkish, Islamist and Western) that has gone on for centuries will be examined, as it has shaped Turkish Democracy and its substructure, the CMR. Furthermore, the chapter will provide a short history of Turkish military interventions using as subtitles: the late Ottoman (1800-1923), Kemalist (1923-1950) and multi-party (1950-2010) eras. Because of their effects on the present political structure, the grounds of the Republic’s four coups and their outcomes will also be analyzed in detail.

Chapter 6 will elaborate on how Turkey’s particularities have shaped the existing CMR model, which has given the TAF a guardian role over the Republic. In this context, in addition to geographical and societal factors, the folk’s culture will largely be examined. Special attention will be paid to education, as it is one of the major preconditions for a consolidated democracy. Since the fear of being ruled by Sharia has been a dominant factor in shaping the Turkish elites, I will discuss whether the fear is exaggerated or valid, as it affects the TAF’s reputation to act as the principal guarantor of the secular state. For this reason, special attention will be paid to the exploration of Political Islam, and its weighty influence over almost all political and social structures of Turkey, as in Muslim majority countries.

The seventh and final chapter will begin with a succinct summary of all chapters, continue with discussion that will help audiences understand how I have come to my brief conclusions. The chapter will also discuss all major factors influencing the research question, to reveal whether the present CMR structure can meet the EU’s common practices and Turkey’s particularities. After stating six major conclusions, the chapter will end with a final answer to the research question of whether Turkey’s CMR structure can still be considered an impediment to Turkey’s EU membership aspirations.

14 Islamism or Political Islam “is a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives. It provides political responses to today’s societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations for which rest on reappropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from the Islamic tradition.” Quoted from: Denoeux, G., The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam, Middle East Policy, Vol. 9, No: 2, June 2002, p. 61.
The contribution of this thesis to the scholarly field is as follows: while the harsh competition between the secularist and religious worldviews in Turkey causes various domestic socio-political interactions, the key factor in shaping identities, especially Islam’s intervention in this process, is rarely investigated in the scholarly realm. Thus, one aim of this dissertation is to expose to scholars in IR and Political Science the gaps that exist in the academic treatment of the relationship between domestic civilian and military actors. This research offers an alternative approach by analyzing the unavoidable correlation between the two most influential powers in Turkey: Islam and the military.