

THE CYCLICAL NATURE OF COUPS IN TURKEY: TUTELAR STRUCTURES, POLITICAL POLARIZATION, AND ECONOMIC CRISES

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Abstract

This study looks at coups in Turkey from political, social, and economic angles. A coup in Turkey is rarely just a military move. Courts, the bureaucracy, the media, and the economy often play a role too. These point to deeper problems that keep democracy from taking root. The study uses a historical and comparative approach. It focuses on the main military coups 1960, 1971, 1980, and 2016 as well as on key non-military interventions like the February 28 process and the Ergenekon-Balyoz cases. The findings show that the legacy of Ottoman administration and the tutelary mindset inherited from the Committee of Union and Progress continue to undermine democratic oversight. Economic crises and global factors, like the 1980 downturn, played key roles. In more recent cases, media and communication technologies had a strong impact. The study concludes that for democracy in Turkey to take root, tutelage must end, the rule of law must be strengthened, political polarization must be reduced, and economic stability must be secured through broad democratic reforms.

Keywords: Coups, Military Tutelage, Democratization, Political Polarization, Turkish Politics.

Özet

Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de gerçekleşen darbeleri siyasal, toplumsal ve ekonomik boyutlarıyla ele almaktadır. Türkiye’de bir darbe çoğu zaman yalnızca askeri bir müdahale niteliği taşımaz; yargı, bürokrasi, medya ve ekonomi de bu süreçlerde etkili roller üstlenir. Bu durum, demokrasinin kökleşmesini engelleyen daha derin yapısal sorunlara işaret etmektedir. Çalışmada tarihsel ve karşılaştırmalı bir yöntem kullanılmıştır. 1960, 1971, 1980 ve 2016 askeri darbelerinin yanı sıra 28 Şubat süreci ve Ergenekon-Balyoz davaları gibi askeri olmayan kritik müdahaleler de incelenmiştir. Bulgular, Osmanlı idari geleneğinin mirası ile İttihat ve Terakki’den devralınan vesayetçi zihniyetin, demokratik denetim mekanizmalarını zayıflatmaya devam ettiğini ortaya koymaktadır. 1980 ekonomik krizi örneğinde görüldüğü üzere, ekonomik bunalımlar ve küresel gelişmeler darbelerde belirleyici rol oynamıştır. Daha yakın dönemlerde ise medya ve iletişim teknolojilerinin süreçlere etkisi dikkat çekici boyutlara ulaşmıştır. Sonuç olarak, Türkiye’de demokrasinin kurumsal olarak yerleşebilmesi için vesayet anlayışının sona erdirilmesi, hukukun üstünlüğünün güçlendirilmesi, siyasal kutuplaşmanın azaltılması ve ekonomik istikrarın geniş kapsamlı demokratik reformlarla güvence altına alınması gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Darbeler, Askeri Vesayet, Demokratikleşme, Siyasal Kutuplaşma, Türkiye Siyaseti.

Introduction

Turkey has undergone an extraordinary experience in shaping its modern political history. Since the proclamation of the Republic, intervention processes that took place in critical periods such as; 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997, and 2016 have profoundly shaken the country’s political, social, and economic dynamics, leading to disruptions in governance, structural reorganizations, and even large-scale societal traumas. These interventions have shown themselves not only as direct military actions but also through postmodern approaches, the strategic use of judicial processes, and ongoing power struggles within the state. This repeated cycle of intervention reveals underlying structural weaknesses that enable undemocratic forces

to periodically interfere with democratic progress. It shows that interventions in Turkey extend beyond mere military coups. They are symptoms of deeper structural fractures within the state, compounded by tutelary traditions, social polarization, and economic crises. These elements combine to create a nearly cyclical crisis environment. In this context, military and civilian interventions have come to be seen as a normal tool for regime correction or restructuring.

This article sets out to examine why military or civilian interventions have surfaced time and again in Turkey's political history. Rather than looking at each episode in isolation, it brings together historical data and academic debates to reflect on the structural issues that keep reappearing. It looks at how power relations between key institutions especially the military, judiciary, and civilian governments have remained unsettled over time. At moments when political rifts have widened and the economy has weakened, these unresolved institutional frictions have opened the door to undemocratic interference. What this study underscores is that such patterns are not only driven by institutional breakdowns they are also shaped by deeper historical currents, enduring ideological divisions, and shifting pressures from outside.

This study adopts a comparative perspective to analyze Turkey's military and civilian intervention processes in the context of various theoretical approaches in the literature; such as tutelary democracy, separation of powers, and conflict theories. What it tries to show is that these interventions cannot be reduced to simple military takeovers. They are also tied up with long-standing rivalries within the state, unresolved ideological tensions, and the pressures of shifting global politics. Instead of relying on just one theoretical path, the study draws pieces from several perspectives to better follow how these patterns changed over time. By doing so, it argues that Turkey's struggle with democratization has often clashed with the endurance of tutelary habits embedded deep in the political structure.

Although each intervention carried its own particular set of motives and conditions, they all pointed to a deeper, unresolved issue: Turkey has consistently faced difficulty in building democratic institutions that are resilient and fully functional. From the 1960 coup all the way to the failed attempt in July 2016, different branches of the state including the military, judiciary, and parts of the civil bureaucracy have at various points positioned themselves as guardians of the system. In some cases, even certain civil groups supported these efforts, claiming they were needed to maintain order. But the ways in which these interventions were carried out often sparked controversy and bypassed the boundaries set by democratic principles. This recurring pattern reflects a deeper struggle between the formal legal system and the unwritten rules that continue to shape political behaviour. These actors have frequently acted

beyond their constitutional roles, thereby disrupting the balance of civilian authority and democratic legitimacy.

In this context, the study looks at the repeated occurrence of coups in Turkey not just as acts carried out by the military, but as outcomes shaped by a combination of deeper structural issues such as the enduring influence of tutelary elements within the state, uneven distributions of power, periods of social tension, and ongoing economic fragility. Rather than isolating these events, the study situates them within broader theoretical discussions, particularly the concepts of tutelary democracy and postmodern coups found in the literature. It's often referred to as a "postmodern coup" because, despite the absence of an outright military takeover, the February 28 process brought about serious political change. Instead of using force, the military exerted its influence through indirect means mainly the courts, the bureaucracy, and the media. Similarly, the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials, which took place mostly between 2006 and 2007, can be interpreted as attempts to eliminate certain groups within the state. At the same time, they also reflected deeper power struggles between rival factions inside the system. From this angle, the article goes beyond simply listing events and tries to understand the underlying dynamics behind them. Instead, it proposes a framework to explain why and how these interventions occur over time, and how their form has shifted. It also highlights a key distinction: some interventions break institutions openly, while others happen behind closed doors less visible, but no less significant.

In the sections that follow, the article first defines the concept of coups both in their classical form and in more recent, postmodern interpretations. After that, it takes a closer look at Turkey's historical state tradition, the development of its centralized governance, and the dynamics of civil-military relations. These areas are explored in depth. The discussion then turns to the broader social, political, and economic consequences of coups, while also considering the internal and external factors that have shaped them such as the influence of the United States, recurring economic crises, and shifting global conditions. In the final part, the article puts forward concrete suggestions aimed at addressing these long-standing issues. These include steps to strengthen democratic institutions, improve civilian oversight, and promote mechanisms that support social reconciliation. Rather than treating coups as isolated moments, this structure allows for a more layered and connected way of understanding their complexity.

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Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Approach

The history of coups in Turkey cannot be reduced to a list of military takeovers that occurred at specific times. Rather, these events point to deeper issues that have developed over time fragile institutions, recurring economic troubles, social tensions, and persistent ideological divides. This section starts by outlining how the study approaches the idea of a coup, using both traditional definitions and more recent perspectives. It then examines Turkey's experience with tutelary democracy, focusing on how this pattern of governance has affected the distribution of power and the functioning of state institutions. The discussion includes key ideas such as the separation of powers and democratic resilience, which are used here to better understand the conditions under which interventions occur. Conflict theories are also introduced to provide additional context for how political struggles can emerge from within the system itself. With these elements, the section offers a basis for analyzing both direct military actions and more subtle forms of authoritarian influence that operate through institutional channels.

A coup is generally defined as a military intervention that removes the ruling political authority through force (Charkton, 1992). The 1960 and 1980 military takeovers in Turkey are frequently referenced as textbook examples of this. The term "postmodern coup" is used to describe a different kind of intervention one that doesn't involve direct military force but works through institutions such as the judiciary, media, or bureaucracy. The February 28 process is often cited as an example, where both military officers and civilian actors took coordinated steps to influence political decisions, all while keeping the formal appearance of democracy intact (Işık, 2023). Although these actions followed legal procedures, they still shifted political power in ways that favored particular groups. In Turkey, democratic institutions have often coexisted with informal centers of power, making it possible for interventions to occur without the use of force. Terms like "civil coup" or "judicial coup" are used to describe instances where state officials such as judges or high-level bureaucrats exercise legal authority in ways that steer political decisions rather than remain neutral (Malamud, 2019). While these actions may follow the letter of the law, they frequently work against its democratic purpose.

According to this wide framework, the coup phenomenon includes more than military interventions. It also reflects profound power struggles, ideological conflicts, and institutional imbalances within the state. These elements together define the nature of coups. Turkey's experience with democracy, unlike Western liberal democracies, has been historically marked by tutelary tendencies (Paşaoğlu, 2021). The effectiveness of the democratic process is deeply undermined when key state institutions particularly the military, judiciary, and bureaucracy operate based on internal power dynamics and ideological positions, rather than through democratic oversight (Bakan, 2019). From this viewpoint, one of the key factors behind coup events in Turkey is the lack of a well-established separation of powers and the persistent interference by certain elites and tutelary structures within the state. In this dynamic, a political culture is created where authoritarian impulses are periodically legitimized. National stability or secularism is often invoked to justify them. These dynamics highlight a systemic fragility, where democratic legitimacy is frequently subordinated to perceived institutional needs.

In environments where the separation of powers does not function effectively, power becomes concentrated; in the hands of one or a few actors instead of being balanced through checks and balances. In the Turkish case, the historical mission of the military and judiciary to “protect the state” has frequently led to the exclusion of political opponents and groups with differing ideological perspectives from the system (Capezza, 2009; Yanaşmayan, 2017). This kind of imbalance increases the likelihood of military involvement and leaves democratic norms exposed. Because of this, political actors often stay cautious and operate within informal boundaries limits set not only by law, but by what might trigger a reaction from powerful institutions. Over time, this has contributed to a climate where opposing views are met with suspicion and rarely seen as part of normal democratic debate.

Social and political conflict theories provide an essential perspective for understanding coup events (Çakı, 2018). According to these theories, ideological, ethnic, sectarian, and; class-based divisions within society, when combined with power imbalances within the state, weaken democratic mechanisms and create conditions conducive to radical intervention tendencies (Anderson, 1988). Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Anderson, 1988) and C. Wright Mills's theory of elites (Mills, 1956) have been used to examine how certain groups within the state especially those in the military and bureaucracy have tried to shape political and social structures based on their own beliefs. In some cases, these groups do not view intervention as a break from democracy, but as a way to protect the state or preserve what they consider essential values. In Turkey, coups are not only the result of internal institutional rivalries; they also reflect deeper ideological divisions that have long existed in society. These theoretical

approaches help make sense of how some state actors come to see themselves as responsible for guarding the system, even if doing so means stepping outside democratic norms.

Furthermore, the deepening of social polarization, the uncertainties caused; by economic crises, and interactions with the international environment further exacerbate these conflicts. Since the 1970s, Turkey has experienced recurrent economic and political crises, leading to weakened social cohesion and; challenges to democratic legitimacy, thereby making the coup phenomenon almost cyclical. This pattern shows how weak institutions and public dissatisfaction tend to fuel each other over time. In many cases, economic instability has been used to justify military involvement, strengthening the idea that the armed forces are needed to restore order.

At this point, an alternative perspective involving the concept of the “deep state” should also be considered. The deep state refers to the unseen but influential elements within democratic institutions and civilian governance; (Kavakci, 2009). In Turkey, the discourse on the deep state has expanded; beyond military interventions to include indirect interventions carried out through the judiciary, bureaucracy, and media (Çolak, 2019). Because of this, coups shouldn’t be seen only as military actions. As a result, coups can be understood not only as military interventions, but also as expressions of broader struggles over power and ideology within the state. In this context, the so-called deep state operates as an informal layer of authority, often maintaining authoritarian practices beneath the surface of democratic procedures. This reading draws attention to how formal institutions and informal networks may function together, at times weakening democratic accountability through opaque and unregulated actions.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework developed in this section proposes that coups in Turkey should not be understood only as military takeovers. Instead, they should be seen within a broader context that includes tutelary political structures, weak institutional separation, ongoing social divisions, and the influence of informal power networks. This approach provides the foundation for both the historical analysis and the proposals that follow in later sections. It ties the discussion to academic work that deals with how democracies hold up under pressure, and how power is shared inside the state. More importantly, it points to something central: real reform can’t just focus on keeping the military out of politics. The deeper institutional problems have to be dealt with too. Otherwise, the conditions that allow authoritarian politics don’t really go away.

Historical Analysis and Systemic Dynamics of Coups in Turkey

Historical Background

Understanding the fundamental dynamics that have shaped Turkey's modern political history requires; a detailed examination of how the state tradition evolved from the late Ottoman Empire to the establishment of the Republic. In this context, the Ottoman Empire's centralized and authoritarian governance model; became a lasting structural feature of Turkey's state apparatus in the following centuries. Combined with the military-political role of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), this legacy left deep imprints on the political culture; during and after the establishment of the Republic. This historical continuity is essential for comprehending the institutional roots of interventionist tendencies in Turkish politics. This continuity also underlines that modern political ruptures in Turkey cannot be fully understood without tracing their institutional and ideological genealogies.

The Ottoman Empire was built as a strongly centralized state, governing a vast territory with firm control from the center. This control rested on the absolute authority of the sultan, which kept the bureaucracy tightly organized and hierarchical. The aim was to keep all levels of administration under central rule, leaving little space for local autonomy and making sure the system stayed efficient and loyal (Güngör, 2021). Over time, this shaped a political culture where discipline, obedience, and hierarchy were seen as essential especially in the military and bureaucracy. Researchers have shown that this centralization became deeply rooted through institutions like the devshirme system, the timar arrangements, and the Imperial Council (Divan-ı Hümayun), which helped spread authoritarian habits throughout the state structure (Akça, 2005). Such mechanisms fostered a bureaucratic mindset centered on top-down control and unquestioned loyalty to central authority. These structural legacies laid the foundation for an enduring political culture where vertical power relations were normalized, making institutional resistance to democratic decentralization more difficult.

During the modernization era, the Ottoman Empire struggled to adapt to a changing world. This struggle became more visible as reform efforts began to question the authority of its tightly centralized system. The Tanzimat period, followed by the Islahat Edict, reflected these attempts to reshape the state along lines influenced by Western ideas. Still, these reforms didn't manage to break the authoritarian foundations of the state. In many cases, the very tools meant to modernize governance actually made central control even more solid spreading it further through the bureaucracy, the army, and financial institutions (Güngör, 2021). Later, during the founding of the Republic, there were renewed efforts to rebuild the state along more democratic and modern lines. Still, the long-standing habits of centralization didn't fully disappear. As a result, the new state ended up with a mixed character. It looked modern on the surface. But in practice, control still flowed from the top. Each time the political ground started

to shift, the same tension came back. Reform attempts moved ahead, but they kept running into the same barrier deeply rooted habits of centralized control.

The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) emerged as a key player in the late Ottoman period, shaped by both modernization goals and a strong belief in centralist governance (Gökbayır, 2012). After the 1908 Revolution, it became more visible in politics and began working closely with military and bureaucratic elites to maintain and redefine the idea of a strong central state. Much of its legitimacy came from the tight networks it built within the army and state institutions. The CUP often described its role as one of “protecting the state,” a claim grounded in fears about existential threats (Akça, 2005). This kind of rhetoric didn’t disappear with the Empire it was later used to justify military interventions in the Republican era as well. In that sense, the idea that the state should be guarded from within took root even before the Republic, laying the groundwork for tutelary thinking in modern Turkey.

The military-political role of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) was not confined solely to the 1908 Revolution; its ideological legacy continued to exert influence during the; early years of the Republic. In the process of establishing the Republic, Atatürk and his comrades undertook radical reforms to construct a modern state, yet; they could not overlook the impact of military tutelage on state governance. Military discipline, a centralized structure, and an authoritarian tradition remained defining elements in the institutional framework of the new state, which later emerged as significant obstacles in Turkey’s democratization process; (Aslanmirza, 2021). The literature contains extensive debates on the CUP’s legacy in relation to the continuation of the "protection of the state" doctrine within the military and; bureaucratic institutions of the early Republic. These discussions present strong arguments regarding how military tutelage and; the centralist tradition hindered the proper functioning of democratic institutions even during the republican era (Çolak, 2019). So instead of being dismantled, tutelary thinking found a place in the institutional fabric of the Republic. This helps explain why, even after the shift to parliamentary democracy, the idea of full civilian control over the military remained unsettled.

With the establishment of the Republic, efforts were made to construct a new state structure in line with modernization and; democratization objectives; however, traces of the old authoritarian tradition continued to deepen, particularly within military and bureaucratic ranks (Aslanmirza, 2021). Military elites, who embraced the mission of "protecting the state," at times perceived; the existing civilian government as a threat and exhibited a tendency to intervene (Uluçakar, 2018). This phenomenon is considered; a structural issue that laid the foundation for the coup culture in Turkey, manifesting itself through concrete interventionist examples at

certain points in republican history. Such reflexes illustrate the persistent perception among state elites that civilian rule must be kept in check to preserve national integrity. Consequently, the legacy of the Committee of Union and Progress; was not limited solely to the institutionalization of the modern state; it also encompassed a set of elements that facilitated the persistence of military tutelage, centralized authority, and the authoritarian state tradition. In that light, military interventions didn't break with the past. Instead, they kept the old tutelary mindset alive even under new constitutional rules.

In conclusion, the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic left a lasting impact on the institutional foundations of modern Turkey. The state's centralist and authoritarian tendencies formed the basis of this continuity, with the political and military dominance of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) further strengthening these traits. Rather than fading over time, these traditions have persistently hindered efforts toward democratization and liberal modernization. In fact, they have laid the foundation for a political culture in which military interventions and tutelage have become ingrained in governance. This pattern is frequently discussed in academic debates, particularly through the concepts of "continuity of the state tradition" and the "ideological influence of the military elite" in Turkey's political modernization process (Böreklioğlu, 2021). A growing number of scholars argue that addressing the structural roots of military interventions requires, above all, a critical engagement with this historical legacy. Without taking this history into account, attempts at democratic reform are likely to miss the deeper forces that keep authoritarianism in place. It's important to think critically about this legacy not only to understand how the current political system took shape, but also to consider possible alternatives. Military interventions in Turkey shouldn't be regarded as mere disruptions. They belong to an enduring narrative, influenced by longstanding historical traditions and institutional patterns that persist in shaping how power functions today.

In this context, understanding; Turkey's coup cycle requires more than merely examining specific intervention events such as those in 1960, 1971, or 1980. Rather, it necessitates an analysis of how; the centralist and authoritarian tradition has been shaped since the state's foundation, how the CUP reinforced this tradition, and how this legacy evolved in the early republican period. By doing so, the institutional, ideological, and cultural dynamics underlying the recurring phenomenon of military interventions in Turkey today can be better comprehended, thereby providing a solid theoretical foundation for future reform and; democratization efforts. A structural transformation can only be meaningfully addressed when approached from this broader perspective. Rather than limiting itself to a descriptive account,

this framework enables the article to engage with wider theoretical discussions on democratization and the role of the military in hybrid political systems.

Critical Periods and Methods of Intervention:

Since the proclamation of the Republic, Turkey has experienced a political structure frequently shaken by; military interventions and internal power struggles within the state. These interventions have not always taken the form of direct military takeovers; they have also been carried out by manipulating state institutions and civilian actors. The coups of 1960, 1971, and 1980, the February 28 process, and the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016 each with its own context and characteristics have revealed deep institutional, ideological, and societal fault lines in Turkey. The next section looks more closely at these key periods and the different ways in which interventions took place. Looking at these episodes through historical, institutional, and ideological lenses can help explain why the military has continued to play a recurring role in Turkey's political landscape.

The 1960 Coup: The First Concrete Example of Direct Military Intervention

The interruption of democratic governance in Turkey through military intervention became a structured and recurring reality with the coup of May 27, 1960. The roots of this intervention can be traced back to the growing economic difficulties and rising political tensions during the 1950s, under the rule of the Democrat Party (DP) (Çoşkun, 2023). Initially coming to power with promises of rapid economic growth, the DP achieved short-term prosperity; but failed to address long-term structural problems. The deterioration in income distribution, rising inflation, and; economic imbalances in rural areas raised significant concerns regarding the sustainability of the government (Takım, 2012). During this period, economic hardship combined with growing political unrest, which began to fuel unease within the military. The unresolved structural problems in the economy were no longer just economic they started to carry political weight, raising doubts in military circles about the regime's long-term stability.

The growth strategies of the early 1950s seemed promising at first. But rising public spending, increased foreign borrowing, and a shortage of foreign currency soon made the economy fragile (Baytal, 2007). Industrial and agricultural policies were not applied evenly. While some groups benefited from these policies, large parts of the population saw little change. For many, things even got worse over time (Demirbaş, 2024). Poverty became more visible in the countryside. In urban areas, the momentum of modernization began to slow. Some people benefited from the economic growth, but many others did not. As this gap became more visible, discontent started to grow. Over time, it put pressure on the DP government and weakened its

support. This shows that when economic policies fail to include most of society, they can do more harm than good.

In this period, the government grew more authoritarian. The government's suppression of political opposition and its restrictions on the press added to an already growing crisis in governance. As democratic institutions lost their strength, the idea that the state needed to be protected started to gain support within the military. A significant number of officers viewed the armed forces as a stabilizing force, one that could step in when civilian politics were perceived to be failing to act in the public's best interest (Kaya, 2024). Over time, this mindset became widespread in military circles. It developed into an ideological position that justified direct involvement in politics. This shift represented a turning point: the military evolved from being merely a professional institution to considering itself a political player. In doing so, it assumed a role that surpassed its constitutional boundaries acting as an ideological guardian.

On May 27, 1960, the military intervened in politics and removed the elected government from power. It was the first time the armed forces had taken full control of civilian rule. The Chief of General Staff was at the center of the operation. The officers involved argued that the government had lost its connection with the people and was endangering the stability of the state. The coup leaders accused the ruling government of driving the country into economic collapse, dividing society, and undermining the state's basic institutions. In their view, intervention was not a choice, but a necessary step to prevent further damage (İlyas, 2016). They presented the coup not as a grab for power, but as a duty to protect the nation. This language of necessity, grounded in ideas of national salvation, became a common feature in the way later coups were justified.

The coup did more than remove an elected government. It signaled the start of the military's lasting role in Turkey's political sphere. In its aftermath, a group of officers took over and set up the National Unity Committee. One of their first steps was to draft a new constitution. The 1961 Constitution reshaped the way the state operated and redefined the balance between military and civil authority (Kaya, 2024). Although it broadened some rights and freedoms, it also enhanced the authority of the military and senior bureaucrats. This shaped a system where democracy and military influence existed side by side. The new political order appeared democratic, but it left room for the military to step in again when it saw fit. Although the reforms were presented as a step forward, they introduced boundaries that would continue to affect civil-military relations for years.

Cemal Gürsel and the other coup leaders tried to justify their actions by claiming that the political system no longer reflected the will of the people and had moved away from basic

democratic principles (Önder, 2014). But this argument left an important question unanswered: did such interventions actually help democracy, or did they cause long-term harm? The turn toward a more authoritarian style of governance also raised concerns about how safe elected governments really were under the watch of the military. For a long time, Turkish politics has been shaped by a basic tension: should the priority be stability, or popular will? This question has never fully gone away. Even today, many debates around democracy reflect this same divide.

In conclusion, the May 27, 1960 coup marked a turning point not only in political leadership, but also in the relationship between the state and democracy. It happened during a period of economic difficulties, political tension, and public unrest. The military claimed it was stepping in to restore order, but its intervention changed the course of Turkish politics for many years. Instead of reinforcing democratic institutions, the coup gave the armed forces a lasting role in civilian affairs. This opened the door to repeated interventions and a long-standing imbalance between elected governments and military influence. May 27 remains a clear example of how fragile democratic gains can be when deeper structural problems go unresolved.

The 1971 Memorandum: The First Signs of Soft Intervention and a Postmodern Approach

The March 12, 1971 military memorandum was a turning point. In 1971, the military didn't remove the government entirely. But it put strong pressure on elected leaders to change course. The intervention disrupted politics, even though it stopped short of a full coup. It showed that the military could shape outcomes without stepping into power directly. At the time, prices were rising fast, protests were common, and politics had all but frozen. Things were not working, and frustration was growing across society. The military, once again, viewed itself as the force that could restore order. The system put in place after 1960 had expanded freedoms, but it also led to new tensions and power struggles. By the early 1970s, things had become hard to manage. Once again, the military stepped in, claiming to defend the state. This intervention showed a shift in approach. Instead of direct rule, the military now preferred to act from the background. It shaped outcomes without holding office. That pattern staying in the shadows but steering politics would appear again in later years.

By the late 1960s, Turkey was facing growing economic problems. Inflation was climbing fast, foreign debt was rising, and public spending was out of balance. In 1970, the lira lost two-thirds of its value after a major devaluation, which made everyday life more expensive for many people (Öz, 2018). At the same time, strikes and labor protests became more common.

The gap between city and countryside kept growing, partly due to weak industrial policies. On top of this, political tensions were escalating. Clashes between right- and left-wing groups often turned violent, and street confrontations became a regular part of daily life (Ortaç, 2019). Student movements in universities expanded, while political assassinations and; the activities of armed organizations brought the country to the brink of civil war (Akal, 2013). This multidimensional crisis not only destabilized the social fabric but also challenged the state's capacity to govern effectively. The convergence of socio-economic discontent and ideological polarization created a pretext for intervention by state elites claiming to act in defense of national unity.

In this tense environment, the Justice Party government under Süleyman Demirel struggled to keep control. The government avoided negotiation and chose strict methods to manage the unrest (Tansi, 2021). Yet these steps did little to ease the tension. Still, these efforts failed to restore order. On the contrary, they created uncertainty and exposed a growing gap in state authority. This atmosphere gave weight to the belief especially within the military that the state needed protection. But unlike in 1960, the military did not take full control. This time, it chose a different route: guiding politics from the outside rather than stepping in directly. It was a shift in strategy. Influence replaced takeover. What emerged was a new kind of intervention less visible, but still powerful. Over time, this method became more familiar. The military didn't rely on force, but on quiet pressure to steer politics from behind the scenes.

On March 12, 1971, the Chief of General Staff and the Commanders of the Armed Forces presented a memorandum to President Cevdet Sunay, effectively; forcing the government to resign. The memorandum stated that the country had become ungovernable; due to escalating anarchy and economic instability, that the government had failed to restore order, and that the military would act within its constitutional duty to protect the constitutional order. Faced with this explicit threat, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel was compelled to resign¹, and; in his place, a technocratic government was formed under Nihat Erim, who was backed by the military. This new government pledged to implement reforms within; the framework set by the military authorities. However, under the guise of reforms, democratic rights were curtailed,

¹ On March 12, 1971, the government led by Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel submitted its resignation to President Cevdet Sunay through an official letter. The primary reason for this resignation was the memorandum issued by the Chief of General Staff and the Commanders of the Armed Forces, which was presented to the President, the President of the Republic Senate, and the Speaker of the National Assembly and was publicly announced on the same day via Turkish Radio. In his letter to President Sunay, Demirel asserted that the memorandum went against the principles of constitutional order and the rule of law. He emphasized that, under such circumstances, the government could no longer continue its duties. This event is recorded as a major turning point in Turkey's political history, highlighting the impact of military interventions.

and; military oversight over the state was further strengthened (Ertürk, 2023). This period revealed how constitutional mechanisms could be repurposed to serve extra-constitutional objectives. This case illustrates how legality can be strategically used to veil illegitimate power assertions, eroding democratic resilience from within.

Following the memorandum, martial law was put in place, and many basic rights were rolled back especially for leftist groups and workers' organizations. The state launched large-scale crackdowns on movements like the Turkish People's Liberation Army (THKO) and the Turkish People's Liberation Party-Front (THKP-C). These crackdowns led to the execution of prominent figures such as Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Hüseyin İnan. During this time, press censorship increased, union rights were rolled back, and academic freedom at universities came under heavy pressure (Akal, 2013). The so-called reform process of the government ultimately resulted in a contraction of fundamental rights and; freedoms, reinforcing security-oriented policies as a dominant approach in state governance. This approach blurred the distinction between reform and repression, casting a long shadow over the legitimacy of the new order. In this context, reformist language served as a way to justify authoritarian measures, showing how calls for modernization can be used by unelected powers to strengthen their position.

The constitutional amendments introduced; after the memorandum significantly eroded the liberal structure established by the 1961 Constitution. While executive powers were expanded, judicial independence was severely weakened, marking the beginning of a new era in which the state was effectively governed under military control (Bakırcı, 2023). These developments were not limited to the 1971 memorandum; alone but also paved the way for the legitimization of future military interventions. The military showed that it didn't need to take full control to shape political outcomes. The memorandum became a tool to steer civilian politics without dissolving it entirely. This approach set the stage for what would later happen in 1980, gradually expanding the military's influence over elected governments. Over time, it also helped spread the idea that military involvement was sometimes needed to "fix" political problems. What happened in 1971 created a pattern on the surface, civilian rule remained, but behind it, the military held quiet but lasting power.

The March 12, 1971 memorandum showed how the military could steer politics without directly taking over. Rather than ousting the government, it relied on state institutions like the media, the courts, and the bureaucracy to apply pressure and influence key decisions (Oral, 2023). This method weakened democratic processes. Civilian leaders stayed in office, but their power was limited. Public trust in elections and democratic institutions began to fade. Over

time, military influence became part of how the system worked. In the end, the system still looked democratic from the outside. But inside, it worked under quiet, constant pressure. This made real political reform harder than it seemed.

In conclusion, the March 12, 1971 memorandum showed that democratic rule in Turkey could be undermined without a full military takeover. Instead, sustained pressure and indirect intervention proved just as effective in steering civilian politics. Faced with economic troubles, political deadlock, and rising unrest, the military once again stepped forward not as a temporary force, but as a guiding authority over the state. This moment made military influence in politics more permanent. It also slowed down efforts to build a stronger democracy in Turkey. The influence of the 1971 intervention still lingers, particularly in discussions about the boundaries between civilian authority and military involvement. In later years, the memorandum was seen as introducing a more subtle form of intervention shaping politics from behind the scenes without dismantling democratic institutions outright.

The 1980 Coup: A Radical Intervention Amid Deep Economic, Social, and Political Crises

The September 12, 1980 coup was the most comprehensive military intervention in Turkey's history, occurring at a time when economic crisis, political turmoil, and; social violence were deeply intertwined. This intervention not only overthrew the existing government; but also permanently reshaped Turkey's political, economic, and legal structures (Özçelik, 2011). By the late 1970s, Turkey; had become ungovernable. On one hand, rising inflation, a foreign exchange crisis, and; high unemployment destabilized the economy; on the other hand, escalating right-left conflicts, assassinations, and sectarian tensions pushed the country to the brink of civil war (Kibritcioglu, 2004). Democratic institutions had become dysfunctional, and; governments were ineffective and short-lived. As the state lost its ability to manage the growing crisis, a power vacuum emerged. The military came to see itself as the only organized force capable of stepping in. In this light, the coup was more than a reaction to disorder. It reflected a deeper belief within the military that it had a duty to step in and reshape the state when civilian rule failed.

The oil crises of the early 1970s and; the state's highly interventionist economic policies had significantly increased public spending, driven inflation up, and rendered external debt uncontrollable. By 1980, inflation had surpassed 100%, foreign exchange shortages had brought imports to a halt, and; people struggled to access even basic consumer goods (Durmuş, 2011; Firat, 2009). Although governments intended to implement IMF-backed free-market reforms to rescue the economy, political instability prevented these reforms from; being realized. The January 24, 1980 economic measures aimed to transition Turkey toward a free-

market economy, but; strong political authority was required for their implementation (İnal, 2010). Given; the weak coalition governments, it was clear that such a transformation could not be achieved under the existing political conditions. Thus, the September 12 coup was not only a military intervention; but also a turning point that reshaped Turkey's economic direction, paving the way for neoliberal policies. This period also marked a shift in Turkey's economy toward global market trends. From this perspective, the coup served as a means to push forward neoliberal reforms that did not have strong public or democratic support. It revealed how major economic changes could be carried out through authoritarian methods when popular approval was weak or missing.

As the economic crisis deepened, Turkey's political structure; also became increasingly unstable. Throughout the 1970s, coalition governments proved fragile, with constant power struggles; between the Nationalist Front governments, the CHP-MSP coalition, and various minority governments. Although CHP emerged as the leading party in the 1977 elections, Ecevit's government was short-lived, as; the ongoing rivalry between Süleyman Demirel and Bülent Ecevit completely paralyzed state governance (Ak, 2018). However, the most severe crisis occurred; during the 1980 presidential elections. Despite; 115 rounds of voting, the parliament failed to elect a new president, leading to a total deadlock in state mechanisms. This made it even harder for any government to take meaningful steps toward economic reform. As a result, the political system became increasingly paralyzed (Kızılkaya, 2014). With the collapse of governance and; the paralysis of the political system, Turkey became ungovernable, creating the perfect conditions for military intervention. This environment reaffirmed the military's belief in its constitutional responsibility to act as a stabilizing force. Thus, the coup also illustrates how institutional gridlock and elite fragmentation can activate authoritarian guardianship models, whereby the military assumes a corrective role under the pretext of restoring institutional coherence.

Widespread political violence was one of the central reasons cited to justify the military coup of September 12, 1980. In the second half of the 1970s, street clashes between right- and left-wing groups became more frequent and more deadly, turning daily life into a struggle for security. The state seemed unable to contain the unrest. On May 1, 1977, violence broke out during a workers' rally in Taksim Square, leading to 34 deaths and hundreds of injuries. A year later, the Maraş Massacre, in which many Alevi citizens were killed, sparked deep sectarian tensions. In 1980, similar violence returned in Çorum, once again showing that the authorities had lost control. These events shaped the growing perception among the public and the military alike that the country was slipping into chaos. Together, these events created the perception

both within the military and among segments of the public that the country was slipping into chaos and that drastic action was necessary (Altun, 2019; Erdoğan, 2016).

With an average of 20 people assassinated daily, armed groups; had rendered the state's security apparatus completely ineffective. As the civilian government lost control over law enforcement, the military's perception of itself as; the ultimate "protector of the state" grew stronger, making military intervention; seem inevitable. These security-based justifications also helped the military gain quiet support from parts of the public. They didn't just explain the intervention they made it seem like a needed step to restore order. In doing so, the distinction between force and public approval became harder to see.

On the morning of September 12, the Turkish Armed Forces seized full control of the government, declaring martial law; nationwide. The parliament was dissolved, political parties were banned, politicians were arrested, and; the press was silenced. Following the coup, the country entered one of the most repressive periods in its political history. Around 650,000 people were taken into custody, and 50 individuals were executed after trials. Another 30,000 people were stripped of their citizenship and forced into exile. Torture became widespread; at least 171 people died as a result. Thousands of people received long prison sentences. At the same time, trade unions were shut down, the press faced heavy censorship, and universities were brought under firm military control (Türkdoğan, 2022). The military left almost no space for opposition. By silencing dissenting voices, it established a rigid and centralized form of rule. The 1980 coup was not only a move to restore public order. It also reflected a clear intention to reshape political life. The military wanted to reshape how the state and society related to each other, based on its own ideas of what stability and authority should look like.

A key result of the coup period was the 1982 Constitution. It gave more power to the president and made the military's role in politics a permanent part of the system. At the same time, it weakened the courts, narrowed basic rights, and set up a system that kept the military's influence alive well beyond the coup itself (Toprak, 2020). By framing Turkey's political structure within an authoritarian framework, this; constitution became one of the most significant legal texts that undermined democracy. In theoretical terms, the constitution codified military preferences into law, institutionalizing a form of "delegative authoritarianism" under constitutional guise.

The September 12, 1980 coup also had major economic consequences. It opened the way for Turkey's transition to a neoliberal model. With Turgut Özal's leadership, the January 24 economic decisions were quickly enforced. The state began to withdraw from the economy, privatization gained speed, and foreign trade was liberalized. However, this shift brought

serious social consequences. Workers lost key rights, trade unions were pushed aside, and income inequality worsened (Çavdar, 2006). The military government reshaped politics and set the stage for a market-driven economy, but it did so without gaining broad support from the public. There was a clear mismatch between politics and the economy. Although economic reforms steered the country toward a more market-oriented model, political life remained under strict control. Citizens were largely excluded from participating in decisions that had significant consequences for their lives.

In conclusion, the September 12, 1980 coup went beyond being a military intervention. It acted as a process of restructuring that altered both Turkey's governance and economic system. Military tutelage became more entrenched, civilian authority was weakened, the state's economic involvement was reduced, and democratic rights were curtailed. In the post-1980 period, Turkey evolved into a new political and; economic order shaped under the shadow of the military, while democracy remained constrained for many years. Therefore, September 12 is not just a past military intervention; but one of the most critical events that shaped the political and economic structure of contemporary Turkey. Its legacy continues to shape ongoing discussions on civil-military relations and constitutional change. In Turkey, coups have often been more than short-term reactions to crises. They have served as deliberate tools to reshape the state politically, economically, and ideologically.

The February 28 Process: An Analysis of the Postmodern Coup and Indirect Intervention

The February 28, 1997 process is one of the most notable examples of military tutelage in Turkey shaping the political order without directly seizing power. Instead, it used civil mechanisms, such as the media, judiciary, and economy. This method of intervention introduced a hybrid form of control that blurred the lines between civilian oversight and military pressure. Referred to as a "postmodern coup," this process set itself apart from earlier military takeovers by steering clear of direct force. Instead, it relied on psychological tactics and the manipulation of public opinion to pressure the government into resigning. However, February 28 was not simply a change of government; it was a transformative process that deeply impacted Turkey's political, economic, and social structures. It demonstrated how undemocratic control could be maintained under the guise of democracy. The case shows that informal mechanisms can weaken democratic norms while still appearing legal, supporting the idea that postmodern coups are indirect but effective in preserving authoritarian rule.

In the late 1990s, Turkey experienced major political change. After the 1980 coup, conservative groups became more active in politics. This trend peaked in the 1995 general elections, when the Welfare Party (RP) led by Necmettin Erbakan became the leading political

force. However, this ascent triggered considerable concern among key power centers, including the military, judiciary, media, and financial elites (Sasa, 2023). Claiming that the principle of secularism was under threat, these groups launched a coordinated effort against the Welfare Party's government, turning the process into a military-guided intervention. This reaction reflected the persistence of state elites' resistance to alternative ideological actors gaining legitimate political power. In this context, the episode reflects the enduring structural role of tutelary elites in filtering political legitimacy through ideological conformity rather than democratic representation.

On February 28, 1997, the National Security Council (MGK) imposed a series of measures on the government to uphold secularism. These measures included restrictions on Imam Hatip Schools, the tightening of the headscarf ban, and increased oversight of religious sects and communities (Yaşar, 2020). Although the Erbakan government was compelled to accept these decisions, the process did not end there. To legally and psychologically reinforce military intervention in civilian affairs, the Western Working Group (BÇG) was established. The BÇG monitored and pressured religious communities and Islamic financial groups, orchestrated media campaigns to delegitimize the government, and influenced the political process by imposing economic sanctions on the business sector (Arkan, 2019; Kınalı, 2022). Through these tools, the military constructed an environment where civilian compliance was achieved without tanks on the streets. Accordingly, the military institutionalized a new form of influence that functioned through bureaucratic coordination and ideological policing rather than overt coercion.

The media became one of the most crucial instruments in paving the way for military intervention during this period. Newspaper headlines and television programs targeted the Welfare Party (RP) and conservative groups through the rhetoric of an "Islamist threat." Business elites exerted economic pressure on the government, destabilizing markets, while the judiciary expedited legal proceedings, leading to the initiation of a closure case against the RP (Baran, 2024). This process allowed the military to push the government to resign without using direct armed intervention. Public opinion was managed to legitimize the intervention through legal and civilian means. The cooperation of the media, judiciary, and economic actors illustrates that modern coups often rely more on narrative and institutional control than on outright force.

Since this method differed from traditional coups, it was labeled a "postmodern coup" (İsa, 2020). The fundamental distinction of the February 28 process was that the military exerted its influence not through direct intervention but via civil mechanisms, steering the political

process through the media, judiciary, and financial sector. As a result, Necmettin Erbakan was forced to resign, the Welfare Party was dissolved, and military tutelage reached its peak (Temel, 2024). This form of intervention represented a subtle but highly effective erosion of democratic will. As such, tutelary power was sustained not by disruption, but by repackaging itself within the discourse and mechanisms of constitutional order.

Over time, the February 28 process produced results far from what its architects had planned. Conservative groups were deliberately pushed to the periphery, facing the headscarf ban and limits on Imam Hatip Schools. These restrictions deepened their marginalization. At the same time, they created the conditions for a new political movement to emerge. The founding of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in 2001 and its victory as the sole ruling party in the 2002 elections are widely regarded as direct outcomes of the February 28 process (Demirkol, 2023; Işık, 2019). The intervention, although aimed at suppressing a political vision, ended up creating the conditions for its eventual revival and dominance. This result supports the theory of reactive mobilization, which suggests that exclusionary policies can end up strengthening the actors they aim to diminish, often increasing their influence.

After coming to power, the AK Party initiated a gradual process of weakening the military tutelage system established by the February 28 process. Although the military's attempt to issue an "e-memorandum" during the 2007 presidential elections (*Basın Açıklaması*, 2007), indicated the persistence of military tutelage, the AK Party government took a firm stance against this intervention and implemented measures to uphold civilian governance. With the 2010 constitutional amendments, military courts were brought under civilian oversight, significantly curbing military influence in politics (Kuru, 2013). This transition marked a symbolic and institutional shift in favor of civilian supremacy. In this regard, civilianization was institutionalized not merely through legal reforms but also via symbolic confrontations with the military's residual legitimacy.

In conclusion, the February 28 process; has left a lasting impact on Turkish democratic history, symbolizing a period in which the military was able to steer politics without direct intervention. While in the short term, military tutelage appeared to gain strength, in the long term, it contributed to the resilience of civilian politics against military interventions and; accelerated Turkey's democratization process. Therefore, February 28; is not merely a government change but a critical turning point that triggered a transformation in Turkey's political structure. The effects of the process are still felt in ongoing discussions about the proper balance between secular principles, democratic governance, and military power. This case offers an opportunity to compare the dynamics of traditional coups with those of

contemporary hybrid authoritarian regimes. Seen from this angle, it becomes clear that ruling powers adjust their methods of control as societal norms evolve.

The July 15, 2016 Coup Attempt: An Intervention Shaped by Modern Technology and New Actors

One of the most complex coup attempts in Turkey's history took place on July 15, 2016. Unlike earlier military takeovers, it followed a different course. At its core were covert networks embedded within state institutions. Modern communication tools were used to coordinate actions. The planners combined psychological pressure with asymmetrical tactics. These methods went beyond the scope of a conventional military operation. The attempt was the outcome of the Gülenist Terror Organization's (FETÖ) long-term infiltration of state institutions. Yet it was ultimately stopped by the determined resistance of both the public and the government. In this respect, the events of July 15 reflect a new form of intervention one that blended covert infiltration with popular defiance and departed from classical coup patterns.

To understand the dynamics of the July 15 coup attempt, it is necessary to follow how the Gülenist Terror Organization (FETÖ) steadily expanded its influence. The group's gradual and intentional infiltration of state institutions paved the way for this expansion. Beginning in the 1980s, the group expanded its influence in education, media, and finance, securing a firm and lasting presence in these sectors. By the 1990s, it had extended its reach into law enforcement and the judiciary, gaining a firm position in the bureaucracy. The most critical element of this infiltration, however, was within the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK). For years, the organization trained loyal officers in military academies and, from the early 2000s, systematically increased its influence in the army, placing members in key strategic posts (A. S. S. Açıl, 2017). These operations formed part of a long-term strategy designed to avoid detection, demonstrating the sophistication of modern subversive movements within state structures. This case also shows how sustained infiltration, reinforced by parallel bureaucratic networks, can gradually undermine institutional integrity.

In 2013, the power struggle between FETÖ and the government reached a turning point, making the conflict publicly visible. During the Gezi protests and the December 17-25 corruption investigations, the organization sought to topple the government through the judiciary and law enforcement. These attempts, however, ultimately failed. After 2014, as the government directly targeted; FETÖ's network, purges accelerated, significantly weakening the organization's influence in the bureaucracy. However, FETÖ's strongest foothold remained within; the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK). Foreseeing the complete elimination of its presence in the military, the organization launched the coup attempt on the night of July 15 (Gümüş,

2020). In this context, the July 15 attempt can be interpreted as a desperate effort to reclaim lost influence within the state's coercive apparatus.

The coup attempt followed a strategy different from traditional military interventions, relying on modern communication tools, media influence, and psychological warfare to shape public opinion. To disrupt the chain of command in the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), the coup plotters began by taking Chief of General Staff Hulusi Akar hostage. Subsequently, the coup plotters seized control of the state broadcaster TRT and; aired a coup declaration. Strategic locations, including the Bosphorus and Fatih Sultan Mehmet bridges, were blocked with tanks, and; military activity intensified in Istanbul and Ankara (Güder, 2016). However, the coup plotters miscalculated both; the public's and the government's reaction, failing to anticipate the scale and strength of the resistance. The outcome demonstrates that digital communication is vital in modern resistance and that messages from leaders can swiftly influence public action. It indicates that coup tactics have evolved, merging psychological warfare with information control to create hybrid operations.

The most decisive factor in the failure of the July 15; coup attempt was the public's mobilization in the streets. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's call for citizens to take to the squares via social media; led to the coup plotters losing their psychological advantage (Şahin, 2019). Unlike earlier coups, when most people stayed passive, in 2016 large sections of the public took action standing in front of tanks and physically stopping soldiers. The General Directorate of Security and Special Operations Police was also instrumental, confronting coup forces and helping to restore control (Bulur, 2016). This level of public resistance changed how civic participation was understood, showing that mass mobilization can be a decisive force in defending democracy.

In contrast to earlier military interventions in Turkey, the coup attempt did not receive support from the armed forces in their entirety. Most high-ranking commanders refused to participate and actively opposed the plotters. Additionally, shortcomings in the planning of the coup, coordination problems among the coup plotters, and; the premature timing of their actions contributed to its failure. Most importantly, the public's mobilization and; the decisive response of security forces led to the coup's collapse much faster than expected. This marks a shift in Turkey's civil-military relations, where the authority of civilian institutions visibly overcame a military uprising. This moment indicates a paradigm shift in civil-military relations, where institutional loyalty was fractured by ethical and legal dilemmas.

Following July 15, Turkey underwent fundamental structural changes in its state institutions. A state of emergency (OHAL) ; was declared to completely eliminate FETÖ's

presence within government institutions, leading to extensive operations (Akgün, 2023). The military structure was reconfigured, with critical units such as; the gendarmerie and air force placed under the Ministry of the Interior. Military academies were closed, and; new training systems were introduced. Additionally, large-scale purges were carried out in the judiciary and bureaucracy, while FETÖ's influence in economic and; social spheres was significantly diminished (Özer, 2017). These actions signaled a decisive centralization of institutional power within civilian executive structures. In this regard, the restructuring of civil-military relations shows a strong reassertion of civilian control, though it also raises concerns about growing centralization.

July 15 was a pivotal moment in Turkey's move to break away from military tutelage. Unlike previous coups, this attempt was blocked by civilian resistance, limiting the military's capacity to shape politics. However, it also brought new debates over the state of democratic checks and balances. Following the coup, the declaration of a state of emergency (OHAL), the ensuing judicial processes, and the restructuring of state institutions brought renewed concern over how to maintain the balance between security and freedom. The weakening of military influence in politics was accompanied by growing questions about the concentration of power and the long-term resilience of democratic governance. These circumstances also ignited debates on whether the rhetoric of defending democracy could be used to justify authoritarian practices.

In conclusion, the July 15, 2016 coup attempt diverged from the traditional pattern of military interventions, showing that state institutions, modern communication tools, and coordinated organizational methods could be mobilized in such an effort. At the same time, it stood as a prominent example of popular resistance in defense of democracy, reinforcing civilian authority over military tutelage. The effects of July 15; are not only significant for Turkey's internal dynamics; but also serve as a critical turning point for implementing necessary reforms to prevent similar threats in the future. It redefined how anti-democratic threats could be executed and neutralized within a democratic framework. Hence, it stands as a modern example of how democratic resilience and authoritarian adaptation can occur simultaneously within contested political environments.

The table below compares the types of interventions, key factors, institutional outcomes, and socio-economic impacts of the 1960, 1971, and 1980 coups. It also includes the February 28 process and the July 15, 2016 coup attempt. The comparison shows recurring patterns as well as differences in the historical course of these events. The information is presented in a clear and structured way. This comparative approach is especially useful for identifying

recurring structural patterns that have enabled military or military-guided interventions over time. Consequently, the tabular comparison underscores structural weaknesses recurring across different military interventions.

TABLE 1. A Comparative Summary of Coup Periods.

Coup Period	Type of Intervention	Key Factors	Institutional Consequences	Socio-Economic Impacts
1960 Coup	Classical military intervention	Political instability, inter-party conflict, polarization	Strengthening of military tutelage, institutional purges and restructuring	Erosion of democratic legitimacy, economic uncertainty
1971 Memorandum	Indirect intervention (soft coup)	Left-right conflicts, social unrest, political crisis	Strengthening of ideological orientations, manipulation of civilian governance	Increased social polarization, uncertainty
1980 Coup	Direct military intervention	Economic crisis, social chaos, political uncertainty	Comprehensive institutional purges, institutionalization of military tutelage	Economic inequality, social divisions
February 28 Process	Postmodern/indirect intervention	Indirect pressure through media and judiciary, ideological manipulation	Weakening of civilian institutions, decline in democratic oversight	Erosion of social legitimacy
July 15, 2016 Attempt	Modern technological intervention	FETÖ infiltration, deep-state gaps, modern communication tools	Breakdown of institutional checks and balances, deepening of ideological conflicts	High social polarization, economic uncertainties

Table 1 outlines the development of coup culture in Turkey over time. It links each form of intervention to enduring structural weaknesses and ideological tensions within the state. It also provides a reference for evaluating changes in institutional vulnerability and democratic fragility across different periods.

Coups in Turkey are not only repetitions of earlier events. They are also the result of deep and persistent structural problems. These include the challenges of state modernization. They also include the fragility of democratic institutions. Another key factor is the intense

polarization within society. The following sections outline reform proposals and strategic measures. They are grounded in a thorough historical and systemic analysis. At their core is the call for a broad and comprehensive reform program designed to prevent the recurrence of similar crises. Beyond tracing historical patterns, this study examines how democracy can be reinforced in political systems still undergoing transition. The Turkish coup experience underscores a key conclusion: the endurance of democratic stability depends on robust institutional safeguards.

The Ergenekon and Balyoz Cases

The Ergenekon and Balyoz cases, which took place in Turkey during the 2000s, began under the banner of ending military tutelage. Over time, however, they became highly contested, raising concerns that the judiciary was being used for political and ideological ends. While not direct military interventions, these processes functioned as large-scale purge operations carried out through judicial and bureaucratic channels. They show how legal tools can serve as alternative means of political intervention in hybrid regimes. The trials were initially presented as measures to safeguard democracy and uphold the rule of law. Over time, they revealed how the legal system could be used as a tool for political rivalry. As a result, the fragility of institutional balances within the state became evident. These cases, therefore, illustrate the risks that politicized judicial mechanisms pose in transitional democracies.

At the heart of the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials was an ongoing power struggle within the state. In the early 2000s, judicial proceedings launched under the pretext of combating military tutelage gradually turned into a tool for removing certain groups from state institutions through legal channels. The Ergenekon process, which began in 2007, was presented as a large-scale investigation into so-called “deep state” structures (Güney). The Balyoz case centered on allegations of a 2003 coup plot and led to a series of high-profile trials. Throughout both processes, however, serious doubts arose over the credibility of evidence, procedural flaws, and the use of fabricated documents, making their legitimacy highly contested. The decline of due process and the use of questionable legal practices intensified debates over judicial abuse. Intensifying political polarization, the weakening of judicial independence, and persistent bureaucratic power struggles all heightened the impact of these cases (“Ergenekon Davası,” 2008; Rodrik, 2014). Together, they serve as a warning that legal institutions can be drawn into elite power struggles, especially in fragmented political systems.

One of the most striking features of these trials was how the judiciary became entangled in a political power struggle. Facing prosecution were hundreds of military officers, academics, journalists, and bureaucrats. The accusations ranged from attempting a coup to membership in

illegal organizations. In the years that followed, many defendants were acquitted. Several cases, however, fell apart because of legal irregularities (“Ergenekon Davası,” 2008). As the trials progressed, it became evident that some convictions rested on fabricated evidence. Doubts deepened, bringing serious concerns about credibility of the judiciary and the impartiality (Rodrik, 2014). In a democratic system, judicial independence is fundamental. The use of legal proceedings to further political agendas directly erodes the rule of law. These trials exemplify how vulnerable democratic institutions become when legal principles are influenced by factional interests. With sustained partisan pressure, even the most robust safeguards can be gradually dismantled.

The Ergenekon and Balyoz; trials were not merely efforts to counter military tutelage; they also revealed how ongoing ideological and political factionalism within the state transformed into a judicial purge process. Unlike military coups, these trials brought forward the idea of a “judicial coup,” prompting concerns that the judiciary was no longer acting as an impartial legal body but had instead become a venue for political retaliation. Lack of sufficient evidence, incomplete investigations, and the unlawful collection of evidence (BBC, 2019) weakened the credibility of these cases. What emerged was not a genuine path to accountability but a politicized confrontation framed as judicial reform. Rather than; reinforcing democratic processes, the use of judicial mechanisms as a tool in power struggles was seen as one of the greatest threats to judicial independence. Accordingly, these events underline the paradox of pursuing democratization through undemocratic judicial means.

These trials brought significant structural changes to the state’s institutional framework. Framed as an effort to counter military tutelage, the legal proceedings triggered large-scale purges within the security bureaucracy, sharply reducing the military’s political influence. At the same time, however, they opened the door for new centers of tutelage to emerge within the judiciary and law enforcement. This marked a shift from open military dominance to a more concealed form of bureaucratic authoritarianism. In later years, it emerged that some judicial and law enforcement officials involved in these cases were connected to the Fetullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ), revealing how easily the process could be steered for political ends (B. K. T. Ö. S. Açıl, 2019). It also showed that power struggles within the state extended beyond the military and civilian bureaucracy. They spread into the judiciary, the media, and security institutions. The course of these trials points to a change in the nature of tutelage from direct military control to a more hidden form of bureaucratic entrenchment.

The Ergenekon and Balyoz processes made clear how fragile judicial independence is in Turkey. When the legal system became a tool in state power struggles, public trust in the

judiciary suffered, and the separation of powers a core principle of democracy was weakened. When the judiciary is seen as serving political aims rather than acting independently, public trust in the rule of law erodes over time. This perception has reduced the normative legitimacy of legal institutions in the eyes of much of society. Restoring that credibility will take more than legal reforms. It also demands a change in political culture, one in which those who hold power actively demonstrate their commitment to the rule of law.

The Ergenekon and Balyoz trials illustrate how the legal system in Turkey has been manipulated for political purposes. They also show how the judiciary has been used as a tool by specific power groups. Preventing the recurrence of such episodes in a system committed to the rule of law requires strengthening independent judicial mechanisms, ensuring fair trial standards, and improving democratic oversight. Judicial impartiality and independence need to be prioritized within both legal and political frameworks for Turkey to prevent similar challenges in the future. Without a strong commitment to these principles, the judiciary risks becoming a forum for political conflicts rather than a place of justice. The legacy of these trials emphasizes the need to reconsider judicial independence not only as legal autonomy but also as a key pillar of democracy.

Causes of Coups and Systemic Issues

The recurrence of coups in Turkey's political history should not be seen merely as isolated events of military intervention at specific times. Rather, it reflects deeper, systemic issues within the nation's institutional, ideological, social, and economic frameworks. There are three main factors that significantly contribute to the ongoing occurrence of coups: the tutelary structure of the state, the political and societal polarization, and the influence of economic crises and external factors on coup risks. These elements point to fundamental structural weaknesses and growing divisions within Turkey's democratization process, signaling a pressing need for comprehensive reforms to avoid similar crises in the future. This analysis serves as the conceptual foundation of the study's central argument: recurring coups in Turkey are not anomalies but rather the systemic consequences of a deeply rooted tutelary system, further intensified by weak institutional oversight.

The Tutelary Structure of the State: Interactions among Military, Judiciary, and Bureaucracy

The persistence of a tutelary state structure is a major factor behind the ongoing risk of coups in Turkey. This structure is characterized by the close relationships between the military, judiciary, and bureaucracy. These institutions often prioritize their internal power dynamics instead of adhering to democratic oversight. As a result, an authoritarian culture continues to

thrive within the state. These institutions often act based on their internal power dynamics, rather than being subject to democratic oversight, which reinforces an authoritarian culture within the state. Historically, the Turkish military has seen itself as the protector of the state since the republic's founding, frequently intervening to reshape political authority. Scholars argue that military tutelage goes beyond direct interventions, maintaining its influence through strategic relationships with other state institutions (Paşaoğlu, 2021). This interconnectedness is further strengthened by a shared "salvation ideology" and a narrative of "protecting the state," both of which play a central role in reshaping the political order. Therefore, the theoretical framework here views the state not as a neutral entity but as a battleground of competing elite powers, where military, judicial, and bureaucratic alliances create a stable tutelary bloc.

When the judiciary loses its impartiality and becomes subject to political pressures and ideological influences, it forfeits its legitimacy and is used as a tool in power struggles within the state. The judicial manipulations seen during the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases illustrate how the judiciary can be transformed into an instrument for removing political adversaries. This situation exposes deep flaws in the state's legal framework and raises important concerns about the effectiveness of democratic oversight mechanisms (Rodrik, 2014). In a similar vein, while the bureaucracy is intended to ensure the effective running of the state's administration, it often prevents innovation and democratic reforms by upholding a culture of hierarchy, discipline, and obedience that is deeply embedded in Turkey's traditional centralized system. The tight and often opaque interactions among these three foundational institutions the military, judiciary, and; bureaucracy (Akıncı, 2013), hinder the establishment of democratic norms and; facilitate the maintenance of authoritarian structures. As a result, the tutelary nature of the Turkish state can be identified as one of the main reasons behind the persistence of a coup-prone political culture. The case studies in this paper offer empirical evidence to back this claim. They demonstrate how these institutional coalitions have functioned over different historical periods. This has occurred despite changes in political actors or shifts in ideological narratives.

Table 2. Overview of Principal Factors Contributing to Coup Risk. The Role of Tutelary Structures, Economic Crises, Social Polarization and External Influences in Undermining Democratic Oversight.

Main Factor	Effect / Process	Outcome
Tutelary Structure (Military, Judiciary, Bureaucracy)	Weakening of democratic oversight mechanisms	High coup risk
Political & Social Polarization	Distrust, societal fragmentation	Weakening of democratic institutions

Economic Crises & External Factors	Economic uncertainty, international pressures	Increased coup risk
(Interaction of All Factors)	Collective weakening of oversight mechanisms	High coup risk

Table 2 illustrates the way in which structural weaknesses within the state interact with societal dynamics. It reveals how the lack of effective oversight mechanisms ultimately heightens the risk of coups. This comparative synthesis reinforces the study's main argument: the convergence of tutelary alliances, social divisions, and economic fragility systematically creates conditions that make Turkey more susceptible to coups.

In conclusion, the risk of coups in Turkey is strongly linked to the tutelary structure, suggesting that military interventions are not merely past occurrences, but rather manifestations of deeper, persistent structural problems. These problems are exacerbated by insufficient institutional oversight, growing societal divisions, and ongoing economic crises. As a result, the political system has come to favor the interests of powerful groups rather than reflecting the will of the people, establishing a persistent environment susceptible to coups. Consequently, Turkey’s tutelary state structure and; associated factors have marked its political modernization process as one of the most prominent examples of the ongoing tension between democracy and authoritarianism. Ultimately, by linking institutional theory with historical pattern analysis, this study offers a unifying explanatory framework capable of accounting for both classical and contemporary coup attempts, including the July 15 case.

The Role of Political and Social Polarization

A critical factor in Turkey's ongoing coup cycle is political and social polarization. This goes beyond the usual competition between political parties, manifesting in growing divisions based on ideology, ethnicity, sect, and region. These fractures weaken the trust shared by different societal groups. These rifts diminish trust among various social groups. These divisions erode trust between different groups in society. They also promote an "us versus them" mentality within the state. This kind of polarization is not just a political issue; it enables military interventions. It disrupts the possibility of inclusive governance and strengthens the reflexes of elite-driven tutelary control.

Historically, political rivalries before and after the 1960 coup in Turkey created ongoing tensions between military and civilian institutions. These tensions played a key role in legitimizing military tutelage (Kaya, 2024). Following the 1971 memorandum, the increasing conflict between left-wing and right-wing ideologies deepened the polarization within civilian politics (Akal, 2013). This division gave the military and similar institutions a stronger rationale for intervention, justified under the guise of "protecting the state." Thus, the recurring

legitimization of coups through polarization illustrates how state elites strategically use societal fragmentation to reassert their control, in line with the theoretical framework outlined in this study.

Social polarization, along with factors such as economic inequality, unequal access to education, and regional disparities, has fostered increasing distrust and conflict within society (Baus, 2024). As these divisions widen, a growing number of people lose faith in the state's ability to represent and safeguard their interests. When crises occur and trust in the state diminishes, military interventions and coup attempts are often viewed more favorably, especially when justified as efforts to "save" the nation. However, the acceptance of these interventions is not just due to elite influence. It also arises from a broader social environment, which allows these actions to be accepted by society, whether passively or actively.

Academic studies emphasize that Turkey's coups stem not only from military tutelage but also from deep-rooted polarization and social discord (Uyar, 2020). Trust in democratic institutions is undermined by political polarization, enabling certain groups to accumulate disproportionate political influence while excluding others from the political system. By destabilizing existing power balances within the state, this dynamic heightens the risk of coups. Thus, polarization acts as a key mediator, connecting institutional weaknesses to interventionist outcomes, which supports the study's argument that coups emerge from intersecting systemic flaws.

The Impact of Economic Crises and External Factors on the Risk of Coups

In Turkey, economic crises are not seen simply as the outcome of failed financial policies or international economic fluctuations; they are also viewed as a deep reflection of political instability, social injustice, and institutional weaknesses. Economic crises erode public confidence through indicators such as income inequality, rising unemployment, and inflation affecting large parts of society. As a result, democratic legitimacy and civil oversight weaken. This situation leads to the weakening of democratic legitimacy and; civil oversight. Accordingly, economic collapse is not treated here as an isolated financial event, but as a key destabilizing force that interacts with societal grievances and elite calculations to heighten coup vulnerability.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, substantial empirical evidence shows that economic uncertainties increased the risk of military coups. In particular, the economic crises leading up to the 1980 coup intensified social unrest and polarization, which weakened the legitimacy of the civilian government and provided a justification for military tutelage to intervene under the guise of "protecting the state" (Bakırtaş, 2016; İsmihan, 2024). Economic crises also led to a

stronger influence of international financial institutions on Turkey (Kaba, 2020). Significantly restricted by IMF programs, structural adjustment policies, and neoliberal reforms, the state's ability to shape economic and social policies was greatly diminished. This limitation further deepened social inequalities and polarization. As a result, the likelihood of military intervention grew. This dynamic reinforces the paper's broader theoretical argument. It suggests that institutional erosion, worsened by economic crises and external pressures, creates conditions that enable the resurgence of tutelary structures. In other terms, the erosion of institutions, fueled by these factors, creates conditions that allow tutelary control to resurface.

External factors have also played a significant role in Turkey's cycle of military interventions. During the Cold War period, the involvement of international actors such as; the United States and NATO in military interventions in Turkey or at the very least, their supportive role in the background of these interventions has been a frequently debated issue in academic literature (Çolakoğlu, 2018; Erkmen, 2020; Yetim, 2019). Turkey's position in the global geopolitical landscape, together with ongoing regional crises, has created external influences. Significantly impacted by these, the country's economic and political stability has been altered. This, in turn, has led to the creation of an environment favorable to military coups. Particularly following 1980, the economic reforms and neoliberal policies resulted in heightened economic uncertainty and further deepened the social divides and polarization within society. These factors, together, raised the risk of military interventions. Therefore, external constraints and global pressures act as amplifiers of internal fragility, paving the way for coups. These dynamics are incorporated into the theoretical framework of the study.

Moreover, the repercussions of global economic crises on Turkey have disrupted the country's internal dynamics, while the instability of economic policies and; the inequitable distribution of public resources have become primary causes of social unrest. The legitimacy of the state and the effectiveness of democratic institutions are negatively affected by this situation, thus raising the risk of military interventions. In conclusion, the theoretical framework in this study argues that economic shocks act as catalysts. They activate tutelary mechanisms, all while being framed as actions to bring stability.

Proposed Solutions and Reform Perspective

At the core of Turkey's recurring coup cycle and institutional challenges are several critical factors: the persistence of a tutelary state structure, insufficient democratic oversight, increasing social polarization, and economic uncertainties. These problems undermine the democratic system, setting the stage for the legitimization of military interventions. To avoid

similar crises in the future, implementing comprehensive reform packages is essential. The proposed solutions can be grouped into four main pillars. First, the establishment of strong democratic institutions; second, reducing military tutelage and transitioning to civilian oversight; third, addressing social polarization; and fourth, implementing reforms to ensure economic stability. By connecting these pillars to the structural causes of coups tutelary legacies, polarization, and economic volatility the proposed reforms are not just theoretical suggestions. Instead, they are empirically grounded responses to vulnerabilities that have been clearly identified.

Strengthening democratic institutions can be accomplished by establishing the rule of law, guaranteeing judicial independence, and safeguarding a free press. To achieve this, the processes for appointing and promoting judicial officials must be transparent and based on merit. An independent Supreme Court and Judicial Council must be created. In addition, laws that protect press freedom should be properly enforced, while ensuring media diversity is promoted. With the advancement of digital media platforms, democratic participation can be fostered. This can be done by improving access to information, which, in turn, encourages more active public engagement in political processes. This institutional focus is consistent with the theoretical argument. A weak rule-of-law environment, combined with flawed oversight mechanisms, creates a vacuum that provides fertile ground for tutelary actors.

The reduction of military tutelage can be achieved by subjecting the armed forces and defense institutions to democratic oversight, establishing civilian monitoring mechanisms, and; ensuring that military personnel are recruited and promoted based solely on professional and meritocratic criteria. The creation of parliamentary-approved audit bodies and; the management of military expenditures and strategic planning in accordance with the principle of transparency will reduce the risk of military intervention and ensure institutional balance. Strengthening civilian governance necessitates the establishment of effective communication and cooperation mechanisms between civilian institutions and the military at every level of the state, which are crucial for ensuring democratic stability. The proposed depoliticization and professionalization of the military directly address the case study findings, particularly in terms of the persistence of tutelary reflexes, and support the study's argument that continuous reforms are essential to break interventionist patterns.

To address social polarization, inclusive programs in education and cultural policies are crucial. Education systems should be designed to include diverse cultural, ethnic, and ideological viewpoints, and it is essential to raise younger generations with a pluralistic perspective. Furthermore, supporting cultural and artistic initiatives, ensuring diverse

representations in the media and public spaces, and fostering a culture of tolerance and agreement within society are key components. Supporting projects that decentralize decision-making by strengthening local governments will play a critical role in addressing regional inequalities and promoting social solidarity. These actions are closely linked to the theoretical model, which sees polarization not merely as a symptom but as a structural factor that enables military legitimacy, highlighting the need for substantial social investment to uphold democratic values.

Achieving economic stability requires structural reforms, the encouragement of the private sector, greater investment in research and development, and the implementation of transparency and fiscal discipline in the management of public funds. Additionally, strengthening international integration, enhancing foreign trade policies, and; implementing regulatory reforms in financial markets will contribute to minimizing economic uncertainties and addressing income inequality. Consistent with the study’s multi-factorial framework, these economic reforms represent a foundational dimension in minimizing coup risk by closing off systemic entry points to political destabilization.

TABLE 3. Summary of Reform Areas, Proposed Policies, Expected Outcomes, and Implementation Timeframes.

Reform Area	Proposed Policies	Expected Outcomes	Timeframe
Strengthening Democratic Institutions	Judicial independence, transparent appointment processes, safeguarding press freedom	Establishment of the rule of law, increase in democratic legitimacy	Medium/Long Term
Military Tutelage	Establishment of civilian oversight mechanisms, professionalization of the military	Reduction of military intervention risk, institutional balance	Short/Medium Term
Reducing Social Polarization	Inclusive education programs, cultural	Enhancement of social consensus and solidarity	Long Term

	pluralism, local		
	government reforms		
Reforms to Support Economic Stability	Structural economic reforms, strengthening of social security programs, international integration	Reduction of Medium Term economic uncertainties, mitigation of income inequality	

Implementing these proposed reforms will break the tutelary culture within state institutions and improve democratic oversight mechanisms. Addressing social polarization and ensuring economic stability, these measures will establish the groundwork for a comprehensive strategy to reduce the risk of military interventions. The academic literature underscores instances where comparable reforms have enhanced democratic resilience and institutional legitimacy. Therefore, Turkey can benefit from these cases by implementing long-term, comprehensive reforms to address its structural challenges. This article links reform efforts to the causal mechanisms identified in the case studies, offering both a critique of existing vulnerabilities and a theory of democratic consolidation, grounded in empirical findings and applicable to various contexts.

In conclusion, the reform perspectives discussed above offer; a comprehensive approach to addressing the deep-rooted structural issues that hinder Turkey’s democratization process. These broad reforms in the political, social, and economic areas will help lower the risk of military interventions. They will also support the creation of a governance model that is more transparent, accountable, and participatory. The success of these reforms relies on the cooperation of state institutions, civil society, academia, and international actors. Additionally, it requires the implementation of long-term strategic policies. This integrated reform model ties together the theoretical framework of the study by transforming diagnostic insights into practical recommendations. It bridges the gap between empirical analysis and normative solutions.

Conclusion

In Turkey’s modern political history, coups have not merely been military uprisings; but rather a multidimensional phenomenon shaped at the intersection of structural weaknesses of the state, social and political polarization, economic instabilities, and external influences. The

historical examples and systemic analyses discussed in this study highlight the cyclical nature of coups in Turkey and; the fundamental factors that contribute to the perpetuation of this cycle. Thus, the persistence of coups should be interpreted not as isolated historical anomalies but as the outcomes of systemic configurations that reproduce vulnerabilities across different periods and modalities.

One of the most crucial factors sustaining the continuity of military interventions is the tutelary structure of the state. The intertwined relationships between the military, judiciary, and; bureaucracy have disrupted democratic processes, preventing the full establishment of a governance model based on the will of the people. The military and civilian interventions that took place from; 1960 to July 15, 2016, have revealed the lack of democratic oversight mechanisms within the fundamental institutions of the state. Eliminating this tutelary structure is only possible through institutional reforms. A strong democracy is upheld not only by electoral processes but also; by the effective functioning of checks and balances. Therefore, ensuring the rule of law, establishing an independent and impartial judiciary, and; fully subordinating military institutions to civilian authority are the most critical steps to permanently preventing coups. In this regard, the cases examined in this study collectively demonstrate how different forms of tutelary control military, judicial, or bureaucratic have evolved but remained structurally embedded in Turkey's institutional configuration.

The coup culture in Turkey should be viewed as a legacy of the centralized governance tradition of the Ottoman Empire and the military-political influence of the Committee of Union and; Progress. Since the founding of the Republic, the tutelary structure, the weakness of democratic institutions, and; social polarization have emerged as structural factors that have rendered the coup cycle almost inevitable. Under the guise of "protecting the state," the close ties between civilian and military institutions have created a situation where democratic legitimacy and accountability are lacking. The culture of coups, therefore, is not confined to the past as a historical sequence. It is an ongoing issue, driven by deeply rooted structural problems. Consequently, the recurrence of coups should be viewed as a result of institutional path dependencies, not just political contingencies.

Coups in Turkey have taken on various forms and evolved throughout the years. Classical military interventions, like those in 1960 and 1980, were carried out directly by the armed forces. However, during the February 28 process, postmodern coup tactics emerged, relying on media, judicial, and bureaucratic manipulations. In the 2000s, purges through legal frameworks, such as the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases, revealed the involvement of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies in coup-like activities. The July 15, 2016 coup attempt, however,

stood apart from previous ones by using modern communication tools, covert networks, and asymmetric methods of intervention. These evolving tactics show that coups are not simply a historical event, but a persistent threat capable of adapting to new circumstances. The case studies presented highlight not only specific instances of intervention, but also demonstrate how tutelary mechanisms evolve in response to shifting technological and institutional environments.

Throughout history, Turkey's coups have been heavily impacted by economic crises and international influences. Every significant economic crisis has sparked political instability, setting the stage for military intervention. The economic downturn before the 1980 coup was a key factor in political instability. Inflationary pressures before the 1971 memorandum worsened the situation. The political upheaval during the February 28 process was greatly intensified by the media's involvement. Ensuring economic stability is key to reinforcing democracy. Through greater transparency in public spending, the strengthening of independent economic institutions, and the reduction of income inequality, social cohesion will be improved and democratic stability further solidified. The influence of international alliances and economic relations on coup dynamics suggests that Turkey should pursue reforms aimed at greater integration into the global community. This highlights the need to expand the analysis of coups to incorporate political economy, which examines both institutional shortcomings and macroeconomic vulnerabilities, along with global dependencies that deepen instability.

Economic crises in Turkey have not only exposed governance failures but also deepened social polarization. Ideological, sectarian, and class divisions have caused rifts not just between political parties, but across society. The coups of 1960, 1971, and 1980, along with the February 28 process, all took place during times of increased polarization, when state power weakened and public trust diminished. Therefore, developing inclusive policies to unite various segments of society is crucial. Reforms that encourage consensus should be adopted in critical areas, including the education system, media regulations, cultural policy, and the strengthening of civil society. Polarization, in this context, serves not just as a symptom but as a contributing factor to institutional fragility, facilitating the acceptance of military or judicial interventions.

A historic turning point in Turkey, the July 15, 2016 coup attempt signaled the end of military intervention as the norm. In that moment, the public and civilian authorities played an active role in resisting the coup, affirming their determination to protect democracy. However, the policies put in place after July 15 have not been enough to strengthen democracy, leading to ongoing debates about legal oversight mechanisms and civil liberties. For the democratization process to rest on solid ground, a balance must be maintained between security

and freedom, with a firm commitment to the rule of law and the protection of individual rights and liberties. If these post-crisis efforts are not institutionalized through lasting democratic reforms, they may remain as symbolic moments rather than genuine turning points.

The steps that need to be taken to ensure that Turkey; does not face similar crises in the future are clear. Strengthening democratic institutions, completely eliminating military tutelage, reducing societal polarization, and; ensuring economic stability constitute the fundamental pillars of the country's democratization process. The implementation of these reforms will not only secure Turkey's domestic stability but also enable it to position itself as a stronger and; more reliable actor in the international arena.

In conclusion, coups are not just military actions; they are manifestations of underlying institutional weaknesses, societal divides, and economic instability. The removal of the coup culture in Turkey requires building trust in democracy, establishing a more transparent and accountable state, and promoting inclusive governance that involves all social groups. These reforms are crucial for both learning from the past and securing Turkey's future as a stable, democratic, and resilient nation. The framework presented in this study, linking tutelary structures, polarization, and economic fragility, explains the persistence of coups and offers a clear path toward democratic consolidation.

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