

Case study

Indirect praetorianism: the case of Turkey's military

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ABSTRACT

Based on a case analysis of the Turkish military interfering on 27 April 2007 in the presidential elections, the article seeks to analyse the mechanisms of indirect interventions and contribute a new perspective to the analysis of praetorianism. The study found that the military intervention that took the shape of an e-memorandum of 27 April 2007 was a form of veto coup that is often used by the guardian-type military. In this paper, the subjects of direct non-violent intervention, their methods, as well as negative consequences for the military environment have been identified. The presented analysis of modern forms of praetorianism focuses on such forms of indirect actions of the military in which it is difficult to identify the interests of the military or see an increase in its political influence.

KEYWORDS

praetorianism, coup, guardians, intervention, e-memorandum



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Introduction

Coups have disappeared from the political agenda in most developed states but continue to play an important role in the political life of some countries. The Turkish military was repeatedly an active participant in the “path of coups d’état”. The military has overthrown civil governments four times in the modern history of the state (1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997), and intervened in the activities of democratically elected governments in 1962, 1963, 2007 and 2016. Considering these aspects, one of the main aims of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP) was to force the country’s mighty army to return to the barracks permanently and leave the political scene. The ruling AKP party and the country’s President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have severely curtailed the military’s powers, especially in 2016. However, the 2016 coup attempt was not the last manifestation of political interference. In April 2021, following “a memorandum from retired admirals”, the President, Presidential Administration, some opposition leaders, experts and commentators portrayed the memorandum as an attempt to restore a military guardianship regime in the country [1; 2]. The 2016 military coup attempt and the 2021 events [3] have shown that the tradition of military intervention is still alive in the corps of officers and the manifestation of military

tutelage takes the Turkish state back to the times when the country had the characteristics of a praetorian state, where the military acts as a guardian.

Research on the phenomenon of praetorianism is based on the insights of S. Huntington [4], E. Nordlinger [5], and A. Perlmutter [6]. In analysing the theoretical framework of praetorianism, the researchers described this phenomenon and pointed to the methods of direct intervention as forms of manifestation of praetorianism. In the case of civil-military transformation in Turkey, these approaches are incapable of describing new forms of military intervention in domestic and foreign policies. Due to the Europeanisation reforms, the military started losing its formal institutional mechanisms (as in the case of the National Security Council, the State Security Courts, the General Staff, and other similar institutions). Consequently, it started exerting its power in politics through informal noninstitutional mechanisms, such as memorandums/statements/speeches by senior members of the Armed Forces on issues related to domestic and foreign policy [7]. It could be argued that the representatives of the Turkish military have moved away from the traditions of guardianship and praetorianism. The new methods, used in attempts to interfere in 1997 and 2007, are based not on armed violence, but on other, insufficiently explored and described methods of military influence. To fill this gap, it is necessary to research the methods of indirect influence in order to extend the concept of praetorianism. The purpose of the article – based on the case analysis of interference of the Turkish military in 2007 – is to analyse the mechanisms of indirect intervention and, thus, contribute a new perspective to the research on the concept of praetorianism.

In order to achieve the goal, the method of case analysis will be applied. The first part of the article describes the state of knowledge regarding praetorianism, types of intervention, and elements of indirect praetorianism. The second part provides the methodology for case analysis in order to identify and investigate the mechanisms of indirect intervention of the Turkish military in politics and social life. Lastly, by identifying these factors and the links between them, the existing state of knowledge about the phenomenon of praetorianism and coup d'état will be extended.

1. Literature review

The literature review focuses on an academic discussion on the topics of praetorianism and indirect methods of political intervention and offers an opportunity for a historical interpretation of the indirect intervention of the Turkish military.

The phenomenon of praetorianism can be traced back to the dominant role of the military in the Roman Empire and to the concept of the 'praetorian guard' – a small military unit which in ancient Rome became the 'kingkillers' and 'kingmakers' [8]. From the nineteenth century, the term '*praetorian*' became a synonym for mercenaries, cruelty, and the arbitrariness of the military [9]. The main approach to praetorianism is based on its definition as "a situation when the military class of a given society exercises independent political power within it by virtue of an actual or threatened use of military force". This classical definition of praetorianism by Friedrich Mandell Watkins appeared in "The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences" in 1933.

Eric Nordlinger, one of the leading researchers on praetorianism, in his description this phenomenon draws the definition proposed by Watkins. Nordlinger refers to it as a situation where military officers are major or predominant political actors by virtue of their actual or threatened use of force [5, p. 2]. According to E. Nordlinger, "praetorianism (or military intervention) occurs when officers more or less overtly threaten to carry out a coup d'état, unless certain demands are met; when they stage an unsuccessful coup; when a coup brings

about or prevents the replacement of the government by another group of civilians, and, most importantly, when the officers themselves take control of the government” [5, p. 2]. Similarly, Amos Perlmutter argues that modern praetorianism manifests itself in a state in which the military tends to intervene or potentially could dominate the political system [6, p. 382]. These are fundamentals in the research on military intervention.

In modern research on the relationship between society and the military, the concept of praetorianism is used less frequently, but researchers use a compilation of statements proposed in its classical definition. For example, Drew Holland Kinney in his study describes praetorianism as a situation in which the military “plays a dominant role in political structures and institutions”, tends to frequently intervene to influence politics and “constitutional change”, and can “dominate the political system or otherwise” [10, p. 682]. Another researcher, Renaud Egretreau, hypothesises that praetorianism is a form of political intervention carried out by armed forces (from direct rule to indirect forms of influence and policy control) and evaluates their impact on political stability, governance, and democratisation [11, p. 259]. In this context, questions arise about the forms and nature of military intervention.

As far as the nature of military intervention is concerned, researchers propose a variety of definitions. According to A. Perlmutter, “military’s political interventionism has recurred in the form of coups and counter-coups, both being successful and unsuccessful” [6, p. 382]. Claude Welch sees the military’s general involvement in politics as ranging from “military influence, military participation to military control” [12]. Another researcher, David C. Rapoport, defines praetorianism as a constitutional form of “government without consent”. It refers to “soldiers hired by a government to police an unruly population, but it also suggests that the loyalties of these soldiers are not fixed, for they often overturn governments they were hired to defend” [13, p. 72]. As the author indicates, violence is a means for changing government, because “governments are most often overturned by violence, though there are usually few casualties since not many will risk their lives to oppose or support a government during the crisis” [13, p. 4].

Scholars of civil-military relations have identified several forms of military interventionism, according to the type and level of intervention. A. Perlmutter distinguishes the two basic types of praetorian armies – the ruler-type and the arbitrator-type military [6, p. 382-402], which are more professionally oriented and combine the features of moderators with those of guardians. E. Nordlinger extended the typology and classified praetorian officers as rulers, moderators and guardians [5, p. 22].

The ruler-type praetorian military has enormous power to exercise and ambitious political and economic goals [5, p. 26]. It controls the government and dominates the regime, sometimes attempting to exercise extensive control over political, economic, and social life by establishing mobilisation structures. Ruler-type military intends to bring about fundamental changes in the distribution of power by eliminating nearly all existing power centres. This type of military builds authoritarian regimes while guardian types limit themselves to control of the government. Ruler-type officers distrust politicians; they themselves occupy formal positions in the governmental structure.

The moderator-type praetorian military exercise veto power over a varied range of governmental decisions and political disputes, without however taking control of the government themselves. Moderator-type praetorians act as highly politicised and pressure groups with powerful influence over civilian incumbents, sometimes backing up their demands with explicit threats of a coup. Moderator-type military acts in a conservative manner, which helps

explain why it does not exercise governmental power itself. According to E. Nordlinger, despite the considerable power exercised by the moderator-type military [5, p. 23], it soon ends up as praetorian guardians or rulers.

The guardian-type praetorian military shares many similarities with moderators. This type seeks to stave off political change and maintain political order, however, guardians are convinced that these goals can best be realised by controlling the government themselves. According to E. Nordlinger, they essentially intend to correct what is seen to be the malpractices and deficiencies of the previous government. Military representatives are reluctant to take the reins of government into their own hands. E. Nordlinger's approach is the same as that of A. Perlmutter about the arbitrator-type military, which imposes a time limit on army rule and arranges to hand the government over to an 'acceptable' civilian regime. The arbitrator-type army does not necessarily relinquish its political influence when it returns to the barracks; in fact, in many cases, it acts as a guardian of civilian authority and political stability [6, p. 391]. The basic dilemma related to the guardian role involves the two assumptions that the army is above politics and that the army should intervene in politics to prevent changes in the political system. The guardian role of the military is based on the premise that the causes of military intervention arise from temporary and extraordinary disruptions of the political system.

Later, Muthiah Alagappa modifies and supplements the typology of military participation in politics. He distinguishes four types of participation: referee, guardian, participant-ruler, and praetorian ruler [23, p. 34]. Zeki Serigil, exploring relations with the social and political domains, distinguishes additional types: predatory praetorian and popular praetorian [43, p. 267]. The characteristics of the types within his typology, in principle, do not differ from those previously proposed by E. Nordlinger, but rather complement them.

It should be noted that the above concepts of praetorian armies leave ambiguity about the nature of their corresponding interventions, as well as about the level and nature of the violence that is used to achieve the political goals of the representatives of the military. As Ömer Aslan notes, "the meaning of the concept of military intervention must have been so obvious to E. Nordlinger and M. Desch that they left the concept undefined in their books" [14]. It is unanimously accepted that only the military is the main actor in political intervention. Extant categorisations of "army roles in politics" reflected this type of thinking and classifications were drawn up in accordance with the concept of a military monopoly on violence. In these classifications, the military arbitrates/moderates, guards/corrects and rules, displaces and supplants, rules and moderates, and influences and blackmails civilian governments [14, p. 364] – its distinguishing feature is the level of violence in intervention.

A significant category of praetorianism is intervention in "state politics" as a direct mode of action of the military. The word intervention comes from the Latin word *intervenire*, which means "to intervene, to interrupt". Military intervention, according to Lyle N. McAlister, is "a situation in which the armed forces, or parts of them, are knowingly involved in governmental processes in order to go beyond the legitimate interests of the service" [15]. Military interventions are measured in terms of the level of direct use of violence and can range from brief and limited military involvement in civil affairs to full military state control. Military intervention (in the classical concept of praetorianism) is divided into coups, guardian coups, veto coups, government control, military resolution of a civil dispute over sovereignty or military arbitration, and the dominance of the regime.

J. Jenkins and A. Kposowa defined *a coup* as an irregular transfer of executive power by the regular armed forces or internal security forces using force or threatening their own power

[16, p. 272]. Brian Taylor, in turn, defines a military *coup* as a special type of military intervention, an attempt to usurp state power by using force [17, p. 7]. Harvey Kebschull also points out that “a coup d’état is commonly defined as a *speedily* executed, *extralegal* takeover of a government by a *conspiratorial* group, usually consisting of *army officers*, that uses force or the threat of force to remove the government or assume power for itself” [18].

The goal of a *guardian coup d’état* is usually to improve public order and end corruption. Generally, the power structure in a state does not change in this type of *coup d’état*. On the contrary, the military considers its actions to be a temporary and compelling necessity. The Egyptian military’s action resulting in the removal of President Mohamed Morsi met the definition of a guardian military coup.

Veto-coup – minor acts of violence by the military, where the goal of the military representatives is to avoid changes that they believe are detrimental to the interests of the military or to preserve the *status quo* by protecting it from radical political change [19]. The military, by its actions or threats of aggression, limits government decisions but does not control the governments themselves. In Turkey, the coup of 27 May 1960 was a ‘veto coup’, “[...] to curtail the participation in politics of leaders supported by the more traditional and conservative rural masses” [20, p. 201-215, 211].

The purpose of military participation in the state regime as a form of intervention is not only to control the government but also to dominate the regime, sometimes trying to control large segments of political, economic and social life. *Dominance in a political regime* means different types of military dictatorships or authoritarian regimes where the military has full or substantial control over the political power and the dictator is often a high-ranking officer.

The types of military intervention described above are linked to acts of political violence. These are direct violent actions, they are characterised not only by an exact target but also by a defined source of their violence and political purposes [21, p. 151]. It is possible to identify the interests of the military in all types of interventions that use military methods of coercion. Representatives of the military are identified as the subjects of direct violence which completely distorts the system of relations between society and the military.

This direct action leads to changes in the distribution of state power through the use of physical violence. Only a few researchers in the field of public-military relations mention indirect interventions, describing them as the implicit dominance of the military in terms of power and influence over politics. Samuel Finer claims that “indirect rule [...] comes about when intervention is carried only to the level of blackmail (which presupposes a civilian government being blackmailed by the military) or of displacement (which presupposes one civilian government being changed for another” [22, p. 164]. Muthiah Alagappa describes the phenomenon of indirect praetorianism in terms of the military’s intention to influence politics through “alliances with certain political and administrative interests, blackmail (including the cessation of political support) and threats and the use of force” [23, p. 34]. However, such insights do not provide sufficient analytical clarity and precision, as the methods of indirect interventions are of a political nature and allow the identification of the source of the violence, as well as its military and political objectives.

To sum up, the definition of forms of intervention is limited and describes it in terms of control, threat, or use of force. Therefore, in the analysis of its consequences, expressions such as ‘indirectly’, ‘potentially’ or ‘threaten to use force’ acquire new meanings that need to be assessed in the modern concepts of intervention. To research the inconsistencies in the concept of praetorianism use by the mode of action of representatives of the Turkish

military which has a history of coups and interventions in political and social processes. In these cases, the military has not only changed the executive or legislative power, but also tried to strictly control other stakeholders (such as the judiciary), the economy, or society.

Methodology

To achieve research goals and identify mechanisms of indirect military intervention, the methodology of a case study was chosen. A case study is deemed a suitable research strategy when the proposed research addresses a contemporary phenomenon, over which the researcher has no control; the research is largely exploratory; and it addresses the 'how' and 'why' questions [24; 25]. The case of Turkey is typical for the study of praetorianism since the role of the Turkish Armed Forces as a guardian was normatively determined, and representatives of the Turkish military, directly and indirectly, interfered in the political life of the country. Based on the data of University Of Illinois Urbana-Champaign "Frequency of Coup Events from 1945 to 2019, by Country" [26], the Turkish military took part in conspiracies (1 time), attempted coups (3 times), and launched successful coups (4 times).

Therefore, one of the cases of indirect intervention is considered, namely the actions of representatives of the Turkish military related to the electronic memorandum (e-memorandum) of 2007. For this, the author retrospectively and chronologically analyses the actions of representatives of the Turkish army, as well as the political context associated with the case of the 2007 indirect intervention.

By its nature, the e-memorandum is a political statement of the military representatives, which is regarded as an attempt to exert pressure on the political and electoral processes of 2007. The memorandum was published on the General Staff website at midnight on 27 April 2007 and was not signed by any representative of the military. The statement entitled "Concerning some recent developments" expressed concerns over the spread of radical Islamic attitudes and practices, implicitly criticising the 'concerned authorities' for being indifferent and even sometimes 'encouraging' these anti-secular activities. It can be argued that the 2021 statements made by retired admirals under the Montreux convention are similar to those of the 2007 e-memorandum. That is why the case of the 2007 e-memorandum is the basis for the study of similar atypical cases of indirect non-violent intervention.

The empirical basis of the research was the memoirs of the participants of the events of 2007, newspapers, and other sources, including new memoirs written by retired officers. Also, the author analysed the articles and works by researchers on civil-military relations in Turkey. The main challenge of the study was the limited access to information about the actions of representatives of the Turkish Armed Forces in cases of interference. Lack of data limits the possibility of accurately reconstructing actions taken during the intervention. It also complicates the identification of necessary data in secondary sources. Another challenge is the closure of several news agencies and secular newspapers in Turkey that reported and investigated the actions of various actors. To overcome these challenges, new memoirs written by retired officers and digitised archival data of Turkish news agencies were examined.

Case of e-memorandum of 27 April 2007

CONTEXT. Since the AKP came to power in November 2002, there has been a dramatic shift in the balance of powers between civil authorities and the military. The party was the result of the coup of 28 February 1997 during which the military warned and then disbanded the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi – RP) as their policies were considered anti-secular. Before the

AKP was elected as a unified party, Turkish politics remained under the tutelage of the military. The change in the role of the armed forces took place gradually, as part of an attempt to make Turkey a full-fledged member of the EU and to consolidate internal political and public forces. First, the Government limited the formal institutional arrangements of the military by introducing various coordination packages and constitutional amendments that the EU required for democratic control of the military. The EU documents on Turkey list four fundamental issues requiring reform: the position of Chief of the General Staff; the role of the NSC; the composition and jurisdiction of state security courts; and the state of emergency in the southeast of the country.

Second, the consolidation of the political power of AKP and de-securitisation policies have reduced the military's significant role in countering internal threats such as the rise of Kurdish nationalism, terrorism and international threats. The AKP, unlike its predecessor – the RP – initially sought to make Turkey a full member of the EU. Therefore, one of the main reasons for the conflict between the two sides was the AKP losing its enthusiasm for EU-inspired reforms following the start of open accession negotiations in 2005. Europe's concerns about Turkey's membership have led to an increase in Euroscepticism in Turkey. These events provided the military with the opportunity to take action against the AKP government which limited the formal power of the military through EU-inspired reforms. Another major reason for the confrontation was the replacement of the moderate chief of the general staff, Hilmi Özkök, by the influential nationalist and pro-secularist General Yaşar Büyükanıt. Unlike his predecessor, who preferred to remain silent about everyday politics, General Y. Büyükanıt delivered speeches concerning anti-secular and separatist activities.

In 2007, as President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's term was nearing its end, the AKP announced that their candidate for Turkey's 11th president would be Abdullah Gül. The nominee, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, had roots in Turkey's Islamist movement and his wife wore a headscarf, which secularists considered a symbol of Islamism. Moreover, because AKP already controlled the prime ministry and parliament, it was argued that the balance of political power would be disturbed if the party also assumed the presidency. The fact that a presidential candidate could be nominated by the AKP caused some anxiety among the military and secular parts of society. The first signs of increasing political confrontation between Islamists and secularists occurred when the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) declared its detailed decision on 10 November 2005 in the case of Leyla Sahin vs Turkey and upheld the headscarf ban.

Also, criminal charges against the candidate for Chief of the General Staff led to an upsurge of tensions between the government and the military, and among secularists who argued that the incident was used by 'insidious forces' to discredit the Turkish Armed Forces and the secular roots of the Republic of Turkey [27, p. 4]. The main opposition party and some elements in the media speculated that the prosecutor acted under the influence of the Gülen Community to discredit the staunch secularist general and prospective Chief of Staff. After a wave of various accusations from representatives of both the ruling and opposition parties, President A. Sezer, feeling obliged to intervene in the situation, upon suggestions to quell any speculation, immediately approved General Y. Büyükanıt's appointment [28]. A few days later, General Y. Büyükanıt was appointed as the Chief of General Staff. Also, a confrontation occurred when the AKP attempted to lift the ban on wearing hijabs in public places, and reform higher education to make it easier for graduates of schools of prayer leaders and preachers (Imam Hatip) to enter universities, as well as make it easier for graduates of religious schools (imams) and members of religious brotherhoods to be appointed to official positions, including the judiciary and police force [29].

The political tension in the country began escalating as President A. Sezer's seven-year term was approaching its end. The political confrontation engaged universities, retired members of the high judiciary, part of the media, secularist civil society organisations, retired commanders, and many other influential personages. A few days before the elections, Ankara witnessed one of the largest demonstrations in Turkish history. Over half a million protesters marched through the centre of Ankara, chanting secular slogans [30].

In the process of presidential elections, opposition parties and some independent members of parliament boycotted the first round to render its outcome invalid. In order to select the president, the parliamentary assembly must have a quorum of 367. The members of opposition parties did not participate in the first session of the parliamentary assembly and thus prevented the quorum. Immediately following the elections, the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) petitioned that the Constitutional Court annul the election result.

INTERVENTION. General Y. Büyükanıt, assuming command on 28 August 2006, stated that "the founding principles of the Republic of Turkey and its territorial integrity had never been a subject of debate to this extent and that the Republic has never been confronted with so many threats since its foundation" and added that "protecting the Republic is not political engagement, but a duty" [31]. Subsequently, marking the opening of the new academic year at the War Academies, General Y. Büyükanıt reiterated his concerns about the rise of political Islam. In response to Prime Minister R.T. Erdoğan's recent assertion that there was no fundamentalist threat in Turkey, Y. Büyükanıt argued: "Are there not those who take every possible opportunity to cry out, 'Let us redefine secularism!?' Don't these same people occupy the highest levels of government? Isn't [it true that] the great founder of our republic, Atatürk, and the mindset he put into place, as well as the basic principles of the regime of our republic, are under attack? Are there not those who exploit every opportunity they get to damage and wear down the Turkish Armed Forces? Are there not elements that want to destroy our societal structure, and drag our people back into anachronistic ways? If you cannot answer all these questions with a 'no' and say 'these things do not happen in Turkey', then yes, there is threat of religious fundamentalism in Turkey, and we must do everything we can to fight it" [32; 33].

On 12 April 2007, commenting on the presidential election, the military Chief of Staff, General Y. Büyükanıt, said, "I hope a president is chosen that is sincerely dedicated to the basic values of the Republic, the unitary structure of the state, and a secular and democratic state" [34]. The nature of this statement expressed concerns of representatives of the army and the secular layers of society about the candidate from the ruling party.

The day after President A. Sezer's speech on 14 April 2007, 370,000 Turks, draped in flags, rallied in Ankara against religious-minded Prime Minister R.T. Erdoğan. It was a demonstration that emphasised the intense opposition to R.T. Erdoğan and the depth of Turkey's political division. The rally was a landmark event, bringing more than 300 non-governmental organisations together under the leadership of the Association of Atatürkist Thought headed by retired General Mehmet Şener Eruygur [35].

On the election day, after the unsuccessful first round on the evening of 27 April 2007 around 11:30 PM, the Office of the Chief of Staff issued a two-page press statement on its official website stating that "it should not be forgotten that the Turkish Armed Forces is not neutral in these discussions and is the absolute defender of secularism. Furthermore, the Turkish Armed Forces are definitely against the ongoing discussions and negative comments and would reveal its attitudes and behaviours clearly and transparently when necessary. No one should ever doubt about it" [36]. Also, the statement indicated that "The Turkish Armed

Forces still maintains its firm determination to fully carry out its clear duties assigned to it by laws in order to protect these qualifications and its commitment and faith in this determination is absolute” [36].

On 28 April 2007, the Office of the Prime Minister issued a press release, in which it assessed the statement of the General Staff as interference in democratic processes and condemned it.

On 1 May, the Constitutional Court annulled the first round of the presidential election on the grounds that the required two-thirds quorum was not present. The AKP and others viewed the ruling as a political one; Prime Minister R.T. Erdoğan described it as “a bullet aimed at democracy” [37].

On 4 May 2007, only days after the e-memorandum, R.T. Erdoğan held a private meeting with General Y. Büyükanıt at the Dolmabahçe Palace. The content of the two-hour negotiations has thus far been kept secret. President R.T. Erdoğan recently said: “This is an issue that I will take to my grave. I believe Büyükanıt believes the same thing” [37].

OUTCOMES. The Constitutional Court’s annulment of the presidential elections led to the calling of early general elections scheduled for 22 July. After e-memorandum, the government reacted strongly to the military’s statement and the AKP spokesman Cemil Çiçek described the statement as ‘inappropriate’ interference in the democratic arena and declared that “the General Staff is an establishment under the Prime Minister’s office. It would be inconceivable for the General Staff of a democracy upholding the rule of law to make a statement critical of the government about any issue” [38]. The European Union also immediately intervened by declaring that “it is important that the military leaves the remit of democracy to the democratically elected government and this is a test case if the Turkish armed forces respect democratic secularism” [39, p. 18].

The impact of the presidential elections worked in favour of the AKP. In early elections, on 22 July 2007, the AKP had increased its vote share from 34.4% in 2002 to 46.5%, the largest share for a single party since the elections of 1957 [40, p. 130]. The following modifications for the amendment package were brought to parliament: The general elections will be held every four instead of five years, the presidential election will be carried out by popular vote, the presidential term will be reduced from seven years to five, one person can be elected president only twice, in order to carry out any election in the parliamentary assembly, at least one-third of the total number of parliamentarians must be present. On 28 August 2007, in the third round of the presidential elections, as a result of the success achieved by the AKP and the support of the Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), Abdullah Gül was elected president in defiance of the memorandum issued by the General Chief of Staff.

Discussion

The presented case study examined the dynamics of processes during the military’s attempt to intervene in electoral and judicial processes. It pointed out new methods of intervention in politics that have replaced the standard militarised anti-democratic coups. However, some important questions need to be answered.

First, is it possible to regard the e-memorandum of 27 April 2007, as an act of intervention by the Turkish military? Political intervention means an individual or collective action intended to influence public discourse, the structure and policies of the government, and ultimately the distribution of rights and resources in a society [15]. After a period of coups, the Turkish military continued to exercise its political power through informal or non-institutional

mechanisms, such as speeches delivered by senior members of the armed forces. Such statements, made by senior officers representing the institution of the army, were also a latent threat that affected others, for example, political or judicial institutions. In cases of statements by representatives of the Turkish army, the consequences of their interventions were a change of government as in 1997 or a change in the electoral processes of 2007.

The political processes accompanying the 2007 presidential elections created the preconditions for the praetorian motives of the representatives of the Turkish Armed Forces. Changes in the political agenda, the inclusion of religious issues, and the political stratification of society were regarded by the military and secular strata of society as abuses and shortcomings of the then government and the ruling political majority. Also, the military and secular majority critically assessed the actions of the ruling party to Islamise society and recognised them as violations of the principles of the founder of the republic, Mustafa Kemal. The Islamist threat was one of the most sensitive issues for the Turkish military, because “this elite perceived secularism as the most important dimension of republican ideology” [41, p. 636] and acted as its guardians. The desire to prevent political change and maintain political order created interventionist preconditions for the military.

The next prerequisite for the praetorian actions was the intervention of representatives of the ruling party in the internal affairs of the army and an attempt to discredit the future head of the General Staff Y. Büyükanıt. As E. Nordlinger argues, powerful interventionist motives are invariably engendered whenever a civilian government attempts to tamper with the highly valued hierarchical structure and the immense power derived from it. Challenging the hierarchical principle is viewed as an unwarranted attack on the military's corporate interests [5, p. 26]. As well, the support of the President of Turkey A. Sezer, and of various layers of the public and the institutional monolith of the army motivated the intervention of the representatives of the military. Case analysis also revealed no signs of opposition in the ranks of the armed forces against the decision to confirm the military's guardian position. Moreover, the intervention in the appointment of the Chief of the General Staff was unsuccessful and, before the publication of the e-memorandum, General Y. Büyükanıt had already been in charge of the General Staff for several months.

With regard to the analysis of the processes of indirect interference, this study showed a discrepancy between the means, goals, and results of the actions taken by representatives of the Turkish Armed Forces. The type of interference chosen is a modern type of veto rule for the military which prefers maintaining the *status quo*. In the report of the European Commission, it was noted that the General Staff directly interfered with the April 2007 presidential election by publishing a memorandum on its website [42, p. 15]. Instead of an officially announced memorandum, General Y. Büyükanıt chose an electronic form for the statement. If in the past the military issued official memoranda, presented its views to the National Security Council or held press conferences, then, in this case, the softest method possible was chosen to fulfil the military's obligations related to its role as guardian of secularism. It should be noted that data shows no preparatory actions for a possible intervention – the armed forces remained ‘in the barracks’ during the entire duration of the 2007 crisis.

The results of the intervention are evaluated ambiguously. The short-term goal of cancelling the elections by the Constitutional Court was achieved. Yet the long-term effects of the memorandum have had negative consequences on the Army. The memorandum was followed by a negative reaction from the European Union and NATO countries. Many civil society organisations, businesses and EU officials have expressed strong disapproval of the military's indirect involvement in politics. Since the military ‘remained in the barracks’, political activity

was not stopped. As a result, the ruling party gained a majority in early elections and Abdullah Gül, the candidate against whom the e-memorandum was directed, became the President of the country. Afterwards, an official investigation was launched into the 'Ergenekon' case, which had critical consequences for civil-military relations and for the integrity of the Turkish Armed Forces. Another investigation was also launched into the involvement of members of the armed forces in coups and other interventions. Domestic criticism of armed forces and military intervention has grown in the country – since 2007, the public questioned the legitimacy of the military as a player in the political arena, trusting civilian rule over the tutelage of the military. This was the breakthrough in the civil-military relationships in Turkey.

In comparison, the coup of 28 February 1997 was an example of a successful nonviolent military intervention called 'postmodern coup d'état', 'indirect intervention' or 'soft coup'. In 1997 the government was forced to resign. This coup served as a model for the military intervention attempt in 2007. One of the active researchers of civil-military relations in Turkey Ömer Aslan argues that the 28 February coup was violent, but not bloody, it was staged almost openly through "theoretically constitutional political operations' and psychological warfare against the elected government" [14]. Despite the fact that the author mentioned above also researched several selected 'civil' groups from the media, the judiciary, trade unions and non-governmental organisations, he pointed to the army as the main actor in the bloodless coup on 28 February 1997. Therefore he failed to demonstrate, what an indirect intervention is.

Both the 1997 and 2007 coups in Turkey have all the signs of a coup veto, with a clearly identifiable subject and direct non-violent actions of the subject to correct the abuses and shortcomings of the previous government [5, p. 24]. The above approaches are related to the guardianship phenomenon. In line with studies drawing attention to the guardianship role of the Turkish military, this study also acknowledges that military tutelage has been one of the tenacious features of the Turkish political system. The findings of this study indicate shifts in specific notions that are used to describe the nature of the intervention of the Turkish military. As defined by Zaki Sarigil, the military's guardianship role in Turkey between 1960 and 2000 was 'assertive' and from 2001 onward, it is described as 'post-guardianship' [43]. According to this line of reasoning, "the assertive guardianship of the 20th century does not linger in Turkish politics, although some members of the military maintain a tutelary notion, and it has remained at a rhetorical level from 2001 onwards" [44]. The rhetorical nature of guardianship in Turkey was also evident in the memorandum of retired admirals in April 2021. Therefore, it can be stated that the guardianship regime (direct, indirect or rhetorical) of representatives of the Turkish Armed Forces in the state is preserved.

Conclusion

The article investigated the indirect interference of the military in politics. The case for the study was the non-violent intervention of representatives of the Turkish Armed Forces in the presidential elections on 27 April 2007. Researchers consider the publication of an e-memorandum as an example of indirect interference in the balance in civil-military relations.

The study found that the 27 April 2007, military intervention was a form of a coup veto that is often used by the guardian-type military. The non-use of violence by representatives of the military to intervene is evidence of the desire to maintain the *status quo*. Therefore, consideration of this case for the study of indirect interventions would be inaccurate and not advisable. Indirection should be identified as a feature of interventions.

In a study of modern forms of praetorianism, different forms of indirect actions should be considered, when it is difficult to identify the military's interests or increase in political influence. In the case of Turkey, the economic domination of businesses controlled by the army, patronage networks, and political corruption should be analysed.

Consideration of new approaches in the study of praetorianism is necessary for identifying praetorian actions of the military in the modern stages of state development. The first approach is to understand them as direct intervention – the possible actions are identified as the subject of intervention by representatives of the army who will be forced to take responsibility for internal and external consequences (sanctions, threats of isolation). The second approach is that one should talk about indirect interference if it is impossible to identify the military as a subject of the actions of participants in various processes of the state. As a result, the corporate interests of the Armed Forces are ensured and their influence in politics is increased.

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Conflict of interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

The author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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Pretorianizm niebezpośredni: przypadek tureckich sił zbrojnych

STRESZCZENIE

Niniejszy artykuł ma na celu przeanalizowanie mechanizmów niebezpośrednich interwencji wojska oraz wniesienie nowej perspektywy do badań zjawiska pretorianizmu w oparciu o studium przypadku ingerencji tureckich sił zbrojnych w wybory prezydenckie 27 kwietnia 2007. Wykazano w nim, że interwencja wojskowa w formie e-memorandum z 27 kwietnia 2007 była formą prewencyjnego zamachu stanu, często przeprowadzanego przez siły zbrojne pełniące w państwie rolę „strażnika”. W pracy zidentyfikowano podmioty bezpośredniej interwencji bez użycia przemocy, stosowane przez nie metody oraz negatywne konsekwencje dla środowiska wojskowego. Przedstawiona analiza nowoczesnych form pretorianizmu skupia się na tych formach działań

niebezpośrednich wojska, w których trudno jest zidentyfikować jego interesy albo dostrzec wzrost jego wpływów politycznych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE pretorianizm, zamach stanu, rola strażnika, interwencja, e-memorandum

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