

# MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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## PROFESSIONALISM IN THE TURKISH MILITARY: HELP OR HINDRANCE TO CIVILIAN CONTROL?

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The Turkish Officer Corps has developed into a professional body of personnel with a high degree of autonomy. Turkey's participation in NATO and the U.S. military assistance it received over the course of almost fifty years are key contributing factors to the modernization of the force. However, contrary to Samuel P. Huntington's proposition that maximizing military professionalism leads to objective civilian control of the military, the Turkish Officer Corps is not under civilian control and continues to play a major role in domestic politics.

The reason why the military is not under civilian control is that its definition of military professionalism differs from that normally attributed to Western militaries. The officer corps regards itself as the guardian of the ideology of Kemalism, named after Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey. Rather than focusing exclusively on national defense, military officers are indoctrinated in and become occupied with the preservation of Kemalism against internal threats such as political Islam and Kurdish separatism. Although the adoption of Atatürk's example as a great strategist and military leader lends itself to military professionalism, adherence to Kemalism as an ideology is a hindrance to objective civilian control.

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