On the evening of July 15th, Turkey witness a military coup attempt designated by the Fetullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) that has covertly infiltrated into the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) for many years, with respect to achieving long-term targets. Due to the simultaneously conducted bombings and mass shootings, 241 civilians were slaughtered and 2195 were wounded. Against all the odds; Turkey's people, political parties, media and NGO's gained an excellent victory by carrying out the struggle with strong nation wide resistance. This strong stance with an amazing support to government was maintained following the defeat of awkwardly conducted but still very bloody failed coup attempt waged by FETÖ terrorists, as Turkish citizens gathered in the city squares to stand side by side against probable kind of terror attacks. Events occurring since the 15th July might best be considered as a milestone not only in the history of Turkish democracy but also in the history of world's democracy. An unarmed resistance of people against a military junta is unprecedented. Therefore, it is important to record and reflect the opinions and perceptions of this civil initiative, which took the streets and squares of each and every city in Turkey for 25 days, regarding the July 15 coup attempt.

Undoubtedly, these events and the social transformation deserve a comprehensive socio-political analysis. In this context, new definitions and conceptualizations are necessarily needed to be examined analytical outputs of field research. For this purpose, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) has conducted a fieldwork and had interviews with 176 people from the different segments of the society at 12 different public squares in 9 provinces between the dates July 18 and August 10 in order to make sense of the coup attempt and the public resistance following the attempted coup. This book presents a comprehensive analysis of the results of the fieldwork by taking into account the main motivations of the people and their perception of the 15th July coup attempt.
DEMOCRACY WATCH

Social Perception of 15 July Coup Attempt
DEMOCRACY WATCH
Social Perception of 15 July Coup Attempt

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SETA
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On the night of July 15, Turkey witnessed the coup attempt of the Fetullah Gülen Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) which has been infiltrating into the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) for a significant period of time. The coup attempt organized by the FETÖ was the most murderous among numerous coups and coup attempts in Turkey's history. The putschists bombed crucial state institutions, such as the Parliament, Presidential Palace, General Staff compound, Police Headquarters and National Intelligence Organization (MİT) compound with the helicopters and F-16s. Along with these institutions of strategic value, 241 civilians resisting the putschists were murdered and 2195 wounded with bombs and heavy weaponry. On the night of the coup attempt, President Erdoğan, along with the government and opposition leaders, called the people to resist the putschists. Thanks to the determined resistance of the people, political parties, media and NGOs, the coup attempt failed. This stance was maintained after July 15, as the people stood watch on the streets and public squares against a reiterated attempt. Dubbed as “democracy watch”, this month-long process became a phenomenon in world’s democracy history. Tens of thousands of people in all cities of Turkey gathered at the streets and public squares to demonstrate against the putschists. Lasting for 27 days, the democracy watch ended on August 10.
Looking back at the history of Turkey, one would notice Turkey faced many military coup attempts since the Ottoman period. Regardless of their success, all of the military interventions had a significant impact on Turkish political life, while perpetuating the coup culture. Juntas, encouraged by their predecessors, employ similar methods. To justify the coup, they have used the conflicts between different identity groups as an excuse. They have deposed governments with the support of civic bureaucracy, intelligentsia and certain political parties. Moreover, they have shaped the judicial and institutional mechanisms to perpetuate their own tutelage. Therefore, they have subjected the social sphere to their tutelage by exploiting the political sphere.

Due to the extended existence of tutelage mechanisms in Turkey, the normalization of civilian-military relations was not possible until very recently. AK Party governments passed numerous legal and institutional reforms to achieve this normalization. As a result of this transformation, a public belief that the era of coups and military interventions were over emerged. However, the FETÖ, which infiltrated into the army over a long period of time and was motivated by the messianic teachings of Fetullah Gülen, attempted a coup on July 15, imitating the previous coup attempts. In this context, the coup attempt of July 15 was a revolt, which employed terrorist tactics against the state and the people.

It is important to analyze the impact of the July 15 coup attempt on the collective memory sociologically in order to have a complete picture of the incidence. This book, aiming to serve this purpose, contains a social research conducted at 12 public squares in 9 cities. The interviews were held in Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Diyarbakır, Trabzon, Adana, Van, Sakarya and Eskişehir. The field research was carried out by holding in-depth and focus groups interviews with the participants of the democracy watch, and their opinions regarding the following questions were asked: the motivation for
going out on the streets on July 15, their experience of the streets during the democracy watches, time spent on the streets, why the coup failed, the relation between FETÖ and foreign powers, ruling party’s efforts after the coup attempt, the stance of the opposition towards the coup attempt, FETÖ’s role in the coup attempt, FETÖ before the coup, their stance towards the TSK and security forces, comparison with the previous coups, the fight against FETÖ and accomplice elements after the coup, what would happen if the coup was successful. A balanced distribution of age, gender and political views were sought.

The findings of the research were carefully analyzed and made into a report by SETA researchers. The report titled “15 July Coup Attempt: The Perceptions of Turkish Society” was extended and prepared to publish as a book. The field research at two more provinces at the Eastern part of Turkey, Diyarbakır and Van not included in the report were added for the book version. Moreover, the interviews held at the Democracy and Martyrs Rally in Yenikapi, to which more than 5 million people attended, were analyzed and added.

I would like to thank the authors, the researchers and assistants for their utmost efforts in the preparation of this book. Moreover, I want to extend my thanks to Faruk Yaslıçimen, Abdullah Erboğa, Dilruba Toklucu, Mümine Barkçin, Salihe Kaya, Rıfat Öncel, Bilgehan Öztürk, Sibel Düz, Hilal Barın, Sümeyra Yıldız, Elif Madakbaş Gülener, Fikret Topal and Büşra Kepenek, who conducted the field research, for their contributions.

Prof. Dr. Burhanettin Duran
SETA General Coordinator
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Interviews were conducted at 12 public squares in 9 cities (Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Diyarbakır, Trabzon, Adana, Van, Sakarya and Eskişehir) between the dates July 18 and August 10. The first edition of the research was published on July 28. This second edition includes the results of interviews conducted at the Democracy and Martyrs Rally in Yenikapı quarter, along with the ones in Diyarbakır and Van.

- The semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with 176 people. Most of the participants were from İstanbul.

- All participants of the in-depth interviews are Turkish citizens over the age of 15, while more than half of them are university graduates. Sex ratio of the protesters at the streets and public squares are balanced. It was observed that many of the protesters were with their families during the democracy watch.

- Most of the protesters were consisted of AK Party supporters and right-wing voters consisting among others of so-called idealists (ülkücüler). Active participation by the conservative Kurdish constituents was observed. According to the interviews held in Diyarbakır and Van, people were actively participating in the democracy watch in mass since the very first day.

- Even though many of the participants were from different sociological and political background, it was observed that the principle value which contributed to the unity was “their devotion to the country.” When asked why they took the streets, they have expressed their motivations mostly with three phrases: “devotion to the country,” “to protect future of the country and its people” and “to preserve national unity.”
• Almost all of the participants have expressed that the perpetrator of the coup attempt is the FETÖ. Many of them stated that they have realized the threat posed by the said organization during the December 17-25 events, while adding that they became fully aware of the extent of the threat posed by the said organization with the July 15 coup attempt.

• According to the findings of the research, most of the people, who claimed that a foreign power was behind the FETÖ’s coup attempt, said that this force was the USA.

• It was observed that President Erdoğan’s call to people to take the streets, coup declaration being read on the state television TRT and salahs (prayer) broadcasted via mosques’ loudspeakers were effective in motivating people.

• Almost all of the 176 participants who are from various political backgrounds have stated that President Erdoğan’s crisis management skills and his leadership were the most prominent factors in foiling the coup attempt.

• President Erdoğan’s landing at the İstanbul Atatürk Airport with a private aircraft was an important factor in raising the people’s spirits.

• Statements made by the prime minister, ministers and various force generals during the night of the coup attempt were considered to be considerate and calm by the public.

• It was observed that the participants acted with discretion against the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), differentiating the FETÖ members and the remainder of the military personnel.

• Regarding the opposition’s attitude towards the coup attempt, participants have said that they were satisfied with the stance of the MHP and the CHP, respectively. On the other hand, the HDP’s belated stance was criticized by all participants, including their own supporters. There were also criticism towards the CHP and the HDP for not being adequately involved in anti-coup activities.
• In the interviews conducted with Kurds, it was revealed that some of them were critical towards the AK Party for not inviting the HDP administration to the Yenikapı Rally. Meanwhile, almost all of the Kurdish participants have criticized the HDP for not demonstrating a clear stance against the coup attempt.

• It was expressed that the opposition’s participation to the rally is important. However, there was a notion that the newly emerged unity among the government and the opposition would not be long-lasting. Moreover, the conservative constituents believe that the CHP’s participation in the rally was due to social pressure.

• The cooperation between the government and the opposition after the coup attempt was deemed significant and worthwhile by the participants. In this context, it was underscored that the close relations between the government and the opposition would be effective in preventing and avoiding new crises.

• All participants have approved the Presidency of Religious Affairs’ decision to broadcast salahs via mosques’ loudspeakers during the night of the coup attempt.

• The three-month state of emergency announced by President Erdoğan on July 20 was also condoned by all participants of various age and political background.

• While it was expressed that one of the main factors which gathered people for the democracy watch was the feeling of insecurity caused by the coup attempt, more than half of the participants said that they felt secure in Turkey.

• The negative connotation of coups in the collective memory of the people were effective in shaping people’s stance against the coup. Remembering Adnan Menderes being hanged after the 1960 coup, the people drew similarities between Adnan Menderes and President Erdoğan, and addressed the coup accordingly.

• Expansion of the middle class, along with the increasing social and political consciousness of the people were found to be significant factors in foiling the coup.
• As the AK Party has faced and overcame various crises over the years, it was already experienced in crisis resolution and political maneuvering. These skills were highlighted during the coup attempt.

• The importance of AK Party’s reaction towards the April 27 e-memorandum and President Erdoğan’s fight against the FETÖ after December 17-25 have become clearer with the coup attempt.

• The putschists were not able to find support from different segments of the society, as it was the case in the previous coups in Turkey’s political history, which is directly connected with the pluralization of the media, bureaucracy’s transformation and the emergent intellectual capital against coups.

• The participants have said that they want the government to fight against the coup plotters and perpetrators with absolute determination.

• To prevent similar incidents from happening, it was asserted that various state institutions, especially the intelligence agencies and the security forces, had to be reformed.

• Participants have expressed that the removal of officials with alleged FETÖ connections has to be based upon concrete and reliable evidences.

• More than half of the participants support the reintroduction of the death penalty while the majority of the people who were on the streets on the night of July 15 said that they would approve the reintroduction of the death penalty.

• The remainder of participants who were either impartial towards or against the death penalty were found to be concerned about the possible infringements of the right to fair trial.

• Some of the participants have said that the putschists had to be penalized by death sentence, while adding that this would be highly improbable due to the circumstances. Therefore, they have expressed that their second preference would be a life sentence.
INTRODUCTION
Turkish political life has experienced many military coups with diverse aims, methods and results, both before and during the Republican era. After the commencement of democratic politics during the first years of the Republic era, Turkey experienced its first military coup on May 27 1960, which was followed by coup attempts to the civic political culture almost in every decade. March 12 1971’s memorandum, murderous armed military coup of September 12 1980, the post-modern coup on February 28 1997 and 27 April e-memorandum incidents were all attempts to instill military tutelage into civic politics, which allowed the putschist mindset to survive in different forms. Considering its economic and political development, along with the democratization efforts, Turkey was able to commence its battle against the putschist mindset and structures relatively late, when compared to the countries with similar backgrounds.

This battle against the military tutelage was effectively commenced only after AK Party’s rise to power. Through democratization efforts, AK Party was able to cleanse most of the mechanisms and means of the military tutelage. However, on July 15 2016, Gülenist Terror Organization (FETÖ) member putschists, who have gradually infiltrated the military over a 40 year period, attempted a murderous coup against the government. This group, which has a different junta structure and ideology when compared to the coups of the past, had planned to exact an armed revolt. In order to achieve their goals, they have resorted to terrorist methods; they have massacred civilians by utilizing the bombs of fighter jets and
heavy weaponry of attack helicopters and tanks. Many strategic state
institutions, including the Parliament, the Presidential Complex,
National Intelligence Organization (MİT) and Police Special
Forces Department, were bombed. Moreover, the junta attempted
to assassinate President Erdoğan while he was on vacation with a
special training unit. This coup disregarded the chain of command
and its plotters are of a perverse religious mindset. In this sense, the
July 15 coup attempt is significantly different than the past coups in
regards of its motivation, planning, application and aims.

After realizing that the coup attempt was not being backed by
the public, President Erdoğan and the leaders of the ruling and
opposition parties called their people to take the streets and resist.
The coup attempt was foiled as the people showed resistance, while
the political parties, media and NGOs demonstrated a stalwart stance
against the putschists. Unfortunately, during the coup attempt,
which is the bloodiest coup in Turkey’s history, 241 people were
martyred and 2195 were wounded. People’s courageous resistance
against the putschists has been transformed into ‘democracy watches’
in the following days. People took the streets and the public squares
in masses every night in every city of Turkey. Lasting 25 days, the
democracy watches were concluded on August 10.

The events transpiring since July 15 can be considered as a mile-
stone in world’s democratic history, not only Turkey’s. An unarmed
resistance of people against a military junta is unprecedented.
Therefore, it is important to record and reflect the opinions and
perceptions of the civic initiative, which took the streets and squares
of each and every city in Turkey for 25 days, regarding the July 15
coup attempt. Undoubtedly, these events and the social transfor-
mation deserve a comprehensive sociological analysis, which can-
not be limited to the civil-military relations section. In this context,
new definitions and conceptualizations are direly needed. Address-
ing the said concerns, Foundation for Political, Economic and So-
cial Research (SETA) has conducted interviews with 176 people at 12 public squares in 9 cities between the dates July 18 and August 10, in order to have a healthy analysis, supported with the data from primary sources, on the coup attempt and the public resistance following the coup. The research was extended by including interviews conducted by SETA researchers at the Yenikapı Democracy and Martyrs Rally and in the cities of Diyarbakır and Van. The theme of the research is the public consciousness which foiled the coup attempt. Certainly, the democracy watches all across Turkey were the most tangible reflection of this consciousness. The interviews held with the participants of the democracy watches aim to uncover the codes of the public consciousness, which was shaped by the coup attempt, and to reveal how the society perceived the coup attempt. Conduction of similar researches on this subject is essential, if it is aimed to immortalize the sociological phenomenon which is the July 15 coup attempt. With this study, SETA made a leading step.

I. THE ROAD TO THE JULY 15 COUP ATTEMPT

As a starting point an important reference is the fact that the FETÖ, have infiltrated all state institutions using a religious rhetoric over a period of 40 years. On the night of July 15, it was revealed that TSK played a crucial role in their plans. FETÖ has always been a distinct movement among Islamic communities, as its interactions with the others were limited. This movement, which has a rigid hierarchical structure and organization, has instilled the ‘ends justify the means’ mindset to its followers, being able to concentrate vast social network and finances, along with a significant human capital.1 The frenzied state of the FETÖ during the night

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of the coup unveiled to what extent they will go to achieve their aims and how their motivations could transform purely pragmatist mindset into a murderous rampage.

To fully understand the complete metamorphosis of the movement, one should be able to accurately read the milestones in Fethullah Gülen’s life, starting with his appointment as the chief preacher to İzmir on March 11 1966. Until his arrest in 1971 and four-month incarceration, it can be argued that Gülen’s followers were merely consisting a religious community. However, after 1971, there are significant efforts to organize and incorporate followers especially through private schools and NGOs. The numbers of his followers have started to multiply 1972 onward, while the establishment of Akyazılı Foundation in 1978 became an important milestone for their activities.2

Opposing to the National Vision movement led by Necmettin Erbakan in the early 1970s, the Gülen Movement preferred to support Süleyman Demirel. However, as Demirel was removed from his post with the 1980 coup, Gülen and his followers ceased to support Demirel and demonstrated an open support for the military junta with an article named “Son Karakol” [The Last Outpost] in the October issue of their periodical Sızıntı.3 As a result of his support, Gülen and his followers were deemed as a “moderate Islamic” movement, an alternative to Erbakan’s National Vision, by secular segments of the society between the years of 1980 and 1997.

During this period, a group known as the Nur Movement4 was factionalized, while Gülen simplified and distorted the Epistles

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4 Hatem Ete, “Gülen ve Takipçilerini Tanımlama Zor(unlu)luğu” [The Difficulty and Necessity of Defining Gülen and His Followers], Sabah Perspektif, February 1 2014.
of Light written by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, which were already being read in the Gülen Movement owned houses and dormitories, without consultation or permission, rousing the ire of the Nur Movement. Moreover, the Gülenists violated the principle of abstaining from political activities; a value which was advocated by Bediüzzaman in his Emirdağ and Kastamonu appendixes and upheld by Nur Movement. It can be asserted that these events have completely isolated the Gülenists from the Nur Movement.

After the end of the Cold War, the Gülen Movement has started to found schools in newly established countries of the Balkans and Central Asia. At that time, President Turgut Özal and the government supported these enterprises as it was perceived as an activity of soft power and public diplomacy. The Gülenists have started to establish contacts with churches in 1997, under the guise of “interfaith dialogue.”

In 1994, along with the Welfare Party’s rise to power and spreading Pan-Islamic movements, Gülen was also able to expand his influence. However, Gülen, defining the Welfare Party as radical, depicted his own movement as a moderate interpretation of Islam and was endorsed by the West and certain segments of the Turkish society. Many Turkish people of various political backgrounds, who previously viewed Gülen as a reactionary, started to acknowledge him as an equilibrant against the Welfare Party. Gülen and his movement utilized the term “moderate Islam” as an alternative to Erbakan and the domestic variations of Islam, while disguising

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its authentic aims by constantly stating that they do not have any quarrels with a Kemalist and secular Turkey. Gülen maintained the same discourse during the post-modern coup of February 28 1997, showing an overt support for the putschists similar to the one he has demonstrated during the 1980 coup. Furthermore, Gülen said that he is ready to give his private schools into the service of the state if need be, swearing allegiance to the putschists. The FETÖ leader Gülen later moved to the U.S. in 1999, the same year the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured.

Gülen’s followers infiltrated the state institutions with strategic value, as it was later understood, through illegal and illicit means, in the guise of providing support for the state in its fight against the tutelage system in the aftermath of April 27 2007 e-memorandum and March 14 2008 attempt to close AK Party down. During this period, they became organized within the police force, the military, and the judiciary. It was revealed that the organization distorted the AK Party’s fight against the tutelage, abusing the Balyoz and Ergenekon trials to promote their own goals. Moreover, they have resisted the reconciliation process in Turkey and utilized their cells within the police force and the judiciary to arrest thousands of people. As they have faced resistance in organizing themselves within the National Intelligence Organization, the Gülenists especially tried to apprehend Undersecretary Hakan Fidan in 2012, which can be seen as their first coup attempt. Achieving what they had aimed with the Balyoz and Ergenekon trials, their second attempt to overthrow the AK Party government, is known known as December 17-25 (2013) period. This was done in order to organize cells within bureaucracy by removing AK Party officials from their posts, the ultimate goal being the formation of a new political

structure. As a result, it can be argued that the Gülen Movement transformed itself into an operational structure with strong judiciary and intelligence aspects.

Having the agenda of becoming strictly organized since the 1980s, the Gülen Movement lost its civic aspect and finally become a murderous terrorist organization with the July 15 coup attempt.

Even though the Gülen Movement defined itself as a civilian initiative, its ulterior motives, along with its “militia” and “secretive structure” were only revealed recently. The putschists of the July 15 coup attempt, whose allegiance to FETÖ is evident, did not hesitate to employ terrorist methods.

II. THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE PUTCHISTS AND FETÖ CELLS WITHIN THE TURKISH ARMED FORCES

The extent of the July 15 coup attempt is directly related with the FETÖ’s organizational structure. One of the targeted institutions for their long-term professional infiltration was the TSK. The July 15 coup attempt has unveiled that the FETÖ had a stronger organization and more operational capacity within the TSK, along with the state institutions including the police force and judiciary, than what was initially assumed.

It has to be taken into account that the analyses on the said coup attempt are required to be enforced with new information, due to the fog of war shrouding the incident. However, the most important matter is the fact that FETÖ had cells and military personnel who were allied with the organization within the TSK. Therefore, uncovering the organizational structure, which attempted a coup is crucial in detailing how the FETÖ became dominant within the TSK.

CONTRIBUTORS

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On the evening of July 15th, Turkey witness a military coup attempt designated by the Fetullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) that has covertly infiltrated into the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) for many years, with respect to achieving long-term targets. Due to the simultaneously conducted bombings and mass shootings, 241 civilians were slaughtered and 2195 were wounded. Against all the odds; Turkey's people, political parties, media and NGO's gained an excellent victory by carrying out the struggle with strong nation wide resistance. This strong stance with an amazing support to government was maintained following the defeat of awkwardly conducted but still very bloody failed coup attempt waged by FETÖ terrorists, as Turkish citizens gathered in the city squares to stand side by side against probable kind of terror attacks. Events occurring since the 15th July might best be considered as a milestone not only in the history of Turkish democracy but also in the history of world's democracy. An unarmed resistance of people against a military junta is unprecedented. Therefore, it is important to record and reflect the opinions and perceptions of this civil initiative, which took the streets and squares of each and every city in Turkey for 25 days, regarding the July 15 coup attempt.

Undoubtedly, these events and the social transformation deserve a comprehensive socio-political analysis. In this context, new definitions and conceptualizations are necessarily needed to be examined analytical outputs of field research. For this purpose, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) has conducted a fieldwork and had interviews with 176 people from the different segments of the society at 12 different public squares in 9 provinces between the dates July 18 and August 10 in order to make sense of the coup attempt and the public resistance following the attempted coup. This book presents a comprehensive analysis of the results of the fieldwork by taking into account the main motivations of the people and their perception of the 15th July coup attempt.