

ANALYSIS

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TURKEY'S STILLBORN JUNTA COUP ATTEMPT

PROCESS, RESPONSES AND PROSPECTS

MURAT YEŞİLTAŞ AND NECDET ÖZÇELİK





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This paper is dedicated to those who heroically sacrificed their lives for democracy...

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ABSTRACT

After the dramatic turn of events in the confusing hours of that thrilling and fateful night in July when an attempted coup in Turkey was thwarted, we know one thing much better than before: the power of the people using the Internet communication tools and platforms can be greater than the power of the military. In this paper we analyze Turkey's stillborn military coup attempt by focusing on the internal process (personnel configuration, tactics and operational areas) of the military coup attempt and reactions of different political, military and civilian actors against the putschists. In addition to this, the paper focuses on the consequences and influences of the 15th July military coup attempt in the context of Turkey's near political future.



In this paper we analyze Turkey's stillborn military coup attempt by focusing on the internal process of the military coup attempt and reactions of different political, military and civilian actors against the putschists.

INTRODUCTION

The latest military coup attempt of 15th July, which follows an infamous history of Turkish coups, proved that a terrorist organization can gain control of the idea of a military junta and exploit it to achieve its own ideological and political interests. Yet, the failure of the coup attempt solidified the concrete role of people in Turkish democracy.

The Turkish government achieved a perfect success in countering the coup attempt and forced the attempt to fail within 22 hours of being initiated. What was behind the success was the handling of the procedures of *knowledge, decision and execution*. Government officials obtained the factual information from different reliable sources and gained the *knowledge superiority* before the junta and this superiority helped Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım to call the incident “an attempt of a small group within the armed forces.” This diagnosis disclosed to the people that it was the junta -not the entire army- behind the attempt. It also untangled the distinction between the junta soldiers and the soldiers who are loyal to the constitutional order. Information superiority paved the way for the government to take the decision to call the people to take to the streets and

defend democratic values. *Decision-making superiority* overcame the junta initiative and a hybrid counter-measure organization which was made of civilians- from the full spectrum of political outlooks-, police and military. Decision-making superiority was the key element to obtain the *execution superiority*, which was achieved by the well-handled coordination of divergent actors of police, military and local municipalities.

In this paper we mainly focus on the stillborn coup attempt by considering its internal process in terms of organizational, personnel, tactical and geographical aspects. More importantly, this analysis aims to put the failure of the coup on its operational conceptualism and we argue that the main cause of the failure were the cumulative efforts of multiple actors such as people, politics, government and different state institutions. The paper also draws attention to the consequences of the stillborn military attempt by contextually analyzing its effects on Turkey’s near future.

PROCESS: ORGANIZATIONAL, TACTICAL AND OPERATIONAL LEVEL

In terms of the ‘planning’ and ‘execution’ phases of the putschists, we might indicate one of the core pitfalls of failure as ‘operatives.’ More clearly, even if the organization plan, strong network among inner circles, selected operation areas, chosen military bases, highly effective weapon systems, air force superiority etc. would be counted as advantageous, all these factors remained in theory. From theory to practice, the putschists did not need only skilled, experienced and high-ranked military officers who are good at planning, rather they were mostly in need of operatives who would not panic easily and were capable of protecting their decisiveness and calm attitude. In other words, the chief in command structure would have been much more functional for the putschists if they had given arms

and equipment into the hands of professional soldiers not to junior conscripts who were totally unaware of the seriousness of this desperate duty. This careless mistake of the high-ranking soldiers was reflected in the *Whatsapp* group chat entitled Peace at Home Council (PHC) which was widely used among both senior and junior level of military officers from the beginning of the operation.

In other words, military operatives who were launching the assault seem to be highly inexperienced ones. Confronting the resistance of public was a critical turning point for these young soldiers when emotions started to determine their actions, as they were no longer able to behave professionally.

Organizational Aspect of the Military Junta

Personnel Configuration

The core organization of the coup seems to have evolved in the Personnel Directorate of the General Staff and the Generals and Admirals have been assigned from this Directorate to the desired key positions for all Force Commands. The Personnel Directorate has not simply assigned the putschists within the last year, but has been working on this for at least 3-7 years. The generals have followed a pattern of critical assignments after they graduated from the Military College. Brigadier General Mehmet Partigöç has served in the Personnel Directorate since he was a major and it is presumed that he accumulated the personal information of officers who have a tendency towards Fethullah Gulen and the potential to take part in a coup plot. He was also the person who put the signature under the name of "Peace at Home Council" declaration, which is the main body of the organization itself. He appointed the potential coup personnel to the Air Force, Land Forces, Navy, Gendarmerie and the Coast Guard.

The rest of the armed forces personnel would become *de facto actors* after success had been achieved. This group, the main body of the

armed forces that does not have a similar ideologically orientation to the above mentioned group, could be called "the periphery".

Tactical

Organization was formed of the core tactical elements of Air Force, Land Forces, Navy, Gendarmerie, Coast Guards and the Special Forces. A limited combination of special operation teams, attack helicopters, fighter jets and armored units was intended to provide a joint fire support to capture key facilities with a shock effect. The rest of the military bases throughout Turkey were expected to have a spillover effect via the assigned generals and the officers.

Special operation teams were assigned with several missions (!) like the capturing of the key HQs such as Special Forces Command, General Staff and other Force Commandments, and to abduct or kill the president and chiefs of the Force Commanders. The fighter jets were deployed to secure the airspace, suppress any public reaction, to hit the strategic targets and to create shock and awe. Attack helicopters were assigned to play a role as a hub for the advance of the armored vehicles and tanks. Helicopter gunships were also assigned to hit the tactical targets of police, intelligence and military units who were against the coup. Armored vehicles and ground troops were given orders to secure the key facilities like military bases, police stations, intelligence offices, transportation routes and communication stations. Combat support service was also planned for tactical sustainability of the attempt; S-70 utility helicopters were planned to transport the tactical units to the target areas and the detained people to the safe hideouts, KC-135 aerial refueling aircrafts were deployed to provide continuous air dominance from Incirlik NATO Air Base.

Geographical

Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir were selected as the key cities where government institutions would

be taken under control, to take power as swiftly as possible. Therefore, the military bases and the HQs in and around those provinces played substantial roles in the execution of the plotted coup.

Ankara

General Staff and Forces HQs are located in downtown Ankara –the capital city of Turkey– together with the civil state institutions. The 4th Air Force Base, which is located 50 km to the west of the capital, has the capability of providing the air dominance and can suppress the people within minutes with fully loaded F-16 fighter jets. The son in law of the former Air Force Chief Akın Ozturk, the mastermind of the coup plot, was the commander of 141st Fighter Squadron of F-16's. This air base was selected as the tactical air command and the detention center for those who were to be abducted. Army Aviation Command is located within the city center and just 5-8 km away from the intended targets like presidential palace, parliament, and the military, police and intelligence HQs. The 28th Mechanized Brigade is located 10 km away from the city center in the east, and Armor School is located within the city center in the west, 12 km away from the intended targets; both are convenient for a quick siege of the targets by the tanks and armored vehicles. Special Forces Command is 30 km away from the city center and it is also convenient for further operations after the initial captures were made.

Istanbul

Istanbul had strategic propaganda value rather than military importance for the coup putschists. It was intended to draw the attention of the international community by blocking the highway traffic on the bridge over Bosphorus and shutting the Ataturk Airport which was also recently targeted by a DAESH attack. Paralyzed civilian air and highway traffic always results in widespread public curiosity. Militarily, Istanbul

is home to 1st Army Command HQs, which is responsible for the army brigades scattered throughout Trace and northwestern Anatolia. Military Colleges are also located in Levent in the western bank of Istanbul and this military facility was a key location to provide key operation leaders for the small coup elements in Istanbul. Western Istanbul is covered by a series of military bases; 66th Mechanized Brigade equipped with Leopard 2A4 main battle tanks and armored battle vehicles in Topkule is 15-17 km away from Ataturk Airport and Police HQs in Vatan Street, with the capable of intervention within 30 minutes. The motorized regiments in Hasdal and Metris were also planned as the backup units to control the desired targets. Moreover, the armored and mechanized brigades in Trace were also calculated to provide additional force, if needed.

In the east of Istanbul, the 2nd Armored Brigade, responsible to besiege the Bosphorus Bridge, 1st Army Command and Sabiha Gökçen Airport, is 18-28 km away from the specified targets. The 23rd Motorized Regiment was the backup unit in case extra force would be needed. It seems that the 4th Army Aviation Regiment was planned to provide support for the coup movement with helicopters.

As can be understood from the geographical locations of the military bases in and around Ankara and Istanbul, both cities have been circled around operational bases. This makes it possible and easier to conduct military intervention against the civil government institutions.

Process

Chief of Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar, Land Forces Commander Gen. Salih Zeki Colak and Deputy Chief of Staff met in the office of the Chief of Staff in Friday evening, soon after MIT provided reports about unknown military activity at some military bases throughout Turkey. Putschists inside the Chief of Staff Building- among them

the personal assistants and aide de camp of the chiefs- reacted to the MIT information by isolating the chief's office during the meeting and offering Gen. Hulusi Akar the choice to lead the coup activity. Following the harsh refusal of the Chief of Staff, putschists –with the help of special forces elements who came from Etimesgut Air Base- engaged the body guards of the chiefs, killing a few of them. Moreover, they detained the chiefs forcibly, then waited until a S-70 utility helicopter arrived at Chief of Staff HQs to abduct them to the 4th Air Force Base. Meanwhile, in Istanbul military vehicles started to block the Bosphorus Bridge and then Ataturk Airport, aiming to be in full control using tanks. Putschists in the General Staff Building released a fake military facsimile to all major commands and ministries claiming the control of government at 10.15 pm on 15 July 2016.

Operational activity of the putschists started at 9 pm, after the group of forty Special Forces (SF) troops in Diyarbakır landed at the military air base in Etimesgut/Ankara. The group was divided into three different groups; the first group was ordered to capture SF HQs in Gölbaşı, the second group for the General Staff HQs and the last group moved to Akinci Air Base to seize the key locations. Each and every target had inside support to help the groups' activity. The capture of these three primary targets was vital to the putschists for the momentum of activity and the captures were planned to be executed simultaneously. Even though the plan was executed in accordance with the time schedule, the seizure of SF ran into a major setback when the Brigadier General Semih Terzi was shot dead by the aide de camp of existing SF commander. He had been assigned as the new SF commander and expected to initiate an emergency alarm procedure to bring as many as possible off-duty SF soldiers who had no idea of the coup attempt. Those soldiers were intended to be used

for further capture of government institutions and despite the absence of Semih Terzi, the rest of the group was able to seize the SF HQs, but they came under a counter-engagement by the on-duty SF soldiers and as a consequence the SF strategy of the coup failed.

The most important setback of junta was the quick reaction of MIT and the Presidential Protection Unit to evacuate President Recep Tayyip Erdogan from his hotel in Marmaris to a safe place, then to Istanbul.

The group at the Akinci Air Base seized the designated targets without any problems and settled in the 141st F-16C Squadron. Some pilots welcomed the group and technical ground personnel were forced to load the fighter jets. This squadron was also reinforced with additional 6 F-16C jets from 8th Air Force Base in Diyarbakır and became one of the strategic bases for the putschists to provide air dominance. Lt. Col. Hakan Karakuş, Commander of the 141st Squadron, became the head of tactical air strikes and ordered six jets to take off and conduct low altitude flights over Ankara to coerce and intimidate the people. Jets were also ordered to strike police special operation base in Gölbaşı Ankara. Two other jets were sent to Istanbul air space to suppress the people, while two others were believed to fly around Ankara for immediate air support. At the same time, Incirlik Air Base Commander Gen. Bekir Ercan Van ordered two KC-135 aerial refueling aircrafts to take off for refueling activity.

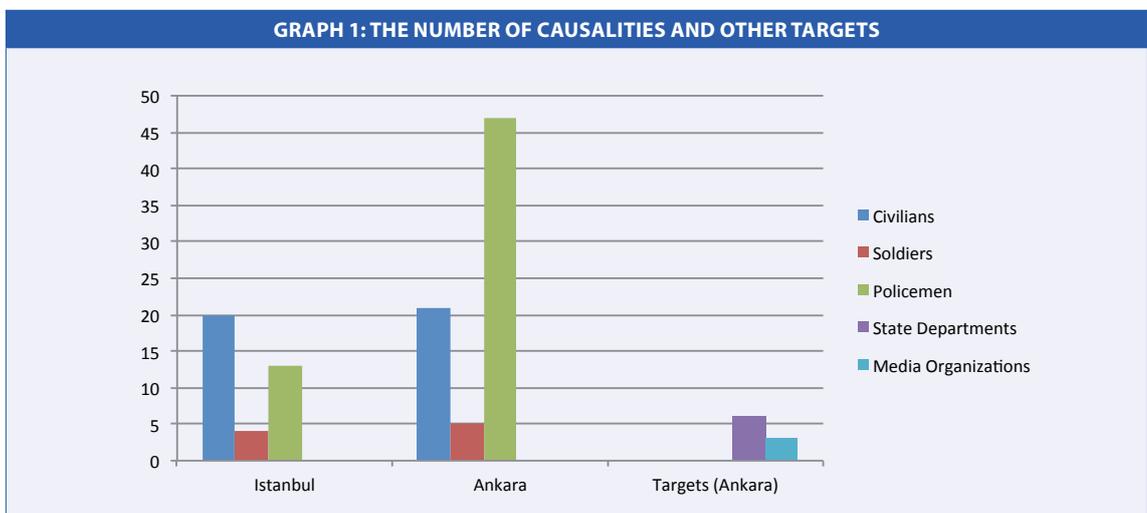
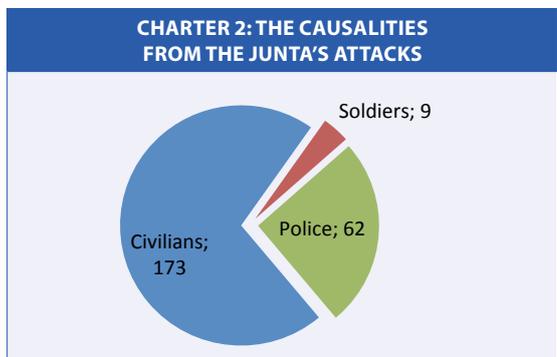
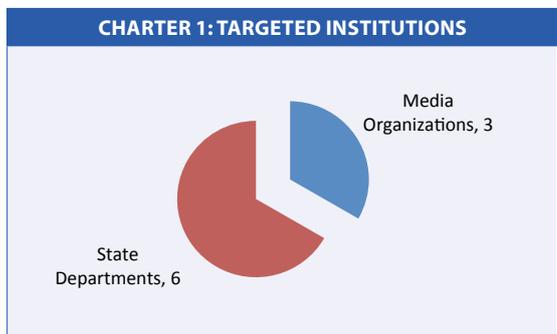
Shortly after jets took off, two AH-1W Cobra helicopters also took off from the Army Aviation School in Guvercinlik to provide close air support for the advance of ground vehicles. A company size tank unit (up to 13 tanks) and

20 armored vehicles left the base of 28th Mechanized Brigade in Mamak to seize the key targets like General Staff, Force Commands, MIT building, Police HQs and government institutions. Apparently the helicopters hit the targets when the tanks and armored vehicles were seen in the target areas. Within six hours of the coup attempt being stopped, the most dramatic helicopter gunfire was seen at Ankara Police HQs, MIT Building and around the Presidential Palace. Helicopter gunships also targeted the Police Special Operation after it was hit by the F-16 jets.

The most important setback of junta was the quick reaction of MIT and the Presidential Protection Unit to evacuate President Recep Tayyip Erdogan from his hotel in Marmaris to a safe place, then to Istanbul. Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) elements from Izmir were delayed due to bad co-ordination with the Land Force Commandos. When the three utility helicopters started to fly over the President’s hotel, he had already left an hour previously. Later on, he flew from a small air base in Dalaman near Marmaris to Ataturk Airport in Istanbul. The 1st Army Commander in Istanbul provided aerial and ground security to the President’s flight. It is very interesting that Stratfor, a CIA backed security analysis site – shared the coordination and traces of TC-ATA publicly five times during the

President’s flight. Two junta jets tried to scramble Erdogan’s plane, but they were intercepted by the F-16 jets deployed by the 1st Army Commander.

Putschists kept the aerial dominance until 8.00 a.m. in Saturday morning (16 July 2016) and carried out deadly bombings in the vicinity of the presidential palace around 6.30 a.m. Eventually Junta aircrafts were intercepted and forced to land, and they lost the full control of aerial dominance by 11.00 a.m. Gunfire and bombs were heard during the whole night but



further advance of the putschists was stopped by police and military forces which were against the coup. In a historic move it was the civilians who played a significant role to stop the armored vehicles in the streets.

RESPONSES: WHY THE COUP ATTEMPT FAILED?

There are numerous reasons behind the failure of the 15th July terrorist coup attempt – organized by putschists who are mainly members of the FETÖ (Gülenist Terrorist Organization). It can be argued that the reasons behind the failure of the military-coup attempt are two-dimensional. In the first dimension — there is no doubt that the putschists were not well-organized because their organizational body was divided into different groups of high-ranking military officers. This has been formally mentioned by the government and other state institutions, following initial investigations which include confessions of many FETÖ members, arrested after the military coup attempt. Undoubtedly, within the organizational structure, FETÖ was the leading actor in the planning and enacting of the military coup. However it is important to emphasize the fact that one way or another, different cliques coming from diverse ideological and motivational backgrounds were also involved in the military-coup attempt. The strategic target of the putschists was to overthrow the democratically elected government, to capture or kill President Erdoğan, and eventually to control all the pro-government civil society organizations, universities and the people who defined their position along with the government and President. However, the lack of hierarchy among the putschists created a vital complication which inhibited the organizational, operational, strategic and tactical aims of the designated target plan. Nevertheless,

the physiological and sociological dimensions played a more determinant role in the failure of the coup attempt.

In the second dimension are included the organizational and strategic maneuvers of the counter-coup powers which are composed of different military, political and civilian actors. Among these, the first one is President Erdoğan's role in organizing counter-narratives and operations in deterring the military coup attempt, the second is the role of government and state institutions, the third is the reactions of the mass media, and the fourth one is the role of the political parties in the parliament particularly the MPs who gathered in the parliament while the pro-plotter forces were bombing the parliament building. Last but not least, TAF played a vital role by organizing itself operationally in order to protect and retake the main HQs of the different Force Commands and declaring that the job of the TAF will be of serving the nation.

Beyond doubt, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's appearance and statement calling people to struggle for their own will in a live broadcast of CNN Turk remains the primary reason for the failure of the military coup attempt.

a. ***“I have never known any power higher than the power of the people:” The role of the President Erdoğan's Leadership***

Beyond doubt, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's appearance and statement calling people to struggle for their own will in a live broadcast of CNN Turk remains the primary reason for the failure of the military coup attempt. While Erdoğan promised to the public to fight against any kind of coup attempt, he also demanded from the citizens to show their power and decisiveness during this desperate situation.

Addressing the citizens, President Erdoğan confirmed that the coup attempt was illegitimate, thus underlining how the putschists surpassed the chain of command, namely by-passing the orders carried out by the hierarchical authority within TAF. On the other hand, Erdoğan put great emphasis on calling the masses to gather in the city squares and stand side by side against the coup putschists. In his speech he stated: “In the meantime I urge the nation to gather in the city squares. I also invite my citizens to the airports. Let us all meet at the airports and squares and then this small group coming with their tanks and artilleries can do what they want to do to the public. I have never known any power higher than the power of the people.”

Regarding the discourse and practical level, Turkish citizens’ active intervention shifted the operational field in a manner that soon led to the weakening of the putschists’ confidence and dominance.

Actually Erdoğan pursued two strategies during his public announcements on the television channels. At first, he urged crowds to gather in streets and squares to display strength against coup putschists. He called not only his supporters/followers but all the people to create and maintain a strong and unified community. Secondly, he reminded the people that he is still the commander in chief. In this way, he aimed to attract the rest of the high ranked army officials within the TAF who had not taken part in the coup planning and gain their support. Therefore, Erdoğan’s primary goal was to mobilize the main powers as fast as possible, stemming from the public, other state institutions and TAF in order to make room for the state powers’ maneuvers. President Erdoğan’s success of mobilizing the society very fast, led in the first place to the mo-

bilization of the masses in the big cities such as Istanbul and Ankara then quickly spread to the other cities across Turkey. Thus in many cities, the citizens created huge mass pressure against pro-coup soldiers that were carrying out operations for control. Briefly, even in the first phase of the coup attempt, citizens mobilized much faster than the pro-coup soldiers in the squares. In particular, the building of the state news channel TRT in Ankara, and the building of the private news channel CNN Turk located in Istanbul – both taken under control by the pro-coup soldiers – were retaken after the successful interventions of the public. By this means, Erdoğan’s appeals and messages delivered to the Turkish citizens via alternative television channels were very effective. Moreover, the Turkish nation watched live while the coup putschists’ organized these terrifying operations, performed simultaneously in different cities and regions.

In addition to all these, Erdoğan declared his route, from Marmaris to Istanbul. That is to say, Erdoğan explicitly challenged the coup putschists by announcing his route and even calling the people to meet there. As a matter of fact, a huge crowd went to Atatürk Airport to welcome the Turkish president. Again another turning point was the time when Erdoğan arrived at the airport (while the threat of the attack against Erdoğan was still a high possibility) and made a public speech in front of the cameras stressing once again that the fight against coup putschists would continue. Regarding the discourse and practical level, Turkish citizens’ active intervention shifted the operational field in a manner that soon led to the weakening of the putschists’ confidence and dominance. Considering operational time and place, within 10 hours of the first coup attempt, counter-coup teams had gained power in the field while rebel soldiers started to surrender. Turkish military and police officials claimed that they had almost secured the control of the country by late evening, on Saturday.

b. ***“Never submit to coup putschists/pro-coup mindset:” The responses of the government and state institutions***

Another cause of the FETO’s coup attempt failure, or in other words the successful response to prevent the coup, depended on the ‘government’s policy,’ namely the ‘integrated strategy’ applied by all state institutions and organizations at the same time. In fact, it is the gaining of fast operational ability of the security bureaucracy (officials) that effectively and closely cooperated with government from the first moment. The initial phase of this aforementioned integrated strategy was first established by President Erdoğan’s decisive attitude and then complementarily by the Prime Minister and government’s discourse level which was critical for the formation of the resistance. In this manner, members of the government who became aware of a possible threat from a planned coup immediately reached to TV channels by phone and spoke out about possible coup attempts. Firstly, Prime Minister, Binali Yıldırım connected to NTV by phone and warned about the coup calling it an attempt by members of the terrorist organization FETÖ – which had concealed itself in TAF – telling citizens to stay calm and not to get anxious. Certainly, this behavior/attitude was decided together with President Erdoğan and aimed to mobilize the society against the coup attempt. Such a strategy would provide the government and security bureaucracy with more time to prevent the coup by military means. Following Prime Minister Yıldırım, almost all of the other members of the government appeared on television channels talking about the strategy that was going to be applied and invited Turkish citizens to unify on the streets and protest the coup attempt. As a matter of fact, the government’s stance and attitude from the outset was clear: “never submit to coup putschists/pro-coup mindset.”

Thereafter, the government activated the engaged security bureaucracy and put the plan into

effect. This plan was based upon the reaction of security forces to intervene directly against rebel soldiers. On this issue, National Intelligence Organization (MIT) and Police Special Operations Department (PÖH) were the institutions forming the backbone of the security bureaucracy. Not only did they constitute and present the operational power of the government to fight against the coup but they also defended and protected their own institutions and centers’ from falling into the hands of coup putschists. In addition to security bureaucracy, the other public institutions and organizations’ have taken an active role by spreading anti-coup discourse.

Despite the government’s early and strong reaction against the military coup attempt, the parliament also played a vital role by gathering in the parliament building while the aerial bombing against the parliament was still ongoing. The MPs from different political parties stressed their decisiveness in deterring the military coup attempt and declined to go to sanctuary within the parliament building despite the fact that the building was under attack. This decisiveness increased the state institutions motivation to a high level in deterring the military coup attempt. As a result, the all-out attack process of the coup attempt was initiated. The united image of state institutions appeared live on TV and the immediate reflection of this image to the public by the mass media weakened the operational capability of pro-coup organization and also prevented coup putschists from reaching their targeted people and institutions.

c. ***“No to the Coup:” Public protests and the power of the ‘maidans’***

Another important pillar of the reaction to the coup attempt was that large numbers of the public quickly rushed into the streets. This situation prevented the putschists tactical progress at the operational level as well as side-tracking the timing of the coup plans. There were two main ob-

jectives of the public protests. The first was to intercept the operational progress of the putschists by combined action of the state institutions against the coup as a whole with the aim of preventing the coup attempt. The second was the withdrawal of the leaders of the coup as a result of the panic created by the pressure of the public gathered on the squares across the nation.

Although the coup leaders “declared a curfew” in an announcement broadcasted by force on TRT, the people’s choice to go into the streets caused the main pillar of the coup plan to get side-tracked. Apparently, three levels of resistance were created to achieve these two goals. The *first* was at the operational level, the public turned into a *de facto* counter-military coup force. In this context; the people on the streets and main squares of the big cities a) demonstrated an actual and direct physical resistance to the coup putschists, b) intervened in the institutions confiscated or attempting to be confiscated by the coup putschists. Concordantly, a similar resistance arose on the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul, which was broadcasted live and turned into the symbol of resistance.

Notably in Bosphorus Bridge, including the resistance experienced in other critical locations, the operational force of the public enlarged more and spread all over the country when some soldiers opened fire on the mass. On the other hand, with the efforts of the police forces, the unarmed public pressure on the institutions under the control of the putschists both facilitated the task of the police and led to the rebel soldiers’ quick surrender. TRT, CNN Turk, some provincial governors, police departments and the other government agencies were liberated from the coup putschists in a similar manner.

The *second* dimension was gathering on the squares en mass. Firstly, people gathered on the main city squares. Initially, their gathering on the squares was devoid of a clear-cut strategy and developed in a very abrupt manner. How-

ever, especially after the local authorities acted to mobilize people, an effective demonstration and protest chain emerged country-wide. In this sense, the local authorities spearheaded by the municipalities; a) invited public to the streets and squares (mosques played a significant role in this), b) provided support to meet the needs of the public on the squares, and c) ensured the safety of the protests, d) provided public transportation for free e) eliminated the risk of the soldiers joining the chain of the coup putschists by deploying vehicles of the local government to the entrance of the military barracks.

The *third* dimension was the usage of social media by all segments of the society in order to circulate anti-coup discourse actively, communicate and organize. From the first moment of the implementation of the coup plan, an anti-coup discourse dominated social media. Especially after the images of putschists opening fire against civilians in some parts of the country, the bombardment of the Parliament from the air and indiscriminate firing on civilians from helicopters were circulated, people began to use social media to organize better. Immediately after the implementation of the coup plan, the extent of the achievement thanks to the extraordinary activism on social media, provides a clear picture. After the normalization of access to social media, over 20 million posts in various platforms were turned into an effective anti-coup discourse and movement.

d. *The Role of Media and Communication Technologies: A New Visual Front for Resistance*

After the dramatic turn of events in the confusing hours of that thrilling and fateful night in July when an attempted coup in Turkey was thwarted, we know one thing much better than before: the power of the people using the Internet communication tools and platforms can be greater than the power of the military. Thanks to the mobilizing force of the new communication

tools, the people went out in the streets in their epic struggle against the junta to face nothing less than the buzzing F-16's and rumbling tanks firing live ammunition and bombs at the protesters. There is no doubt that the public protests across the country against the attempted coup have taken place on multiple fronts by multiple segments of the Turkish society. However, the vital role played by the Internet media in deterring the coup merits particular attention. Literally every digital social media platform from end-to-end encryption to FaceTime communication tools were put to use both by the officers in the attempted coup, by the civilians and the political forces. The latter included the President himself, who not only tweeted his anti-coup message to mobilize his eight million followers to resist the putschists but also used a popular news channel and connected through FaceTime video chat app on the iPhone, calling on all the people to stage anti-coup protests by taking to the streets and guarding critical check-points including the bridges and airports. Seeing the President alive and well through the improvised video link assured the people of the authenticity and urgency of the call. The people's power and many Internet platforms not only stopped the participating soldiers but also deterred many other soldiers waiting their turn at the barracks. Most of the social forces posted statements on Twitter, including many MPs and political parties.

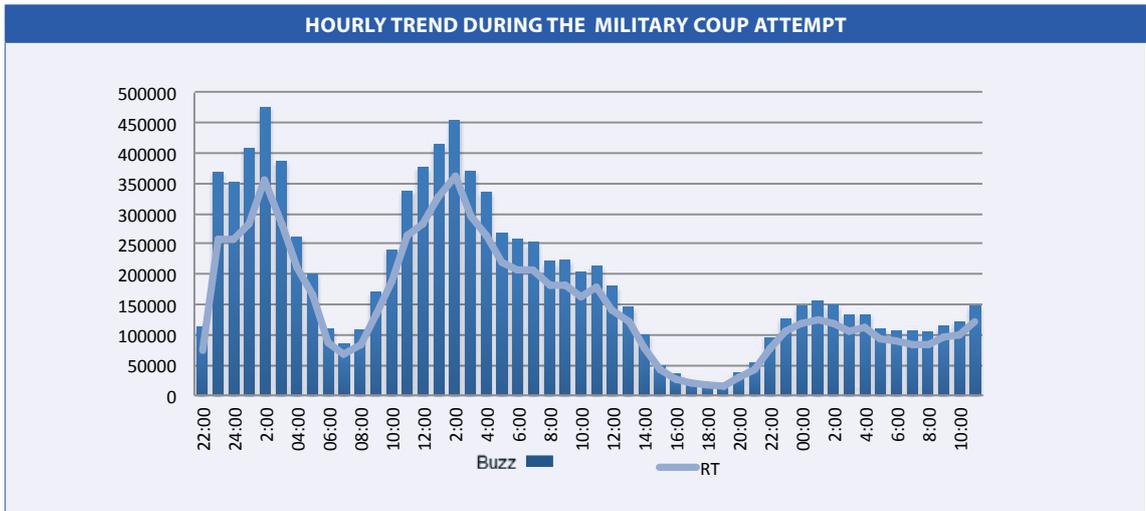
Those mainstream TV channels that managed to stay on air were quick to side and sync with the digital social media platforms helping to mobilize and inform the public. Soon after the people took to the streets to stop the coup attempt, they did crush the coup. While the military tried to take control of the state-run TRT – as it had done in the previous military coups – this soon proved futile because other private mass communication channels propitiously reported about the perplexing situation, conveyed the unanimous anti-coup message of the politi-

cal class and even urged the people to march in the streets to stop the coup. This has showcased the immense mobilizing role of new communication technologies such as digital mass media in crushing the attempted military coup.

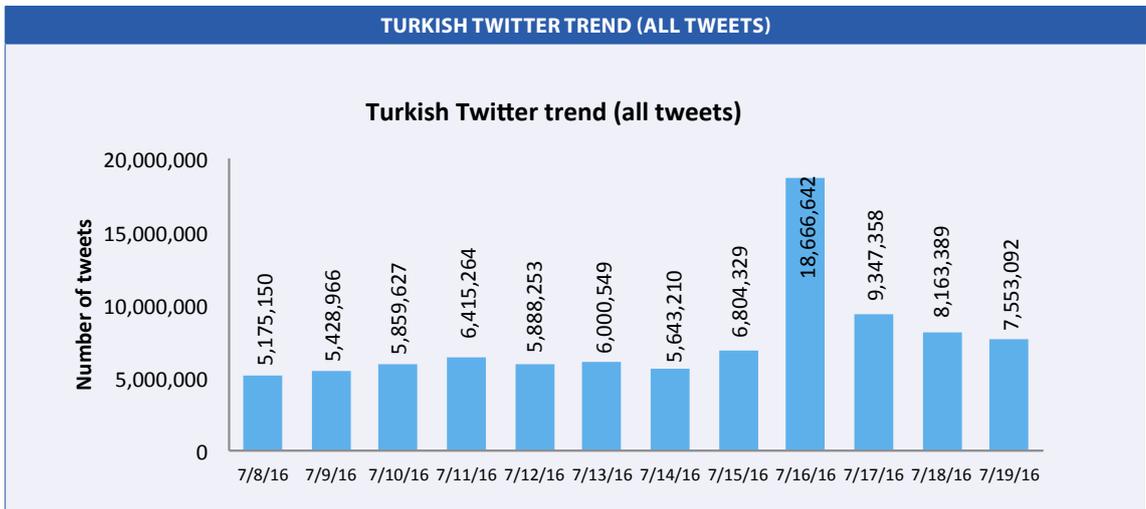
Make no mistake: this is not an ode to the enfolding romantic tale of social media's libera-

After the dramatic turn of events in the confusing hours of that thrilling and fateful night in July when an attempted coup in Turkey was thwarted, we know one thing much better than before: the power of the people using the Internet communication tools and platforms can be greater than the power of the military.

tion power. Rather it is to understand the powerful sources of massive civilian uprising against the cruel bombings and brutal attacks by the military. Digital social media disseminated the overall anti-coup attitude of the activists as well as the lay people. Indeed, such a power proved critically instrumental in mobilizing the people; showing the power of the small street activism that has eventually triggered the ongoing mass protests. For example, the feeds following hashtags such as #DarbeyeHayır (No to the Coup) and #MilletçeMeydanlardayız (The whole nation is at the *maidans*) were already trending for hours. According to the data provided by Somera, the number of tweets increased by 223 percent and a total of 34.818.329 interactions was shared, reaching to a staggering of 15 million people. After 10:00 PM on July 15th, the buzz regarding the attempt started to rise, as President Erdoğan did a FaceTime on CNN Türk the first peak occurred. The next morning, the attempt failed and the second peak happened.



The graphical analysis is produced by Somera for SETA



The graphical analysis is produced by Somera for SETA

As soon as the tanks blocked the roads, including the famous Bosphorus bridge in Istanbul, amidst gunshots and flying F16's, the citizens, who just happened to be there as they were returning home after work, started live-streaming through the social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter. It is important to emphasize that the most shocking as well as mobilizing were the horrific images of tanks ruthlessly running over the civilians as well as appalling images of F-16's bombing the Turkish Parliament building. To be sure, the President's video-chat and above-mentioned image sharing proved much more effective than other uses. Fearing that a possible military

coup would ruin the lives and upend the country's future prospects they tuned in to listen to the Prime Minister, Binali Yıldırım, who connected to the NTV news TV channel through a phone call confirming what was feared most, that this was indeed a coup attempt and that the public did not know the whereabouts of the PM. It was, however, the social media feeds that later carried the night with live-stream and critical information on the worsening of the situation. From the beginning of the coup attempt until 16 July midnight, there were approximately 180 tweets posted from the official Twitter account of the Prime Ministry itself. Clearly those tweets aimed

to mobilize the people. The Presidency posted 35 tweets, whereas the main opposition party CHP's official page posted 7 tweets and MHP 24 tweets.

While all the TV channels were importantly unified against the coup attempt and strongly condemned it, they were clearly out powered by the power of images and narratives presented live-stream at the social media platforms across the country. Only few minutes before the midnight, a couple of soldiers managed to enter in the offices of TRT where at gun-point they forced the anchor, Tijen Karas, to read the statement written by the junta which claimed that the government had been overthrown and that the people should return home leaving the streets to the tanks and officers for their safety.



e. *The Responses of Opposition Parties: Harmony of Interest Does Matter*

The responses of opposition parties to the coup attempt deserve due attention, as they played a considerable role in thwarting the attempt. Three major opposition parties in the parliament took an opposing stance towards the coup attempt. Head of the Republican People Party (CHP), Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was on a plane on his way to Istanbul Atatürk Airport, when the coup attempt was kicked off. Kılıçdaroğlu was informed of the coup attempt at 11 p.m. by his advisor when his plane landed at Istanbul Atatürk Airport. His initial reaction to the news was, “We need to oppose this [coup attempt].

This is a coup and a coup is unacceptable.” He then turned to Hayati Yazıcı, the Deputy Chairman of Justice and Development Party (AKP), who was sitting next to him on the plane and said, “We are against the coup.” After these initial comments, CHP officials were contacted and Kılıçdaroğlu's instruction was delivered to them: “This is a coup. No matter whether it succeeds or fails. We will absolutely oppose it.”

Kılıçdaroğlu made his first public remarks that he was against the coup through TV channels. His anti-coup stance is also visible in his conversation with Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, “There is no question we are against the coup Mr. Prime Minister. Defending democracy is a position that should be taken up by everyone who believes in democracy. It is impossible to accept a coup in Turkey of 21st century.” Kılıçdaroğlu also answered positively to the invitation of İsmail Kahraman, Speaker of the Turkish Parliament, for a special session in the Parliament to oppose the coup attempt.

The head of the National Movement Party (MHP), Devlet Bahçeli convened a meeting with MHP officials at the MHP headquarters immediately after the low altitude flights of the putschist pilots over the skies of Ankara. MHP assessed this unusual mobilization as a coup attempt. Since Bahçeli could not contact the prime minister himself, he contacted his personal secretary and stated that Bahçeli himself and the MHP were on the side of the government against the (coup) attempt. This message was particularly important as it was the first statement of support to government from the opposition.

Co-chair of Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Selahattin Demirtaş, made a public statement opposing the coup attempt one day after the beginning of it. In that statement Demirtaş said: “Our party's stance towards coups has been clear. We condemn the coup attempt.”

Leaders of all political parties in the parliament, including the Prime Minister, partici-

pated in the special session held in the parliament on July 16th and made their speeches. All leaders of opposition parties took up an opposing stance towards the coup attempt based on their own political leanings and arguments in their respective speeches. Kılıçdaroğlu argued that the coup attempt was in fact an attack to the republican regime of Turkey. He also pointed out that what actually foiled the coup attempt was the parliamentary democratic system of Turkey. He said that the parliamentary democratic system is a heritage and it should be preserved. As Kılıçdaroğlu is the leader of a political party, which upholds Kemalist and republican principles, his ultimate concern was apparently the integrity of the republican regime itself. He was against the coup attempt because it would ruin the republican character of the regime if it was successful.

Bahçeli on the other hand stated: “The common future of Turkish nation is law and democracy. Our national unity and fraternity is based on a national and moral foundation.” He also argued that with this coup attempt the national will was obviously a victim of an overt attack and assassination. In addition, Bahçeli called the putschists “a bunch of enemy co-conspirators who infiltrated the honorable Turkish army.” He asserted that the objective of the coup attempt was to bring Turkey to its knees, break its backbone and it aimed at a total collapse of national asset. His emphasis on the Turkish nation, national unity, fraternity, and national and moral values constitutes the core of his opposition to the coup attempt. He was against the coup attempt because it disrespected the national will of the Turkish nation. The emphasis on the “honorable Turkish army” is also important, as the respect for the Turkish army is one of the main pillars of Turkish nationalism. He carefully excludes the institutional identity of Turkish army as a clean whole while bashing the putschists as a bunch of foreign co-conspirators.

Since Demirtaş was not available to attend the special session, the speech for HDP was delivered by İdris Baluken, the group deputy chairman of the party. Baluken said: “The peoples of Turkey have never given credit for coups, never submitted and will not submit to the coups.” He also attributed the coup attempt to Turkish state’s decisive fight against PKK starting from July 2015. He argued that tanks in cities, legal and *de facto* powers granted to security forces (in his words “undemocratic forces”) paved the way for the coup attempt.

f. ***The TAF’s Responses: The Real Army of the Nation***

One of the important reasons of the military coup attempt failure was the lack of hierarchical military order. The first reason behind the lack of hierarchical military order is the decisiveness of the Chiefs of Staff and the Force Commands and the opposition of the coup by the core commanders. Among them, General Hulusi Akar, Gen. Umit Dündar, Gen. Zekai Aksakallı played a crucial role at strategic level. On the other hand at operational level, commanders like Gen. Yılmaz Yıldırım and Major Barış Dedebağ resisted and stopped the junta followers immediately. While at individual level Sgt. Ömer Halisdemir and Sgt. Özkan Hekim stood against the coup putschists sacrificing their lives.

If the military reaction is considered in two stages: the first stage is the *preventive period* of an unconfirmed and suspected military activity. This period was initiated soon after the MIT Undersecretary left the meeting at the Chief of Staff office. In this period the Chief of Staff ordered Brigadier Gen. İlhan Kırıl, Head of Command Operation of General Staff, to;

- a. stop any military aircrafts from taking off and call the others already flying back to their bases,
- b. send a group of military personnel to Army Aviation Command in Guvercin-

lik to check the personnel activity and order the Army Aviation Commander to take every possible measure including not letting the aircrafts take off,

- c. send a group of military personnel to Armored School in Etimesgut to provide all necessary measures to be taken including stopping all motorized activity and not letting the vehicles out of their base, not allowing any order to move to Army Aviation Command to check the personnel activity and to order the Army Aviation Commander to take measures to not let the aircrafts to take off,

Deputy Chief of Staff also ordered Air Force Operation Center to stop all aircraft flights in the preventive stage.

The second stage was the *counter-operation period*. In this period the military forces, whose compounds and facilities had been targeted, reacted against the coup putschists at operational and individual levels. At operational levels, the insider coup putschists were the biggest threat against on-duty soldiers organizing and reacting effectively. However, the tactical commanders, who were dedicated to democratic values, were able to organize the small-armed groups to save some critical locations in their bases. They also played an outstanding role in linking up with the police forces to guide them against the positions of coup putschists. Fierce fights with small arms against the putschists were conducted by those tactical groups together with the police operation units. Their role in identifying the junta soldiers was also enormously helpful during the process of detention. At individual level, the soldiers, who had the democratic values and dedication, bravely fought and sacrificed their lives. MSG Bulent Aydın was killed while he was trying to prevent the abduction of Land Forces Commander Gen. Salih Zeki Çolak. Capt. Özkan Hekim was in the General Staff building when the HQs was captured by the junta sol-

diers. He rejected being part of junta and was executed by the junta soldiers. SFC Ömer Halisdemir took the order from Special Forces Commander and killed the junta General Semih Terzi before the soldiers shot him.

PROSPECTS: WHAT IS NEXT FOR TURKEY?

Although the coup attempt on July 15 undertaken by FETO junta failed, it will bring significant repercussions in the near future. There is no doubt that after the coup attempt a new process will start with regard to the political sphere as a whole, TAF itself and Turkey's international relations. Such a period entails three phases: *lustration*, *rehabilitation* and *reconstruction*. However, since each of these processes would take a long time, there is a need for a comprehensive strategic planning.

There is a consensus at the levels of state, politics and society over the fact that the FETÖ is the main perpetrator of the coup attempt, which was planned and tried to be realized by a junta within TAF on July 15.

Lustration Policies Period

Lustration can be defined as a period of punishment of the coup putschists and their sponsors or members of the previous regime by dismissing them from political and all state institutions after a coup or transition of regime. There is a consensus at the levels of state, politics and society over the fact that the FETÖ is the main perpetrator of the coup attempt, which was planned and tried to be realized by a junta within TAF on July 15. However, it is known that there are some members of TAF who joined

the coup attempt with different motivations. In addition to this, given that this terrorist organization formed an alternative structure by gang-ing up at different state levels other than TAF, lustration period will not be limited to TAF after the coup attempt. Hence, as people who are connected to the terrorist organization are laid off from ministries, governorates and law enforcement agencies, we can conclude that the lustration period will be completed quickly. The probation and arrest of a considerable number of the military personnel who attempted to stage the coup – the majority of whom are generals and staff officers – constitutes the military pillar of lustration policy. Such a lustration policy aims at the total dismiss of FETÖ members from armed forces who infiltrated TAF at different levels and entails a process of their arrest for being members of a terrorist organization. The state of emergency, whose implementation will begin shortly, would also expedite the lustration period in accordance with the law and constitution.

Given that TSK has been through a turbulent period with all its members as an institution since Ergenekon trials, what has happened in the July 15 process made this process further fragile and harmed the credibility of the army in the eye of the society.

The Rehabilitation Process

Although the July 15 coup attempt is a great victory for the democracy in Turkish political history, it also brought about a far-reaching challenge. The most significant dimension of this challenge is the fragile process TAF is going through. Given that TSK has been through a turbulent period with all its members as an

institution since Ergenekon trials, what has happened in the July 15 process made this process further fragile and harmed the credibility of the army in the eye of the society. Nevertheless, it is known that the FETÖ is the main perpetrator of the July 15 attempt and the repetition of this emphasis resulted in suspicion towards TAF as a whole. On the other hand, it is observed that TAF is experiencing a significant break in terms of institutional social psychology because of the terror created by the coup attempt. It can be expected that TAF will enter a specific period of rehabilitation in order to restore itself. In this context, TAF will need to prioritize regaining the confidence of the people while strategizing an in-house reconstruction.

The second pillar of the rehabilitation process is the re-establishment of diminishing confidence basically in security bureaucracy at societal level. Such a rehabilitation process will be realized more easily through the political/societal anti-coup consensus that emerged during and after the counter-coup efforts as well as the transformation of the positive national atmosphere into a democratic political agenda.

The Period of Reconstruction

The third strategic phase of the post-coup attempt period is a total reconstruction. It is observed that given the ever-repeating tendency of military coup attempts approximately every ten years, the structural problems with regards to democratization of civil-military relations have not been overcome. The persistence of structural problems, despite many steps that have been taken in this current AK Party period to democratize civil-military relations, urges the introduction of a series of democratic control reforms in security bureaucracy especially the revision of the institutional structure of TAF. For this reason, the July 15 coup attempt should be taken as a milestone and opportunity for democratic consolidation rather than resorting to ad hoc

solutions. Thus, all messages given accordingly after the coup attempt, signify a new historical beginning for Turkish democracy. It is mandatory to declare a comprehensive national strategic vision in order for the new historical beginning to initiate a reconstruction period. Therefore, Turkey should allow the government to handle civil-military relations more freely and organize the entire armed forces with new policies.

CONCLUSION

Historically military coups in Turkey have yielded dividends for coup putschists. Members of juntas benefitted personally to a great extent from the successful coups they undertook, as they enjoyed respectable statuses both in military and civilian realms in post-coup attempt periods. This fact also had institutional implications for the army and civil-military relations in the political system. For instance, the military as an institution consolidated its tutelary position over political system thanks to successful coups in the past. The balance of civil-military relations has been tilted towards the latter for a long time arguably until the rebuff of the military memorandum announced by the General Staff in April 27, 2007 by the then AK Party government.

The stillborn coup attempt in July 15, 2016 signifies a rupture in this continuum, since this time a full-fledged coup attempt failed due to a number of factors. One of these factors is the acquisition of the intelligence of the coup attempt by the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) hours before its implementation. This granted the civilian and military actors the chance –albeit limited- to repel the coup attempt. It also caused the partial failure of the coup attempt, since it forced the putschists to mobilize earlier than the time that had been set and forced them to make fatal mistakes. The second of these factors is the failure of putschists to kill or capture President Tayyip Erdoğan. Erdoğan's survival,

and his ability to call the people to take to the streets via mass media, was a major blow to the coup attempt. Moreover, Erdoğan's survival and his ability to mobilize the people have given both morale and material superiority to the anti-coup camp. The third of those factors is the miscalculation of the state of media and communication technologies by the putschists. The putschists raided TRT, the state-run television and radio station and forced it to broadcast the coup declaration. Although TRT had to follow the order, the other TV channels did not obey it, as they were not physically threatened by the putschists. Nationwide Internet connection, TV broadcast and social media were still active during the attempt to control TRT, hence masses were kept well informed and organized against the coup attempt. In order to maintain the momentum of protests the day after the military coup attempt, the Internet communication platforms continued to play vital roles in convincing the people to stay at the city centers during the following nights to deter any remnants of the putschists to stage another coup. One can only hope that the anti-coup protests and the use of digital and visual media would be an opportunity for understanding the necessity of responsible use of open Internet. The latter heralds a transforming social space beyond the traditional political practice by promising to fill the destructive gap within those highly connected yet disenfranchised social forces. It may also help to stop the existential polarization in a society otherwise driven by social and political divisions.

The fourth factor is the immediate reaction of opposition party leaders who sided with the legitimate elected government and denounced the move as a coup attempt right away. This was important in terms of augmenting the social and political base of the anti-coup camp. Last but not the least of the factors is the resistance of Hulusi Akar, the Chief of Staff, against the putschists, not to support the coup attempt. If Akar supported

the coup attempt it would dramatically increase the prospects of it, since that would grant a proper chain of command to the attempt, and hence could mobilize almost all units within the army.

The repercussions of this stillborn coup attempt will expectedly be very different from the previous coups in Turkish political history. This stillborn attempt will leave a deep scar on the prestige and standing of the Turkish military as

an institution, although it did not engage in the coup attempt as a whole. Thus, it will not be a surprise to witness diminution of influence of Turkish military *vis-à-vis* the civilian authority in the future. There is no doubt that Turkey will suffer to a great extent from a sprained military; however, Turkey can turn this setback into an opportunity and consolidate its democratic principles and institutions.

After the dramatic turn of events in the confusing hours of that thrilling and fateful night in July when an attempted coup in Turkey was thwarted, we know one thing much better than before: the power of the people using the Internet communication tools and platforms can be greater than the power of the military. In this paper we analyze Turkey's still-born military coup attempt by focusing on the internal process (personnel configuration, tactics and operational areas) of the military coup attempt and reactions of different political, military and civilian actors against the putschists. In addition to this, the paper focuses on the consequences and influences of the 15th July military coup attempt in the context of Turkey's near political future.



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