On the evening of July 15th, Turkey witnessed 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 NGOs 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 the July 15 Coup Attempt
DEMONCRACY WATCH

Social Perception of the July 15 Coup Attempt

NEBİ MİŞ, SERDAR GÜLENER, İPEK COŞKUN
HAZAL DURAN, M. ERKUT AYVAZ

CONTRIBUTORS
SERENCAN ERCİYAS, S. HÜSEYİN ÖZTÜRK

SETA
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*Foreword* 7  
*Executive Summary* 11  

### INTRODUCTION 15
- The Road to the July 15 Coup Attempt 19
- The Organizational Structure of the Putschists and FETÖ Cells Within the Turkish Armed Forces 23
- The Two Bills of Indictment Against FETÖ and the Process Leading to the Coup Attempt 24
- The Infiltration of the TSK by FETÖ Members 26
- The Roots of the July 15 and Its Aftermath 28

### ONE 33
#### RESEARCH METHOD 33
- Research Pattern and Sampling 37
- Preparation of the Questionnaire 38
- Limitations of the Research 39

### TWO 41
#### PROFILE OF THE DEMOCRACY WATCH 41
THREE

FIELD RESEARCH FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Motivation for Taking to the Streets on July 15</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Perception of the Coup Perpetrators</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Involvement of FETÖ and Foreign Powers in the Coup</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors in the Failure of the Coup</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erdoğan’s Leadership in the Prevention of the Coup and the Mobilization of the People</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views of the TSK after July 15</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Perception of FETÖ</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Memory of Coups and the July 15 Coup Attempt</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes of the Opposition Parties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward the July 15 Coup Attempt</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Secure in Turkey after the July 15 Coup Attempt</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combating the Putchists and the Coup Supporters</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Would Be the Next if the Coup Was Successful?</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FOUR

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE JULY 15 COUP ATTEMPT AND THE DEMOCRACY WATCHES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributors</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the night of July 15, Turkey witnessed the coup attempt of the Fetullah Gülen Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) which has been infiltrating the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) for a significant period of time. The coup attempt organized by FETÖ was the most violent among numerous coups and coup attempts in Turkey’s history. The putschists bombed crucial state institutions, such as the Parliament, the Presidential Palace, the General Staff compound, the Police Headquarters and the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) compound with helicopters and F-16s. Along with these institutions of strategic value, 241 civilians resisting the putschists were murdered and 2,195 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 the “democracy watch,” this month-long process became a phenomenon in the history of world democracy. Tens of thousands of people in all cities of Turkey gathered in 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 country's history, Turkey has faced many military coup attempts since the Ottoman period. Regardless of their success, all the military interventions had a significant impact on Turkish political life, while perpetuating the coup culture. Juntas, encouraged by their predecessors, employed similar methods. To justify the coup, they used the conflicts between different identity groups as an excuse. They deposed governments with the support of the civic bureaucracy, the intelligentsia and certain political parties. Moreover, they shaped the judicial and institutional mechanisms to perpetuate their own tutelage; they 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, the public came to believe that the era of coups and military interventions had ended. However, FETÖ, which infiltrated 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 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.

In order to gain a complete picture of the incident, it is important to analyze sociologically the impact of the July 15 coup attempt on the collective memory. This book, aiming to serve this purpose, contains social research conducted in 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 group interviews with the participants of the democracy watch. They were asked their opinions on the following questions: What was their motivation for going out on the streets on July 15? What was their
experience in the streets during the democracy watches? How much time did they spend on the streets? Why did the coup fail? What is the relation between FETÖ and foreign powers? What was their opinion of the ruling party’s efforts after the coup attempt? What was their opinion on the stance of the opposition toward the coup attempt? What was FETÖ’s role in the coup attempt? What was their opinion of FETÖ before the coup, their stance toward the TSK and the security forces? How did this coup compare with the previous ones? What was their opinion on the fight against FETÖ and its accomplices after the coup? What would have happened if the coup had been 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 "July 15 Coup Attempt: The Perceptions of Turkish Society" was extended and prepared to publish as a book. The field research in two more provinces in the Eastern part of Turkey, namely Diyarbakır and Van, that were not included in the report were added to the book version. Moreover, interviews held at the Democracy and Martyrs’ Rally in Yenikapı, attended by more than 5 million people, were analyzed and included in the book.

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, Rifat Öncel, Bilgehan Öztürk, Sibel Düz, Hilal Barın, Sümayra 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 in 12 public squares in 9 cities (Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Diyarbakır, Trabzon, Adana, Van, Sakarya and Eskişehir) between July 18 and August 10. The first edition of the research was published on July 28. This second edition includes the interviews conducted at the Democracy and Martyrs’ Rally in Yenikapi, along with interviews from Diyarbakır and Van.
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with 176 people. Most of the participants were from İstanbul.
- All participants of the in-depth interviews were Turkish citizens over the age of 15, while more than half of them were university graduates. The gender ratio of the protesters in the streets and public squares was balanced. Many of the protesters in the democracy watch were there with their families.
- Most of the protesters were AK Party supporters and right-wing voters consisting among others of the so-called "idealist" (ülkücüler). Active participation by the conservative Kurdish constituents was also observed. According to the interviews held in Diyarbakır and Van, people were actively participating in the democracy watch in mass from the very first day.
- Even though many of the participants were from different sociological and political backgrounds, the principle value which contributed to the unity was “their devotion to the country.” When asked why they took to the streets, they expressed their motivations mostly with three phrases: “devotion to the country,” “to protect the future of the country and its people,” and “to preserve national unity.”
- Almost all of the participants named FETÖ as the coup attempt’s perpetrator. Many stated that they realized the threat posed by the organization during the December 17-25 events, while adding
that they became fully aware of the extent of the threat with the July 15 coup attempt.

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

- People appeared to have been effectively motivated by President Erdoğan’s call to take to the streets, the coup declaration being read on the state television TRT, and the salahs (prayer) broadcasted from mosques’ loudspeakers.

- Almost all 176 participants, who were from various political backgrounds, stated that President Erdoğan’s crisis management skills and his leadership were the most important factors in foiling the coup attempt.

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

- Statements made by the prime minister, ministers and various force generals during the night of the coup attempt were considered by the people to be considerate and reassuring.

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

- Regarding the opposition’s attitude toward the coup attempt, participants said that they were satisfied with the stance of the MHP and the CHP. On the other hand, the HDP’s belated stance was criticized by all participants, including their own supporters. There was also criticism toward 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 toward the AK Party for not inviting the HDP administration to the Yenikapi Rally. Meanwhile, almost all of the Kurdish participants criticized the HDP for not demonstrating a clear stance against the coup attempt.
• Participants stated that the opposition’s participation in the rally was 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 approved of the Presidency of Religious Affairs’ decision to broadcast salahs from the 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 was 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.

• The expansion of the middle class, along with people’s increasing social and political consciousness 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 the AK Party’s reaction to the April 27 e-memorandum and President Erdoğan’s fight against FETÖ after December 17-25 became clearer with the coup attempt.

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

• The participants stated that they want the government to fight 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 stated that the removal of officials with alleged FETÖ connections has to be based on concrete and reliable evidence.

• More than half of the participants supported the reintroduction of the death penalty, while the majority 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 concerned about the possible infringements on the right to a fair trial.

• Some of the participants said that the putschists had to be sentenced to death, while adding that this was highly improbable given the circumstances. Their second punishment preference was a life imprisonment 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 Republican era, Turkey experienced its first military coup on May 27, 1960, which was followed by coup attempts that disrupted the civic political culture almost every decade. The memorandum of March 12, 1971; the murderous armed military coup of September 12, 1980; the post-modern coup on February 28, 1997; and the April 27 e-memorandum incidents were all attempts to instill military tutelage into civic politics and allowed the putschist mindset to survive in different forms. Considering its economic and political development, along with its democratization efforts, Turkey was able to commence its battle against the putschist mindset and structures relatively late, when compared to 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 the heavy weaponry of attack helicopters and tanks. Many strategic state institutions, including the Parliament, the Presidential Complex, the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) and the Police Special Forces Department, were bombed. Moreover, the coup plotters attempted to assassinate President Erdoğan with a special training unit while he was on vacation. 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 to its motivation, planning, execution, 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 to 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 2,195 were wounded. The people’s courageous resistance against the putschists was transformed into ‘democracy watches’ in the following days. People took to the streets and public squares in masses every night in every city of Turkey. Lasting 27 days, the democracy watches concluded on August 10.

The events that transpired after July 15 are a milestone in the history of world democracy - not only in Turkish history. An unarmed resistance by the people against a military coup is unprecedented. Therefore, it is important to record and reflect the opinions and perceptions of this civic initiative, which saw people take to the streets and squares of each and every city in Turkey for 27 days following the July 15 coup attempt. Undoubtedly, these events and the social transformation that occurred deserve a comprehensive sociological analysis, which cannot be limited to a study of the civil-military relations. In this context, new definitions and conceptualizations
are direly needed. Addressing these concerns, the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) conducted interviews with 176 people in 12 public squares of 9 different cities between July 18 and August 10, in order to have a healthy analysis, supported by data from primary sources, on the coup attempt and the public resistance following it. 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 public consciousness, which were shaped by the coup attempt, and to reveal how society perceived the coup attempt. Similar research on this subject is essential, research that aims to immortalize the sociological phenomenon of the July 15 coup attempt. With this study, SETA has taken a first, crucial step.

THE ROAD TO THE JULY 15 COUP ATTEMPT

It is important to point out from the very start that FETÖ has infiltrated all state institutions using a religious rhetoric over a period of 40 years. On the night of July 15, it was revealed that the TSK played a crucial role in their plans. FETÖ has always been a distinct movement among Islamic communities, as its interactions with other movements has been limited. FETÖ has a rigid hierarchical structure and organization and has instilled a mindest of ‘the end justifies the means’ to its followers. It has been being able to amass a vast social network and finances, along with significant human capital.¹ The frenzied state of the FETÖ during the night

of the coup unveiled the extent to which they will go to achieve their aims and how their motivations could lead a purely pragmatic mindset to a murderous rampage.

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

Opposing 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 supporting him and expressed open support for the military junta with an article titled “Son Karakol” (The Last Outpost) in the October issue of their periodical *Sızıntı*.\(^3\) As a result of Gülen’s support for the coup, Gülen and his followers were deemed a “moderate Islamic” movement, an alternative to Erbakan’s National Vision, by secular segments of society between 1980 and 1997.

During this period, a group known as the Nur Movement\(^4\) was factionalized, while Gülen simplified and distorted the *Epistles of*

\(^2\) Akyazılı Orta ve Yüksek Eğitim Vakfı [Akyazılı Secondary and High Education Foundation], http://akyazili.org.tr.

\(^3\) “Fethullah Gülen’in 12 Eylülcüler’e Destek Yazısı” [Gülen’s Article Supporting 1980 Putschists], *Sabah*, May 10 2015.

\(^4\) Hatem Ete, “Gülen ve Takipçilerini Tanımlama Zor(unlu)luğu” [The Difficulty and Necessity of Defining Gülen and His Followers], *Sabah Perspektif*, February 1 2014.
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 the Nur Movement. These events completely isolated the Gülenists from the Nur Movement.

After the end of the Cold War, the Gülen Movement started to found schools in the newly established countries of the Balkans and Central Asia. At that time, President Turgut Özal and the government supported these enterprises as they were perceived as activities of soft power and public diplomacy. The Gülenists 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 the spread of 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 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 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 stated that he was ready to give his private schools to the service of the state if need be, swearing allegiance to the putschists. In 1999, FETÖ’s leader moved to the U.S. - the same year PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured.

Gülen’s followers infiltrated 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 the April 27, 2007 e-memorandum and the March 14, 2008 attempt to close down the AK Party. During this period, they organized themselves within the police force, the military, and the judiciary. The organization distorted the AK Party’s fight against tutelage, abusing the Balyoz and Ergenekon trials to promote their own goals. Moreover, they resisted the reconciliation process in Turkey and utilized their cells within the police force and the judiciary to arrest thousands of people. As they faced resistance in organizing themselves within the National Intelligence Organization, the Gülenists tried to apprehend Undersecretary Hakan Fidan in 2012 – this 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 as the “December 17-25 (2013) period.” This was orchestrated in order to organize cells within the bureaucracy by removing AK Party officials from their posts. The ultimate goal was the formation of a new political structure. As a result, it can be said that the Gülen Movement

transformed itself into an operational structure with strong judiciary and intelligence aspects.

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

Even though the Gülen Movement defined itself as a civilian initiative, its ulterior motives, along with its “militia” and “secretive structure” were only recently revealed.8 The putschists of the July 15 coup attempt, whose allegiance to FETÖ is evident, did not hesitate to employ terrorist methods.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE PUTSCHISTS AND FETÖ CELLS WITHIN THE TURKISH ARMED FORCES

The extensive network of the July 15 coup attempt is directly related with FETÖ’s organizational structure. The TSK was one of the institutions targeted by FETÖ for long-term professional infiltration. The July 15 coup attempt has unveiled that FETÖ was better organized and had greater operational capacity than what was initially assumed within the TSK, and state institutions such as the police force and judiciary.

It has to be taken into account that analyses on the coup attempt need to be conducted with new information when the fog of war has lifted. The most important matter, however, remains 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 understanding how FETÖ became dominant within the TSK.

THE TWO BILLS OF INDICTMENT AGAINST FETÖ AND THE PROCESS LEADING TO THE COUP ATTEMPT

In unveiling the coup attempt, the two bills of indictment prepared by the public prosecution offices provide the clearest details in the process leading to the coup attempt. The first of these two bills, the “Parallel Structure Indictment” prepared by the Ankara Public Prosecution Office, is considered the most extensive joint indictment against FETÖ.

The second is an indictment that was prepared by the İzmir Public Prosecution Office against FETÖ on the allegations of forging evidence for the İzmir military espionage trials, currently being reviewed by the Second Heavy Penal Court in İzmir.10

The İzmir Espionage Indictment is regarded as the catalyst of the July 15 coup attempt. In this indictment, which was prepared as a result of the irregularities exacted during the İzmir military espionage investigations, Fetullah Gülen is named as the head of FETÖ. Moreover, the indictment accuses 81 suspects of forming an armed terrorist organization, disrupting the unity of the state and the country, unauthorized wiretapping, slander, forging official documents, illegally ac-quiring and spreading personal data, violation of privacy, and removing and tampering with evidence.11 Following an extensive investigation, it became possible to unveil many high-ranking officers within the TSK who were members of FETÖ. Along with many colonels and lieutenant colonels, the mention of numerous

9 Selahattin Günday, “‘Paralel Yapı’ Ana İddianamesi: Gülen Yarı Tanrı Gibi...” [Parallel Structure Indictment: Gülen is like a demigod...] , Aljazeera, July 19 2016. From now on, the indictment will be referred to as “FETÖ Joint Indictment.”

10 “İzmir’deki FETÖ/PDY’ye İlişkin İddianame Tamamlandı” [The Indictment Against FETÖ Concluded], Akşam, April 15 2016. From now on, this indictment will be referred to as “İzmir Espionage Indictment.”

11 “İzmir’deki FETÖ/PDY’ye İlişkin İddianame Tamamlandı” [The Indictment Against FETÖ Concluded], Akşam, April 15 2016.
generals, who allegedly took part in this criminal activity, are crucial in comprehending FETÖ’s reach within the TSK.12

During the preparation of the İzmir Espionage Indictment there were hints indicating how to uncover military personnel who were members of FETÖ. Attorney General Okan Bato, who is in charge of conducting the investigation, declared that he did not receive responses for 75 warrants which were sent to the TSK. He added that FETÖ-member officers were being protected by Muharrem Köse, the former Legal Adviser to the Chief of Staff. Bato also indicated that Colonel Oğuz Akkuş, who replaced Köse, acted in a similar manner.13 Indeed, it was revealed, as had been indicated by Bato, that Köse was the main actor in organizing the coup attempt.14 Moreover, after the coup attempt, it was revealed that Köse was investigated on the allegations of being a Gülenist.15

It became clear that the planning phase of the coup attempt started after the approval of the İzmir Espionage Indictment, as FETÖ learned that the military personnel whose names were included in the indictment would be arrested on July 16 and 17.16 The aforementioned indictment is one of the main factors in connection to the timing of the coup attempt.

Another prominent factor in the timing of the coup attempt was the Supreme Military Council meeting which is held annually in August. As Bato’s statements suggest, the operations against...

---


13 “TSK’dta FETÖ Temizliği Tepeden Başlıyor” [FETÖ cleansing in the TSK to start topdown], Yeni Şafak, July 14 2016.

14 “Hain Kalkışmayı Planlayan İsim Muharrem Köse Tutuldu” [Muharrem Köse who planned the heinous coup attempt was arrested], Sabah, July 19 2016.

15 “Muharrem Köse nasıl Genelkurmay Adli Müşaviri oldu?” [How did Muharrem Köse became the Legal Adviser at the Chief of Staff?], Aljazeera, August 13 2016.

16 “Darbeciler Hafta Sonu Gözaltına Alınacaktı” [Putschists were to be apprehended at weekend], Milliyet, July 19 2016.
FETÖ-member military personnel were planned to commence after the Supreme Military Council meeting; however, foreseeing that FETÖ-member high ranking officers, who were to be removed from their posts, might resort to other means, the operations were moved to an earlier date.\(^{17}\)

The FETÖ Joint Indictment, unlike the İzmir Espionage Indictment, portrayed the connections between the organization's position in the TSK and its general structure. This indictment for 73 suspects, including Fetullah Gülen, was prepared by the Ankara Public Prosecution Office and sent to the Fourth Heavy Penal Court in Ankara, where it was approved.\(^{18}\) The most crucial aspect of the indictment is its detailed account on the aim, structure and methods of the organization. The aim of the organization is stated as “taking control of the state institutions, replacing the constitutional order with an authoritarian and totalitarian oligarchy, and attempting to depose of the government.”\(^{19}\)

**THE INFILTRATION OF THE TSK BY FETÖ MEMBERS**

FETÖ’s basic method of infiltration consists of stealing the military schools’ entrance exam questions, and distributing them to the students affiliated to the organization. These illicit activities started as early as 1971, while they gained momentum from 1986 onward.\(^{20}\) Suspension of some cadets is believed to be in connection with these activities. Colonel Ahmet Zeki Üçok, a former military prosecutor at the Turkish Air Force, expressed during an interview

---

17 “Darbeciler Hafta Sonu Gözaltına Alınacaktı” [Putschists were to be apprehended at weekend], *Milliyet*, July 19 2016.

18 Indictment was approved on July 22 2016. The first trial is agreed to be held between November 22-25 2016.

19 “FETÖ’nün ‘çatı iddianamesi’ kabul edildi” [FETÖ Joint Indictment was apk proved], TRT Haber, July 22 2016.

20 İrfan Bozan, “Kritik Yil 1986” [1986 is the turning point], Aljazeera Turk, July 20 2016.
that the putschist colonels and brigadier generals, considering their ranks, should have entered the military schools by the second half of the 1980s. Üçok said that almost 250 candidates had the full score in the Turkish section of the exam, adding that 40 or 50 of them were directly dismissed, while the rest were kept in the force with the aim of “reintegration.” However, an increase in FETÖ’s activities was observed from this date onward.

In a statement, Defense Minister Fikri Işık has underscored the role of FETÖ in stealing the exam questions by referring to the statistics of exams held between 2000 and 2014. Işık said that there were up to 700 students receiving full or nearly full marks in a single exam in the aforementioned period. When the Student Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM) started to prepare the questions for the military schools’ entrance exams from 2014 onward, the number of students who were able to receive full marks drastically declined to only 2. It was later discovered that successful students who were not affiliated with FETÖ were eliminated during the interview stage by those who had infiltrated the organization.

The Balyoz and Ergenekon trials also helped FETÖ members ingrain themselves in the TSK. The trials allowed FETÖ members to replace the dismissed staff and to rise through the ranks quickly. This situation is expressed clearly in the FETÖ Joint Indictment, where it is stated that the aforementioned trials were abused by FETÖ in order to take control of the TSK, instead of ending military tutelage. Moreover, it is stated in the FETÖ Joint Indictment that the efforts to reform the military after uncovering FETÖ’s il-

21 “Askere Sızma 1986’dan Fark Edildi Ama...” [FETÖ’s infiltration to the military was noticed in 1986], Hürriyet, July 20 2016.

22 “Sayılarla sızıntı” [FETÖ’s infiltration by numbers], Hürriyet, August 3 2016.

23 “Çatı İddianame Kabul Edildi” [Joint indictment was approved], Vatan, July 22 2016.
licit activities were thwarted by the organization infiltrators, who claimed that the reforms would demoralize the military.²⁴

It becomes obvious that many FETÖ members infiltrated the military through the distribution of leaked questions and the manipulation of various legal processes. It is beyond question that FETÖ was able to organize the July 15 coup attempt with the help of these infiltrators.

THE ROOTS OF THE JULY 15 AND ITS AFTERMATH

Turkey’s most violent coup was initiated by FETÖ members who infiltrated the military over a 40-year-long period on the night of July 15. The coup was thwarted by the extraordinary resistance of the Turkish people, along with the security forces’ and military personnel’s efforts. However, until the coup attempt was quelled, putschists killed 241 people and wounding 2,195. After the coup attempt’s failure, many who were involved in or supported the coup were apprehended. This coup attempt’s most prominent characteristic is that it was exacted by military personnel with a perverse religious understanding who took orders from a civilian organization. The motivation behind the coup, its preparation and action plan were all determined by the organization’s civilian elements.

According to the statements of the apprehended putschists, the last preparations for the coup attempt commenced on July 8. Moreover, it was revealed that after the meetings at Akıncı Airbase, the Presidential Guard Regiment, Yeşilköy Air Force Academy and FETÖ bases, it was decided which unit would assault strategic targets, occupy certain locations and apprehend the politicians at 03:00 on July 16. It was later revealed that the coup was resched-

²⁴ “Çatı İddianame Kabul Edildi” [Joint indictment was approved], Vatan, July 22 2016.
uled to an earlier time, as there were high level inspections at the bases at 18:00 on July 15 which caused FETÖ to believe that they had been compromised.

Even though the coup was uncovered by the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) and certain measures were taken by the Chief of Staff, the coup attempt was not thwarted and was moved to an earlier hour. Putschists began by conducting flyovers in Ankara with F-16s, then closed the bridges over the Bosphorus with tanks, and occupied the Chief of Staff compound. Moreover, they incapacitated the high command who were not affiliated with FETÖ. They also bombed certain police headquarters, which could have commenced an operation against them, with F-16s, while assaulting many other security forces’ compounds, including that of the MİT, with helicopters and tanks.

The putschists’ most significant target was President Erdoğan. They aimed either to capture or assassinate him. On the night of July 15, an elite team of 37 departed from Çiğli Airbase and assaulted the hotel where Erdoğan was staying, minutes after Erdogan had left. The putschists also tried to occupy the Presidential Complex in Ankara; the civilians who were protecting it were targeted with heavy weaponry and bombs.

As the politicians, particularly President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Yıldırım, called the people to take to the streets, the people gathered in mass and started to resist the putschists. In reaction, the putschists attempted to demoralize and disperse the crowds with aircrafts, and more specifically with the effective use of F-16s and attack helicopters. Even though the runways of the Akıncı Airbase were bombed by anti-coup military personnel in order to prevent the F-16s from refueling and taking off, the putschists refueled the F-16s on a tanker aircraft, which took off from İncirlik Airbase.

Targeting the media, the putschists occupied the state-run TRT and forced a newswoman to read the coup declaration repetetive
for minutes. They also launched operations against Türksat and certain privately owned TV channels to stop the media from broadcasting the news. Meanwhile, the putschists bombed the parliament compound and assaulted locations where people were resisting with heavy weaponry. However, Erdoğan’s call and later his landing at İstanbul Atatürk Airport despite all the risks demoralized the putschists, while bolstering the morale of the anti-coup forces. With the efforts of the security forces and the contribution of the people, by dawn many putschists started to surrender.

From the very first moments of the coup attempt, it was apparent that FETÖ was the perpetrator; a fact that was consolidated with documents in the following days. Many of the apprehended putschists confessed their connection to FETÖ. Meanwhile, numerous civilian FETÖ members were found within the perimeters of military garrisons and were arrested. When the coup failed, the state started to apprehend FETÖ-affiliated civil servants and members of the judiciary. In the following days the operations continued against FETÖ’s other pillars, including its financial structure. In order to prevent a new coup attempt and to ease the fight against FETÖ, a state of emergency was announced on July 21. The people continued to take to the streets at night in all cities of Turkey for 27 days; these protests against a potential new coup attempt were dubbed ‘democracy watches.’
The National Intelligence Organization (MİT) received intelligence about an extraordinary activity at Army Aviation School. The MİT relayed the intelligence at the Turkish Armed Forces. The Head of the MİT Hakan Fidan met with the Commander of Turkish Armed Forces Hulusi Akar at the General Staff compound. At the meeting attended by Hulusi Akar, Deputy Chief of Turkish Armed Forces Yaşar Güler and Commander of Turkish Land Forces Salih Zeki Çolak, they discussed the precautions that would be taken. All military flights were canceled and all units were ordered not to leave their barracks.

21.00

Hulusi Akar and other force commanders and generals who were against the coup were taken hostage and transported to Akıncı Airbase. Trying to “persuade” the generals, the putschists wanted the generals to talk with FETÖ leader Fethullah Gülen. Avoiding capture, some generals like Zekai Aksakallı of the Special Forces Command and Ümit Dündar of the First Army started to fight against the putschists. 5 soldiers were martyred by the putschists.

22.00

News of gunfire at the General Staff compound, low flying F-16s and the closure of the bridges in Istanbul spread. The putschists started to occupy strategic locations such as airports, TV channels, communication networks, and state institutions.

22.30

The MİT, the Gölbaşı Police Special Forces compound, the Ankara Police Headquarters and other security forces which opposed the coup were assaulted with the heavy weaponry of attack helicopters, tanks and F-16s. 55 police officers in Ankara, along with 5 in Istanbul and 2 in Marmaris, were martyred, while 140 officers were wounded.

23.05

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım called a TV station and said that it was “an attempt from a faction within the army,” while adding they were taking the necessary measures against it.

23.50

MHP Chairman Devlet Bahçeli announced that they are supporting the government against the coup attempt. Following Bahçeli’s statement, other opposition parties’ chairpeople and representatives also declared that they are against the coup attempt.

00.05

On the state TV station TRT, the coup declaration of the “Yurta Sülh Konseyi” (Peace at Home Council) was broadcasted. As a countermeasure, TÜRKSAT blocked the broadcast until TRT was retaken by the security forces and the people. Media corporations such as CNN Türk, Digitürk and Turkuvaz Medya were assaulted. Being unable to block their broadcasts, the putschists attacked TÜRKSAT’s Gölbaşı compound to completely black out the media, martyring two personnel.

00.25

Connecting to a TV station via video chat, President Erdoğan said that the putschists “will pay for attacking the people by misusing the country’s aircrafts, helicopters, and tanks.” Erdoğan then called people to take to the streets, while stating that he will stand together with the people in the streets. More people started to take to the streets after Erdoğan’s call.

00.40

In order to protect their country and democracy, people started to gather at crucial locations and resist the putschists. The most significant locations of the resistance in Ankara were the Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi (The Presidential Complex), Keïlay Square, the General Staff compound, the MİT compound and Police Headquarters. In Istanbul, there were Çengelköy, the Mayor’s Office, the Police Headquarters and the bridges. Unable to surpass the people’s resistance and the efforts of the anti-coup security forces, the putschists started to fire at civilians with the heavy weaponry of F-16s, attack helicopters and tanks. 88 civilians in Ankara, 84 in Istanbul and 1 in Malatya were martyred, 2,195 were wounded.

01.40

With Parliamentary Speaker İsmail Kahraman’s call, the TBMM (Grand National Assembly of Turkey) held an extraordinary meeting. While a joint anti-coup declaration was being prepared, the parliament was bombed.

03.00

President Erdoğan’s aircraft landed at Istanbul Atatürk Airport after a risky flight. Erdoğan was welcomed by tens of thousands of people who cleared the airport from the putschists. At the press meeting, Erdoğan said that it was an “attempt of the Parallel Structure to occupy the country” and that the necessary precautions were being taken against them. Erdoğan declared that the hotel he was staying at in Marmaris was attacked by the putschists right after his departure.

04.30

After Erdoğan’s speech, the resistance of the people and the operations of the security forces, the putschists’ morale declined drastically and they started to be apprehended by the security forces. The failure of the coup attempt was declared with numerous statements by the MİT, the security forces, generals and ministers. By dawn, the remaining putschists started to surrender.

---

### FIGURE 1. HOURLY BREAKDOWN OF THE JULY 15 COUP ATTEMPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>The National Intelligence Organization (MİT) received intelligence from Army Aviation School. The MİT relayed the intelligence to the Turkish Armed Forces. The Head of the MİT Hakan Fidan met with the Commander of Turkish Armed Forces Hulusi Akar at the General Staff compound. At the meeting attended by Hulusi Akar, Deputy Chief of Turkish Armed Forces Yaşar Güler and Commander of Turkish Land Forces Salih Zeki Çolak, they discussed the precautions that would be taken. All military flights were canceled and all units were ordered not to leave their barracks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>Hulusi Akar and other force commanders and generals who were against the coup were taken hostage and transported to Akıncı Airbase. Trying to “persuade” the generals, the putschists wanted the generals to talk with FETÖ leader Fethullah Gülen. Avoiding capture, some generals like Zekai Aksakallı of the Special Forces Command and Ümit Dündar of the First Army started to fight against the putschists. Five soldiers were martyred by the putschists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>News of gunfire at the General Staff compound, low flying F-16s and the closure of the bridges in Istanbul spread. The putschists started to occupy strategic locations such as airports, TV channels, communication networks, and state institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.30</td>
<td>The MİT, the Gölbaşı Police Special Forces compound, the Ankara Police Headquarters and other security forces which opposed the coup were assaulted with the heavy weaponry of attack helicopters, tanks and F-16s. Fifty-five police officers in Ankara, along with five in Istanbul and two in Marmaris, were martyred, while 140 officers were wounded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.05</td>
<td>Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım called a TV station and said that it was “an attempt from a faction within the army,” while adding they were taking the necessary measures against it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.50</td>
<td>MHP Chairman Devlet Bahçeli announced that they are supporting the government against the coup attempt. Following Bahçeli’s statement, other opposition parties’ chairpeople and representatives also declared that they are against the coup attempt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00.05</td>
<td>On the state TV station TRT, the coup declaration of the “Yurta Sülh Konseyi” (Peace at Home Council) was broadcasted. As a countermeasure, TÜRKSAT blocked the broadcast until TRT was retaken by the security forces and the people. Media corporations such as CNN Türk, Digitürk and Turkuvaz Medya were assaulted. Being unable to block their broadcasts, the putschists attacked TÜRKSAT’s Gölbaşı compound to completely black out the media, martyring two personnel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00.25</td>
<td>Connecting to a TV station via video chat, President Erdoğan said that the putschists “will pay for attacking the people by misusing the country’s aircrafts, helicopters, and tanks.” Erdoğan then called people to take to the streets, while stating that he will stand together with the people in the streets. More people started to take to the streets after Erdoğan’s call.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00.40</td>
<td>In order to protect their country and democracy, people started to gather at crucial locations and resist the putschists. The most significant locations of the resistance in Ankara were the Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi (The Presidential Complex), Keïlay Square, the General Staff compound, the MİT compound and Police Headquarters. In Istanbul, there were Çengelköy, the Mayor’s Office, the Police Headquarters and the bridges. Unable to surpass the people’s resistance and the efforts of the anti-coup security forces, the putschists started to fire at civilians with the heavy weaponry of F-16s, attack helicopters and tanks. Eighty-eight civilians in Ankara, eighty-four in Istanbul and one in Malatya were martyred, two thousand one hundred ninety-five were wounded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.40</td>
<td>With Parliamentary Speaker İsmail Kahraman’s call, the TBMM (Grand National Assembly of Turkey) held an extraordinary meeting. While a joint anti-coup declaration was being prepared, the parliament was bombed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03.00</td>
<td>President Erdoğan’s aircraft landed at Istanbul Atatürk Airport after a risky flight. Erdoğan was welcomed by tens of thousands of people who cleared the airport from the putschists. At the press meeting, Erdoğan said that it was an “attempt of the Parallel Structure to occupy the country” and that the necessary precautions were being taken against them. Erdoğan declared that the hotel he was staying at in Marmaris was attacked by the putschists right after his departure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.30</td>
<td>After Erdoğan’s speech, the resistance of the people and the operations of the security forces, the putschists’ morale declined drastically and they started to be apprehended by the security forces. The failure of the coup attempt was declared with numerous statements by the MİT, the security forces, generals and ministers. By dawn, the remaining putschists started to surrender.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ONE RESEARCH METHOD
The research used interviews from the cities of Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Diyarbakır, Trabzon, Adana, Van, Sakarya, and Eskişehir as representative samples of the whole of Turkey.

The research employed a qualitative data collection method. It was assumed that the acquisition of direct and observable data would better reveal the connection with the social context.  

The field research, data analysis, and preparation of the study were conducted by an expert team of researchers who have authored academic papers in sociology, political science, and education. The field researchers were given brief informative training regarding the extent, subject matter and method of the research, which aimed to help them in overcoming possible issues on data collection.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 176 participants. By comparing the data acquired from each city, an effort was made to reveal the differences and similarities. Interviews were mostly held with people over 18 years old as the subject matter was of a political essence; however, in order to incorporate the youth’s perspective, a limited number of interviews were also held with youth aged between 15 and 18.

No personal information was requested from the participants. All statements in this study are anonymous. The abbreviations of the cities where the interviews were held can be found below (Table 1).

While transcribing the participants’ statements, each was assigned a code name comprising of the city where the interview took place and a number attributed to the interviewee. An example can be seen below (Figure 2).
RESEARCH PATTERN AND SAMPLING

The research was conducted mostly by holding semi-structured interviews and by a limited number of focus group interviews. The pattern was designed by SETA experts, who consulted with experienced academics and researchers. The research pattern is detailed in Figure 3.
The sample cities were selected taking into consideration geographical distribution, people’s participation in the protests, and the intensity of the putschists’ assault. The face-to-face interviews lasted on average 25-30 minutes. In some instances, a few interviews lasted almost 2 hours. The participants were selected according to a ‘quota’ system, which gave the participating sample a similar age and sex distribution to that of Turkish society; this guaranteed more accurate results.

**PREPARATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

The interview questionnaire was carefully revised several times. A committee consisting of political scientists, sociologists, NGO staff and researchers was established for consultation. There are 19 main questions in the questionnaire. These questions aimed to reveal the participants’ demographic information, including their education, occupation and political views. Moreover, the question were set in order to survey the opinions of participants on certain the subjects, some of which are the following: 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, relation between FETÖ and foreign powers, ruling party’s efforts after the coup attempt, 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. The questions were generalized in order to appeal for every city; local dynamics were noted, while the participants were selected in order to represent the wide spectrum of various political views and identities existing within the society. During the interviews, the participants were informed that this was a scientific research and the data would not be used for other purposes.
LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

As the event was recent and the threat of a new coup attempt was real during the interviews, some of the participants were hesitant in participating the research. It was observed that women were more hesitant than men. For instance, six out ten women in Adana rejected to be interviewed by the researchers. Another limitation was that even though the efforts to have a balanced representation of different walks of life, there were issues in reaching people with different political views who would provided the balance. This is due to the fact that the most of the people on the streets were right-leaning conservatives and nationalists. Still, in order to overcome this specific limitation, the researchers tried to interview as many people as possible during the CHP’s Taksim Rally and the joint rally of the ruling party and the opposition at Yenikapi. On the other hand, in the cities of Van and Diyarbakır, interviews were also held with people sitting in cafes and walking down the streets, along with the people participating in democracy watches.
TWO

PROFILE OF
THE DEMOCRACY WATCH
Millions of people stood watch against any threats to democracy and freedom, as a result of President Erdoğan’s call during the July 15 coup attempt. One of the largest social movements of the century, the democracy watches have the potential to become a precedent for other democratic social movements all across the world. It is imperative that the factors that made the masses stand watch every night after the coup attempt be analyzed accurately. SETA’s current research placed utmost importance on addressing the psychology of the masses, along with the factors that contributed to people standing watch. The details of these psychological states play an important role in enlightening the acquired data. The chants, songs and banners encountered in the public squares where the interviews were held are included on this premise.

İstanbul hosts the most symbolic locations of the resistance, such as the July 15 Martyrs Bridge, and as such is given prominence as a sample city. The interviews were mainly conducted at two locations in İstanbul: Kisıkli, where Erdoğan resides, and Saraçhane, where the most people were killed and where the mayor’s office is located.

Experts in the field reported that any media announcement or slogan which referred to Erdoğan was received with exhilaration. It was noted that many of the youth and middle-aged participants present in the public squares perceived the future of Turkey and Erdoğan’s personality as inseparable. In this context, the people who left their homes to take to the streets before Erdoğan’s call can be understood in conjunction with Erdoğan’s 14-year-long policies that have prioritized the people and their opinions. In this manner,
it can be said that Erdoğan contributed to making the people a valid political actor, an achievement that was fully manifested on the night of July 15.

Another location for the interviews was Taksim Square, where the CHP rally was held. On July 24, nine days after the coup attempt, the main opposition party CHP organized a rally against the coup attempt. The rally started at 18:00 and its participants were mostly CHP constituents, with small numbers of people with different political backgrounds also present. The most-chanted slogans were “Mustafa Kemal’in askerleriyiz” (We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk]) and “Türkiye laiktir, laik kalacak” (Turkey is secular, and will remain so.) The rally started with the Republican march named “10. Yıl Marşı” (10th Year March), which celebrates the Turkish Republic a decade after its establishment, commemorating its achievements, and the song by the Turkish composer Zülfü Livaneli “Ey Özgürlük” (Oh Freedom). After CHP Chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu’s speech, interviews were held with 11 people. They were all randomly selected and were almost all CHP supporters. Only one of the participants stated that they were a AK Party supporter. The participants, at first, showed signs of hesitation. In the interviews, CHP supporters occasionally compared the democracy watches with the Gezi Park protests. Some of the participants signified that, regardless of their political views, they felt close to Erdoğan.

The Democracy and Martyrs’ Rally at Yenikapı on August 7, was another important location where interviews were held. At the rally, the crowd was addressed by President Erdoğan, Prime Minister Yıldırım, Speaker of the Parliament Kahraman, CHP Chairman Kılıçdaroğlu, MHP Chairman Bahçeli, and Commander of the TSK Akar. Before the start of the rally, an entourage moved toward the rally location accompanied by a mehter band (a traditional Ottoman army band). There were no party banners, flags, or
symbols at the rally point; Yenikapı was dominated by the Turkish flag. After the Turkish flag, the blue-and-white flag of the Kayı tribe (the tribe from which the Ottoman Dynasty originated) was the second most-encountered flag. The slogans, chants and songs were similar to those in other public squares. The rally started with the recital of the national anthem and continued with a prayer in Turkish by President of Religious Affairs Görmez. The first speaker was MHP’s Bahçeli, followed by CHP’s Kılıçdaroğlu, Commander of the TSK Akar, Prime Minister Yıldırım, Speaker of the Parliament Kahraman, and ended with President Erdoğan. While Erdoğan was speaking, the crowd was enraptured; it was also elated during Bahçeli’s speech.

The capital Ankara is another city that has become a symbol of the July 15 resistance. Many state institutions were targeted by the putschists; the parliament, which was not targeted even during wars, was bombed. Democracy watches in Ankara were concentrated at two locations: Kızılay Square and the Presidential Complex at Beştepe.

It was observed that the participation of so-called idealists (ülkücü), mostly members sympathetic to the MHP, was more concentrated around Kızılay Square, while there was a homogeneous AK Party supporter mass around the presidential compound. As a result, the interviews were conducted in Kızılay Square, as it was more heterogeneous in the sense of political views. From the platform constructed in Kızılay Square, the Qur’an was recited occasionally, which was followed by prayers. Almost all people at the democracy watches held the Turkish flag, while some held Ottoman and Kayı tribe flags, as well. During the 10-day-long observations, the song “Dombıra” (both the original and the version written for Erdoğan) and the TRT series Diriliş Ertuğrul’s theme music were the most effective in raising the crowd’s spirits. Furthermore, “Dik dur, eğilme, bu millet seninle” (Stand tall, never bow, the nation
is with you now) and “Şehitler ölmez, vatan bölünmez” (Martyrs are never dead and our country will never be divided) were the most-chanted slogans.

It was observed that students and NGOs were mostly concentrated around the presidential compound in Beştepe. There were vehicles belonging to the Mayorship of Ankara and NGOs specialized in humanitarian aid, such as the Red Crescent (Kızılay). From these vehicles, beverages (tea and water) and food (soups and sandwiches) were distributed. The most activity was observed between 23:00 and 02:00. The volume of chants and songs were toned down, if not completely silenced, after 03:00. In addition, at the presidential compound, the speakers and the content of the speeches were more varied when compared to the politicians who addressed the public at Kızılay Square. During the democracy watches, many citizens and NGOs hung hundreds of posters on the outer wall of the presidential compound. The posters’ contents varied from texts signifying Erdoğan’s leadership and messages to Erdoğan, to the names of martyrs, poems and slogans on devotion to the country, furious slogans against FETÖ and its ringleader Fetullah Gülen, and the reintroduction of the death penalty.

Almost all the participants in Ankara stated that they were out on the streets from the very first day. Hence, many of them said that they had witnessed the attacks on the Chief of Staff compound. It is important to note that one of the participants was wounded during the attack on the compound and was back on the streets before fully recovering. Another participant, who was out on the streets from the first day, said that she “felt bad things would happen, if [she] stayed at home,” indicating that the sounds of jet engines and gunfire traumatized the masses. It was observed that people were more anxious when they were in their homes and felt more secure and hopeful when they were with other people in the streets – a clear indication of the effect of the sense of solidarity.
Besides Ankara and İstanbul, research was conducted in Adana, İzmir, Sakarya, Trabzon, Diyarbakır, Eskişehir, and Van. Similarly to the previous two cities, the Turkish flag dominated every square in every sample city. Furthermore, the slogans and songs were also similar to the ones in Ankara and İstanbul. Again, the Qur’an and the national anthem were also occasionally recited in the public squares of these cities. On a different note, there were many Syrians participating in the democracy watches, especially in Adana and Sakarya, singing along with the crowds and sometimes waving the Syrian flag.

In Adana, where there were not any significant clashes between the putschists and civilians, the crowd was concentrated at Uğur Mumcu Square, mostly at night. It was observed that the local NGOs were very active. Stages, tents, tables and chairs were provided by the local municipalities in the public squares, alongside the vehicles of the Red Crescent, and the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD).

Democracy watches in İzmir were held at Konak Square. The square was crowded and people did not leave until late into the night. Erdoğan’s photos were occasionally projected on the two giant screens in the square: in the eyes of the people at the protests, the fight against the putschists was being carried through Erdoğan’s leadership.

While people claimed to be from various political backgrounds, all of the participants expressed their common support for Erdoğan and stated that they had voted for the AK Party in the last elections in 2015. They also expressed positive opinions about the MHP.

In Sakarya, a city that became known for repelling the putschists from the Governor’s Office, the democracy watches took place in the town square. The most activity was seen between 21:00 and 22:00. The participants explained that the watches became a “ritual” for them and they always stood at the same place, in order to meet with their friends.
Democracy watches in Trabzon were concentrated in Atatürk Square. Most of the people in the square were supporters of the AK Party and the MHP. The participants said that many CHP supporters were also on the streets on the night of the coup; however, they added that they were not participating in the democracy watches. A woman with an overcoat embroidered with the symbol of “Halk Özel Harekat” (People’s Special Operations, the name given by the media to the people who fought against the putschists on the day of the coup and a reference to the Police Special Operations) on her back and a club in her hand was among the crowd.

On the last day of the democracy watches, SETA researchers arrived at Diyarbakır. An explosion on the symbolic Dicle Bridge was heard at around 19:30, when the interviews were to be held. The researchers assumed that Park Orman Square would not be crowded due to the terrorist attack by the PKK and increased security measures. However, when they reached the square, they discovered it was crowded despite the explosion a couple of hours earlier. When the news reached the square that a family from Ergani had been killed in the explosion caused by the PKK,²⁶ people recited the Qur’an and held a mevlit (a religious memorial service) for the martyrs. As Erdoğan’s televised speech started, the crowd became more animated. The locals of Diyarbakır stated that even though there had not been any military movements in the city, the people went out to the streets, as the painful experience of the 1980 coup was still fresh. To prevent the torture and unsolved murders which were the trademark of the 1980 coup from happening again, the local population took to the streets with Turkish flags and stood watch for 27 days. The slogans chanted in the square were both in Turkish and Kurdish. The posters hung in the square had various messages: “Grab your flag and come together,” “It is the time to come

together,” “Stand united against the putschists,” and “The devotion to the country comes from faith.” Besides the Turkish flag, many people had Ottoman flags.

Democracy watches in Van were organized in Beşyol Square. MHP supporters, a limited number of CHP supporters, and AK Party supporters were observed in attendance. HDP supporters were not seen participating in the democracy watches, a fact which was also highlighted by the people in the square. AK Party supporters were seen making the “Rabia” sign (the symbol of the anti-coup protesters in Egypt), while the MHP supporters made the “Grey Wolf” sign. Most of the participants carried the Turkish flag and stated that they had not been able to carry the flag openly before the July 15 coup attempt as they had been afraid of the HDP - an exception to this were the AK Party rallies organized in Van.
THREE  FIELD RESEARCH FINDINGS
THE MOTIVATION FOR TAKING TO THE STREETS ON JULY 15

The decision of people to take to the streets and stand up to the July 15 coup was undoubtedly the main event that led to its failure. The question regarding the main motivation behind this resistance movement is quite meaningful. This study aimed to answer the question of the nature of the motivation that drove people to stand up against heavy weapons, tanks, and fighter jets.

As the events began to unfold around 20:00 on the evening of July 15, confusion took hold of many people. Initially the low-flying fighter jets in Ankara did not make sense and the closing of the bridges in İstanbul was thought to be related to a terror incident. Many thought that the country was under attack by a foreign assailant; the possibility of a coup did not cross the minds of many. The remarks of the participants of this study confirm this.

A cabdriver in Kızılay witnessed the beginning of the events and described them as follows:

“The jets started flying around 20:30 and I sensed that something bad was going on. I thought that our military was going to attack somewhere; the possibility of a coup did not cross my mind. I saw Kenan Evren’s coup, I saw three coups. I am 82 and I have never seen anything like this.” (ANK-21)

A 38-year-old male participant who identified himself as a social democrat described the events as follows:

“I was on Vatan Street that night. I learned about it a little late. When I saw it on the news, I did not understand what a putsch
was. After all, I had not experienced a coup before. When I understood what it was, I immediately went outside. I was furious. I went to Vatan Street taking the airport route.” (TKS-06)

After the initial confusion, most people who had learned about the coup attempt through the media and social media went outside. Most people who went outside were overwhelmed by feelings of anger, fear, fervor, self-confidence, and uncertainty. As the night went on, people felt more relieved and their self-confidence was bolstered as the struggle against the coup started becoming successful.

Approximately 3 out of 4 participants who were interviewed took to the streets to protest the coup attempt. The concepts that came up the most concerning the reason for taking to the streets were “homeland, country, the nation, and freedom”. The findings highlight four factors that influenced people’s decision to go out that night:

1. Love for the country and the nation

2. The coup declaration on TRT, and an anti-coup stance

3. Erdoğan calling the people to the streets on live television

4. Prayers broadcasted from the mosques’ loudspeakers

It is understood that as the hours went by the situation became clearer in people’s minds. Especially in places like Ankara and Istanbul where the coup attacks were concentrated, those who were disturbed by the fighter jet noise that began around 22.00 thought that a terrorist attack was taking place and went outside to figure out what was going on. Later in the night, it became clear that a coup attempt was taking place and people were motivated to go outside. In this sense, the remarks of a 46-year-old female participant are quite striking:

“I went outside before Erdoğan spoke, then I came home and saw Erdoğan’s statement and I said going out is a holy obligation now. When I first went out, there was nothing. I even
made a joke to my husband, saying that probably an idiot of an admiral is attempting a coup.” (ANK-20)

Similar findings came up during other interviews as well. Some examples can be seen below:

“When we saw that the Bosphorus Bridge was closed down we thought that it was not a terror incident. We went out from our house in Bahçelievler. We walked to the Kocasinan Police Station. Once we saw that it was calm there and heard the news, we immediately went to the airport. We came face to face with the tanks. What happened to Menderes and Özal was clear. We stood by our Reis (Chief, Erdoğan). I saw the bursting reaction of the people. I saw people from all walks of life.” (SRC-01, M, 26)

“I went out at 23:00 before Erdoğan went on television, to find out what was going on. I guessed it was a coup attempt. Why would I be afraid? You are going to die anyway, why be afraid? We went to the building of the General Staff.” (ANK-15, M, 40)

“The first night I went out before Erdoğan’s call. I felt terrible. Even non-believers would not do this to us. I would never take a life, but if they were to hang Fetullah, I would pull the chair from underneath him.” (ANK-10, F, 70)

“The feeling of being a victim… Concerns about the future… The painful memories of the 1980 coup… Having an anti-coup stance… My wife and I decided long before these events that we would resist a coup. And we went out to the streets before Erdoğan’s call.” (KSK-01, M, 56)

“I came here knowing I was putting my life at risk. It was not a party issue anymore, it was my (personal) issue. I went out around 22.00, before I heard Erdoğan. I learned that it was a coup from the news and I heard my brother was on his way to the square and I grabbed my flag and made my way there with my friends.” (TRB-01, F, 29)

As indicated by these statements, the main motivation for the people taking to the streets was protecting democracy and the
homeland. It is also important to note that alongside the emphasis on democracy and homeland, another prominent theme was the sense of unity and togetherness. A striking statement concerning this theme was made by a 27-year-old male mathematics teacher from Sakarya.

“Our country needs and will always need democracy and the sovereignty of the people. Therefore what drove me to the streets was the urge to protect our democracy and the sovereignty of the people.” (SAK-02, M, 27)

Some of the participants commented on the patriotism and the sense of unity among the people who came out that evening. They described these themes quite strongly.

“I went out around 00:00. I can only say one word: ‘patriotism.’ Please, emphasize this particularly.” (ANK-02, F, 31)

“This coup is not a game; it is a reality. We need to bring in their ringleaders. We came out for our homeland and our flag.” (VAN-03, M, 26)

“I came out for my flag and to defend my country. We felt that if we became united we could overcome this attempt.” (YNKP-09, F, 65)

Most of those who went out before Erdoğan’s speech stated that they went after the coup statement was read on TRT, when the situation became clear.

“I went out after the statement was read on TRT. I was at the hospital when I heard that the bridges were closed. Initially I thought that the Kemalists and Fetullahists were collaborating in this coup. I knew that Tayyip Erdoğan would emerge victorious from this struggle. But I did not expect such a great attitude. When I was engaged in politics, my political views were essentially different from Mr. Erdoğan’s. But his attitude that evening was a very relieving one and our love for him reached a new high.” (VAN-09, M, 58)
Some of those who went out on the first night stated that they went out with the motivation of standing up against the coup. Their statements are witness to the wounds that were caused by the political collapse and disintegration of the social fabric brought upon by past coups. A 26-year-old male who works at a pastry shop in İzmir said the following:

“In past coups, they declared a curfew and deposed governments. I went out to prevent this.” (İZM-04, M, 26)

Others considered the haunting memories of the past as one of their main motivational sources.

“I witnessed painful events in the 1980 coup and I have painful memories of it. The possibility of returning to those times compelled me to go out to the streets.” (SAK-08, M, 27)

“I went out due to patriotism. There was no trouble in the country but soldiers came out anyway. In 1980, there was chaos and soldiers came out, but right now everything is fine. Although the circumstances were not such, soldiers came out of their barracks. This is unacceptable. I first thought why did the soldiers come out? The president’s speech did not influence my decision to go out, I was going to go out anyway. I went out because our economy and our youth were going to suffer.” (TRB-04, M, 50)

“I am the granddaughter of a DP member. He was the provincial chairman of İzmir. He told me that Menderes once said ‘I believe in my people.’ But the people he believed in did nothing. All the things he suffered came to my mind, the putting out of cigarettes on him came to my mind, and I went out. My sixteen-year-old daughter asked me not to go, but I said I was going out and that I would regret it if I did not. I was uneasy at first, but after hearing the President’s speech I immediately went out.” (ANK-12, F, 50)

After the coup statement was made on TRT at gunpoint, President Erdoğan joined a private TV channel via visual phone conference and he called on the people to go out to the streets to defend
democracy. He also stated that he and the Prime Minister would also join them in the streets. After the coup statement was read, Erdoğan’s statement on live broadcast influenced many people’s decision. Many stated that the prayers that were broadcasted from the mosques’ loudspeakers also increased their confidence. A 45-year-old woman from Yenikapi who identifies herself as a Kemalist made the following statement:

“Yes, we went out. We went to Atatürk Airport. For our children’s future. I saw what a coup looks like only this year, I did not previously know what it was. I don’t remember 1980. My children influenced me very much, we should protect their future. The president’s warning influenced my decision to go out.” (YNKP-14)

In terms of how much the President’s call resonated with the public, the following remarks are quite striking.

“After seeing Erdoğan and hearing the prayers I was overjoyed. But when I saw the TRT anchor I was terrified, I was terrified that the Chief of the General Staff would also speak.” (ANK-11)

“I went out for my country and my children. After our president’s speech we had to go out. That is why we went out. Everyone was out there regardless of party affiliation or ethnic identity. Next to me were people from Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Edirne, and I am from Erzurum. We were sitting next to each other for the very same purpose.” (ADN-4, M, 36)

It is clear that some participants put their lives on the line by going out that night and they were prepared for the worst.

“When I first heard of the events I was shocked and I could not believe it. But I was also very furious. I saw Abdullah Gül’s and Erdoğan’s statements on television. At that point I decided to go out. There could have been shootings and I could have been killed, or I could have been taken into custody. I did not care at all.” (ANK-14, F, 25)

“Were we supposed to give our country up to our enemies? Were we going to become Syria? Where would we go? No-
body would take us in. That is why I risked my life and went out into the streets." (IZM-15, M, 61)

“If I had not gone out maybe the soldiers would have come in the morning and taken me away in front of my father’s eyes. Perhaps they would have dishonored me, my mother, my sister or my brother’s wife.” (ADN-11, F, 28)

The interviews indicated that one of the important motivational factors that drove people to the streets were the prayers that were broadcasted from the mosques’ loudspeakers. Although this caused fear amongst some people, in the case of most participants it created an urge to take to the streets and resist the coup. Some of the participants who stated that they went out during the prayers provided the remarks below.

“I went out because of the prayers. Because I know that untimely prayer means jihad. I was playing video games at a cybercafe and as soon as I heard the prayers I immediately went outside. I did not know what exactly was going on, I just thought that our homeland was in jeopardy and I went out.” (TRB-2, M, 17)

“It was the prayers that drove me to the streets.” (ESK-15, F, 44)

“People were walking in the streets and I think nobody knew where they were going but we all walked. I tried to go to the Kızılay area and on the way the crowds kept getting bigger. I also think there were many who were Grey Wolves in the crowd. They were making the sign of the MHP. They were chanting slogans. Hearing prayers from the mosques deeply affected me, I felt a lot of sorrow. It was a whole other atmosphere, at that point I did not care about politics or parties.” (ANK-14, F, 25)

“...They have artillery and tanks, and we have our faith. We stopped them with our faith. In the past, coups silenced the adhans (call to prayer), now adhans silenced the coup. The prayers sent chills down our spines.” (ADN-03, M, 52)
Although a significant portion of society went out to the streets and squares, some citizens chose to remain in their homes. The two main reasons that were provided by those who did not go out were “fear” and “confusion.” Only a few days later, when things became clear, did some of these people join the democracy watches. A 20-year-old woman from İstanbul who identifies herself as a CHP supporter presented her reason as follows:

“We did not go out that night but we had friends who were both government supporters and opposition supporters that went out. This incident was not about party or politics. People went there for their country and their flag.” (TKS-01)

Another prominent factor for participants not going out was their unavailability. A portion of the participants stated that they were on vacation during the coup and another portion stated that they wanted to go but could not. A female participant from Ankara who identifies herself as neither left-leaning nor right, stated that she was in Bodrum so she did not go out. But she stated that she did react through social media.

“I was in Bodrum on vacation. My co-workers at the office said that jets were flying. In a couple of minutes I knew it was a coup. Our correspondence began at 22.30. There were feelings of anger and anxiety. The whole country was furious. Coups are not even comprehensible in strong democracies. It seems we have failed on some fronts so the possibility of a coup still exists. Then I became furious with the coup perpetrators. The allegations that the coup was like a theatrical play, they were not rational at all. I find the condition of being blindly opposed to someone very unhealthy. It is an unnecessary effort. The idea that the President could persuade thousands of officers to throw away their lives is ridiculous. These people are blinded by their hatred. There were not many people who supported this idea and in my TED alumni group some ideas circulated. I was not very involved in the group and I told them how illogical this idea sounded.” (ANK-23, F, 41)
Another participant who stated that she was at Çeşme in İzmir at the time of the coup attempt, made these remarks:

“Unfortunately I was at Çeşme, in İzmir. If the incident had occurred here I would have gone out. We experienced the incident there as well, but not as much as in İstanbul and Ankara. There was only panic there. We panicked as we were trying to decide whether to leave the hotel or not, while receiving news about a coup and curfew. I was not here. If I were here, I would have certainly gone out.” (YNKP-08, F, 47)

In summary, although there were various motivations behind people taking to the streets on the evening of the coup attempt, four of these stand out. First, in light of the participant testimonies, it is clear that almost all who went out to the streets to resist the coup did so because of a love for their country and the desire to protect democracy. Another factor was the coup statement read live on TRT. Those who were driven to the streets with the motivation to resist the coup indicated that the main reason for their choice was that they knew and remembered the consequences of previous coups. Most of the participants were 40 or above so they had seen at least the coup on September 12, 1980. A portion of the participants gained this motivation through the accounts of their family elders. A significant portion of the participants indicated that they went out to the streets after President Erdoğan made a call on live television to do so. It should be noted that those who went out due to Erdoğan’s call were vastly of the conservative-right persuasion. Finally, the broadcasting of prayers from the mosques’ loudspeakers was another driving force to go out into the streets.

While some of those who did not go out the first night stated that they willingly did not do so, a significant portion stated that they were unable to do so. Those who were on vacation in the country’s various vacation spots stated that they did not go out because there were no incidents in the area and people were not
going out. Those who did not provide a reason for not going out were mostly CHP supporters or left-leaning participants.

**PEOPLE’S PERCEPTION OF THE COUP PERPETRATORS**

Another important question that was asked during the interviews concerned the coup’s perpetrators. From the responses it is clear that almost all the participants considered FETÖ as the coup’s perpetrator. Furthermore, the vast majority of the participants indicated that they believed FETÖ had foreign help for the coup attempt and that it would have been very hard to execute without foreign support.

Among those who considered FETÖ as the perpetrator of the coup attempt, there were different views concerning its role in the attempt. Some of the participants thought that FETÖ was the sole perpetrator while others thought it did not act alone.

Those who thought that FETÖ was the sole perpetrator, highlighted FETÖ’s half-a-century-long organizational infiltration of the state. A participant from Sakarya emphasized FETÖ’s organized infiltration of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and indicated that the coup attempt was executed by this organization.

“As it has been infiltrating the military for a long time, I think FETÖ is the primary organizer of these events.” (SAK-09, M, 25)

A 26-year-old male participant from İzmir stated that FETÖ was not only organized within TSK but throughout all the state institutions and that the organization’s educational institutions played a crucial role in this process.

“Gülen was able to launch operations against state institutions because he prepared students and planted them within institutions like the armed forces. This process still continues.” (İZM-04)
A 28-year-old female history teacher from Adana also claimed that the coup perpetrators were from FETÖ which had infiltrated the state for many years. She argued that the organization had the power to execute the coup all by itself and that it failed due to fate.

“They had organized perfectly for years and they were going to execute a very successful operation. They failed because they forgot that Allah intervenes in such plans. Otherwise they had a very good system.” (ADN-11, F, 28)

A 33-year-old female participant who is a computer engineer did not believe FETÖ was so powerful until the evening of July 15.

“We had doubts until the coup but afterwards it was clear that FETÖ was behind it.” (ANK-16)

On the other hand, some participants thought that although FETÖ was the main perpetrator it was also possible that it had received assistance from other actors. A retired 62-year-old participant from İstanbul Saraçhanes pointed out that the main perpetrator was FETÖ but other actors provided support.

“There are definitely other actors although FETÖ had the primary role. I think the others provided logistic support and the Parallels conducted the operations.” (SRC-09)

A 36-year-old male participant from Van thought that the coup attempt was executed only by FETÖ and other actors were not involved.

“This coup was definitely executed by FETÖ. The sole perpetrator was FETÖ but the organization itself is supported by the United States.” (VAN-01)

The involvement of FETÖ and foreign powers in the coup

Only 10% of the participants thought that FETÖ acted alone. More than half of the participants thought that foreign powers were actively involved in the coup attempt either as in the planning or
the organizational phase. The rest of the participants stated that although foreign powers were not the primary actors they provided indirect support for the coup.

Participants pointed out different indicators of foreign involvement such as Fetullah Gülen living in the USA, the wording used by the foreign press, and the attitude of foreign powers toward Turkey. The reason put forward as to why foreign powers would support the coup attempt in Turkey was related to the geographical positioning of Turkey and how Turkey’s active foreign policy and economic growth would generate discomfort among these foreign powers.

Half of those who thought foreign powers were involved in the coup list the U.S. as one of these powers. European countries are second. A small number of participants list Israel, Russia and Iran as possible countries that could have been involved.

One of the main reasons that participants mostly believe that the U.S. was behind the coup is the fact that Fetullah Gülen lives in Pennsylvania, a fact that contributes to the perception of the U.S. protecting Gülen. A 58-year-old retired male participant from Van stated that before the coup he thought that the accusations against FETÖ were exaggerated but after the coup he thought that Fetullah Gülen’s presence in the U.S. is evidence of U.S. involvement. The participant also stated that the PKK, which is another terrorist organization, is also supported by foreign powers.

“Until July 15, the claim that FETÖ was a terrorist organization sounded like an exaggeration. Although I believed in conspiracy theories when I was young, I don’t believe in them anymore. But the fact that he [Fetullah Gülen] lives in the U.S. proves that they are involved firsthand in the coup attempt. Our President’s narrative has been proven right. He said that the organization’s foundation was faith, the structure was commerce and its roof was treason. I thought this was an exaggeration as well. The organization does not have the capacity to execute such a treasonous act, they absolutely
had outside support. Just like the PKK, which claims to be a Kurdish movement, this organization also receives critical support from foreign powers.” (VAN-09)

A participant from Yenikapı also perceived Fetullah Gülen living in the U.S. as evidence of the U.S. support for the organization.

“Of course the biggest supporter is the U.S. As the saying goes, you lay your egg where you are fed. In this case, he [Fetullah Gülen] is being fed in the U.S. It is clear that he serves those people. The U.S. is behind them [FETÖ], I saw in the news that their Secretary of State had his picture taken with these traitors. They met before the coup.” (YNKP-06, M, 29)

The initial response from the U.S. to the coup attempt was a call of restraint toward both sides. Although in later days the U.S. expressed support for the elected government, the participants didn’t think that the U.S. stance toward the coup and support for Turkey was adequate. A 26-year-old engineer from Ankara described the situation as follows:

“Foreign powers were involved, the statements from the U.S. were too late, Kerry did not support us and their press had news like Erdoğan sought asylum in Germany.” (ANK-11)

Some of the participants who thought the U.S. was behind the coup attempt pointed out that the tanker aircraft that took off from Adana İncirlik Base provided fuel for the fighter jets that hit many areas and killed dozens of people. The participants highlighted that these tanker aircrafts could not have taken off from one of the most important U.S. bases without authorization from the U.S. itself. Participants claimed that this provides clear evidence of the U.S. involvement in the coup attempt. A 26-year-old participant from Saraçhane, İstanbul, states that FETÖ was the operator in Turkey while the U.S. was the foreign actor.

“It is very likely that the U.S. was behind it [the coup attempt]. The inner layer was FETÖ. The U.S. provided clear support from İncirlik Base to these traitors within.” (SRC-05)
In the context of U.S. involvement, another claim brought forward by the participants was that the U.S. supported the coup attempt through NATO and its military wing. The participants highlighted that this created a fissure within the Turkish Army along the line of “NATO supporters and the others,” and that FETÖ promoted this fissure and utilized it during the coup attempt. An academic who identifies as someone from the National Vision tradition, provided the following comment:

“I think that the U.S. and NATO provided significant support. The fact that the tanker aircraft that fueled the F-16’s in the air took off from İncirlik is adequate evidence for this.” (ANK-18)

A 29-year-old female shopkeeper used the claim, which circulated often in social media, that “Öcalan was given in exchange for Gülen” to strengthen her argument that the U.S. is behind the events.

“The U.S. turned Öcalan over to us in the same period that Gülen went to the U.S. I don’t think any more needs to be said. The U.S. is using him just as it has used everyone in the Middle East. The U.S. will discard Gülen once he has served his purpose.” (İZM-13)

Participants frequently highlighted the attitude of the foreign press toward Turkey both before and after the coup attempt. A portion of the participants thought that this attitude reveals the support for the coup attempt by the Western public opinion and governments, and they claimed that the smear campaign toward Turkey and the AK Party was part of a strategy to prepare and soften up the Western public opinion for the coup attempt. A 25-year-old female master’s student from Ankara who identifies herself as close to “HDP and the left” stated that she was always skeptical of the foreign press.

“I think the U.S. and Europe were definitely involved. Although I am opposed to the AK Party, I was annoyed with
the Western press narrative that Turkey was under a dictatorship. I could not make sense of it. Turkey could not be there only concern after all. But when I look at it, I think that this was all to prepare and soften up the West and public opinion. After the coup, they were going to say that Turkey was already authoritarian and the coup was not a bad thing. Therefore they would argue that the coup should be accepted, despite the fact that Turkey is a member of NATO and a candidate for EU membership.” (ANK-14)

One of the arguments put forward as to why foreign powers supported the coup is related to the constant shifts of balance in international affairs and Turkey becoming a target by international powers after the recent developments in the Middle East. The participants highlighted that Turkey, which is making important progress toward its 2023 goals, was being obstructed by foreign powers. The foreign powers were determined to prevent Turkey from reaching its goals by turning foreign and domestic matters into obstacles. A 22-year-old participant from İzmir stated that Turkey is facing obstacles from within and from the outside.

“The U.S. is nurturing them [FETÖ] and they do not want Turkey to grow. The Lausanne Treaty will end in 2023 and Turkey will be freed of its restraints. Turkey is not able to use its full power right now. That is why they want to end Turkey by 2023. The U.S. is the reason why the PKK could not be eradicated for years.” (İZM-07)

A 22-year-old university student from Sakarya highlighted the fact that the changes taking place in Turkey’s geography and increasing threats strengthen the argument that the coup attempt could have been supported by outside powers. “Just like in previous coups, it is very likely that foreign powers were involved: especially at such a time when domestic and foreign threats are increasing.” (SAK-14) A participant, who pointed out that instability in the Middle East is the source of foreign
threats and that the U.S. and Israel are behind the coup, gave the following answer to the question of why these countries would support the coup: “The events in the Middle East. Lebanon, Morocco, Jordan, Syria and next in line is Turkey. The danger still continues and we might go to war.” (ADN, M, 37) The participant believed that they are trying to draw Turkey into the chaos of the Middle East.

Another important point that came up during the interviews was the participants’ view that historically propaganda against Turkey intensifies during periods when Turkey’s progress is accelerating. Participants thought that the list of countries that are part of this hostile coalition changes from period to period, but they noted that this situation should not be understood as mere attempts to overthrow specific governments but rather as a long-term strategy to curtail Turkey’s progress. A 38-year-male participant from Adana who is an engineer evaluates the issue as follows:

“… I don’t just consider the Turkish Republic. They have been curtailing us since the Ottoman period. Sometimes it is Germany and sometimes it is England, but it can be any country that thinks we can resist them. Therefore, they do not want us to grow.” (ADN-04)

Similarly a 50-year-old public servant from Trabzon pointed out that Turkey’s economic development intimidates foreign powers therefore they could be behind the coup.

“They saw that Turkey is making progress and the U.S. wanted to end it. If the coup had succeeded Turkey would fall in line with the U.S. and Europe’s demands.” (TRB-04)

In conclusion, the participants were in agreement that FETÖ is behind the coup. The vast majority of the participants stated that foreign powers, mainly the U.S. and Europe, were involved in planning the coup. The participants highlighted that Turkey is becoming stronger and making important progress in many areas,
which has turned the country into a target for foreign powers. The participants pointed out the smear campaign in Western media as feeding this hostility.

**FACTORS IN THE FAILURE OF THE COUP**

One of the fundamental determiners of Turkish political life, both in the Ottoman as well as in the Republican period, was the repeated colonization of the political and public space by military interventions. Regardless of their success, these military interventions produced and maintained the mechanisms of tutelage of Turkish politics. Those who planned the coup attempts hoped to create fractures within the public and political spheres in order to create conflict between different identity groups. Furthermore, they produced the post-coup coalitions that would support them, and that could ensure that the coup succeeded and would later be legitimized.

There are some elements that have been influential in instilling a coup culture in Turkey beginning with the coup of 1960 and the subsequent coups that took place every decade.

For a long time, the possibility of a coup determined the limits of the public and political spheres, especially until the measures that were taken during the AK Party rule against tutelage and coup culture. The first element that enabled the military intervention in politics was the suspension of the constitution after the military coup and the establishment of a period of extraordinary circumstances. This one-off period of extraordinary measures later became the new normal and the military constantly devised new ways of intervening in politics.

Secondly, the juntas that executed the coups planted special clauses in the constitutions to avoid getting persecuted for their actions.
Thirdly, the institutions that were formed after the coup created legal and institutional bans on criticism toward the perpetrators of the coup and the actions taken in the coup periods.

Fourthly, certain political parties and politicians, for structural, circumstantial, and pragmatic reasons conducted policies that enabled coup policies to function smoothly both on a narrative and a practical level.

Finally, in the spiral of distrust brought upon by the coup, the bureaucracy, media, and intellectuals produced narratives that legitimized this spiral of distrust and enabled the continuation of the military control of politics.\(^\text{27}\)

The AK party policies, on the other hand, significantly weakened the mechanisms of the military tutelage of politics. The collective memory was reconstructed. In this context one of the most important factors in the failure of the July 15 coup was the negative perceptions and attitudes in the collective memory toward coups. The fact that since the 1960s every single coup has had direct negative consequences on various sections of the public has generated a public unity against coups. The total political restructuring that took place during the AK Party period and the awareness that formed against military tutelage compelled all political parties to stand against the coup attempt on July 15. The comments provided by a 29-year-old AK Party supporter who was interviewed at the Yenikapı Rally of Democracy and Martyrs and a 70-year-old female participant from Ankara are similar in the sense that they both reveal the collective memory against coups and the level of public awareness.

“The President’s call was important and we were more aware. We knew what happened in Menderes’s period. The President enabled us to seek justice, his firm stance gave us confidence.”

(YNKP-06, M, 29)

“I observed it as a very chaotic attempt. When I heard the statement on TV, I remembered September 12. I was a child when February 28 happened and I remember April 27 clearly. On September 12, Kenan Evren made a statement that he had taken over the country. On July 15, the statement was read by a civilian anchor, the declaration of the curfew did not scare people, it actually encouraged them.” (ANK-10, F, 70)

On the other hand, the transformation of the media, its pluralism, and the developments in communications technology made the perpetrators’ job much harder. Although the coup perpetrators made plans to shut down all the other channels and allow only TRT to broadcast, their plans failed. The transformation and diversification of the bureaucracy, and the fact that different intellectual groups have been able to influence the public sphere deprived the perpetrators of the support mechanisms they needed.29 Furthermore the strengthening of the middle class, and the increase in the confidence of conservative circles that has occured in the AK Party period brought about masses that would defy tanks in the squares and resist the coup attempt. Alongside this, the AK Party’s success in dealing with political crises such as the April 27 e-memorandum and December 17-25 Parallel Organization coup attempt was critical in the prevention of this coup attempt. This is due to political actors coming out of these crises wiser and stronger. Other factors that prevented the coup from being successful were its timing, the fact that it was conducted outside the chain of command, and the fact that the police force functioned as a balancing security structure. Evaluating the influence of the political leadership in the prevention of the coup requires a separate analysis.

28 There is a confusion about the dates. As February 28 coup happened in 1997, she must be referring to the coup of 1960. In regards of April 27, she is probably talking about the coup attempt in 1971.

29 Ali Balç, “Darbenin Ölenmesinden En Önemli Engel Milletin Hafizasıydi” [The most important factor failing the coup was the collective memory], Derin Tarih, Issue: 53, (August, 2016).
A 52-year-old housewife from Adana who had seen previous coups explained the various factors noted above:

“People have changed. They immediately went outside. We are a country that has paid a heavy price for not going out on the streets in the past. I think people started believing in themselves. Maybe 50-60 years ago while there was tutelage, we as the people were like children deferring to their parents. But once we become individuals, we will start to express ourselves and I think the people of this country are reaching the maturity to express themselves. That is why I went outside that night. I voted, expressed my will, who are you to throw away my will? What right do you have? Whoever does such a thing needs a slap in the face and only the people can do this.” (AND-09, F, 52)

ERDOĞAN’S LEADERSHIP IN THE PREVENTION OF THE COUP AND THE MOBILIZATION OF THE PEOPLE

There is no doubt that the coup failed because of the following critical factors: the legendary resistance of the Turkish people, the extraordinary struggle of the police force and the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), the resistance of the patriotic elements within the armed forces, and the defiance of the political parties, non-governmental organizations and local governments. Beyond doubt, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s political leadership was essential for all these efforts to succeed. It is understood that the coup attempt by the coup plotters that had infiltrated the army was the result of long-term planning. What the perpetrators did not take into account was that the Turkish public, politics, and political leadership had already passed significant tests. Erdoğan’s success in dealing with crises generated a successful and mature political learning process. When Erdoğan’s leadership is taken into account in the analysis of people taking to the streets to start the
resistance, people fighting against the perpetrators and participating in nationwide democracy watches, two dimensions of the issue are revealed.

The first dimension is Erdoğan’s call to the people via visual communications technology to take to the streets and airports after the coup attempt became clear. After people heard the call of the President and rushed to the squares a psychological advantage was established against the perpetrators. With this critical move the perpetrator’s confidence was shaken and confidence increased on the anti-coup front. Erdoğan’s firm and determined attitude combined with his arrival at Atatürk Airport reinforced this confidence. Furthermore tactical movements like the broadcasting of prayers and adhan from the loudspeakers of mosques enabled the public to understand that this was a matter of survival. On this matter, participants from different squares made the following statements.

“I think Erdoğan was loved very much, people loved him so much that they were prepared to put their lives on the line. We have seen this. Therefore, if Erdoğan was captured, people would have protested even more, they would have never gone home. They would have died to resist the coup.” (ANK-16, F, 33)

“The silence of the people was the reason why the 1980 coup succeeded. This time the opposite happened.” (SRC-02, M, 48)

“I think that the main reason the coup failed was that our Chief, the President, made a call and people went out. People were ready to give their lives. In previous coups the soldiers did not fire at the people. Nobody could have known that this time people would be fired at. And of course the main factor was our President’s statement.” (YNKP-07, F, 48)

As it is understood from the testimonies of Erdoğan’s supporters and opposition supporters alike, Erdoğan’s speech subsequent to the coup attempt clearly instilled the public with confidence. A large portion of the public went outside right after the statement.
The testimonies further reveal that people not only went out but they also headed to zones of conflict to resist. A 52-year-old shopkeeper from Adana who identifies as an AK Party supporter evaluated President Erdoğan’s speech as follows:

“As Mr. Erdoğan spoke, I understood that the coup had failed, and the moment I went outside, I understood that they would never succeed.” (ADN-03)

A 47-year-old retired military officer who identified himself as a supporter of the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) and was participating in the Taksim democracy watch commented on the importance of political leadership and confidence.

“Political leadership prevented insecurity. Only Erdoğan's leadership could have saved us from this situation.” (TKS-03)

A 38-year-old female participant who identified herself as a Republican People’s Party (CHP) supporter during a CHP rally in Taksim highlighted her opinion that Erdoğan’s leadership and his bond with the people was a significant factor in the prevention of the coup. She also stated that she felt closer to Erdoğan during this process.

“This was the first time that I felt so close to Erdoğan. I might even say that I have started to like him. That day on that live broadcast I was looking for a move from him in order to refer to him as “Our President.” I have decided that he is currently a lonely man, just like Atatürk was. That is why I cannot abandon him right now.” (TKS-10)

The second dimension is related to Erdoğan’s leadership not only on the evening of the coup but to his leadership after 2002. After 2002, Erdoğan conducted politics in a way that enabled the transformation of Turkish society and politics. The public gained the necessary confidence for resisting the various anti-democratic tutelage structures that had been put in place. He forced the political parties, bureaucratic structures and media that had previously supported mil-
itary coups to transform. In the past, the documents legitimizing the coups were penned by intellectuals, certain political parties defended this legitimization, and the press conveyed it to the public. The judicial bureaucracy above all and other bureaucratic structures cooperated with juntas and arranged the post-coup environment for the junta. This way military coups were normalized and politics could be tightly confined. Furthermore this environment silenced the public and deprived the masses from the self-confidence that could lead to resistance toward military coups.30

Political parties opposed the July 15 coup attempt without any double-talk. The takeover of the TRT did not have a significant impact due to the diversification of the media. The historical block was dismantled so that the bureaucracy could not support the coup. For example, the Constitutional Court issued a statement defending democracy in the first stage of the coup. Local governments used construction machines to resist the perpetrators.

The political leadership that Erdoğan demonstrated during the April 27 e-memorandum is strongly related to the failure of the July 15 coup attempt. The strong reaction to the memorandum which led to the failure of the attempt was a critical turning point for the history of coups. When this process is considered alongside the other major challenges that the AK Party has faced, it can be observed that the AK Party gained significant “political learning” experience while dealing with these crises and other similar ones. While it gained new experiences from every crisis it also reinforced its self-confidence.

After the December 17-25 coup attempt, Erdoğan considered the struggle with FETÖ as a matter of survival for the state’s future. Therefore he directly informed the public of the Parallel

State Organization, the danger of the Gülen organization, and Fetullah Gülen’s perverse religious views. He convinced a large portion of the public that this was a struggle that had to take place. Even though he did not receive any support from opposition parties, and even within his own political movement there were many who did not comprehend the scale of the danger, he continued the struggle. An important factor that prevented the coup was that at least at the administrative level the judiciary and the police force had been purged of the organization. Moreover Erdoğan struggled against those who supported the organization in order to diminish their support. He also took measures to eliminate the organization’s economic resources. FETÖ’s power, therefore, was diminished. It turns out that if these measures had not been taken, the coup attempt could have brought about much deeper crises.\(^{31}\)

After December 17-25, a significant portion of the public was convinced of the danger posed by the Gülen organization. A great number of the participants agreed that only Erdoğan could combat this organization. Furthermore there was a perception that Erdoğan was mostly alone in this struggle. Although some participants put forward the criticism that the AK Party supported the organization before December 17-25, they also stated that it was possible that they had deceived Erdoğan as well. A 28-year-old participant from Adana who identifies as a democrat stated that “When the President said ‘We will go into their dens’ we already knew what he meant.” A 38-year-old female fashion designer from Eskişehir responded to the issue as follows:

“The President exposed the Parallel State and he had proof of it. But I should also say this: they were together before. Since they were together, it is clear that they deceived him also.” (ESK-09)

VIEWS OF THE TSK AFTER JULY 15

The vast majority of the participants discerned the coup perpetrators as FETÖ members who had infiltrated the armed forces and they had positive and protective attitudes toward the rest of the TSK. Although in some provinces there were negative attitudes toward TSK personnel among some right/conservative participants, primarily in cities like İstanbul and Trabzon there were serious efforts to distinguish between FETÖ members and other TSK personnel.

In most interviews the issue of FETÖ infiltration of the TSK came up frequently and in many cities the majority opinion was that the TSK should be distinguished from the members of the terrorist organization who had infiltrated it. In this context when one considers the age of the participants who stated that their view of the TSK had not changed in a negative way, it can be said that there is no significant difference of opinion between the young and old. Those who have not completed their military service did not appear to have changed their views on the TSK or to have taken offence of any kind. Some of the statements that support this view are the following:

“I am going to be conscripted in August. I don’t know what I will experience. I will definitely stand up for the TSK. I can never be reactionary toward the TSK. Those who opened fire against the people were clearly FETÖ-affiliated.” (TRB-08, M, 25)

“I never changed my mind. These were FETÖ’s soldiers.” (KSK-07, F, 45)

“My views on the TSK have not changed. I think I will donate today. Our trust is infinite.” (ANK-17, F, 33)

“We trusted then, we trust again. Trust is especially restored when we hear that it was not the entire military.” (SAK-17, F, 40)

“There were collaborators, there were hoodwinked FETÖ soldiers. They were going to run the country into the ground for so little but they failed. My views on the TSK have not changed because of a couple FETÖ members.” (VAN-10, M, 19)
The interviews that were conducted in this context mainly resulted in commentary that was positive toward the TSK high command which acted in accordance with democratic values and which stated that they remained loyal to the civil authority. The positive perception of the TSK high command, which stood by the President and played a key role on the eve of the coup and later in the process, can be observed in the following statements:

“The TSK was infiltrated by them [FETÖ] and there was no chance to stop them. The privates paid the price. TSK made its statement against the coup after the President made his statement. Our attitude toward the TSK has not changed, it is still the armed forces of the Turkish nation and it is our armed forces. It was FETÖ that conducted the coup.” (ADN-02, M, 22)

Participants highlighted that the TV series broadcasted on FETÖ channels had already revealed the “terrorist” infiltration of the TSK. On the other hand, the participants evaluated officers and generals who fought against the coup, such as Hulusi Akar, in a positive way.

“Ömer Halisdemir has a very special place in our hearts and Hulusi Akar is truly our soldier. We had seen terrorists disguised as soldiers on STV’s (Gülenist TV channel) series “Tek Türkiye” (One Turkey), so I was not very surprised. But I felt sad, especially for the children because they were deceived and manipulated. The most painful point was that both sides were invoking God’s name.” (YNKP-10, F, 36)

“The TSK is the nation’s army and we have always supported it. Once it is cleaned we will support it again. I trust Hulusi Akar very much on this issue.” (YNKP-02, M, 43)

The interviews with citizens who identified themselves as leftists and were CHP voters revealed that their views on the TSK did not essentially change. But a divergence was observed between the leftist constituents that experienced the 1980 coup and the younger generation. The young CHP constituents did not experience a shift
in their “embracement of the army” subsequent to the July 15 coup attempt and they distinguished between the TSK personnel and FETÖ infiltrators. Nevertheless an older female participant stated that she had not trusted the armed forces since before 1980.

“I did not trust the army before 1980 and I do not trust it now.” (TKS-08, F, 60)

Another participant stated that the FETÖ elements within the TSK should be distinguished from the rest:

“According to us, generalizing the TSK is a mistake. The army is our army but it is clear that there are factions within it. Therefore, considering FETÖ or another small group as representative of the entire TSK is wrong.” (TKS-07, F, 20)

Those who are against the AK Party and can be defined as leftists were not only suspicious of the TSK but, reflecting their anti-militarist stance, they expressed distrust toward any armed force as well. A 36-year-old male participant who is a university graduate expressed his thoughts on the issue as follows:

“I was not very surprised. I do not think any army in the world is beneficial. I don’t trust any army.” (TKS-01, M, 36)

Although trust toward the TSK diminished slightly, this was observed more in Ankara compared to other cities. Another issue that was highlighted in the interviews besides trust was “the diminishing reputation of the TSK.” In other words, although there has not been a general shift in terms of trust, some participants stated that the reputation of TSK was being tarnished and diminished.

“There should be no mercy for the FETÖ coup perpetrators. The privates may be innocent but the ringleaders should be hanged.” (KSK-03, F, 22)

In some interviews it was observed that references to the negative consequences of February 28 accompanied the harsh criticisms of the TSK. These criticisms were expressed in a similar manner by two different identity groups. It was determined that Adnan Men-
deres’s execution and the actions taken against conservative circles during the February 28 process had generated a lack of trust toward the TSK. Some participants expressed this in the following terms:

“The TSK is modern in appearance but in terms of mentality it is extremely nationalist and those who consider that the army is the highest power make up the majority of the TSK. I always considered them as a possible threat and I will continue to do so.” (ANK-08, M, 29)

“Everybody is denying responsibility, they are saying we did not do it. Even the general at the top denied it. I think 75% of the TSK is not trustworthy.” (YNKP-06, M, 29)

“I was very saddened. We always knew about the TSK. We were very saddened by their attitude toward Muslims on February 28. I was a teacher back then and I was devastated.” (VAN-08, M, 58)

In regards to the TSK the participants highlighted two concepts: disappointment and sorrow. It was observed that particularly those who were over 50 years old and identified themselves as conservatives became emotional while commenting on the events.

“Although Trabzon is a city that is known for its loyalty to the state, I was profoundly disappointed to learn that a few of the traitors [high ranking commanders] were from Trabzon. From now on people should understand well what democratic culture means. We should be aware of who lurks behind the scenes.” (TRB-12, M, 50)

A similar approach was taken by another participant:

“Such a pity for our military. I am an old ignorant lady and even I am ashamed, why would our military be like this, why... How did these dishonorable people infiltrate our army? In the past foreigners said that Turkey had the best military. How was this allowed? This is why we are angry, otherwise we never blame our military.” (YNKP-09, F, 65)

The approaches toward privates who were given orders by commanders involved in the coup attempt were more compassionate.
In this context those who had experienced previous coups and can be considered in the low income scale approached the situation of the privates who had to “follow orders” with a feeling of “pity.” Furthermore it was highlighted that the privates were “children” and that they had ties to the “village.” It should also be noted that many participants answered positively to the question of whether they had a family member currently serving in the army. Some of the participants stated

“The U.S. military did it [the coup]. The TSK are still our heroic soldiers. Our respect for our patriotic and heroic army is boundless. I pity the privates who went from the villages. I pity the privates who shot at our citizens; what could they have done after receiving orders?” (TRB-03, M, 62)

“I was sad for the poor children who were used in the coup…” (İZM-06, F, 40)

“We are still proud of the TSK. We have to distinguish the soldiers. My older brother is currently serving in Diyarbakır and he would not fire at people. There is false news. We should not curse the soldiers because there were those who defied orders. We should not believe the Internet manipulations.” (TRB-02, M, 17)

Alongside the emphasis on family members who are serving, some of the young participants stated that they would soon begin military service and that their views of the TSK were quite positive.

“Our views did not change because we do not see the coup perpetrators as soldiers. We will also serve in the military. The TSK is the institution we trust the most, even more than the police. We have great trust in the army.” (YNKP-11, M, 26)

Although it represents an exception, a participant who identifies as a Kemalist expressed concern over sending her son to military service.

“The army does not project trust. In the past we were terribly upset when news of martyrs came, but now I am even afraid to send my son to military service.” (YNKP-14, F, 45)
In general, the public sentiment was that the TSK is the apple of this nation's eye. Emotional and religious definitions of the TSK such as “Peygamber Ocağı” (The Army of the Prophet) came up frequently in the interviews. It is clear that this tendency is not specific to a city or a region:

“No, it [my view] has not changed. The military is the ‘Army of the Prophet.’ The military means us.” (TKS-15, M, 43)

“Yes I know that the TSK is a state within the state but it is the ‘Army of the Prophet,’ the purge was successful so I trust it more now.” (İZM-15, M, 61)

“What changed is this: the traitors within the army need to be purged. From now on people need to be vetted properly. My view has not changed at all, it is the ‘Army of the Prophet.’ We need to fix it. We need to close down Kuleli, and the Cadet Schools and put them under civilian control. We need to train university graduates 1-2 years just like police officers. They are poisoning them at Kuleli and the Cadet schools. They are raised with the coup mentality.” (ADN-06, M, 60)

“No the army is still the apple of my eye. The fact that there are a few rotten tomatoes in the crate does not mean that the entire crate is rotten. But the rotten ones need to be thrown away. The military will be cleansed.” (ADN-04, M, 36)

The participants also used the “Mehmetçik” (Little Muhammad, a nickname for soldiers which expresses fondness) reference frequently. It was also stated, however, that the Mehmetçik were unrecognizable during the coup attempt and many people were terrified by this.

“I love our Mehmetçik, but I was very afraid that day. As far as I saw on TV, it was as if they were not our children.” (YNKP-08, F, 47)

Although most of these statements came from those adhering to right/conservative political views, AK Party supporters, idealists or MHP supporter circles, there were also some emotional responses
from secular, leftist, and CHP supporter circles that were supportive of the TSK. The remarks of a participant from Taksim is important to note in this respect:

“TSK with its 750,000 personnel is an institution that I am proud of. Of course the events that took place have affected my views. The institution I trusted so much became helpless, but the TSK shouldn't be blamed as a whole.” (TKS-02, M, 25)

A shopkeeper from Van who identifies himself as a HDP supporter stated that from now on he would view the military in a more positive way.

“I think my approach to the TSK is more positive now. I was saddened but I am glad that there will be a clean-up.” (VAN-05, M, 42)

Another participant from Van stated that the TSK is the ‘Army of the Prophet’ and that after FETÖ elements are cleansed the military would recover.

“The TSK was always the ‘Army of the Prophet’ but it did not act accordingly. We were very saddened. FETÖ has corrupted the TSK but I believe it will recover. Some hasty measures are being taken but I absolutely believe that with a good education the TSK will recover. Let us assume that the histories of Turks, Kurds are 4,000 or 5,000 years old. When Alparslan came to Anatolia in 1071 thousands of Muslim Kurds supported him. When Saladin conquered Jerusalem he did so not as a Kurd but as a Muslim. And the army has existed all this time. The TSK needs to reclaim that spirit. I hope that the Turkish Armed Forces will follow a better path.” (VAN-09, M, 58)

A participant from Taksim who identified himself as a social democrat stated that a distrust had formed toward the TSK and that because of the coup attempt people were drawn closer to the police, and away from the TSK.

“We fell in love with the police but we were disappointed with the TSK. After the recent events we have become confused. We hope that the staff that is assigned after the Supreme
Military Council meeting on July 28 states that they are the nation itself. But for now, there is distrust toward the TSK. Although some try to deny this and try to distinguish various groups in the army this distrust still exists.” (TKS-06, M, 38)

A participant who identified himself as a religious liberal implied that a negative impression has formed because of the past attitude of the TSK. Moreover he highlighted that the latest coup attempt took place because of the AK Party’s reforms against military tutelage.

“Before the AK Party came to power our perception of the TSK was that the TSK saw itself as the rightful owner of the country. In previous times a tutelage mentality was in place. During the AK Party rule there was more civilian control and that is why the coup happened. Therefore, I welcome the reforms that put the military under civilian control.” (VAN-02, M, 47)

A participant, who is a master’s graduate and attended the Yeşilkapı Democracy and Martyrs’ Rally (which took place with the participation of three political parties that have seats in the Assembly), indicated that she already felt distant toward the TSK and that she had an anti-militarist tendency in the past. However, the participant identified herself as a Muslim and highlighted that Muslims should also be in the TSK from now on.

“I had supported the ‘do not serve in the military’ campaign. Those who were FETÖ members and returned from the army said that there were high-ranking FETÖ officers in the military. There is mistrust toward the military, for example my friend says that she did not think the soldiers would be merciful. We struggled with the militarist mentality very much. Of course Turkey needs an army. I think that at Erdoğan’s turn to China for the defense industry was a turning point with the U.S. I think Muslims should be in the army as well, I think it is a sign of a healthy system.” (YNKP-01, F, 25)
THE PERCEPTION OF FETÖ

The participants were asked about their attitude toward FETÖ in order to determine what kind of changes occurred before and after the coup. In the interviews, which were conducted with participants with different political ideologies and identities, there was unanimous agreement that FETÖ existed and that it posed a big threat to Turkey. In terms of their knowledge and opinion about the organization there were three different groups: those who viewed FETÖ negatively from the beginning; those who had positive views but changed their minds subsequent to the Gezi Park incidents and the December 17-25 coup attempt; and those who have a clearer opinion of FETÖ as of July 15.

Those in the first group had a negative attitude toward FETÖ from the very beginning. It is interesting that the percentage of the first group is smaller than other groups. The group of participants who had a negative attitude stated that the organization's
approach to religion had inconsistencies and perversions, and that this was the reason for their negativity. Others said they had decided to stay away due to personal experiences, while some stated that they viewed religious communities in general negatively and that worship should be a private matter. The participants who viewed the religious approach of the organization negatively made the following statements:

“My view was already negative. It was problematic from a religious standpoint. The organization was introverted, it did not instill trust and it was selfish. This kept me away from them.” (KSK-01, M, 56)

“The end justifies the means, this mentality is not appropriate for a Muslim… For a Muslim it is not right to try to pursue good by using evil. The political situation today clearly shows that Fetullah Gülen completely instrumentalized Islam and that genuine Muslims were manipulated to serve his ends. If people have not rented out their brains they should be able to see this.” (ADN-05, M, 26)

“I did not view them positively before as well. Because they commercialized their organization and they even said the headscarf was just a detail. You cannot say that it is a detail to a believer. It is not a detail!” (YNKP-03, M, 26)

A 50-year-old shopkeeper from Diyarbakır highlighted that the organization did not resonate with the public but they had strong roots in the bureaucracy. He also stated that due to his negative attitude toward the organization and his refusal to make the donation for kurban (the animal that is sacrificed during the Islamic holiday Eid al-Adha) the police officers who were members of the organization took him into custody.

“Because I refused to donate for kurban they threw me to the ground and handcuffed me in my workplace and took me into custody for three days.” (DYB-06, M, 50)
Another participant who criticized the organization’s approach to religion stated that she had to stay in the organization’s dormitories and that she witnessed the exclusion of some religious people by the organization.

“When I was studying at Fatih University, I did not realize the kind of organization they were. But I did notice that they did not recruit those with an Islamic background. There were sisters (the women in charge) and during my two-year stay I constantly objected to them during the conversations (special discussion sessions lead by the sisters and brothers). There were some sisters in my department and there was the sister of the faculty. When we went to a reading camp they read Gülen books while I read other books in protest. I think the members were completely enchanted. They were the incarnation of arrogance. My decision to attend Fatih University was not well-informed.” (YNKP-01, F, 25)

Many of those who have had negative views of FETÖ since its beginnings in the 1970s stated that their negative views were based on personal experiences. For instance, the turning point for a 46-year-old woman in terms of her view of FETÖ was the closing down of the Imam Hatip high school (high school which includes a religious education) where she was studying when she was living in Isparta during the 1980 coup. The high school was later turned over to the Gülen Foundation.

“I was never naïve about the Gülen group. I studied at an Imam Hatip high school in Isparta. My school’s grounds were very large. The ownership of the school was turned over to the Akyazılı Foundation during the September 12 operations. The foundation belonged to Gülen. The deeds of the school were given to them. They later constructed two schools on the school grounds. Our objections were conveyed to Gülen but he ignored them and the schools got built. We were deprived of our own school.” (ANK-20, F, 46)

Other participants who were skeptical of Fetullah Gülen stated how they had been right all along.
“Every government which got close to Fetullah Gülen was overthrown with a coup. Ecevit included. These governments were never replaced by an election. Whenever the organization did not approve of certain actions taken by a government, they executed a coup.” (TRB-08, M, 25)

“I was always suspicious of Fetullah. They were always obscure and manipulative. I never felt sympathy for them; they did not instill any trust.” (ANK-07, F, 45)

The percentage of participants in the second group is larger than the others. Those who perceived the organization negatively were largely in the second group. These participants stated that they changed their views from positive to negative after the 2013 Gezi Park incidents and the December 17-25 coup attempt.

“I felt love and respect for them until December 17-25. It was over after that. Now I hate them. We did not realize the threat until it was too late. These people are insidious, dishonest and hypocritical.” (KSK-05, M, 52)

“I studied at their ‘dershane’ (private educational institutions that provide preparation for centralized entrance exams for high schools and universities). I read their works. December 17 was a turning point.” (KSK-06, M, 33)

“These people are a large group. This dishonorable man [Fetullah Gülen] went to the U.S. Before that he was our teacher -I am from Erzurum- we listened to him and we respected him.” (İZM-15, M, 61)

The participants who had interacted with FETÖ expressed their regret in various ways. For instance a participant from Trabzon expressed his regret for attending Gülen’s dershanes.

“May Allah forgive me. Allah will punish me anyway but I am very angry with myself for attending his dershanes and giving them money.” (TRB-02, M, 17)

Two other participants expressed their feelings of being deceived and expressed their regret.
“My brother, until 10 years ago he was crying on TV, we did not know he was evil. How could we have known he was going to betray us and his homeland like this?” (TRB-07, M, 63)

“I gave money to these people. As I said I am a conservative and as a conservative I value helping people. I sent money to orphans in Africa through Bank Asya. It turns out the guy gambled our money away in Kıbrıs.” (ADN-01, M, 50)

Alongside the Gezi incidents and December 17-25, a 26-year-old male participant from Adana stated that his negative approach to FETÖ began with its reaction to the Mavi Marmara incident.

“I have been especially upset with them ever since I heard their remarks on the Mavi Marmara incident. This bothered me even more than the people he planted and the things he said about our people and our homeland.” (ADN-05, M, 26)

The participants who stated that their views on FETÖ changed after the July 15 coup attempt can be divided into two categories: those who avoided considering FETÖ as a sinister organization and are of a conservative-right persuasion, and those who did not know very much about FETÖ and learned about the organization with July 15 and are of a persuasion close to the CHP and HDP. A 59-year-old participant who identified as a conservative and a retired teacher stated how his view of FETÖ changed completely after July 15.

“Until July 15, I considered the claim that FETÖ was a terrorist organization as an exaggeration. Although I believed in conspiracy theories when I was young, I don’t believe in them anymore but the fact that Fetullah Gülen lives in the U.S. proves that the U.S. is involved firsthand in the coup attempt. Our President’s narrative has been proven right. He said that the organization’s foundation was faith, its structure was commerce and its roof was treason. I previously thought this was an exaggeration also. The organization does not have the capacity to execute such a treasonous act, they absolutely had outside support. Just like the PKK which claims
to be a Kurdish movement, this organization also receives critical support from foreign powers.” (VAN-09)

There is also another group of participants who had no extensive knowledge of FETÖ and started understanding the organization after July 15. This group is mostly left-leaning. Two of these participants stated:

“I don't have information or an analysis that dates back years. I don't know much besides what is told in popular books and media. But now I have questions. How did it get so powerful?” (ANK-22, F, 40)

“I don't know them. We saw their real faces with the coup. I hope they stay away from us.” (SRC-08, F, 52)

Lastly, the participants who developed a negative bias toward all religious communities or who did not change their minds should not be neglected. In this context the following statement from a participant is important:

“The latest incidents have changed my view. I pray five times a day but I don’t cover my head. I am a Muslim and I am not after anybody’s property. Let me be blunt, I don’t trust anyone. As I said what matters to me is praying five times a day.” (YNKP-05, F, 50)

Another participant stated that FETÖ did not change his mind about religious communities.

“I have seen good religious communities. Nobody can change that. That community may have been a harmful one, but Allah has given humans a mind and reason. If you use it righteously, then you will never be defeated.” (YNKP-13, M, 47)

In summary, three groups emerge after analyzing the participants’ views on FETÖ: those who viewed FETÖ negatively from the beginning; those who changed their minds after certain public incidents; and those who have a clearer opinion after the evening of July 15. Perhaps it will be useful to include a fourth group consist-
ing of those who developed a negative attitude toward all religious communities subsequent to the actions of FETÖ. In terms of ratios the second group is the largest. From this the conclusion can be drawn that the public’s view of FETÖ evolved negatively over time and that support for FETÖ has been diminishing over time. As the significant size of the third group suggests, after the July 15 coup attempt the public developed a negative view of FETÖ, and the threat that it poses has been generally accepted.

PEOPLE’S MEMORY OF COUPS AND THE JULY 15 COUP ATTEMPT

The July 15 coup attempt was different from previous military coups in Turkey. Instead of an ideological background this attempt was conducted by actors who drew support from a messianic belief system. Although a coup statement was read on TRT that outlined the coup’s goals, the statement’s content was far from showing sings of ideological integrity and consistency. The coup perpetrators attacked people without hesitation; hundreds of people were martyred and thousands were injured. Their actions revealed that they are not part of this society. In this sense, the July 15 coup attempt can be considered as an act of terror that was conducted by a terrorist organization that had infiltrated the armed forces. Yet, people have unavoidably tried to compare this attempt with previous coups – a fact that has become clear in the course of this study. The participants who were 40 years old or older tended to compare July 15 with older coups. In general, participants stated that July 15 held no resemblance to previous coups and coup attempts, and that no coup had been as cruel as the July 15 one.

The condition of the country was one of the important issues that was raised when comparing the old coups and July 15. It was highlighted that there was no atmosphere of conflict in the country
that could justify the latest coup attempt. The execution of Democrat Party (DP) leader Adnan Menderes as a result of a coup instilled a strong reaction in the collective memory against coups. The fact that every coup attempt after 1960 affected various identity groups generated a common reaction in the collective memory against coups. A 62-year-old Cyprus veteran from Ankara made the following comparison:

“I saw that the people were very supportive. Nobody was aware of anything when the 1980 coup was executed at midnight. There was only one television channel back then. It was very sudden. The people could not have gone outside that time, the people were exhausted. We were fed up with the incidents. But now the people have confidence. We saw the 1980 coup, Turkey was in a very bad shape then. Now there is no such situation.” (ANK-09, M, 62)

A 56-year-old participant who is an AK Party supporter was interviewed in the CHP rally in Taksim and stated that the atmosphere of conflict during 1980 was used to convince the people to accept the 1980 coup.

“They had groomed the people for the 1980 coup. The right-left conflict was used as a foundation. People were being killed in front of our eyes, right in front of our windows. They did a very good job convincing the people. We woke up on the morning of the September 12 coup and we heard the Chief of the General Staff speaking on the radio. People were really relieved. Nobody died or got injured. Such a foundation does not exist today, the economy is not doing very well but there is no reason for a coup. What did you count on, what empowered you to do this? They had so much confidence that they started the coup at nine instead of three as they had previously planned.” (TKS-03, M, 56)

A 48-year-old female participant from Diyarbakır who identified herself as distant from the AK Party described the scenes from Diyarbakır before 1980 as follows:
“I was a child when a journalist was murdered in front of me in the street with a gun. I can never forget his camera scattering on the ground. Before the 1980 coup, the streets were always like that, there was chaos. But there was not an atmosphere of chaos that could justify July 15.” (DYB-02, F, 48)

The strengthening of civil politics has undoubtedly been one of the major reasons that the July 15 coup attempt failed. People’s reaction to events was transformed in an environment where democratic politics gained strength and military influence on politics was weakened.

A 46-year-old male industrialist highlighted the following point:

“Turkey was not as developed when the 1980 coup happened. The private sector had not developed as much. Belief in civilian politics was not as extensive. In this context, the AK Party government was a reform government. Therefore unlike previous governments AK Party governments pursued civil-democratic reforms rather than succumbing to tutelage. Instead of turning to the military and depending on them, the AK Party governments focused on civilian democratic politics. Previously the people instinctively turned to the military for protection.” (VAN-02, M, 47)

A 41-year-old female participant stated that she was a 5-year-old child during the 1980 coup and that during those times conflict and deaths had become a part of life. She added that today there is no such atmosphere and therefore people reacted strongly against the coup attempt.

“As a child I experienced an environment of conflict two months before the coup. Armed conflicts were part of our daily lives. Now there is no such environment. The attempt ended quickly. We can all take pride in the fact that people did not want this coup. Only a small group said ‘Oh no, they failed.’ That is the most dramatic difference from 1980. In 1980, there was a coffee shop and exactly opposite there was a pharmacy where the leftists sat. The elderly women crossing the street would ask ‘Are you boys going to fire at each other? I do not want to get caught in the crossfire.” (ANK-23, F, 41)
Another participant who compared the conditions that lead to the earlier coup attempt and the process that lead to the July 15 coup attempt expressed the difference thus:

“In the last coup attempt we reacted as a country. There was no such understanding in 1980. The events of ’77-’78 exhausted all the energy and there was chaos during those times. This is not the case today. Today the economy is a little stagnant but otherwise there is nothing to compare with the conditions of 1980.” (TKS-06, M, 38)

Participants especially highlighted that there was not enough public outcry against the execution of Adnan Menderes. A 52-year-old female participant stated that she went out on July 15 to prevent President Erdoğan from sharing the same fate as Menderes.

“I am the granddaughter of a DP member. He was the provincial chairman of İzmir. He told me that Menderes once said ‘I believe in my people.’ But the people he believed in did nothing. All the things he suffered came to my mind, the putting out of cigarettes on him came to my mind, and I went out.” (ANK-12, F, 52)

Another participant who highlighted the success of the resistance that people demonstrated in the streets stated that this did not happen following the May 27, 1960 coup.

“If people had taken to the streets in the 1960 coup then Adnan Menderes would not have been hanged.” (TRB-12, M)

A 60-year-old female participant who is retired, stated that in the past the media and communications technologies were not as advanced as today and that this enabled the earlier coups to succeed.

“Until now coups always happened late in the night, so nobody believed it at first. In the past there were no calls to the public but this time it happened differently. Also in the past when coups happened in Turkey they controlled the entire country immediately. This time the coup only took place in İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir and since it was not the entire country it did not succeed.” (TKS-08, F, 60)
In summary, when the participants compared the July 15 coup attempt to past coups, they concluded that the conditions for a coup had not formed and the coup attempt was carried out irrespective of this. Participants also believed that Turkey’s problematic democracy and its weak political will were factors that had lead to the success of earlier coups, and that in the July 15 coup attempt the political will had thwarted the effort. It was also revealed that Adnan Menderes’s execution above all generated a collective memory against the past coups and that this influenced people’s decision to take to the streets that evening.

ATTITUDES OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES TOWARD THE JULY 15 COUP ATTEMPT

When Turkey’s past military coups are considered there are several incidents when political actors collaborated with military officials. It is important to note that this collaboration was crucial for establishing a ground for the coups to be later legitimized. The July 15 coup attempt was different from these earlier coups as there was no political actor who collaborated with the coup perpetrators. On the contrary, all political actors stated that they reject the coup attempt and that they stand by the elected government.

During the July 15 coup attempt, the first statement from the opposition parties came from Devlet Bahçeli. The MHP leader Bahçeli called Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım at 23:48 and stated that the putsch was unacceptable and that they are standing with the elected government. CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu distributed a written statement at 01:07 (July 16) which said “This country has suffered very much from coups. We do not want the same problems to be experienced. We are protecting our republic and our democracy and we are preserving our faith in these.”

The last statement from the opposition parties came from the HDP at 01:30. The HDP statement on Twitter read “In a period in
which Turkey is facing important challenges, nobody should try to replace the will of the people, no matter the justification. The HDP is opposed to any coup in principal and under any circumstance. There is no way other than protecting democratic politics.”

The statements by the participants concerning the attitude of the opposition parties toward the coup fall under three main views. The first is that both during the coup attempt and after it, the fact that the opposition parties acted in unison with the government and stood together at the special session in the Assembly that evening deserves praise.

A 25-year-old male participant from Sakarya who is a master’s student highlighted that this display of unity increased people’s motivation.

“Bahçeli’s quick reaction enabled the idealists’ (ülkücüler) community to flood to the streets and increased everyone’s morale. In this sense his reaction was very important and deserves praise. I was not aware of Kılıçdaroğlu’s reaction and I found out later. But that reaction was also very important. I did not know the HDP’s reaction but I saw it later. The formation of this kind of unity from the beginning was very important.” (SAK-09)

During the interviews conducted in Diyarbakır, Devlet Bahçeli’s attitude during the July 15 process was highlighted and although some participants did not feel themselves close to Bahçeli politically, they stated that they admired his attitude.

“Devlet Bahçeli has earned a lot of sympathy in Diyarbakır. His approach and mentality left positive impressions on me. As a person from Diyarbakır, I expected the HDP to be more active but they were not. There is a saying here ‘Ölü evinde kavga olmaz’ (No one should fight in a home where people are mourning). They should have abided by this.” (DYB-01, M, 45)

A participant who does not consider himself close to Bahçeli but approved of his attitude said
“The speech that Bahçeli gave the day subsequent to the coup was very good. I liked it even though my political persuasion is different from Bahçeli’s. I did not like İdris Baluken’s speech. His remark that the events in the East were as important as the coup was misplaced and inconsistent.” (DYB-03, F, 40)

Some participants stated that although the display of unity was important, it was more important that it translated into practical cooperation, and that this unity was important in the failure of the coup. A 32-year-old male participant from Trabzon conveyed that he had direct information relating to this matter.

“The degree in which they stood united is open to debate, but they did what needed to be done. They could not draw people out but they supported the people. There were definitely other parties as well. I saw them. There were small in terms of numbers but they were there. My friends from different persuasions went out; I spoke to them personally on the phone.” (TRB-08)

“Although all the parties came out against the coup, we had hoped that every party would have organized their provincial and county staff so they could be more involved in the resistance.” (SAK-01, M, 34)

A portion of the participants stated that the opposition parties acted in their own interest in relation to Fetullah Gülen and that this should be criticized. But nevertheless the display of unity and togetherness was important.

The second dominant view among participants regarding the attitudes of the opposition was that the opposition parties were late in making statements and that they adjusted their position according to the flow of events. Some participants thought that the parties were unsuccessful and passive about mobilizing their own masses. They also argued that the opposition parties would have taken different positions if the coup had shown signs of succeeding.
On this matter a 26-year-old male participant from Adana said

“After understanding that it [the coup] was not going to succeed, everyone took this stance. Kılıçdaroğlu joining a live broadcast is an example of the mentality of good journalism. I applaud those who did it. Of course he was not going to say he supports the coup in a live interview. This way any coup supporters in İzmir were thwarted. I think Meral Akşener would have become prime minister if the coup had been successful.” (ADN-05, M, 26)

Those who held this view were skeptical about the sincerity of the parties other than the MHP. There were participants who claimed that the CHP and HDP had to support the government and that in the future they would withdraw their support. A 25-year-old male participant expressed this claim as follows:

“I thought that the CHP would observe the flow of events and then take a position. And it did wait. Once events developed in AKP’s favor they took a stance. This stance reduced the polarization between the parties. But if the coup had been successful the CHP would have stood by the coup perpetrators. The CHP supported the AKP because the needle of power was pointing toward the AKP. In terms of the HDP, Selahattin Demirtaş’s presence in Diyarbakır and the fact that he did not join the joint statement are indicators that the HDP did nothing.” (ANK-01, M, 25)

Some participants who thought that the CHP and HDP displayed a hesitant attitude made comparisons with the 2013 Gezi Park protests. A 32-year-old PhD student from Ankara highlighted the following:

“The idealists (ülkücüler) surprised us very much after the coup attempt. At first, the Grey Wolves were very effective, and Kılıçdaroğlu also acted unexpectedly. During the course of the Gezi protests, the CHP and HDP called thousands onto the streets. I would have expected a statement from them. This time they did not call people to the streets and in the coup attempt there were also many trees that turned into ashes.” (ANK-13, M, 32)
The third view that was discerned in regards to the opposition parties was formed by supporters of the opposition who thought that the opposition parties were inadequate. A 25-year-old female participant who identified as a HDP supporter criticized her party as follows:

“My own party is HDP, I cast my vote for them in the last two elections although I had reservations. But I think that although the HDP opposed the coup, as a party which calls people to the streets with every small event they should have called people to the streets against the coup. The HDP should have organized its own rallies. In the demonstrations there were mostly AK Party and MHP supporters. I wish there were more people like me in those events. That is why I feel a little strange.” (ANK-14, F, 25)

A 58-year-old retired teacher from Van commented on HDP’s attitude during the process:

“Unfortunately as an easterner I strongly protest the HDP. They almost stood by the coup. The statement ‘I oppose the coup and I oppose Erdoğan’ is not a good one. This is what happens when the fate of us Kurds is left to three or five people. As a Kurd I do not think that the HDP ruled by Ertuğrul Kürkçü and Figen Yüksekdağ can protect the rights of any person. I know who they worked for in the past. In my opinion the best reaction came from the MHP. The speech that the MHP leader gave at Yenikapi, İstanbul was wonderful. Also his speech on the first Tuesday was great. The CHP was not sincere. They reacted late. But it was important that they changed their attitude and went to Yenikapı.” (VAN-09, M, 58)

A 40-year-old female HDP supporter from Ankara also criticized her party with the following words:

“The HDP was too late and Selahattin Demirtaş’s statements were inadequate. He should have come out on the first evening of the coup. Figen Yüksekdağ’s statement that there were no women on the squares was a terrible statement. I am critical of the HDP during this process. But it was nice that
they tried to make up for it later. I admired the CHP very much. Kılıçdaroğlu’s general assembly speech was very good. The coup perpetrators expected support from the CHP masses but the CHP stood firmly against it. The MHP also stood strong. This issue has been the only one that all four parties agreed on. I consider this as a gain from this process.” (ANK-22, F, 40)

Although there were participants who questioned the sincerity of the opposition parties’ stance on the coup, all of the participants who were interviewed at Yenikapı highlighted that the political leaders coming together on a position against the coup was very important. A 50-year-old housewife who supports the CHP, stated in Yenikapı

“I thought I should be here today when I saw the people coming with their children. I thought that I should contribute to our country.” (YNKP-05)

This is an important example of how this kind of motivation was an important factor that brought people together. A 36-year-old housewife from Yenikapı described the atmosphere at Yenikapı as follows:

“Setting aside unity and togetherness, we the people love the President not only as a man of the people but as a really sincere person. We feel charmed and emotional when we see him. All these people have made sacrifices to come and stand here. It is impossible to describe with words. We also came after hours of travel and an hour walking. I felt as if I were in Mecca, Medina, on the way to Ka’bah with all these people. There was really a wonderful atmosphere.” (YNKP-10)

In summary, while a portion of the participants admired the attitude of the opposition parties and the display of unity, another portion did not perceive the attitudes of the CHP and HDP against the coup as sincere. The HDP supporters who joined democracy watches criticized their party’s attitude during the process.
FEELING SECURE IN TURKEY AFTER THE JULY 15 COUP ATTEMPT

The psychological condition of the people who were exposed to tanks, fighter jets, helicopters and weaponry, is an important aspect of this research. Certain levels of anger and tension were observed during the interviews. In regards to this, some of the participants occasionally swore or cursed. While the resistance of the people made the public “proud,” the ruthlessness of the armed forces “terrified” the public, negatively affecting the feeling of security in Turkey. It was assumed that the results regarding the feeling of security would be bleak; however, the interviews revealed a completely different reality.

Many of the participants stated that they had been standing watch since the first day. As the most intense conflict occurred in Ankara and İstanbul, the people of these two cities expressed more anxiety and fury when compared to other cities—undoubtedly as a result of being severely traumatized. The interviews revealed that people felt insecure in their own homes, while feeling secure and hopeful in the streets due to the sense of solidarity. For instance, an interviewee who was lightly wounded during the coup attempt expressed his reason for being in the streets as follows:

“If I stay at home and don't go out to the streets, I feel like something bad will happen.” (ANK-07, F, 45)

The participants who said that they felt secure had a spiritual motivation. A 52-year-old housewife in Adana commented thus:

“I always feel secure. Death is the will of God and life is only the road to death. I trust in God; whenever my time comes, I will have to go. Death is inevitable. I believe this country is secure, don't listen to those folks who say it isn't. I believe this is the greatest country, regardless of what happens.” (ADN-09, F, 52)

Some participants pointed out that the emergent unity and Erdoğan’s leadership positively affected the public’s sense of security.
“How can you not feel secure while living among such a capable and wise nation? I probably haven't felt more secure than this. During the night of the coup, my courage had surmounted my fears.” (ANK-14, F, 25)

“I feel safe as I see my people united. I believe Erdoğan is the main reason why we feel safe.” (SAK-16, F, 21)

“I feel secure and I don't believe anything bad will happen.” (TKS-13, M, 47)

“Of course, we feel secure. Look at all these people [in the square]. I mean, even if we die, we will become martyrs. Death is inevitable. Why should we be afraid of it? You have seen the bombing of the parliament, those people there weren't afraid. So, why should we?” (ADN-03, M, 52)

Other participants were more cautious about their sense of security, adding that certain weaknesses in various state institutions made them feel insecure. They especially demanded the reformation of the security forces and intelligence agencies.

“I feel secure, as long as we have a country of our own and the bad apples are being picked out. I don't possess a weapon, but I feel at ease.” (TRB-01, F, 29)

“I feel secure; however, there might be another coup attempt originating from the security forces, like the military, police, or the MİT. These institutions should be restructured.” (İZM-13, F, 29)

“I still don’t trust the police forces. The promotions should be made carefully. It is said that they have captured the [putschist] generals. Still, I think they [the putschists] will get away with relatively small penalties.” (ANK-07, F, 45)

Some participants said that they didn’t feel secure. A 42-year-old publicist, who was interviewed after the CHP’s Taksim rally, said that he didn’t feel secure and was afraid of a vulnerability following the July 15 coup attempt.
“I do not feel secure. There will be a vulnerability in security. This is what everyone is afraid of. The apprehension of 100 generals out of 300 might cause issues.” (TKS-12, M, 42)

A participant from Van expressed his anxiety related with the existence of high-ranking FETÖ members among the public.

“I felt more secure before July 15, even though I live in Van. I blame the MİT for such vulnerabilities. There is a security vulnerability at the moment. If there are FETÖ members close to even Erdoğan, I cannot think about my situation. It seems like our lives are hanging by a thread. The late intelligence on the coup has really saddened me.” (VAN-09, M, 47)

A 62-year-old Cyprus veteran living in Ankara said that he didn’t feel secure due to the extensive infiltration of FETÖ.

“Even the imam of the mosque I go to is a FETÖ supporter. For God’s sake, I have prayed behind him. That’s why I trust myself to God. But, I still don’t feel secure. I am not afraid; I just don’t believe I am secure. God is the Almighty.” (ANK-09, M, 62)

A 45-year-old housewife, who was interviewed at Yenikapi, stated that the feeling of insecurity was affecting her daily life.

“Believe me, I cannot even say hi to my neighbors who I know are FETÖ sympathizers. We live under the same flag, but our characters are so different. We feel uneasy. I still cannot get a good night’s sleep as I fear the possibility of another coup.” (YNKP-14, F, 45)

To sum up, the majority of participants stated that they felt secure after July 15. As people played an important role in obstructing the coup attempt, their self-confidence was bolstered which, in turn, nurtures the feeling of security. However, some of the participants stated that they have some concerns about the future, as they are afraid of undercover FETÖ members and supporters.
COMBATING THE PUTCHISTS AND THE COUP SUPPORTERS

Dealing with the failed coup attempt and the putschists will serve two functions: relieving the people while serving justice, and guaranteeing the permanency of democracy. In this sense, the reactions against FETÖ should be considered as a part of Turkey’s existential struggle. All actions taken are reflection of a will to prevent the current and future infiltration of a terrorist organization into the state institutions. It is one of the prerequisites of becoming a healthier democratic constitutional state.

The coup and its supporters will be dealt with both within a political and a legal frame. To deal with politically refers to the government taking certain precautions, while to deal with legally signifies the judiciary’s actions against the putschists.

POLITICAL PROCEDURES

The precautions that have to be taken are being extensively discussed. The participants of this research suggested various options for these precautions.

Most participants expressed the desire that the putschists be judged swiftly and with determination, while their supporters within state institutions should be removed from their positions. Believing that FETÖ goes to great extents to incorporate people starting from childhood, the participants expressed the opinion that the examination system has to be reformed to prevent similar processes from happening again. A 36-year-old doctoral student in Adana stated

“We have revised our examination system. This organization takes their members when they are 12- and 13-year-old children and imposes their ideology on them. It is hard to change or rehabilitate them after they are adults. Think about it, you have become a general or a prosecutor, but you still
take orders from this organization. There is a significant threat abroad. They have hundreds of schools abroad and they have been providing education for decades. They have the same organization abroad. What was their apparent mission? To spread the use of Turkish and promote Turkey. However, I believe they are probably spreading hate for Turkey now.” (ADN-04, 36)

Some participants, touching on similar aspects of FETÖ schools, claimed that new organizations are needed to lobby against FETÖ abroad. When discussing how FETÖ supporters should be removed from their offices in state institutions, participants used expressions such as “purge” and “cleanse.” A 38-year-old CHP supporter when talking about the state of emergency said

“[I] guess it was needed, so I cannot say anything against it. We support this decision of the President, Prime Minister and the government. They [FETÖ] should be cleansed without causing harm to innocent people. We believe the reforms will resolve the issue.” (TKS-10, F, 38)

Similarly, some participants pointed out their belief that removing FETÖ members and supporters will not constitute a resolution in itself. They said that the future organization of such groups should be prevented. A 33-year-old academic from Kısıklı stated

“The threat was realized a bit late. These [FETÖ members] are cowards, liars and two-faced scums. The strict policies against them should be maintained. Their properties should be confiscated. From now on, no congregation should be able to move this freely. Justice should be upheld.” (KSK-06, M, 33)

The majority of the participants agreed that the military schools and institutions should be restructured. Signifying that this process should be done without harming the TSK, they argued that more control mechanisms were needed. A 34-year-old educator in Sakarya stated that the public perception of the military should shift.
“We should prevent the putschist mindset by agreeing on a singular educational system which is in accord with the legal framework. For example, instead of boasting about past military victories and such, we should focus on promoting human rights and the law.” (SAK-01, M, 34)

The participants suggested that the government should be cautious of its actions during the state of emergency and not neglect its international endeavors. They added that they expect the government to demand Gülen’s extradition from the U.S. and to effectively negotiate with the U.S. authorities on this subject.

LEGAL PROCEDURES

FETÖ is responsible for two different kinds of infringements. The first is on a constitutional level, as they tried to disrupt the country’s constitutional order, and the second is in regards to human rights as a direct result of the murders and injuries they inflicted on the people. Consequently, the coup attempt should be addressed by the national judicial system with the support of laws on universal human rights. Another benefit of this process will be the generation of a negative public opinion of FETÖ.

Undoubtedly, the first step of the process was the removal and apprehension of FETÖ-affiliated personnel: tens of thousands of FETÖ supporters were removed from their official posts.

The process of finding and removing the personnel who were involved in the coup attempt will provide the basis for legal action. Suspects who are charged with the crime will be legally penalized. These penalties will be determined according to both the country’s penal code and the laws regarding universal human rights.

The participants were asked their opinion on what the legal procedure against FETÖ members should be. A 50-year-old shopkeeper in Diyarbakır said that the legal procedure should be handled with caution and that all decisions should be accountable.
“The legal procedure should not turn out like the Balyoz and Ergenekon trials, being watered down, I mean. The mistakes of judges and courts should not be forgiven. Especially in the military and the judiciary, no Balyoz or Ergenekon suspect should replace the posts left by the removed FETÖ members. They will show us no mercy.” (DYB-06, M, 50)

While the interviews were conducted, the whole event was shrouded in the fog of war and the reintroduction of the death penalty was being discussed. Therefore, when asked their opinions as to the punishment of the putschists, the participants discussed the reintroduction of the death penalty. The majority of the participants stated that the putschists had to be punished by death – this stands witness to the firmness of the people’s stance against the putschists.

There were three distinct ideas on the death penalty: people who approved of it, people who disapproved, and the abstainers. The ratio of those who approved of and disapproved of the death penalty was very close in Ankara and Istanbul. However, the rigid stance of those who disapproved of the death penalty is noteworthy. As the people in these two cities witnessed the violence of FETÖ members on the streets, and some even witnessed the death of family members and/or friends in the hands of the putschists, they showed a firm stance and a very determined support for the reintroduction of the death penalty. A 46-year-old housewife in Ankara said

“The death penalty should be reintroduced. I am currently doing a master’s degree in Islamic Law. If there is even a fragment of suspicion about a person’s involvement in a crime, you cannot punish them with the death penalty. Even if there was to be a mistrial, there is still the day of reckoning, when the divine justice will be served to all. The death penalty also exists in the military penal code. After what I have seen them [the putschists] do to the people, I have no pity for them.” (ANK-20, F, 46)
In the cities which didn’t witness any armed action, there still was a large number of participants who demanded the reintroduction of the death penalty. Their reasoning was that if the military ever acts against the state and the people, they should be considered as traitors and punished accordingly. Two of the participants claimed that the death penalty may serve as a future deterrent.

“Every one of them [the putschists] should be hanged. You are a soldier; you have everything you want, the state just gives it to you. What problem do you have and attempt a coup?” (İZM-02, M, 54)

“Being dismissed from the army is more than enough as a punishment for the military personnel. On the other hand, crimes similar to treachery and rape should be punished with death penalty. The punishments should act as deterrents.” (KSK-01, M, 56)

Many of the participants were concerned with distinguishing the criminals from those who were innocent. The participants advocating the reintroduction of the death penalty stated that a fair trial is a prerequisite. In general, the participants expressed the importance of judging and punishing the high-ranking officers and the privates, who were only taking orders, separately. In the context of a fair trial, the participants also stated that they were concerned about the possibility of some people deliberately and falsely accusing others of being FETÖ members without any proof. Participants demanded a fair trial from the government for all.

“The putschists, the soldiers who fired at the people and bombed them, should be penalized with something worse than a life sentence. The death penalty would suit them better, but I’m not sure if it is possible legally. The government should act according to the people’s opinions and desires on this subject. Anyone helping FETÖ could be charged with anti-terror laws; however, I believe if the ones supporting them are low-ranking officials, removing them from their posts is adequate. Remorse laws should be applied carefully; otherwise, they will all try to abuse these laws.” (ANK-08, M, 29)
“We see that the reintroduction of the death penalty is being demanded by the public. However, it is easy to accuse anyone of being a FETÖ member during this process. The guilty might disguise themselves as innocent, while the innocent suffer for their crimes. The distinction between the guilty and the innocent should be clear. Moreover, the TSK’s reputation must also be preserved.” (İZM-13, F, 29)

“We desire the death penalty, I know some innocent people might be wrongly accused. Therefore, serving life in prison is better, as you can correct certain mistakes.” (SRC-02, M, 48)

Many of the participants stated that certain preconditions should be fulfilled in order to reintroduce the death penalty. Numerous of them said that Abdullah Öcalan, the former leader of the PKK, along with rapists should also be executed. There were also participants who approved of the reintroduction of the death penalty, only as a temporary provision and on the condition that the putschists are given a fair trial.

“We don’t have the death penalty in our constitution now; however, I believe it should be temporarily reintroduced for this occasion. Still, I think that we should have it in our constitution. The U.S. and Russia have it. If the criminals deserve it, you should execute them.” (TRB-04, M, 50)

“I think the death penalty should be included in the constitution. However, I think it is dangerous. Many innocent people were hanged before. I am not really sure.” (İZM-09, F, 32)

The participants who were against the death penalty expressed different motivations for disapproving of the reintroduction of capital punishment. They can be split into four groups: people who believe the death penalty is inhumane and inadequate; people who want criminals to be judged according to the existing legal system; people who are against it on the basis of their beliefs; and people who think that the reintroduction of the death penalty would harm the chances of Turkey’s prospective EU membership. It is notewor-
thy that many of the participants were indecisive about the death penalty, before deciding to completely disapprove of it. This indicates that people were not yet thinking extensively about the legal procedure and punishment.

The participants who found the death penalty inadequate stated that the criminals would be “getting off easy” if they were executed and that they should “suffer” for their crimes.

“Execution is the easiest way out. All of them [the putschists] should be chained and forced into forced servitude in mines or something. People should be able to watch them through live feed.” (TKS-15, M, 43)

A 52-year-old shopkeeper in Adana said

“Everybody is talking about the death penalty. I believe they should be locked up in prison and suffer there. Execution is like an escape for them. I will tell this to Tayyip [Erdoğan] as well, I will send him a message. They should suffer in prison, while their properties are confiscated. I believe life sentence is worth more than a thousand executions.” (ADN-03, M, 52)

Some participants expressed the belief that the death penalty is against human rights.

“I want the putschists to suffer in dungeons, but I don’t want the death penalty. I believe it is inhumane. We must fight against FETÖ; their schools should be closed down and the coup supporters should be deported.” (ANK-07, F, 45)

“The putschists are terrorists. But I’m thinking about their families; they didn’t do anything wrong. The death penalty seems inhumane. I’m thinking about their wives and children.” (ANK-05, M, 48)

Another group of participants pointed out that the death penalty is not within the current legal and penal system, and demanded that the putschists be punished according to the existing system. The participants stated that Turkey is a democratic constitutional state and has to act in accordance with EU harmonization laws. The
majority of the participants against the death penalty voiced their concerns about deviating from the state of affairs of other democratic countries. A 25-year-old postgraduate student said

“It is important to relieve the public by punishing the criminals accordingly. This must be achieved. Our current legal and penal system does not allow the death penalty. A gradual punishment system can be carried out; the higher their rank, the more severe the punishment.” (SAK-09, M, 25)

The majority of the people at the democracy watches can be identified as conservatives. There were two different attitudes toward the death penalty, both of them having a religious undertone: some were against it believing that only God can end a life, while others supported the death penalty on the premise of retaliation, “eye for an eye,” which exists in Islam. These participants stated that they were conservatives and AK Party supporters. A 51-year-old woman in Adana said

“God endowed life to people and only God can take it. I don’t want that [the death penalty].” (ADN-10, F, 51)

A 39-year-old computer scientist in İstanbul said

“I don’t want the reintroduction of the death penalty, but punishments such as aggravated life imprisonment and lethal injection could be implemented, just as a deterrent. I believe we should also take Islamic law into consideration in this situation.” (SRC-06, M, 39)

Only a minority of participants didn’t talk about the death penalty when asked about how the legal and penal process should proceed. Along with other factors, the fact that slogans about the death penalty were chanted by the public during the democracy watches obviously contributed to this situation. As stated previously, the public didn’t extensively think about the legal and penal procedures, but were affected by the discussions in the media. Some of the participants proposed different methods of punishments un-
related to the death penalty. These included punishments such as aggravated life imprisonment and deportation. A 34-year-old academic in İstanbul said

“All of them should be deported. They committed a slaughter. If they continue to stay inside the country’s borders, it will harm the social fabric. They are already being excluded by the public. This trauma may threaten the social unity of Turkey.” (KSK-06)

A 36-year-old journalist in Van, who defined himself as “a left-leaning patriot,” said that the death penalty violates the ‘right to life’ and proposed the deportation of the putschists.

“People who want to divide our country should be expatriated. I believe life sentence is suitable, but I’m definitely against the death penalty. Everyone has the right to life.” (VAN-01, M, 36)

A 45-year-old real estate agent in İstanbul said

“They are already ashamed which is punishment itself. Life sentence is the best option. I’m against the death penalty.” (KSK-07, F, 45)

A group of participants didn’t express their opinions on the penal method, stating that they trust the state in punishing the criminals. A 30-year-old participant in Eskişehir said

“I believe the government will give the putschists the most suitable punishment.” (ESK-11, M, 30)

A 34-year-old academic in Sakarya expressed her opinion on this subject as follows:

“[I will approve] what measures are to be taken by the state and what the judiciary foresees.” (SAK-18, F, 34)

Yet other participants were indecisive about the death penalty either because of their moral values or because they had not thoroughly thought about the penal methods. Several of the participants changed their minds while answering the question, some of
them saying they are both for and against the death penalty when answering different questions. A 22-year-old occupational security specialist in Adana said

“I guess the death penalty is an option, but... (pause) Yeah, it could be reintroduced. However, not everyone should be punished with the death penalty. Only the ringleaders. Privates, for example, they should not be punished in such a way. They didn’t have any choice.” (ADN-02, M, 22)

The observations and interviews at the democracy watches point to the fact that the reintroduction of the death penalty is demanded by a significant number of people. While some of the participants explained their reasoning for supporting the death penalty, others just voiced their demand for it without hesitation. According to the latter, treachery should be punished by death. People against the death penalty displayed two different approaches: people who consider the death penalty inhumane and people who found it inadequate. The death penalty is being legitimized on two seemingly contradictory bases: the ruthlessness of the putschists, and the inhumanity of taking a person’s life regardless of their crime.

Another important finding while discussing the death penalty is the people’s frequent reference to EU harmonization laws and Turkey being a democratic constitutional state. It was noticed that there was a significant number of participants who believed Turkey’s EU membership process would end if the death penalty were to be reintroduced. Similarly, another significant group believed that the criminals should be punished according to the existing legal and penal system.

In summary, it was observed that people in certain cities felt happy and victorious, while in others they experienced mixed feelings. All participants took a stern stance against FETÖ and its members. The majority felt that this organization’s members should be sentenced to death. Those in favor of capital punishment in Ankara
and İstanbul, the two cities which suffered the most during the coup attempt, had a harsher stance toward FETÖ members. Evaluating the interviews, it can be argued that people mostly reiterated the discussions on the death penalty in the media, as they may not have found the time and space to think the topic through due to the traumatic nature of the recent events. Meanwhile, the slogans about the death penalty which were being chanted at the democracy watches kept the idea of its reintroduction alive in people’s minds.

**WHAT WOULD BE THE NEXT IF THE COUP WAS SUCCESSFUL?**

The answer to the question “What would have happened if the coup had been successful?” was widely discussed in the media. The majority of the experts claimed that it would have had catastrophic effects on Turkey; Turkey might have descended into anarchy as a result of a raging civil war, in which millions of people would die or be forced to immigrate. There were claims which suggest that FETÖ leader Fetullah Gülen would have returned to Turkey and established a bureaucratic dictatorship shaped by his perverse religious understanding. Another theory was that, seeking the West’s sympathy, FETÖ elements would have established a modernist authoritarian regime in a smaller part of Turkey, while ruling the remaining territories with their perverse religious understanding.32

Similar to the experts, the participants expressed their belief that Turkey would have descended into anarchy, like Syria, and that the country would have eventually succumbed to the dominion of foreign powers.

“Everything [would have ended]. Not only my life, but also the Republic of Turkey. It would have been torn apart, along

32 Halil Berktay, “Ya Türkiyeye'deki darbe girişimi başarşaydı?” [What would have happened if the coup attempt was successful?], Serbestiyet, August 11 2016
with our children’s future and our own future as well. We would have regressed decades; all of the prosperity, development would have been lost. I am 47 years old and I have seen a lot. I was in Egypt for a time. Five years later, Sisi organized a coup. Now, they have lost almost half a century of development. The examples of what we would have experienced are right in front of us, the Turkish people know this well. No one would have been safe even in their homes. We might have been like Syria.” (YNKP-08, F, 47)

“If it [the coup] had been successful, Turkey would have turned into Syria.” (DYB-3, F, 40)

“There would be no private life, because there would have been a civil war. It would be different than the 1980 coup; the situation would have resembled Aleppo, Syria.” (YNKP-02, M, 43)

A 29-year-old participant stated that Gülen would have returned from the U.S. and have led a Turkey which would have been like Syria.

“We would have suffered worse than Syria. 250 people were killed during the coup, many thousands would have been killed every day if the coup had been successful. People would have armed themselves, going out to the streets, battling the military every day. The military would have fired at the public. Then, Fetullah Gülen would have returned to Turkey.” (YNKP-06)

Other participants who stated that they believed Turkey would have become like Syria, claimed that it would have been worse than Syria since no one would accept the Turks fleeing the country.

“Turkey would have been like Syria, probably even worse. We wouldn’t have had any place to run. Where is there to run? Iran? They wouldn’t take us.” (VAN-05, M, 42)

“It could have been worse than Syria, if the coup had been successful, but I cannot picture it, as I didn’t believe they [the putschist] would succeed. The Syrians have Turkey, but we have no place to go.” (VAN-09, M, 58)
A group of participants suggested that there would have been a never-ending civil war between the putschists and those against the coup, while adding that Turkey would have been divided and incapacitated as a result of the war. One participant claimed that “Turkey would have become like a cage.” A 36-year-old journalist in Van said

“You wouldn't have been around today. The putschist would have killed tens of thousands of people. All politicians would have been either executed or imprisoned. The economy would have collapsed, while all rights and freedoms would have been removed. Turkey would have been divided. Maybe the eastern part of Turkey would have been invaded. It could have become similar to Syria.” (VAN-01, M, 36)

A 50-year-old housewife, who is a CHP supporter, in Yenikapı said

“I don't even want to think about it. Everything would have been different. They would have just slaughtered everyone. Because, on the night of the coup they killed people indiscriminately.” (YNKP-05, F)

A participant in Yenikapı said

“We wouldn't be here in this moment. If there were to be a war between the armies [the putschists and anti-coup personnel], millions would have been killed.” (YNKP-03, M, 46)

Another important aspect is that numerous participants believed that Turkey would have been dominated by foreign forces, which would invade certain parts of Turkey and set up bases. The participants added that this wouldn’t have been accompanied by a change in regime, but that it would have signified the destruction of characteristics that are an integral part of Turkey. A 47-year-old technician said

“I believe Europeans would have invaded the western coast of Turkey by supporting FETÖ. Southeastern Anatolia would have been given to the PKK, not the Kurds, while the eastern part would have been given to the Armenians. Only
a part of Central Anatolia would have been left to us, just like what they planned to do with the Ottomans. We would become subservient to the U.S. and to Europeans.” (YNKP-13, M)

Another participant in Yenikapı suggested the following:

“I wasn't able to go out on the night of the coup: I became hysterical when I heard the call to prayer. I felt like it was the last time I was hearing it. I was overwhelmed with emotion. The PKK would have invaded the eastern parts of Turkey, while the U.S. would start to interfere with our affairs. Look at Iraq and Syria; we would have been in a worse state than them.” (YNKP-10, F, 36)

In summary, the participants underscored their belief that Turkey's constituent characteristics would have been ravaged, while the whole country would have descended into chaos. The participants also claimed that FETÖ would have established a bureaucratic authoritarian regime shaped by their perverse religious understanding and would have crushed any opposition. On the other hand, the participants suggested that Turkey would have become a puppet state, under the influence of the West. In this sense, post-coup Turkey was envisioned as similar to countries such as Iraq and Syria, which are divided and influenced by foreign forces.
FOUR

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE JULY 15 COUP ATTEMPT AND THE DEMOCRACY WATCHES
It is a fact that the effective usage of social media played an important role in the comprehension of the coup and the organization of the anti-coup protests, while FETÖ members’ propaganda was simultaneously neutralized. Moreover, the campaigns on social media were effective in maintaining the dynamic nature of the protests.

As part of the research, an application was used to track and store the content of various social media and the accounts of their respective creators. The pro-coup and anti-coup accounts, along with hashtags, were later analyzed.

Taking tweets and hashtags into consideration, it can be seen that the social media weren’t only a platform to rally people in anti-coup demonstrations; they also allowed FETÖ members to misinform the public.

Tweet numbers substantially increased starting at 22:00 on July 15 and reached a peak on July 16 with a 223% increase. The peak point was when President Erdoğan called the TV channel CNN Türk and called the people to take to the streets via FaceTime. Erdoğan’s FaceTime call, along with the coup attempt, became the most-tweeted topic. Similarly, the tweet by the Presidency’s official account stating “Whatever becomes of the coup attempt, we should continue taking to the streets tonight. There might be new attempt.” became the most-interacted tweet.33

The hashtags which were tweeted the most and had the most interactions were the following: #nedarbenediktörlük (neither coup nor dictatorship); #darbeyehayır (say no to the coup); #askerimedokunma (don’t meddle with the army); #NoCoupinTurkey; #DemokrasiBayramı (Festival of Democracy); #millettarihyazıyor (people are writing history); #DarbeciyiYargılaErlereDokunma (Judge the Putschists, Not the Privates); #ObamaExtraditeGulen, #AskerimeSevgimSonsuz (My Love for the Army Is Endless); #VatanBirBayrakBir (One Country, One Flag); #UyumuyoruzÇunkü (We Aren’t Sleeping Because of); #KahramanMilletinŞerefliNöbeti (Proud Watch of a Brave Nation); #Türkiyeyenilmedi (Turkey is not defeated); #başkomutanMKATATÜRK (Commander-in-Chief M. K. Atatürk).

Various statements tweeted before the coup attempt by people known to be FETÖ affiliates are interesting as they indicate or imply the coup. In September 2015, a journalist, who supports FETÖ and lives in the U.S., replied to a Twitter user’s question regarding when he would return to Turkey by saying “July 2016.” This person is known to cooperate with FETÖ in the U.S. and is blacklisted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A week before the coup attempt, another FETÖ-affiliated journalist had hinted of the coup when he tweeted “There is no getting away easy! There are only three options: the bad, the worse, the worst. I will only say that the bad one is a coup.” Describing the coup as a bad option, while leaving the worse and worst options vague, is also an important point. Lastly, another journalist known to collaborate with FETÖ a day before the coup openly referred to it when he tweeted “They will be captured while sleeping, and will be hanged by the morning.” He deleted the tweet in the following days.
### Turkish daily Twitter traffic

- July 8 - July 14 daily average buzz: 5,773,003 (before the attempt)
- July 15 daily buzz: 6,804,329 (18% increase)
- July 16 daily buzz: 18,666,642 (223% increase)
- July 17 daily buzz: 9,347,358 (62% increase)
- July 18 daily buzz: 8,163,389 (41% increase)
- July 19 daily buzz: 7,533,092 (39% increase)

**Figure 5. Twitter traffic before, during, and after the coup attempt**

The increases are calculated based on July 8 – July 14 daily average buzz. The graphical analysis is produced by Somera for BETA.
The most common words

FETO-affiliated accounts used the words “plot,” “scheme,” “dictator,” and “dictatorship” frequently in their tweets.
Considering the above topics in social media, it can be observed that the anti-coup sentiments were prominent both before and after the coup attempt. The content of the social media can be regarded as complimentary to these sentiments and a reflection of the anti-coup demonstrations in the streets. Along with being against the coup, people can be seen differentiating between FETÖ members and the remaining personnel of the TSK; this is indicated by hashtags like #DarbeciyiYargılaErlereDokunma and #AskerimeSevgimSonsuz. In addition, there also were certain hashtags, such as #HulusiAkar and #15Temmuz (July 15), which didn’t directly relay any messages.

FETÖ supporters used Twitter extensively to spread disinformation about the coup attempt on the night of July 15. Looking at the language of known FETÖ supporters, it becomes evident that they were aiming to disrupt people’s resistance especially on a psychological level.

The activities of 15 FETÖ-affiliated Twitter accounts between July 15 and 17 were analyzed. It is significant that all of them tweeted anti-government and anti-Erdoğan statements during the coup attempt, instead of focusing on the putschists. The accounts also tweeted statements alleging that the government planned this coup in order to pave the way to the much-discussed presidential system. For instance, an account with approximately 257,000 followers alleged that the coup was “fake” and tweeted certain comments on July 15 and 16 with the hashtags #Erdoğansfakecoup and #OscarGoestoErdoğan.

The aforementioned accounts also frequently used the words “plot,” “scheme,” “dictator,” and “dictatorship” in their tweets. They also all claimed that FETÖ wouldn’t attempt a coup. Most of them retweeted the video of Gülen where he claims he is against coups. It should be noted that none of the accounts directly tweeted the video, but retweeted it from various accounts. This was probably because they had received commands to avoid direct affiliation with the organization.
FETÖ-affiliated accounts also tried to misinform the public. At first, they claimed that Erdoğan requested asylum in Germany. Then, after Erdoğan called people to take to the streets, the same accounts tried to discourage people from going out by referring to the coup in Egypt and the possibility of a civil war. A former journalist at the FETÖ-affiliated daily Zaman continuously tried to discourage people from taking action, while claiming that the coup is just a scheme to impose a presidential system. The result of the field research has clearly indicated that people started going out to the streets, even before Erdoğan's call. The efforts of FETÖ affiliates to keep people off the streets is interesting considering that people's resistance was important in halting the coup on its tracks and that people in general didn't resort to violence which could have escalated into a civil war. FETÖ affiliates clearly tried to confuse and demoralize the public with misinformation and disinformation.

To sum up, the aforementioned FETÖ affiliates have the following in common, considering their activities on Twitter on July 15-16: their condemnation of the coup, alleging that the coup was a scheme, whitewashing Fetullah Gülen, implying the beginning of a civil war, and bringing forth allegations against Erdoğan and claims of authoritarianization. Moreover, these accounts tried to spread the news and perspectives of their own media in order to portray Turkey as an “anti-democratic” country. None of the accounts made any negative comments about Fetullah Gülen nor did they use any of the hashtags which had a positive tone and were about standing united. People responded to these accounts by taking to the streets, organizing demonstrations, and carrying the Turkish flag.
CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION
This research aimed to uncover people’s perception of the July 15 coup attempt and was conducted with face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 176 participants (96 males, 80 females) in 9 cities. The findings from the following questions were included in the study: What was your motivation for going out to the streets on July 15? What was your experience in the streets during the democracy watches? How much time did you spend on the streets? Why did the coup fail? What is the relation between FETÖ and foreign powers? What have the ruling party’s efforts been after the coup attempt? What was the stance of the opposition toward the coup attempt? What was FETÖ’s role in the coup attempt? What were your opinions of FETÖ before the coup? What is your stance toward the TSK and the security forces? How does this coup attempt compare to the previous coups? How should the fight against FETÖ and its accomplices be conducted after the coup? What would have happened if the coup had been successful? The research relies on primary sources: it began a couple of days after the coup attempt and was conducted via face-to-face interviews with the participants.

The field research's most important findings, which have been elaborated throughout this study, are listed below:

- The majority of the participants stated that they were on the streets on the night of July 15. They said that the reading of the coup statement on the state television channel TRT and Erdoğan’s live broadcast were important factors which motivated them to take to the streets. Some of them added that the media and social media also played an important role in motivating them. All participants highlighted Erdoğan’s call as an important factor.
• Many of the participants said that the prayers broadcasted from mosques’ loudspeakers were a prominent motivational factor for them. Some claimed that the prayers brought people together, regardless of their beliefs and political views. Most of the participants regarded the prayers as a call to defend the homeland.

• Among the main motivational factors were “devotion to the country,” “to protect the future of the country and its people,” and “to preserve national unity.” This was true for all identity groups included in the research. More specifically, some participants specified the factors which motivated them as “to protect Erdoğan,” “the future of the children,” and “to protect the elected.”

• The main motivation of the democracy watches was “to protect the country and the state” – in other words, similar to the motivation of the people who went out on the night of the coup. However, many of the participants also said that “showing gratitude to the martyrs” was an important motivation for participating in the democracy watches.

• Participants stated that FETÖ was the primary suspect. While a significant group among the participants believed that FETÖ was the only perpetrator, others claimed that FETÖ had collaborated with foreign powers. There was a portion of participants who believed that FETÖ and the U.S. attempted the coup together. Participants believed that the coup was exacted in order to slow down or incapacitate Turkey, as the country had become an important international actor.
• The majority of the participants acted with discretion toward the TSK. They made distinctions between the FE-TÖ-affiliated putschists and the remaining TSK personnel. The traditional approach to the TSK played an important role in this discretion. The participants referred to the TSK as “The Army of the Prophet” and “the apple of our eyes.” However, some of the participants expressed a certain degree of mistrust toward the TSK. A portion said that they were mistrustful toward the TSK even before July 15, while the rest became mistrustful after July 15. The coup culture of the TSK was important in this mistrust.

• During the research, people’s perceptions of FETÖ were also analyzed. The participants can be divided into three categories: people who were always negative toward FETÖ; people who became critical of FETÖ with the Gezi Park protests and the December 17-25 events (some participants also added the Mavi Marmara incident); and those who understood the threat posed by FETÖ with the July 15 coup attempt.

• There are certain differences between the July 15 coup attempt and past coups. Participants said that in none of the previous coups had putschists fired at their own people and been this ruthless. Some of the participants claimed that this coup was different because people had shown a strong resistance to it.

• People’s negative collective memory of coups was an important factor in their resistance against the July 15 coup attempt and the coup’s subsequent failure. People stated that there were certain powers which wanted Erdoğan to suffer the same fate as Adnan Menderes who was executed by putschists after the 1960 Coup.
• The main actor in preventing the coup was the conservative masses, whose self-esteem has been improved politically and socially as a result of the developing middle class in Turkey. These masses became prosperous and moved from the periphery to the core during the AK Party governments, and they perceived the coup attempt against Erdoğan as a threat to themselves, as well. This implies that they believed their fate is tied with that of Erdoğan.

• The past coups’ success to an important extent relied on the fact that the putschists were supported by an extensive coalition. However, an anti-coup culture has emerged in Turkey by virtue of the following: the pluralization of the media, the existence of social media, the transformation of the bureaucracy, the consolidated power of the local administrations, and the emergence of a new intellectual class. As a result, the destructive effects of the coups on Turkish political life were ingrained in the collective memory.

• As the AK Party faced many crises during its numerous governments, it became proficient in resolving crises and counteracting attempts against it and its supporters.

• The findings indicate that people appreciated the opposition’s support for the elected government following the coup attempt. However, some of the participants expressed their belief that only the MHP was sincere in its stance against the coup, while the other parties waited until the outcome was clear and didn’t mobilize their supporters. Nevertheless, the emergent reconciliatory political environment was approved by the majority of participants.
During the interviews in Van and Diyarbakır, participants discussed two prominent aspects regarding the stance of the opposition parties. The first was about the HDP officials not being invited to the Yenikapı Rally. The second was the fact that the HDP fell behind its own conservative supporters, as they participated in democracy watches, while the party leadership didn’t take a clear stance against the coup. Some HDP supporters criticized their party by stating that the HDP calls its supporters to take to the streets at all other opportunities, but didn’t do so during the coup.

People who attended the Yenikapı Rally stated that the participation of the opposition parties was important. Many, however, said that they didn’t believe that the reconciliatory political environment would last long. Conservative constituents said that the CHP participated in the rally as a result of social pressure.

The feeling of insecurity was one of the reasons people gathered in the streets. The majority of participants said that they felt more secure among the people gathered in the streets and in public squares. Meanwhile, many participants said that they felt secure living in Turkey. Similarly, some of the participants said that they felt secure because of Erdoğan’s leadership, along with the solidarity demonstrated by the people.

Erdoğan’s efforts after the December 17-25 coup attempt to alert the public to the threat posed by FETÖ was another factor that contributed to the coup attempt’s failure. The successful removal of FETÖ elements from certain state institutions, especially the police force, played a crucial role in foiling the coup. Many participants
said that the police force acted as a counterbalance to the putschists, and that its presence and contribution was vital.

- The state has started to combat FETÖ elements both politically and legally as a result of the coup attempt. Participants expressed their opinions about how the fight against FETÖ should proceed. The majority of the participants said that FETÖ members should be removed from their posts in various state institutions. Participants also asserted that the intelligence organizations should be restructured in order to prevent similar incidents in the future. Moreover, most of the participants argued that the actions against FETÖ should be taken with discretion, in order not to cause harm to any innocent parties.

- Regarding the legal stage of the fight against FETÖ, almost all participants stated that those involved in the coup attempt should be penalized with the most severe punishments. In this context, most of the participants argued for the reintroduction of the death penalty. While some of the participants argued in favor of the death penalty, they said it might be almost impossible to reintroduce it considering the international political conjuncture; thus, they asserted that the putschists should be sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment.

- Many participants expressed their fears that Turkey would have become like Syria, if the coup attempt had been successful. In this context, it was believed that a civil war would have raged in Turkey, and the country would have been divided. Participants also alleged that foreign forces would have shaped Turkey according to
their will and with the help of FETÖ. Participants also claimed that Gülen would have returned from the U.S. and a bureaucratic dictatorship would have been established that would have eliminated all opposition and executed many politicians.

- According to the findings, Turkish society demonstrated a clear stance against the coup. For the first time in Turkey’s history, the people united against anti-democratic forces. As a result of the resistance, during which hundreds of people were martyred, the coup attempt failed. The people protected their democratically elected government and were united by their devotion to the country.
CONTRIBUTORS

Nebi Miş received his BA in International Relations in 2003, and his MA in 2005. He received his PhD from Sakarya University upon completion of his doctoral thesis titled “Türkiye'de Güvenlikleştirme Siyaseti 1923-2003” (Securitization Policies in Turkey: 1923-2000) in 2012. He worked as a researcher for Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium for a year during his doctoral studies. His articles have appeared among others in Turkish Studies, Bilgi Dergisi, Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi, Ortadoğu Yıllığı, and Türk Dış Politikası Yıllığı. His articles include “Turkey’s Role in the ‘Alliance of Civilizations’: A New Perspective in Turkish Foreign Policy?” (with Ali Balci) Turkish Studies, Volume: 9, Number: 3, September 2008; “Güvenlikleştirme Teorisi ve Siyasal Olanın Güvenlıkleştirilmesi”, Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi, Volume: 6, Number: 2, 2011; “İslamcılığın Dönüşümünü Tartışmak: İslamcılığın Dört Hali ve Muhabazakarlaşmak”, Bilgi, 24, Yaz 2012; “Kültürel Kimliklerin Güvensizliği: Avrupa Birliği ve Medeniyetler Çalışmasını Yeniden Düştüneke” (with M. Yeşiltaş); and Küreselleşen Dünya Avrupa Birliği, Phonex, Ankara 2008. Miş works on security politics in Turkey, democratization, Islamism, and democratization in the Middle East and Syria. He is currently teaching in the Political Science and Public Administration Department of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Sakarya University.

Serdar Gülener finished his graduate and postgraduate studies at the Public Administration Department of Sakarya University. He received his PhD in 2010. His doctoral thesis was entitled “The Democratic Legitimacy Problem of the Turkish Supreme Court in the Case of Constitutional Judiciary and Parliament Relations.” In 2012-2015, he worked as a judge rapporteur in the Constitutional Court of Turkey. He works in Sakarya University Faculty of Political Science as a lecturer and as a politics researcher in SETA Ankara.

İpek Coşkun received her bachelor’s degree in English Linguistics with a Minor in Sociology from Hacettepe University. She holds a master’s degree in Sociology from Gazi University with a thesis on educational inequality. Coşkun is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Middle East Technical University (METU) as a special student. She has been working for SETA Foundation since February 2010.

Hazal Duran graduated from the Departments of International Relations, and Turkish Language and Literature at TOBB University of Economics and Technology in 2012. She completed her MA in Modern Turkish Studies (MTS) at Istanbul Şehir University. Duran continues her doctoral studies at Bilkent University in the Department of Political Science. She works as a research assistant at SETA Ankara in the Directorate of Political Studies.

M. Erkut Ayvaz graduated from the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg [Germany] with a dual BA in Political Science and Public Law in 2011. He spent the academic year 2012-2013 at Duke University (NC, USA) with a DAAD scholarship. In 2014, he received his MA after completing his master’s thesis which addressed the civil-military relations in Turkey. Other research interests include Turkish politics, human rights, political history, identity politics, and secularism/Islamic politics. His articles have been published in Turkish daily newspapers such as Yeni Şafak, Star and [English language] Daily Sabah. Currently, he works as a research assistant at the Directorate of Political Studies at SETA Ankara.
On the evening of July 15th, Turkey witnessed 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 NGOs 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.