

15 July Coup Attempt in the Light of Civil-Military Relations Theory and Former Military Interventions in Turkey

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Abstract

Failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016 in Turkey has been largely debated in media releases within the framework of the “power struggle” between the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government and the Gulenists, whereas very few academic studies are available yet on it because of the novelty of the event. Therefore, it is important to make contribution to reduce the lack of academic studies and to identify the bases of the coup by transcending the “power struggle” narrative. This paper aims to explain the reason(s) and aim(s) of the coup attempt in light of the Civil-Military Relations theories and former military interventions in Turkey. In this context, the international structure is highlighted as the most decisive factor encouraging the plotters for the coup on July, 15, after analyzing domestic and international dynamics inciting the military intervention into the politics. Besides, the aim of the coup is emphasized especially in terms of its uniqueness in the history of the Turkish Republic.

Keywords: Civil-Military Relations, 15 July Coup, Gulenists, Turkish Political Life, Turkey

Sivil-Asker İlişkileri Teorileri ve Türkiye’deki Geçmiş Askeri Darbeler Işığında 15 Temmuz Darbe Girişimi

Öz

15 Temmuz 2016 tarihinde Türkiye’de gerçekleştirilen başarısız darbe girişimi, medya yayınlarında AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) ile Gülençilerin güç mücadelesi çerçevesinde geniş bir şekilde tartışılmış olmakla birlikte, konuyla ilgili yeterli akademik çalışma vak’ının yeniliği sebebiyle henüz mevcut değildir. Bu nedenle, akademik çalışmalardaki bu eksikliğin giderilmesine katkıda bulunmak ve “güç mücadelesi” anlatısını aşarak, darbenin esaslarını ortaya koymak önem arz

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etmektedir. Bu çalışmada, anılan darbe girişiminin neden(ler)inin ve amaç(lar)ının, Sivil-Asker İlişkileri teorileri ve Türkiye'deki geçmiş darbeler ışığında açıklanması amaçlanmıştır. Bu bağlamda; askerin siyasete müdahalesini teşvik eden ulusal ve uluslararası dinamiklerin analizi neticesinde, 15 Temmuz darbe girişimini gerçekleştirenleri cesaretlendiren en belirleyici faktör olarak uluslararası yapının altı çizilmiştir. Bunun yanında, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tarihindeki benzersizliği açısından darbenin amacı da özellikle vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sivil-Asker İlişkileri, 15 Temmuz Darbesi, Gülenciler, Türk Siyasal Hayatı, Türkiye

Introduction

Over-efficacy of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) on the politics unlike its Western counterparts is a well-known phenomenon in the Turkish political history. The military gets involved in politics sometimes directly with physical force, and sometimes indirectly through declarations/implications of threat of a potential coup, if its demands are not taken into the consideration.

Once again, a faction in the Turkish Armed Forces attempted a coup with physical military means on July 15, 2016 and seized the Chief of Staff and force commands' headquarters, Turkish Radio and Television center, main military and civil airports (Akinci Military Airport in Ankara, Ataturk International Airport in Istanbul) and some roads in Ankara and bridges over Bosphorus in Istanbul. Fortunately, the government re-established its grip on power in a couple of hours with popular and police support as well as with the help of intra-military reaction against the interventionist forces.

Since then, many comments have been released in the domestic and international media, while academic studies suffer the novelty of the event yet. In an attempt to contribute to the elimination of the lack of academic studies on the subject, this paper aims to explain the reason(s) and aim(s) of the coup attempt in light of the related theories and former military interventions in Turkey. In this context, this study begins by analyzing the general framework of the military involvements in politics in the Turkish political life, and the second section examines the domestic and international dynamics of the coups retrospectively in light of the CMR theories. Finally, the last section delineates the July 15 coup as an attempt to destabilize the country and paralyze the political authority. Consequently, it is argued that the plotters aimed to prevent any active military involvement of the Turkish Armed Forces for security threats beyond its southern borders by inciting military and civil strife within the homeland.

The problematic of this study is addressed descriptively with the help of related theories and historical comparison reviewing the literature of secondary sources.

The historical data used in the study are limited to the period of the Republic, although the Janissary establishment conducted many military interventions against the governance during the Ottoman Empire, the predecessor of the Republic, as well. Yet, the negligence of these military involvements would not entail a substantial gap in understanding into the coup-dynamics because of the changing nature of the coup mechanisms in the republican period.¹

General Framework of the Coups in Turkey

Samuel Finer defines four different levels of military involvement in politics. The first level of involvement is constitutional and legitimate. This is followed by a level reflecting over-pressure than the predicted. Threats and intimidation can be levied against political authorities, and this means the violation of constitutional considerations. A more severe involvement is displacement of government in favor of another. And the final level includes the establishment of military government after the removal of civilian authorities.²

In the history of the Republic since its inception, two direct interventions using physical military means in 1960 and in 1980, which resulted in military rule and two indirect interventions through 1971 memorandum and 1997 "postmodern coup", which led governments to resign were experienced. There are also a few failing coup attempts against the government such as Aydemir cases in 1962-63, and design efforts of civil politics by military institutions – for instance, e-memorandum on presidential election in 2007 –.

Use of physical force is a common characteristic of military intervention on July 15, 2016 and former interventions in 1960, 1962-63 and 1980, while the constitutional considerations were violated in the rest by threat. In terms

¹ Uprisings in the Ottoman Empire were firstly sprouted among the people due to discontent against the governance and once the Janissary was convinced by people, than the military intervention was carried out with collaboration of these two forces. But in modern times, the contact between the military and the people was collapsed by confining the military to its barracks and the mechanisms of intervention in politics changed in nature. Serif Mardin, *Türk Modernleşmesi [Turkish Modernization]*, Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 1991, p. 113.

² Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*, London, Pall Mall, 1962, p. 139.

of the unity of the chain of command, the coup on July, 15 resembles the interventions in 1960 and 1962-63, while other interventions were implemented in hierarchical order. In 1960, a faction established itself as a "Committee of National Union", consisting of 38 officers – five generals, thirty three (lieutenant) colonels, majors and captains – took over the government. In 1962-63, Colonel Aydemir, former member of "the fourteen,"³ attempted a coup with his followers outside the chain of command. Moreover, in terms of success, coup attempt on July, 15 is similar to the attempts in 1962-63, which were also put down by the government quickly.

Due to the failure of both coups and subsequent advantage of the leading political parties, the leaders of related eras were subjected to criticism by the dissidence for deriving advantage from the state of emergency. After the coup was suppressed, Inonu was accused of supporting this initiative deviously by a minister of the Republican Party and former Air Force Commander İrfan Tansel. Aydemir's case unexpectedly created a political consensus in favor of Inonu and made it easier to implement his political agenda.⁴ The same approach can be traced in the declaration of the President: "...this uprising is a gift from the God to us, because this will be a reason to cleanse our army,"⁵ delivered right after landing at Ataturk International Airport on July, 16.

With a rough evaluation, many similarities can be established between the July 15 initiative and the case of Aydemir, but one should not overlook that there are also significant differences between them. The most noticeable difference is the cause and aim relationship.

Ankara radio station center had been taken over by Aydemir supporters, and various troops had begun to declare their support to the military intervention. In fact, Fethi Gurcan, who was in charge of the Presidential Guard Regiment during the meeting of the President, Prime Minister, Ministers and Commanders in Cankaya, also reported his participation to the plotters, and made his proposal to arrest the top brass, which was rejected by Aydemir. In the general overview, the armed forces were divided into two camps as the coup and government supporters, and a possibility of mutual conflict emerged between them. But the final aim of the plotters was to ensure the withdrawal of the military assignments confirmed by the government for purging, not to topple the government. Thinking that the armed conflict would

³ There were different groups rivaling in military before and after the coup in 1960. The radical plotters, "the fourteen" including nationalist and socialist subgroups, were not willing to hand over the governance back to civilians.

⁴ Feroz Ahmad, *Demokrasi Surecinde Turkiye, 1945-1980 [The Turkish Experiment in Democracy]*, trans. by Ahmet Fethi, Istanbul, Hil Yayın, 1994, p. 217.

⁵ Jared Malsin, "Turkey's Long Night of the Soul", *Time*, August 1, 2016, p. 9.

be the end of the patriots, Aydemir gave his directive to surrender to the forces under control of the government.⁶

However, it is explicit that in the recent military intervention, the plotters would not have hesitated to use it, if they had had such an opportunity to arrest the civilian authorities. Therefore, understanding the coup on July, 15 needs an accurate analysis of the cause and aim relationship rather than a thesis of who is behind it.

Comparison of the Coups in Terms of Their Dynamics

In sermons to his proponents, Gulen, an Islamist preacher, says “you must move in the arteries of the system, without anyone noticing your existence, until you reach all the power centers,”⁷ “until we have the power and authority in all of Turkey’s constitutional institutions, every step is premature.”⁸ In line with these statements, trying to explain the military coup staged in July just with the struggle for power between the AKP (Justice and Development Party) and Gulen⁹ means to ignore a lot of academic studies in the field of military interventions.

Researches into the dynamics of military coups constitute an important part of the normative, empirical and theoretical academic studies regarding civil-military relations. While some of the researches emphasize the impact of internal factors, others focus on the external inputs inciting military interventions.

Huntington asserts that ideologies and institutions – legal and constitutional framework – within the society are the internal variables of CMR.¹⁰ With close analogy to Huntingtonian “ideology” difference, Janowitz describes the gap between values of civilian and military society as a main

⁶ Diren Çakmak, “Türkiye’de Asker-Hükümet İlişkisi: Albay Talat Aydemir Örneği [Military-Civil Relations in Turkey: The Example of Colonel Talat Aydemir]”, *Gazi Akademik Bakış [Gazi Academic View]*, vol. 1, no. 2, Summer 2008, p. 45.

⁷ Adnan R. Khan, “The War of the Islamists”, *Macleans Magazine*, August 8, 2016, p. 37.

⁸ Dexter Filkins, “Turkey’s Thirty-Year Coup”, *The New Yorker*, 17 October 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/17/turkeys-thirty-year-coup>, retrieved 15 November 2016.

⁹ Dale Sprusansky, “Experts React to Failed Turkish Coup Attempt”, *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, vol. 35, no. 6, October 2016; Jonathan Gorvett, “Turkey’s Long Hot Summer”, *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, vol. 35, no. 6, October 2016.

¹⁰ Samuel P., Huntington, *Asker ve Devlet: Sivil Asker İlişkilerinin Kuram ve Siyaseti [The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations, 1957]*, trans. by Kazım Uğur Kızılaslan, Istanbul, Salyangoz Publishing, 2006, pp. 3-6.

dynamic to military interventions.¹¹ Considering conflicting social and political bases, Perlmutter argues that social conditions – social polarity, lack of social cohesion, low levels of social mobilization – and political circumstances – negligence of periphery, ineffective political parties, lack of political institutionalization – provide conducive environment for military coups.¹² Finer underlines the importance of political culture and lays stress on the procedures for the transfer of power orderly – democratic exchange of government –.¹³ Finally, according to Nordlinger’s study, illegal actions of governments, economic failures and disorder/violence through eroding government’s legitimacy can cause military intervention as well.¹⁴

Military intervention in 1960 in Turkey has several reasons according to Karpaz. He foremost identifies the clash between the increasing new elite from the periphery through economic policies of Democratic Party and the decreasing dignity and worsening income of the military having great contribution in the foundation of the Republic.¹⁵ Economic problems such as import-based trade, high inflation, dependence on foreign capital contributed to instability in the country as well. In 1960, the cost of living reached eleven times higher than it was in 1950-1953.¹⁶

As symptom of the gap in values, deviation from the national character of the state and promotion of Islamism were also condemned by the military. The government was accused of instrumentalizing religion for political purposes and being non-secular.¹⁷

The Democratic Party manipulated also the rules in order to retain its hold on power and to cripple the Republican Party. The Republican Party’s assets were confiscated and its leader was prevented from entering some towns for the meetings of his party. The coalition efforts of the opposition

¹¹ Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, London, The Free Press of Glencoe Collier Macmillan Limited, 1960, p. 248.

¹² Amos Perlmutter, “The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army: Toward a Taxonomy of Civil-Military Relations in Developing Polities”, *Comparative Politics*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1969, pp. 385-90.

¹³ Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*, London, Pall Mall, 1962, p. 21.

¹⁴ Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics. Military Coups and Government*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1977, p. 93.

¹⁵ See Kemal H. Karpaz, “The Military and Politics in Turkey, 1960-64: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of a Revolution”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 75, no. 6, Oct. 1970, pp. 1654-1683.

¹⁶ Feroz Ahmad, *Demokrasi Surecinde Turkiye, 1945-1980 [The Turkish Experiment in Democracy]*, trans. by Ahmet Fethi, Istanbul, Hil Yayın, 1994, pp. 133-154.

¹⁷ Metin Heper, *Turkiye'nin Siyasal Hayatı [Political Life of Turkey]*, Istanbul, Dogan Egmont Yayıncılık, 2011, p. 306; Emre Kongar, *21. yy.'da Turkiye [Turkey in the 21st Century]*, Istanbul, Remzi Kitabevi, 1998, pp. 150-152.

were counteracted through establishing the Fatherland Front (Vatan Cephesi). The freedom of the press was curtailed, and criticizing the government and organizing demonstrations were forbidden by severe laws. Furthermore, an inquiry commission titled "Tahkikat Komisyonu" and equipped with judicial power was formed in the assembly.¹⁸ There were strong internal dynamics that could nurture any type of military intervention.

In case of Aydemir, he and his followers believed that the order to be formed by the 1960 military intervention was not established yet, and thought that the expected reforms by the coup in 1960 could not be executed with elected civilians¹⁹ in general sense. But the actual reason driving them to intervene into politics with warfare school students and armoured forces under his command were the aggressive accusations by the new government,²⁰ and, congruent with that, the assignments to passive posts by the Chief of Command for the purge of the radicals in the army including Aydemir.²¹ New dynamics that would trigger these initiatives on the economic, social and political grounds at the national level did not occur in this period, which might explain the deprivation of popular support to the plotters unlike those that intervened in 1960.

As for following coups in 1971 and 1980, military interventions were triggered approximately by the same dynamics as in 1960 – economy, political Islam and authoritarian approach of the government, etc. –, Additionally, widespread ideology-based violence and political impasse escalating from 1969 to 1980 throughout the country created more unstable situation than ever before. 3000 people were killed in just two years through terrorism.²² Due to worsening internal unrest in 1980, military intervention was welcomed by cheering crowds.²³

Given the general situation before July 15 under the light of above mentioned dynamics; any sharp change in the overall course of the economic situation in the negative direction or any disorder/violence did not coincide with the coup attempt. One can argue that secular sentiments of the military, the terrorist attacks of ISIS in Turkey, the tension on Kurdish issue, the intention on transforming the parliamentary system to a presidential one

¹⁸ See Birsen Gokce, *Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Yapısı ve Toplumsal Kurumları [Social Structure and Social Institutions of Turkey]*, Ankara, Savas Kitabevi, 2004; Feroz Ahmad, *Demokrasi... [The Turkish Experiment...]*.

¹⁹ Feroz Ahmad, *Demokrasi... [The Turkish Experiment...]*, p. 187.

²⁰ Kemal H. Karpat, *Türk Siyasi Tarihi [Turkish Political History]*, Istanbul, Timaş Yayınları, 2014, p. 169.

²¹ Diren Çakmak, "Türkiye'de Asker-Hükümet... [Military-Civil Relations...]", pp. 42-43.

²² See Kemal H. Karpat, *Türk Siyas... [Turkish Political...]*.

²³ William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 281.

might have disturbed the stability and encouraged the plotters. None of them, however, caused any strong political turbulence as to legitimize a coup. In terms of the gap of values between civilian and military authorities, the secular sentiments in the Armed Forces have been greatly diminished along with the recent top brass.²⁴ ISIS attacks and struggle against the PKK in the Southeast cities have already lost their former level of violence. And it was a remote possibility that the transition to the presidential system would trigger a military coup by that day, while the AKP needed additional votes and could not provide support from other parties for constitutional change. On the contrary to these allegations, the majority government was seen as a stabilizing factor across the country since the success of the AKP in elections held a year ago.

As for international dynamics, Lasswell and later Huntington suggest that external threat can undermine civilian control by passing all power to the generals and creating the “garrison state.”²⁵ The greater the external threat is, the more the passion of the military to intervene into politics is. Burk presents international actors such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) as examples to be incorporated in CMR. The expansion policies of both institutions presuppose that member states have civilian control over the military.²⁶ This point of view also implies that international actors may be involved by any party of civil or military authorities in related states for the sake of mutual interest.²⁷ Additionally, Huntington argues that political regimes tend to spread in temporal waves throughout the world, that is, authoritarianism or democratization often happen in the same period in different countries by means of “single cause, parallel development, snowballing and prevailing nostrum” effects.²⁸ The snowballing effect among them explains how the change of the regime in any place can trigger a similar change in other states. Finally, Desch offers a

²⁴ Yavuz Çilliler, “Popular Determinant on Civil-Military Relations in Turkey”, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 2, p. 512.

²⁵ See Harold D. Lasswell, “The Garrison State”, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1941, pp. 455-468, Samuel P., Huntington, *Asker ve Devlet... [The Soldier and the State...]*, pp. 3-6.

²⁶ James Burk, “Theories of Democratic Civil-Military Relations”, *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 29, no. 1, Fall 2002, p. 20.

²⁷ Huntington describes the political, economic, diplomatic and military interventions of the United States conducted in other countries, sometimes for the purpose of democratization (Carter’s tenure) and sometimes for the struggle against communism (Reagan’s tenure) Samuel P. Huntington, *Ucuncu Dalga: Geç 20. Yüzyılda Demokratisleşme [Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century, 1991]*, trans. by Ergun Özbudun, Ankara, Kilit Yayınları, 2010, pp. 107-108.

²⁸ Samuel P., Huntington, *Asker ve Devlet... [The Soldier and the State...]*, pp. 45-48

structural theory that integrates international and domestic independent variables and also puts out when one or the other is more decisive.²⁹

Given the international structure before the coup in 1960, the Russian threat was quite evident at the beginning of 1950's due to the Cold War. But after Khrushchev came to power, the tendency to the "detente" between the USA and the USSR was also reflected in the Turkish-Russian relations. In fact, Adnan Menderes even made a peace visit to Russia in July 1959 upon the call of Khrushchev. Ahmad argues that even the plotters in 1960 were afraid that the USA would hinder them by citing the "protection agreement" made with the Menderes government in 1959. Besides, the emerging crisis on Cyprus since 1954 was also degraded by the London Treaty in 1959. Nevertheless, as an international dynamic, there was no doubt that the coups in Iraq on 8 February and in Syria on 8 March encouraged the plotters in 1960³⁰ with "snowballing" effect. Thus, one can conclude that low level of international dynamics might have triggered the military intervention in 1960, but this effect is not decisive when compared to domestic driving forces mentioned above.

In the memorandum in 1971 and the coup in 1980, the influence of international structure became more apparent than before. Protests of 1968 and the alleged "green belt project" against communism had tremendous effects on some countries. Due to the occupation of Afghanistan by Russians and the regime change in Iran, international problems before 1980 posed intensive threat to security.³¹

It is often said that the coups that have taken place so far in Turkey were supported by another state, namely, the United States. Especially regarding the military intervention in 1980; Air Force Commanders' return to Turkey from the USA on September 11 (one day ago before the coup), to be an American official spokesman announcing the coup abroad first, the statements of J. Carter at the end of his tenure,³² and Paul Henze's statement ("*Our boys have done it,*")³³ are the main grounds for this argument. However, even if all these allegations are accepted to be true, high level of political, economic, social problems and violence before the memorandum in 1971 and the coup in

²⁹ Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment*, London, John Hopkins University Press, 1999, p. 12.

³⁰ Feroz Ahmad, *Demokrasi... [The Turkish Experiment...]*, p. 189, 411, 418.

³¹ Bulent Tanor, "Siyasal Tarih: 1980-1995, Political History: 1980-1995", *Türkiye Tarihi 5: Bugünkü Türkiye 1980-2003 [Turkey History 5: Today's Turkey 1980-2003]* ed. Sina Aksin, Istanbul, Cem Yayınevi, 2014, pp. 108-114.

³² Bulent Tanor, *ibid*, p. 33.

³³ Mehmet Ali Birand, *12 Eylül, [September 12]*, Istanbul, Karacan Yayınları, 1984, p. 286.

1980,³⁴ which would legitimize military intervention throughout the country, was as important as the international engagement.

As for the coup attempt on July, 15, in comparison to previous coups in the Republican history, a surprisingly high level of violence was experienced despite the non-existence of adequate domestic dynamics that could encourage and legitimize a military intervention. According to Desch's theory,³⁵ one needs to consider international environment in the absence or low degree of domestic threats.

Turkish government is at odds with the EU on the deal of refugees and with Germany on the Armenian issue; Turkish relations have not yet returned to the former level with Russia due to the fall of the Russian jet and with Israel since its attacks on the Freedom Flotilla. US-backed PYD in Syria is also a source of tension.³⁶ Among these tense relations, the nearest and most important threat is thought to be the ongoing war in Syria. The Turkish intervention in Syria was not desirable by the international structure – neither by the United States and European countries that preferred to cooperate with the PYD, nor by the Russian Federation that supported mainly Assad regime throughout the crisis –. However, the Turkish government thought that current developments have made its military intervention inevitable.

Coup on July, 15 as an Attempt for Destabilization

The gathering of the plotters under the name of "Peace at Home Council" seems to be in harmony with the fact that they are not satisfied with government's foreign policy, because Syrian conflict has broken the tradition of "Peace at home, peace in the World³⁷". Government's approach to the Syrian civil war has also been met with growing criticism of the pro-Gülen "Zaman" – disbanded newspaper –.³⁸ So, what exactly motivated a number of senior military officers to attempt to overthrow the AKP government might be the political struggle to engage the Turkish Armed Forces into Syrian conflict. In line with international structure, the plotters' goal might be to prevent

³⁴ See Hasan Cemal, *Kimse Kızmasın Kendimi Yazdım [May No One Get Angry, I Wrote Myself]*, Istanbul, Dogan Kitapçılık, 1999; Mehmet Ali Birand, *ibid*; Erol Mutercimler, *İsyanlar, İhtilaller, Darbeler [Uprisings, Revolutions, Coups]*, Istanbul, Asi Kitap, 2016.

³⁵ Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control.*, p. 12.

³⁶ Zhang Bo, "A Failed Coup", *Beijing Review*, July 28, 2016, p. 28.

³⁷ This statement of Atatürk has become a principle that the Armed Forces have adhered to throughout the history of the Republic. As a matter of fact, the prominence of a UN decision or at least a NATO resolution is always emphasized by military authorities whenever governments had willingness to participate in any war such as in 1991 and 2003 Iraq crises, and 2011 Libya campaign.

³⁸ Francesco F. Milan, "Turkey: What Hides Behind a Failed Coup Attempt", *The Rusi Journal*, vol. 161, no. 4, September 2016, pp. 28-32.

possible military operation into Syria. In this context, retired US Gen. Flynn's assessment of the coup as "worth clapping for", the US Central Command Commander Gen. Joseph Votel's statement in a sense of expostulation "a number of the US military's closest allies in the Turkish military have been placed in jail following the coup attempt"³⁹ and the beginning of the Jarabulus operation only one month after the coup attempt are striking. Besides, international structure may also have incited the plotters considering the fact that Western states put the "authoritarian stability thesis" back into practice in the Middle East,⁴⁰ and subsequent military takeover in Egypt might have encouraged the plotters as a result of snowballing effect.

On the other hand, the resources employed by the plotters seem not to have been sufficient to take control of a nation of 78 million with a well-equipped military that included 575,000 armed personnel as well as a 250,000-strong police force. The plotters apparently saw themselves as a stimulus that would incite more military units and popular support.⁴¹ But, neither the Turkish people nor the officers supported the plotters, on the contrary, they struggled to prevent this military faction. By the way, even after it became clear that the plotters on the ground would fail, the Turkish National Assembly was attacked by F-16 pilots and the plotters tried to assassinate the President, which indicates that the aim of the plotters was to create a chaotic environment. A paralyzed state can no longer implement any military operation beyond its borders while dealing with domestic problems.

If the coup had been successful, it would have led to an intra-organizational conflict within the army including still many officers adhered to democratic processes, which could have spilled over into social strife and clash later. Even if the coup had not been successful, it would have led to growing dissent from thousands of people against oppressive measures to be likely taken by the government and possible economic failure, which might have caused a domestic turmoil and instability later. Therefore, takeover of

³⁹ Kim Sengupta, "Having Donald Trump in the White House Will Be Good for the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan", *The Independent*, 24 November 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/donald-trump-president-erdogan-turkey-latest-white-house-michael-flynn-gulen-a7437276.html>, retrieved 25 November 2016; Damian Paletta, "Pentagon Allies Jailed in Turkey Amid Coup Backlash, General Says", *The Wall Street Journal*, 28 July 2016, <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2016/07/28/pentagon-allies-jailed-in-turkey-amid-coup-backlash-general-says/>, retrieved 16 November 2016.

⁴⁰ Saban Kardas, "15 Temmuz Darbe Girişimi: Demokratik Yansıma Etkisi [Coup Attempt on July, 15: Democratic Reflection Effect], *Ortodogu Analiz [Middle East Analysis]*, vol. 8, no. 76, September-October 2016, p. 8.

⁴¹ Jonathan Stevenson, "Turkey: The Attempted Coup and its Troubling Aftermath", *Strategic Comments*, vol. 22, July 2016, p. 3.

the government was not so important for the plotters, either way the situation would be destabilized after the coup attempt.

In brief, the plotters, who found themselves in agreement with the international structure over the perils engendered by government's Syrian policy, wanted to create a chaotic environment and destabilize the country in order to prevent the Turkish armed engagement in a cross-border operation, which failed due to the absence of adequate socio-economic and political dynamics in the country unlike former military interventions.

Conclusion

Many military interventions have been witnessed in the history of the Turkish Republic since its inception. Some of them were welcomed by the society at the beginning and some did not receive popular support at all. In fact, popular support may determine who controls the other in civil-military antagonism.⁴² It means if there is domestically no social, economic and political dynamics shifting popular support to the military side, the success of an interventional attempt gets weaker as experienced in the case of Aydemir and the intervention on July, 15.

As Finer suggested,⁴³ *"Where civilian associations and parties are strong and numerous, where the procedures for the transfer of power are orderly, and where the location of supreme authority is not seriously challenged; the political ambit of the military will be circumscribed."* Precisely because of this, the coup attempt on July, 15 was suppressed and the civilian grip on power was sustained in a couple of hours with popular and police support as well as with the help of intra-military reaction against the interventionist forces.

Nevertheless, there were several international dynamics inciting the recent military intervention in addition to the power struggle between AKP and the Gulenists. Among the tense relations with some states, the most important threat was the ongoing war in Syria, where the Turkish intervention was not desirable by the international structure and the Gulenists as well. What exactly motivated the faction in the military to intervene was the government's struggle to engage the Turkish Armed Forces into the Syrian conflict. In line with the international structure, the plotters who were also encouraged by the coup in Egypt tried to prevent possible military operation into Syria. On the other hand, the insufficient power of the

⁴² Hans Born and Others, "Patterns of Democratic Governance of Civil Military Relations", *Civil Military Relations in Europe: Learning from Crisis and Institutional Change*, ed. Hans Born and Others, Oxon, Routledge, 2006, p. 251.

⁴³ Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on...*, p. 21.

plotters and the continuation of provocative attempts even after the failure of the coup indicate that the aim of the plotters was to create a chaotic environment. Whether the coup attempt successful or not, they struggled to cause a social strife, which could paralyze the state and make it incapable of conducting military operation beyond its borders.

In these premises, even the failure of the plotters still poses a risk of dissent from thousands of people due to the extensive measures taken by the government, which may cause a domestic turmoil and instability later. For instance, following the coup in 1960, 235 generals and 7000 lower ranking officers were retired, who established the EMINSU organization (Association of Retired Revolutionary Officers) and became a powerful pressure group to compel the government to soothe their anger with concessions in their favor.⁴⁴ By the same token in recent history, many officers who were sentenced to jail or assigned to passive posts due to Ergenekon, Sledgehammer, Izmir Espionage etc. cases founded KUMPASDER (Association of Cooperation and Solidarity for Plot-Victims) in 2015 for their violated rights. Therefore, quick and fair judgment is necessary in order not to create masses of victims though the unique nature of the coup attempt on July, 15.

Another vital topic is the efficiency of the Turkish Armed Forces. In the light of the normative literature, both the institutional (moderating the command structure of the Armed Forces, civilizing the Supreme Military Council, moving the peace deployment of the military troops to the periphery, designing the police and gendarmerie as countervailing forces, etc.) and sociological (politics of recruiting and promoting personnel sharing the dominant ideology, altering the structure of military training, etc.) regulations and arrangements are worldwide mechanisms designed by civilian authorities to have control over the military, but some of these control mechanisms might also lead to Huntingtonian subjective control and politicization of the army. Changes in the political power and dominant ideology prevailing among society in the future might produce internal unrest and trouble in the Armed Forces. For this reason, constituting a politically neutral armed forces with commitment to each forthcoming political authority becomes important in terms of the efficiency in the long run.

⁴⁴ Kemal H. Karpat, "The Military and Politics...", p. 1675.

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Özet

Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri'nin yakın zamana kadar siyasi alana etkisinin Batı'daki muadillerine oranla daha yoğun olması, demokratikleşme vizyonu açısından Türk siyasal hayatının trajik bir gerçeğidir. Cumhuriyet tarihinde yaşanan muhtelif askeri darbelerin ardından, 15 Temmuz 2016 tarihinde bir kez daha bir grup asker tarafından emir-komuta zinciri dışında bir askeri darbe girişimi başlatılmış ve bu girişim sivil halkın, polis ve demokratik değerlere bağlı darbe karşıtı askerlerin katkıları ile bertaraf edilmiştir.

Medyada oldukça yoğun tartışılan, ancak hakkındaki akademik literatürün henüz olgunlaşmadığı 15 Temmuz darbe girişiminin açıklanmaya çalışıldığı bu makalede; sürekli tekrarlanan bulgular yerine, "güç mücadelesi" anlatısının ötesine geçilerek, Sivil-asker ilişkileri teorileri ve Türk siyasal tarihindeki geçmiş darbeler ışığında darbe girişiminin nedenleri ve amaçları üzerinde durulmuştur.

Bu bağlamda; birinci bölümde geçmişte yaşanan askeri darbelerin karşılaştırmalı genel çerçevesi oluşturulmaya çalışılmış ve fiziki güç kullanımı, emir komuta zinciri ve başarı durumu dikkate alınarak 15 Temmuz darbe girişiminin, 1962-63 Aydemir vak'ası ile benzerlikleri tespit edilmiştir. Ancak, bu benzerliklerin yanında her iki darbe girişiminin sebepler ve amaç konusunda farklılaştıkları ve bu farklılık nedeniyle birinde silahlı şiddetten kaçınılır iken, diğerinde Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'nin bombalanmasının dahi göze alınabildiği ifade edilmiştir.

İkinci bölümde; Sivil-Asker ilişkileri teorilerine göre askeri darbeleri tetiklediği ileri sürülen ulusal ve uluslararası dinamikler ışığında, Türk siyasal hayatında yaşanan darbelerin sebepleri irdelenmiştir. 1960 darbesinde, uluslararası yapının belirgin bir etkisine rastlanmamasına rağmen, ulusal düzeyde sosyo-ekonomik ve ideolojik faktörlerin oldukça önemli rol oynadığı; 1971 ve 1980 müdahalelerinde de geçmişten itibaren süregelen ulusal sebeplere toplumsal şiddetin de eklendiği, uluslararası yapının ise en az ulusal dinamikler kadar etkin olduğu değerlendirilmiştir. 15 Temmuz darbe girişiminin ise, ulusal düzeyde herhangi bir ekonomik veya ideolojik toplumsal tabana sahip

olmadığı, uluslararası tehdidin arttığı bir dönemde uluslararası yapı ile eşgüdüm içerisinde gerçekleştirilmeye çalışılan bir kalkışma olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Bu açıdan bakıldığında; anılan darbe girişiminin, özellikle Türkiye'nin güney sınırlarındaki gelişmelere müdahil olma gayretlerinin arttığı ve uluslararası düzeyde böyle bir insiyatifin engellenmeye çalışıldığı bir dönemde gerçekleşmesi; darbecilerin Atatürk'ün "Yurtta sulh, cihanda sulh" ifadesine gönderme yaparak "Yurtta Sulh Konseyi" gibi sınır ötesi bir harekate karşıtlığı çağrıştıran bir slogan adı altında örgütlenmiş olmaları ve başarısız darbe girişiminden sadece bir ay sonra Cerablus hareketinin başlaması dikkat çekicidir.

Son bölümde ise, 15 Temmuz darbe girişiminin seyri incelenerek, darbecilerin amacı açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Öncelikle, Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri içerisindeki Gülençi bu yapılanmanın başarısızlık senaryosunu hiç düşünmemiş olması olası değildir. Ancak ulusal düzeyde güç mücadelesi anlatılarının ötesine geçerek, uluslararası faktörlerin etkin olduğunu tespit ettiğimiz bu darbe girişiminin esas sebebini Suriye'deki gelişmeler olarak belirledikten sonra, darbenin başarılı olmasının da hayati öneme haiz olduğu söylenemez. Darbe başarısız da olsa, istikrarsızlaşan ve iç sorunları ile mücadele içinde olan bir Türkiye, ulusal sınırları ötesindeki gelişmelere tepkisiz kalabilecektir. Kaldı ki, darbe girişiminin başarısızlığı görünür hale gelmeye başladıktan sonra bile, bombolama ve suikast teşebbüslerinin devam etmesi, toplumsal bir çatışma ortamının yaratılmak istendiği düşüncesini destekler niteliktedir.

Sonuç olarak; toplumsal bir tabana dayanmadığı için, hiç bir sosyal ve siyasal gruptan umduğu desteği alamayan 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi başarısızlığa mahkum olmuştur. Ancak başarısızlığın dahi uluslararası düzeyde bir amaca hizmet ettiği düşünülür ise, 15 Temmuz sonrası bir daha böyle olaylar yaşanmaması adına yapılan/yapılacak siyasi düzenlemeler dikkatlice tasarlanmalıdır. Sivil-asker ilişkileri teorilerinde; özellikle silahlı kuvvetlerin sivil otoriteler kontrolüne alınabilmesine yönelik dünya genelinde uygulanan mekanizmaların bir kısmı silahlı kuvvetlerin siyasallaşmasına neden olabilmektedir. Dolayısıyla; bugün ve gelecekte anayasal sınırlar içerisinde Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde iktidara gelebilecek her siyasi anlayışa itaat eden siyaset-dışı bir silahlı kuvvet tesis etmek, ülkenin demokrasi vizyonuna yapılabilecek en yerinde katkı olacaktır.