

Reframing the July 15 Coup Attempt: A Political and Sociological Examination

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Abstract

On July 15, 2016, Turkey witnessed the most bloody military coup attempt in its history, and for the first time it was repulsed by the resistance of society, political actors, and state institutions. In the two years since then, instead of examining this attempt from the perspective of Turkey's military coup traditions or civil-military relations literature, the July 15 coup attempt has largely been seen through the lens of FETÖ and the power struggle between FETÖ and the Justice and Development Party (AK Party).

This study goes beyond this rudimentary and reductionist readings of the July 15 coup attempt that reduce it to a disagreement between two former allies. Instead, it looks at it through the political, sociological and institutional contexts that rendered this attempt first possible and then unsuccessful at the same time.

Key Words

Nation-building program, military coup, military guardianship system, struggle for civilian rule, FETÖ

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Instruction

On July 15, 2016, Turkey witnessed the most bloody military coup attempt in its history, and for the first time it was repulsed by the resistance of society, political actors, the media, and state institutions. Over the past two years, a broad literature has emerged on the July 15 coup attempt, and especially about who carried it out, why, and how they were prevented from succeeding. However, very few analyses have discussed July 15 coup attempt in the historical-political context that rendered it both possible and unsuccessful (Çalışkan 2017, Jacoby 2016, Khan 2018). A significant chunk of the literature attempted to account for the dynamics and drivers that led to the failure of coup - given the fact that for the first time in republican history a coup attempt was defeated by the active resistance of society and political actors (Aktürk 2016, Altınordu 2017, Esen and Gumuscu 2017, Uslu 2016, Yayla 2016). Much of the rest of the literature views the coup attempt through the lens of FETÖ and the power struggle between FETÖ and the AK Party (Azeri 2016, Tee 2018, Yavuz and Koç 2016, Yavuz and Balcı 2018a).

The existence of a struggle between FETÖ and AK Party, which began in 2012 and has increased every day since, and the fact that FETÖ carried out the July 15 coup attempt (Alkan 2016: 257–58, Esen and Gumuscu 2017: 63, Oğur and Kenar 2017, Yavuz and Balcı 2018a: 143) cannot be denied. To consider the background of an organization that has around half a century of history, a long-term and multinational goal and motivation, merely from the political developments of the last three years is insufficient. On the other hand, the July 15 coup attempt cannot be understood if we ignore Turkey's tradition of coups, the historical course of military-political relations, and the truth that it was after all carried out by people practicing the military profession, regardless of whether they are FETÖ members.

As two years have now passed since the coup attempt, it is more meaningful to focus on the political and historical conditions that gave rise to July 15. The basic and reductionist discourse on the coup attempt needs to be replaced by a deeper, more layered reading that adds Turkey's political history and political sociology to its account. This study goes beyond the basic reading of the July 15 coup attempt that reduces it to a disagreement between two former allies. Instead, it looks at it through the political, sociological and institutional contexts that rendered this attempt first possible and then unsuccessful at the same time.

Ottoman-Republican Modernization and the State-Building Agenda

The roots of many developments on the political agenda of modern Turkey date back to the process of Ottoman modernization. The Ottoman modernization process, which began as a tendency to gain experience from European states in terms of their military and administrative reforms, radically changed the traditional political structure and culture and planted the seeds for a new political order whose effects continue to the present day (Findley 1980, Findley 2010, Hanioglu 2010). The basic dynamic of the Ottoman modernization process was that of a Sultan and later ruling elites attempting to modernize (through top-down modernization and elitism) carrying it out taking Western political structure and culture as an example (Westernization) with the aim of strengthening the center of the state (centralization).

The Ottoman modernization process opened the way for the formation of three strong classes inseparable from the state which tore the fate of the modernization process away from the Sultan and gained their own existential priorities: the civilian bureaucracy (Tanzimat), the intellectuals (First Constitutional Era) and the military bureaucracy (Second Constitutional Era). These three classes, which formed an alliance under the leadership of the military bureaucracy, updated their missions in the context of saving the state (Kahraman 2008). Thus, the ruling elite took on a tutelary role in order to strengthen the political and institutional center in the Tazminat Era, and in the period from the Balkan Wars up until the struggle for national independence, they made it their mission to save the state, in the first years of the republic they sought to establish a secular and Turkish nation state, and in the era when Turkey had moved to multi-party politics, they tried to protect Kemalism, the founding ideology of the newly established republican regime (Ete 2012: 50–110).

In the republican period, the basic aim of a series of regulations on the legal and institutional level was to reduce the effects of religion and create a void in which a nationalistic ideology could be established. Kemalists saw Islam as the biggest obstacle to the creation of a new nation based on Turkishness and implemented policy of secularism as a road to overcoming this obstacle (Hanioglu 2011). Hence, both the individual and social forms of identity linked to Islam were abolished in favor of Turkism and religious life was restructured under state control in a way that could be used to serve Turkism (Cizre Sakalioğlu 1996: 234, Toprak 1981: 56–57).

Even if elements of society resisted this top-down modernization process in the early years, the authoritarian turn in the political system and the repression through harsh measures via the *Law on the Maintenance of Order* (Göldaş 1997) and the *Independence Courts* (Aybars 1975, Tunçay 1989) led them to withdraw from politics and the state. Religious people who were pushed out of the public sphere by the policies of secularism and nationalism turned to longer-term activities that would ensure the preservation of the Islamic bond within society. Some groups moved into continuing the teaching of the holy Qur'an (Tunahan), while others carried out activities to help preserve beliefs in society against policies of Westernization (Said-i Nursi).

During the nation-building process, Kemalist elites who relied on incredibly authoritarian instruments to instill a political program that was completely the opposite to the ethnic and religious structure of society were deeply affected by the relationships between the state and society, politics and society and between the state and politics (Özbudun 2011). In establishing a new nation on the secular and nationalist principles of the political program being put in place, the Kemalist cadres and political regime were left with two big concerns. The discomfort and objections of Kurds to the policies of nationalism were labeled separatism, while the discomfort and objections of religious groups to the policies of secularism was labeled reaction. In the single-party era, these two threats hid in the darkness to re-emerge with the democratic system. In later eras, the threat of reaction and separatism was used to justify the repression or postponement of democratic demands, the continuation of the authoritarian structure of the system and the establishment of military tutelage on top of democratic mechanisms, which left the Kemalist cadres with the status of the guarantors of the regime.

The Coup Tradition and the Tutelary Regime

Another layer that requires us to look at the July 15, 2016 coup attempt from a historical and sociological perspective is the tradition of coups in Turkey and the tutelage system that was set up after the 1960 coup. İnönü, the second president of Turkey after Atatürk, affected by both internal and external dynamics, decided to move to multi-party politics. In the 1950 elections, the Democratic Party came to power and the political coding of Turkey changed completely. For the first time, society became a political actor that could give its own decision on the composition of the government (Demirel 2011,

Kahraman 2010, Kaynar 2015). Society turning into a political actor that could affect politics and the government on the basis of free and just elections radically changed religion-state, state-politics and society-politics relations. All political groups and ideologies that had been repressed under single-party rule joined politics with the hope of having an influence over the political system.

The DP maintained its societal support throughout three general elections between 1950-60. From the mid-1950s onwards, various military juntas organized within the army with the intention of overcoming problems in its internal affairs (Hale 1994, İpekçi and Coşar 2010), and from 1959 onwards this goal, under the influence of the CHP and those around it (Demirel 2011), evolved into a complete change of administration, and on May 27, 1960 the military took control of the government. With the 1961 Constitution, prepared under the control of junta, a new political system was established. The system would remain a multi-party political system with elections determining the government, but it now again relied on the re-establishment of the dominance of Kemalist elites over the political regime. In service of this aim, the political activities of Kemalist elites led by the military were integrated into the political system as checks on the legislative and executive branches through institutions with constitutional status, which were described as “authorized organs”.

In this system, which gave elected governments the executive functions to provide services and perform actions that made daily life easier, like local services, the duty of protecting the regime, deciding the principles of the political system and supervising the executive were given to the bureaucracy. This political system, which is called the tutelary system, was strengthened by the constitutional changes after the 1971 memorandum and the 1982 Constitution, which was prepared following the 1980 coup.

The center-right parties were largely content to remain within the lines sketched out for them within this new political system. When they tried to move outside them, they were exposed to military memoranda and coups. Ethnic and religious problems were declared to be political red lines, and the Constitutional Courts closed those parties who placed these problems on their agenda. Politics not providing a domain for political demands from society to be heard led on the one hand to the radicalization of political groups, their arming themselves, turning to violence and going out on the streets, and on

the other for political circles unhappy with the existing political equation to evade democratic political procedures and to organize inside the military and civilian bureaucracy as a shortcut strategy to reaching their aims. Many political organizations and groups on both the right and left turned to strategies of radicalization and/or infiltrating the bureaucracy. Due to its privileged position above the system, the bureaucracy became a place for political groups to infiltrate in order to take a shortcut to achieving their goals. As the democratic mechanisms that could influence politics were, prior to the AK Party rule, blocked, the goal became taking over the bureaucracy, and as the political system had been restructured many times on the basis of military coups and judicial institutions, military and judicial interventions became attractive.

In this context, without considering the tradition of military coups and of how the tutelary system had limited political channels, it will be difficult to understand the importance to FETÖ of organizing within the bureaucracy, and to change political conditions that were going badly for them, and their attempt to carry out first a judicial (December 17-25, 2013) and then a military (July 15, 2016) coup. In order to properly evaluate the organizational development of FETÖ and the July 15 coup attempt it carried out, we must also consider the legacy of the coup tradition in Turkey and the tutelary system.

Identity Politics, the AK Party Government and the Struggle against Tutelage

Another heading that must be touched upon in order to understand the July 15 coup attempt is the process of the unravelling of the tutelage system, which lost its meaning with the rise of political identities in the 1990s. With the end of the Cold War, in parallel to global trends, demands based on identity and difference strengthened and a debate erupted over political equations that had previously prioritized stability and security. The Islamic and Kurdish political groups that had been repressed and othered by the Kemalist-tutelary system all along underwent a significant level of revival as social and political movements. Political dynamics such as the division of the center-right, its loss of its naturally-charismatic leaders and its becoming mired in corruption led the center-right voting base to move to identity-based parties. Thus the Welfare Party increased its support among voters at the 1994 local and 1995 general elections and became an alternative to the government.

The Kemalist elites who had formatted the political system using military coups (May 27, 1960, March 12, 1971, and September 12, 1980) designed another coup in which the soldiers would not even leave their barracks in order to stop the rise of identity politics, which was symbolized with the entry of the Welfare Party into a government coalition. This era, which is known as the February 28 (1997) process in reference to the memorandum given by the National Security Council to the Welfare Party-True Path Party (Refah-Yol) government on that date, brought down the government. The Kemalist elites, for the first time invited the segments of society, broadly speaking political secularists, to which they felt closest to act as watchdogs for the Kemalist regime and pitted them against other social groups they felt threatened by. This process, which spread over time and came to include civilian and social groups, poisoned relations between the bureaucracy and politics, politics and society and different social groups (Cizre and Çınar 2003, Gunay 2001, Yavuz 2000). Thus, the February 28 process, which aimed at strengthening centrist parties and thus rolling back identity politics, strengthened identity politics by politicizing and positioning almost every section of society against one another.

In the November 3, 2002 elections, two opposing traditions who were directly sides in the February 28 process (the AK Party and CHP) entered parliament, and all existing parliamentary parties failed to reach the electoral threshold. AK Party government, carried out democratic reform packages in relation to the EU harmonization process in line with the expectations of the middle classes who had found their political demands unmet by the political agendas limited to economic development of the center-right parties from the 1990s at a time when the effects of the February 28 on politics continued (Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, Yazıcı 2009). On the other hand, some policies focused on investment, growth and social policy, added to the economic development program developed by Kemal Derviş and the IMF after the 2001 economic crisis, ensured economic stability. Thus, the AK Party, which united the economic programs of the centrist parties with the democratic narratives of the identity-based parties, found a solution to the political crisis of the 1990s.

AK Party, up until 2007, acted according to a strategy of lowering tensions rather than directly clashing with actors who aimed at creating chaos. The democratic reform packages issued one after the other as part of the EU

harmonization process seriously damaged the institutional presence of the military in the political system. In this context, the military quality of the National Security Council was weakened and its function in the political system reduced to a symbolic one, while the military presence in constitutional institutions such as the Higher Education Council and the High Council of Radio and Television was terminated. Plus, the State Security Courts were abolished, the opportunities for civilians to be tried in military courts lessened and the possibilities for military personnel to be tried in civilian courts were increased, weakening the military's influence and independence inside the judiciary and strengthening the civilian judiciary relative to the military judiciary (Cizre 2011).

However, developments before and after the selection of a new president in 2007 - when the term of the incumbent came to an end - opened the way for the AK Party to take a proactive line in favor of fighting military tutelage. These developments included the military issuing the April 27, 2007 e-memorandum against the elected government, with apparent consent of high judiciary as reflected through their controversial and unlawful infamous "367 decision" that aimed at preventing the selection of AK Party's candidate Abdullah Gül as president and their cancellation of the government's headscarf liberalization regulations, and plus the supreme court prosecutor's case to close the AK Party. The September 12, 2010 referendum ended the era of institutional tutelage and began a new era in Turkish political history in which elected officials and civilian politicians would be dominant (Ete 2010).

Throughout all this time, it is possible to evaluate the political context which formed for the July 15 coup attempt in this way: between 2008-2010 the struggle between tutelage and democracy ended in favor of the latter, thanks to the support given by many political circles who saw the opportunity of democratizing through overturning the tutelary order and decided that the AK Party would be the most effective political actor during this period. The AK Party carried out the struggle against tutelage with the support of many segments of society, such as liberals, social democrats, socialists and nationalists, but the most organized support throughout this years was from FETÖ, which was called *Gülen* movement in those times.

Gülen, who had established relations in the past for the good of his organization with center-right and left parties while remaining distant from the nati-

onal outlook movement, predecessor of the AK Party, and other civil Islamic groups and sects, and who had in particular during the February 28 process separated himself from the Islamic political and civil society groups that were being targeted and worked with the putschist coalition, openly supporting driving the Welfare Party from power, changed his preferences after the 2002 elections and became close to the AK Party. Gülen's decision to support the AK Party motivated by the opening of an investigation into Gülen by the Kemalist establishment. Despite all his efforts to the contrary, the previous establishment regarded the Gülen as part of the Islamic segment that was targeted during the February 28 process. As such, Gülen, his supporters in the military, judiciary and security forces and his media interests, gave vocal and effective support to the AK Party's decision to engage in active struggle against the tutelary regime through judicial cases.

Beginning with the Ergenekon investigation in 2007, ongoing judicial processes like the Balyoz, İrtica Eylem Planı investigations and cases set the agenda until 2012. These cases, which opened the way for the arrest and trial of many serving and retired members of the military including the chief of staff and the force commanders on the basis that they were preparing the grounds for a coup, purged the political system of military tutelage and made a contribution to democratization. Coups and coup attempts were condemned in these cases, the tutelage of soldiers over politics considerably declined, society's democratic aspirations gained momentum, and political institutions acquired confidence and began to deal with chronic problems.

However, these cases which began with political and social support and which made a major contribution in a short time to the democratization of the political system would soon be questioned both by public opinion and by the government. The operations of February 7, 2012 against the chief of intelligence and December 17, 2013 against the government showed that there was a strong autonomous group inside the judiciary and security forces under Gülen's guidance and that this structure had acted outside the hierarchy and principles of the bureaucracy in accordance with its own hierarchy and bureaucracy. These developments led to a re-evaluation of the process relating to cases like Ergenekon and Balyoz, which had come to symbolize the struggle against tutelage, and a clearer picture of FETÖ's agenda in carrying out these cases (Akdoğan 2016, Zengin 2018). Hence, the government took the lead

in changing the laws and the constitutional court took the decision to release the suspects, related to these cases.

These cases, which went on for five years, produced results that directly influenced the July 15 coup attempt taking place as well as the attempt's failure. First of all, these cases were understood as helping weaken institutional reflexes and making it easier for FETÖ to infiltrate into the military in en masse. At the same time, these cases were extremely important in fostering a democratic mindset and opposition to coups in public opinion and for aiding the public in adopting both a political will and their own democratic will. The process of fighting tutelage, which began in 2007 and deepened afterwards made a major contribution to the enthusiasm among political institutions and society in defending the government on the night of the coup. As a result, while this process provided the FETÖ with the qualitative and quantitative power needed to give it the opportunity to attempt a coup, it also played a decisive role in its failure through increasing the military, political will and public opinion to resist the coup attempt.

The purges carried out, during the high profile political and judicial cases, in the military and judiciary with the aim of gaining a position of power there also led to the formation of a serious resistance to FETÖ within these institutions. This process had a decisive effect on the struggle against the coup plotters on the night of the coup, in which the military and judiciary stood beside the civilian government. In the end, the process of fighting the tutelary system made possible the governmental and societal resistance to the coup attempt on the night of July 15 by strengthening civilian and political awareness and consciousness against bureaucratic interventions into politics.

The Search for a New Turkey and the AK Party-FETÖ Split

The AK Party received support in its struggle against tutelage from a wide range of socio-political groups of different tendencies. Many groups who were uneasy with the tutelary system came together under the leadership of the AK Party, which was determined to fight tutelage. However, following the September 12, 2010 referendum and June 12, 2011 elections, when the struggle against tutelage that held together the alliance was replaced with the process of establishing a democratic political system, or in the words of AK Party circles, the process of “constructing a new Turkey”, these political groups

which had stood together under the AK Party's leadership one by one began to go their separate ways due to their different perspectives on this construction. The contest over and political projections for the construction of the new Turkey would become the new determining dynamic in Turkish politics. This radical change on the political agenda also changed the base and parties in the political struggle. When these differences of opinion emerged in 2012, it was the year in which the AK Party received the most criticism from social groups that had supported it for the past decade. Circles that had supported the AK Party in the struggle against tutelage accused the AK Party, in this new period, for losing its reformist and democratizing zeal and instead for prioritizing the construction of a new Turkey premised on conservative and Islamic values. These groups felt that the AK Party disregarded their concerns, visions and aspirations while engaging in the construction of a new Turkey single-handedly.

Between 2010 and 2013, even if the front against the AK Party widened, "anti-Erdoğan and AK Party feeling" had not yet turned into the single constituent dynamic of politics, and had not gained the character of a common denominator between different segments of society in opposition. The political struggle carried out over the possible political co-ordinates of new Turkey changed its character in 2013. The deciding factor in this character change was the AK Party government's attitude towards the Arab Spring. The AK Party government completely supported the dynamics of change in the Middle East and North Africa and continued close relations with the Islamic groups and formations that consequently became candidates for political government, but after a short pause other regional and global actors chose to strangle this dynamics of change. Differences of opinion which were crystallizing over the policies towards Egypt and Syria led to the spread of propaganda "Islamism" against the government, a change that Israel was making against the AK Party and Erdoğan since the Davos summit of 2009 and Mavi Marmara incident of 2010.

The differences between FETÖ and the AK Party were a direct result of this process. On the one hand were criticisms of the AK Party by left-liberals as authoritarians who upheld the status quo, and on the other were criticisms of its Islamism that arose from Davos and the Mavi Marmara incidents and were strengthened during the Arab Spring, and FETÖ used these narratives

to legitimize its struggle against the AK Party and to develop new alliances internally and externally. These internal and external critiques directed at the AK Party hid the aim/ambition of FETÖ to become the new tutelary actor in the post-tutelary system and made it possible to defend the power struggle to be carried out with liberal-democratic excuses (Ete 2014, Özhan 2014).

The Gezi protests beginning from the end of the month of May 2013 and lasting throughout June and the FETÖ's December 17-25 operations against government six months later were the concrete reflections of a new axis of conflict on the map of political alliances. Unclear factors such as Erdoğan's proposal for the transition from a parliamentary system to a presidential system, the presidential elections that would take place in 2014, the possibility that Erdoğan would be the Turkey's first popularly-elected president, and who would take on the role of AK Party's chairmanship should Erdoğan become the president all sharpened the struggle in the years 2013-2014.

As Turkey moved towards presidential elections, the first and most effective move that served a function in terms of identity politics, concerns about lifestyles, politics of alliances and political engineering were the Gezi protests. There were groups that had come out against the purging of the tutelary system and those who opposed the creation of a post-tutelary political system by the AK Party's hand, or in other words, there were those who had been defeated in the purging process and those who believed they had been excluded from the construction process formed an alliance and carried out the Gezi protests, highlighting the political order of the new era (Ete 2013, Ete and Taştan 2014). The Gezi protests, which took place at exactly the same time as the protests in Kiev, Ukraine and Cairo, Egypt, were interpreted by the AK Party government as a provocation intended for them and aimed at Turkey's stability, spearheaded by a coalition of tutelary domestic actors and foreign actors who could not stomach Turkey's growing power.

Around six months later, while the effects of the Gezi protests on politics continued, there was a new shake-up of the political agenda with the December 17-25 operations. While the power struggle over the parameters of the new post-tutelary political system went on at full intensity, the December 17 operation brought politics and the public face to face with a new actor and structure. Since December 17, different from the previous experience with

tutulary, coups and terrorism, Turkey has witnessed a much more inimical and dangerous group, FETÖ, attempt to take over the whole state-structure.

FETÖ was known to the public in the 1980s as a religious sect, in the 1990s as a civil society movement, and in the 2000s as an “unregistered” power that had organized within the state bureaucracy. Different faces of the group may have been more visible at different times, but Gülen carried out activities in these three areas from the first day (Çakır and Sakallı 2014, Davutoğlu 2017, Yavuz 2018). As FETÖ gained power in the bureaucracy, and most of all in the police, judiciary and military, it came onto the stage as a new tutelary power to replace the declining (Kemalist) tutelary power. From the year 2010 onwards, trusting the influence they had built up in the police, the judiciary, the military, the media, and the business world, they began to carry out operations to determine the political agenda and impose it on the elected government.

When the AK Party government noticed that FETÖ had used the steps taken on the road to fighting tutelage and democratizing to strengthen itself in the bureaucracy, had established a parallel structure, had begun to put pressure on the elected government, and had carried out operations in pursuit of their own priorities with no regard for the institutional and political hierarchy, it began to take precautions. Gülen’s separate position had begun to be noticeable, with his differences of opinion with the AK Party government on many domestic and foreign policy issues being voiced, accusing the AK Party of purging its followers in the bureaucracy and beginning operations to put the government under pressure, using elements of the bureaucracy. From there, political developments in Turkey and interventions into the identity of the post-tutelary political system were raised to a new level by the fight between FETÖ and the AK Party.

The first concrete clash between FETÖ and the AK Party occurred on February 7, 2012. The prosecutor running the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) investigation called the new and old heads of Turkish intelligence (MİT), the former deputy head of MİT and one MİT employee to give statements. The request to try MİT members was identified as a new type of judicial coup attempt in the tutelary process in the context of political pressure on the government through judicial overreach. Erdoğan evaluated this development as appointed bureaucrats questioning the political will of

the elected government and as an insidious plan that would lead to himself being put on trial. Publicly known names for their closeness to Gülen or membership of his organization had both wholeheartedly supported this judicial operation against the government and run a public campaign against the government's counter legal and administrative measures. This process had glaringly revealed that Gülen was not content with the AK Party government and that it could use its members inside the police and judiciary in order to carry out other moves against the AK Party government.

The second concrete clash between FETÖ and the AK Party came with the beginning of a powerful operation against the government accusing it of corruption on December 17, 2013. While the AK Party saw the operation as a similar attempt at political engineering to February 7, FETÖ's media and civilian structures stood behind it and defended it. On January 1, 2014, a critical new dimension was added to the Gülen-government fight when a request was made to search a truck belonging to MİT bringing aid to Syria. On January 18, the MİT trucks, which were bringing aid to Syria, this time were searched by a prosecutor and 300 gendarmes and all put on record. It has since been felt that the MİT trucks affair pushed by FETÖ was intended to provide evidence to substantiate international fears that Turkey was supposedly using the charity İHH and MİT to provide al-Qaeda with support in the form of arms.

The February 7 and December 17 processes showed that Gülen and his followers had formed an unregistered political grouping, that they were acting as an independent force within the bureaucracy by establishing a parallel structure, that the group they were members of had gone beyond the bounds of legality in their aims and principles and begun tapping many influential segments of society, that they had recorded conversations that were state secrets and leaked them and that finally they had the cheek to attempt a coup against the elected government using the judiciary (Zengin 2018).

The AK Party government felt that this was a new attempt at bureaucratic tutelage more dangerous than the old kind and began a determined and comprehensive struggle against this organization, which it saw as a serious threat to the continuation of the democratic system. Due to the intensity of their religious and civil society activities, many elements of society had cultivated close relationships with this organization, and difficulties such as revealing its

organizational chart, differentiating movement members from sympathizers, identifying secretive members alongside known members, and recognizing members who had been secretly planted in effective institutions of the state, most of all the military, police, and judiciary, directly affected the character of the fight.

By National Security Council decision, the struggle against this group was transitioned from being a personal, Erdoğan, or group, the AK Party, struggle to that of the state one. Throughout this process, the group's presence in sectors such as education, civil society, the media, the economy and the bureaucracy was seriously reduced. The bureaucratic purges of the group has significantly reduced the organizational and operational capacity of the group. Nevertheless, the group conserved its highly secretive existence and power within the army, where it had launched a coup attempt in advance of the 2016 Supreme Military Council decisions, which were to launch a widespread purge of the group.

From the September 12, 2010 referendum onwards, the developments which shaped the power struggle over the post-tutelary political balance introduced Turkey to many actions, interventions and operations of a type Turkey had never before experienced. The power struggle begun in order to affect or prevent the construction of a new political system led by the AK Party government and to weaken Erdoğan's political power morphed into attempts to destabilize politics and the country at large, with the intervention of FETÖ at the moments of February 7 and December 17, and following terrorist attacks by the PKK, ISIS and similar groups from 2015 onwards. In the face of these attacks, Erdoğan and the AK Party may have continued to retain power and support from society, but the legal and administrative measures that the government had to employ in order to fight off this danger has dramatically changed the political climate inside the country. This process led to the emergence of two contrasting political psychologies inside the country: whereas the pro-government social base regarded this fight as being akin to the second way of independence, the anti-government circle saw the same process as a tragedy of government's own making which resulted from government's its ill-conceived policies and authoritarian turn.

In the context of the power struggle which took place from 2012 onwards over the parameters of the democratic political system after military tutelage;

on the one hand the Arab spring and the attempts to weaken the AK Party's support the Arab spring, the quest for directing of leadership change within the AK Party, and the concomitant internal and external manipulation carried out with the aim of weakening the AK Party government, and on the other hand, the AK Party/Erdoğan's measures to neutralize these interventions and threats have contaminated the political climate in Turkey and paved the ground for the coup attempt. February 7, the Gezi protests, the December 17-25 operations and the rising terror due to the PKK in the southeast digging trenches after the breaking off of the peace process, the security threat created by the civil war in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS in Turkey all left Turkey in a psychological position ripe with fragility and instability.

The AK Party leadership and social base, having conceptualized all these developments as attacks by evil forces targeting Erdoğan's leadership and the stability of the country, closed ranks around Erdoğan and sought to protect him from attacks. While this process increased the determination of Erdoğan and the AK Party, it increased the degree to which the base closed ranks around Erdoğan. Developments such as those in Egypt and Ukraine, the increasing criticism of Erdoğan in the Western media and political world, and Turkey becoming embroiled in a fragile political climate due to increasing terror attacks gave FETÖ the courage to carry out a coup attempt. The same process strengthened Erdoğan and his supporters in their feelings of resistance and refusal to allow the coup to succeed, making it possible for the coup attempt to fail (Uslu 2016: 202–3). If this process had not happened, it is very likely that neither would FETÖ have attempted a coup, nor could a coup attempt have been prevented from succeeding. Thus, this process made it possible both for a coup attempt to take place and for a heroic resistance to leave it fruitless at the same time.

Conclusion

In order to properly understand and take the correct lessons from the July 15 coup attempt, led by the military and civilian components of FETÖ, we can go beyond a focus on the perpetrators of the coup and the focus on what happened on the night of the coup and look at the historical and political context that made the coup attempt simultaneously possible and unsuccessful.

The Ottoman and Republican modernizing rulers who proceeded along a centralizing, Westernizing, nationalist and secularist path in a process dire-

ctly led to two consequences for Republican history: a new nation-building process along the axes of secularism and nationalism became the fundamental ideology of the Republic and a military-civilian bureaucracy with an elitist-savior mission positioned themselves as the watchmen of the regime in order to protect this nation-building agenda against all possible threats. These two dynamics laid the political groundwork for the era of tutelary democracy that was institutionalized in the single party era and through later coups. Civilian politics were limited to the areas of services and economic development and remained unresponsive to demands relating to identity. Political movements left without the possibility of political representation either radicalized and were criminalized or switched to strategies of secret organization within the military or bureaucracy in order to affect the political system. The tutelary actors however intervened sometimes using the “authorized organs” that they had established and sometimes directly through a military coup in order to protect the political status quo they foresaw.

FETÖ, as a product of this political context, took the logic of the coup tradition and tutelary system as an example, and from the 1970s onwards began to secretly organize inside the military and civilian bureaucracy. From 2010 onwards, it acted to fill the place of the purged putschist-tutelary actors and to become a new putschist-tutelary actor in a newly shaped political system. In an era in which institutional tutelage dominated politics, FETÖ established alliances with the parties of the center-right and left and increased its power, and from 2007 onwards it established an alliance with the AK Party, which had shown its determination and gained wide social support in the fight against tutelage, and gave its support in that fight. After the year 2010, in which a power struggle emerged over the fundamental dynamics of the creation of the post-tutelary system and the AK Party became the subject of much criticism and attacks both domestically and internationally, FETÖ acted to become the new tutelary actor in the political system and finally launched the July 15, 2016 coup attempt.

When we consider this political and historical context, despite being aware of the actors and ideologies involved, we might view the July 15, 2016 coup attempt as sharing similar political dynamics and processes with other military coups. Hence, it would be more appropriate to locate FETÖ, without neglecting its *sui generis* qualities, and the July 15 coup attempt it carried

out inside the dynamics of tutelary democracy which has defined politics throughout Republican history. The literature on the July 15 coup attempt up to the present day has been analyzed from an actor-focused perspective, looking at FETÖ's organizational priorities and goals. It cannot be denied that these analyses have made important contributions to unveiling the dynamics of FETÖ's development, links and aims, but if we are to draw a lesson for the future of Turkey's political life from FETÖ and the July 15 coup attempt, then there is benefit in substituting analyses with an emphasis on political processes and context for these actor-focused analyses. Otherwise, as long as the processes and context do not change, and for as long as civilian-military and tutelary-democracy relations are not placed on the necessary democratic fundamentals, if the actors change then the opportunity will remain for other anti-democratic tutelary actors and structures to abuse the same processes and contexts.

For these reasons, this study has sought to understand FETÖ and the July 15 coup attempt within the context of the political activities and processes that began with the Ottoman-Republican modernization process and have continued to the present day. When we consider the fundamental dynamics of Turkish political history, both FETÖ's July 15, 2016 coup attempt and its failure for the first time in Republican history due to the determined resistance of politicians, the bureaucracy and society can be better understood.

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15 Temmuz Darbe Teşebbüsünü Yeni Bir Çerçeveye Oturtmak: Siyasal ve Sosyolojik bir İnceleme

Hatem Ete*

ÖZ

15 Temmuz 2016'da Türkiye tarihinin en kanlı askeri darbe teşebbüsü gerçekleşti ve ilk defa toplumun, siyasetin, medyanın ve devlet kurumlarının direnişi ile püskürtüldü. Darbe girişiminin ardından geride bıraktığımız iki yıl içinde, 15 Temmuz darbe teşebbüsü, Türkiye'nin darbe geleneği veya asker-siyaset ilişkileri literatürü yerine çoğunlukla FETÖ ve FETÖ-AK Parti arasındaki iktidar mücadelesi üzerinden değerlendirmeye tabi tutuldu.

Bu çalışmada, 15 Temmuz darbe teşebbüsünü iki eski müttefik arasında yaşanan anlaşmazlığa indirgeyen okumanın yüzeyselliğini aşmak üzere, 15 Temmuz'u aynı anda hem mümkün hem de başarısız kılan siyasal ve sosyolojik bağlam üzerinde durulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Ulus-inşa programı, askeri darbe, vesayet sistemi, vesayetle mücadele, FETÖ

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Интерпретация попытки переворота 15 июля: политический и социологический анализ

Хатем Эте*

Аннотация

15 июля 2016 года в Турции произошла самая кровавая попытка военного переворота в ее истории, и впервые она была отбита сопротивлением общества, политических и государственных институтов, СМИ. В течение двух лет с тех пор, вместо того, чтобы рассматривать эту попытку с точки зрения опыта военных переворотов в Турции или гражданских и военных отношений, попытка государственного переворота 15 июля в значительной степени была интерпретирована через призму FETÖ и борьба за власть между FETÖ и Партией справедливости и развития (партия АК).

Это исследование выходит за рамки этого рудиментарного и редукционистского прочтения попыток государственного переворота 15 июля, которые сводят его к разногласиям между двумя бывшими союзниками. Вместо этого автор рассматривает его через политический, социологический и институциональный контексты, которые сделали эту попытку максимально возможной, и неудачной в то же время.

Ключевые слова

Программа государственного строительства, военный переворот, система военной опеки, борьба за гражданское правление, FETÖ

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