

# Making a Determination from the Operational Code of a New and Influential Actor: President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan

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## Abstract

Lack of sufficient and fulfilling information about new political actors who have key positions on the international stage, makes the task of explaining and predicting their choices much more complicated. With the help of Operational Code analysis it is possible to provide the missing information. Thus the main purpose of this article is to understand the behavioural pattern of a relatively new political actor by using Operational Code. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has become one of the most prominent political leader in Turkey due to his political methods, manners, decisions and his deep impact on political processes, has been analyzed primarily for being a relatively “new actor” compared to his antecedents. Secondly Erdoğan is a unique leader who has overcome a serious crisis of survival of his country during 15 July failed coup d’etat. For all those aforementioned reasons, Operational Code of Erdoğan is the main argument of this paper.

## Keywords

New actor, political psychology, Operational Code, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, belief system, 15 July

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## Introduction

Many shifts accompanied the end of the Cold War, one of them being the theories and interpretations of international relations. It does not seem possible to infer correct policy implications using the same political means that were employed when the globe was bipolar. Notwithstanding the Cold War's environment and political atmosphere, the world today faces great uncertainty. On the international stage, the logic of power politics is far more complicated, and individual leaders make a difference (Grove 2007). In the post-Cold War era, globalization not only has a huge impact on economic welfare; it also influences relationships among ordinary people in various societies. Despite innumerable threats, a plethora of opportunities to protect or enhance state interests have emerged (Schafer and Walker 2006: 6).

In such a challenging atmosphere, political analysts and theorists have come to agree that the old structural analysis of the Cold War period no longer makes sense for understanding global affairs. In other words, political scientists can no longer depend solely on state level analysis. Rather than only focusing on states and using structure-based theories, agent-based explanations should be incorporated into political studies, since today's world is far different from the past in the sense of "who" makes decisions on certain matters. In sum, comprehending the motivations and rationale behind political choices has become crucial to grasping international politics.

Hence, there is a strong need to study the attitudes and belief systems of important decision-makers. Belief systems and political psychology have become more significant as political actors dynamically construct reality through their cognitive schemata or convictions, which then play an important role in shaping their policy choices. In an effort to clarify world politics, one of a political researcher's basic goals is not only to build and specify an individual decision maker's profile, but also to shed light on the means of his/her judgments.

Throughout the profiling process, a political researcher tries to elucidate why individual decision-makers may choose a certain option out of other ones (Walker 1995). As stated above, political researchers' efforts are rather important, because most of the time, the motives underlying specific decisions are closely linked with a decision maker's belief system.

Political scientists have to specify the decision maker's profile and his/her corresponding principles in terms of predicting future choices (Dyson 2001: 329). This task becomes even more vital when the individual is a new and influential actor in the global political sphere. A new actor can be defined as an executive or other important figure who has recently come to our attention without the kind of established, visible records of decision-making or public behavior that form a profile (Dyson 2001).

However, this is not always easy, especially when the leader in question is reluctant or unavailable for candid interviews or direct communication. In this case, in order to build a profile, political scientists must refer to secondary sources such as past actions, political experiences, public speeches, and other verbal material. By combining the framework of political psychology and a tool called operational code analysis within the scope of the framework of political psychology, a researcher gathers information from all primary and secondary sources so that he/she can develop a valid and consistent profile of a political leader.

Since the 1970s, there have been multiple operational code studies on political elites such as Henry Kissinger (Walker 1977), John Foster Dulles (Holsti 1970), Dean Acheson (McLellan 1971), Woodrow Wilson (Walker 1995), Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres (Crichlow 1998), Jimmy Carter (Walker, Schafer, and Young 1998), Bill Clinton (Schafer and Crichlow 2000), Lyndon B. Johnson (Walker and Schafer 2000), Vladimir Putin (Dyson 2001), Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bashar al-Assad (Malici and Buckner 2008), George W. Bush (Renshon 2008), Mao Zedong (Feng 2005), Fidel Castro, and Kim Il-sung (Malici and Malici 2005).

Before proceeding to the literature on operational code analysis, it is worthwhile to briefly explain how political psychology connects actors' cognitive predispositions with their political decision-making processes. Such cognitive structures drive decision makers' perceptions and responses to international events, aiding the organization and interpretation of data (Brulé, Mintz, and DeRouen 2013). Thus, operational code analysis allows us to offer answers regarding our primary research puzzle (Malici and Malici 2005). Considering that personal values are a state of mind, the design of operational code analysis enables researchers to understand the views of political decision makers (Breuning 2007: 39).

## 1. Political Psychology

At the most general level, political psychology is an application of what is known about human psychology to the study of politics (Huddy, Sears, and Levy 2013). It addresses phenomena concerning political elites such as personality, motives, actions, choices on foreign policy, international conflicts, and conflict resolution (Cotham 2004: 3). According to Kuklinski, political psychology uncovers the psychological causes of political decision-making (Kuklinski 2002: 2). Another goal of political psychology is to establish general laws of behavior that can help predict future events. Political psychology scholars use the scientific method that consists of four steps: (1) making observations; (2) forming a hypothesis; (3) further observation; and (4) refining explanations (Cotham 2015).

While political psychology scholars examine political behavior, they try to answer a fundamental question: Why do people (including political leaders) behave the way they do? In order to find out, they explore psychological patterns, including emotional psychodynamic roots that influence how government actors behave in politics (Kuklinski 2002). By carefully investigating these clues and patterns, it is highly possible to construct an almost complete profile. At this point, it would be useful to provide a literature review of operational code analysis, which was developed by Nathan Leites within the domain of political psychology.

## 2. Operational Code Analysis

The concept of “operational code” dates back to the 1940s. Merton was the first scientist to use the term (Crichlow 1998: 688). In other words, it is not a recent methodology in the social sciences. It was used by Nathan Leites in his two works, which both later became classics: *The Operational Code of the Politburo* (1951) and *A Study of Bolshevism* (1953) (Schafer and Walker 2006: 7). Leites conceptualized the Politburo’s responses to political choices as a series of decision-making rules and axioms that established their viewpoints (Renshon 2008). He then drew on psychoanalytic theory and social psychology to justify these worldviews and analyze the primary motives and goals of Soviet leaders (Walker 1990). His works were mainly based on psychology and psychoanalysis, so they were dense and not easily referable to a wide political framework; yet the two aforementioned writings pioneered the construct of operational code analysis.

Alexander George (1969) helped revive the notion of operational code after a decade. He wrote an article titled “The ‘Operational Code’: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making.” George re-examined Leites’ writings, excluded some “unusually complex” parts of Leites’ works and finally had his own simplified version of Operational Code. Unlike Leites’ work, his investigations centered more on beliefs than psychoanalysis.

Holsti is another key figure who contributed to the literature on operational code analysis by developing a basic typology. According to Holsti, there are two basic types of leaders: Type A and Type B. The fundamental difference between them lies in the fact that their cognitive “master” values are either harmonious or conflictual (Holsti 1977). Values (i.e., beliefs) are subjective and personal representations of truth held by a particular actor.

It is generally recognized that our behavior is in large part shaped by the manner in which we perceive and interpret our physical and social environment. This perception of ours is molded by clusters of beliefs about what has been, is, and will be. Thus, our beliefs provide us with a more or less coherent code by which we organize and make sense of what would otherwise be a confusing array of signals. If there is a general linkage between this behavior and beliefs, they are likely to be relevant for understanding the behavior of political actors. (Holsti 1970)

Beliefs also provide norms, standards, and guidelines that influence an actor’s strategies and tactics, his/her structuring, and weighing of alternative courses of action (George 1969: 191). George (1969) presented a leader’s operational code as consisting of two basic dimensions: (1) a set of philosophical beliefs; and (2) a set of instrumental beliefs. In the first dimension, there are aspects of a diagnosis of the context for action (Ciot 2014: 173). They are attributional tendencies, which occur when a leader tries to make sense of the actions of other agents around him/her. As for instrumental views, they are mostly elements of prognosis. They are determinants of the most effective preference and strategies for achieving political goals. Instrumental principles are also components that reflect patterns of preferences regarding the nature of actions that a leader carries out, encourages, or discourages

(Crichlow 1998). All in all, beliefs serve as a litmus test for whether a leader believes he/she is able to control events (Crichlow, Scott, Schafer, and Mark 2000). Taken together, these values serve as guides for making political decisions.

The Operational Code: Philosophical Questions

P-1: What is the essential nature of political life? Is the political universe one of harmony or conflict? What is the fundamental character of one's political opponents?

P-2: What are the prospects for eventually realizing one's fundamental political values and aspirations? Can one be optimistic, or must one be pessimistic on this score? In what respects can one be optimistic and/or pessimistic?

P-3: Is the future of politics predictable? In what sense and to what extent?

P-4: How much control or mastery can one have over historical development? What is one's role in moving and shaping history in the desired direction?

P-5: What is the role of chance in human affairs and historical development?

The Operational Code: Instrumental Questions

I-1: What is the best approach for selecting goals for political action?

I-2: How are the goals of action pursued most effectively?

I-3: How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?

I-4: What is the best timing of action to advance one's interests?

I-5: What is the utility and role of different means for furthering one's interests?

Source: George 1969.

Indeed, philosophical attitudes attribute the fundamental nature of politics, political conflict, and the opponent's image to an actor's assumptions (Feng 2005). The first set of questions is formed around the following successive themes: (1) the perception of the political universe; (2) beliefs; (3) outcomes; (4) control; and (5) the role of chance. However, instrumental principles prescribe the use of strategies, tactics, and preferences. This relates to selecting goals, ways of pursuing them, risk control tactics, the timing of actions, and the utility of means for desired ends.

In a nutshell, operational code analysis is critical to understanding how political leaders construct reality and order through their belief systems. Thus, an effort to build a comprehensive profile of an influential leader can provide us with indispensable data on his/her predictability. It is also of great use in interpreting controversial moves and risk-seeking attitudes in times of political crisis. Moreover, it enables us to picture how the actor perceives others.

### **3. The Operational Code of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**

Considering all of these merits in a geopolitically fragile location, it seems almost urgent to build a profile of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, one of Turkey's most prominent leaders. Of course, this necessitates the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. However, in terms of limitations, this article lacks quantitative data since it is part of a larger study. This paper aims to build a profile of Erdoğan based on primary sources, including his official biography (aforementioned), in order to find clues about his attitudes so that we can create a full outline of who Erdoğan is. We have also employed two non-biased academic books on Erdoğan: (1) H. Bahadır Türk's *Muktedir Türk Sağ Geleneği ve Recep Tayyip Erdoğan* (The Competent Chief Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Turkish Right-Wing Tradition); and (2) *Bir Liderin Doğuşu Recep Tayyip Erdoğan* (The Birth of a Leader: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan) written by Hüseyin Besli ve Ömer Özbay. As secondary sources, Erdoğan's speeches were taken from the official website of the Justice and Development Party (JDP), the presidency, and mainstream media.

It is well known that Erdoğan is a comparatively recent but highly influential actor in Turkish politics. He has been chosen as this article's case study on account of the fact that he is a relatively "new actor" compared to his forerunners (Demirel, Özal, and Ecevit, who dominated Turkish politics throughout their long political careers). In addition to being a "new actor," his political behavior, choices, methods, decisions, and deep impact on political processes are also the reasons he was chosen for the case study. As stated above, Erdoğan is one of the foremost political leaders in Turkey's political arena. He is a unique leader who was able to overcome a serious crisis of his country's survival during the coup d'état on July 15, 2016.

His biography has evolved into a success story in terms of his political life. Three successive victories in the general presidential elections and earning the title “the first publicly elected president” of Turkey crowned his political career. Erdoğan was born in Istanbul on February 26, 1954; his family originally came from Rize. He graduated from Kasımpaşa Piyale Primary School in 1965 and completed his high school education at Istanbul Imam Hatip High School (Religious Vocational High School) in 1973. Having taken additional courses, Erdoğan received a diploma from Eyüp High School as well. In 1981, he graduated from Marmara University’s Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences.

According to his official biography, he has always been interested in sports and politics. From 1969 to 1982, he was actively interested in football, which taught him the significance of teamwork in his youth (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey 2016). He joined the students’ branch of the National Turkish Students’ Association during his high school and college years. Erdoğan was elected Head of the MSP Beyoğlu Youth Branch in 1976, and Head of the MSP İstanbul Youth Branch that same year. Holding this position until 1980, he served as a consultant and senior executive in the private sector during the September 12 coup of the same year when political parties were closed down.

Erdoğan returned to political activities with the Welfare Party. On March 27, 1994, he was elected Mayor of Metropolitan İstanbul. His political career at this time was not smooth though. On December 12, 1997, while addressing the public in Siirt, Erdoğan read a poem from a book and was sentenced to prison for reading it. Thus, his term as mayor ended. After serving 4 months in prison, he founded the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) on August 14, 2001 with his friends (Besli and Özbay 2010). He became a deputy in Siirt for the 22<sup>nd</sup> term. As prime minister, Erdoğan established the 59th, 60th and 61st governments. Elected the 12th president on August 10, 2014, Erdoğan is also the first Turkish president to be chosen by popular vote.



#### 4. The Operational Code: Philosophical Questions

*P-1 What is the essential nature of political life? Is the political universe one of harmony or conflict? What is the fundamental character of one's political opponents?*

There seems to be one “master” principle that Erdoğan’s firmly sticks to: the centrality of stability. Erdoğan’s philosophical attitudes about the nature of the political universe can be established around this pivotal principle; laws and rules should be designed in accordance with solidity and the sustainability of the system. He strongly believes in firmness. After all, the essence of the political universe is found in the link between laws and stability which are often reflected in his speeches: “When there is stability there is security. When a country is stable and secure, the world would come there, otherwise nobody would come” (Türk 2014: 223).

Looking at his press conferences, one can see that he constantly stresses the importance of order. Furthermore, he thinks that past economic failure was due to a lack of solid, secure government:

For God’s sake, [in the past] we used to wait in...long queues for gas, oil, bread... even salt, didn’t we? But now, 20 years later, we are not familiar with such situations... [The people] only know the rule of the JDP and think that Turkey has always been like this. It wasn’t like that; it never was. (Erdoğan 2013)

Considering Erdoğan’s positive tendency toward stability, we can find hints if we look for clues in his biography about such an attitude. For instance, some internal values regarding his inner discipline could be interpreted as a sign that he favors strength and sustainability. His passion for football started in primary school and continued in high school, where he developed his skills in the following years. While he was playing football on the field, he learned the importance of having a team spirit, which helped consolidate his sense of teamwork in political life.

During my primary school years, I was not in politics. All I did was build a substructure for politics in the future. When I started high school, I began to participate in more of these activities. I took part in all of the school’s cultural and sport activities. When I finished high school, I found myself active in politics. (Ak 2002: 59)

When we take a second look at Erdoğan's philosophical values, it is possible to claim that he placed importance on laws, norms, and rules in political life. However, he highlighted the significance of norms as long as they related to his "service" and "project" policy. In general, laws and regulations have not obstructed his mega construction projects, nor his service policy. On the contrary, laws should function as facilitators of those mega projects.

As long as laws are facilitating government's operations and performances and stay relevant to the conjecture the ultimate goals can be reached. Otherwise all promises will break down and goals cannot be accomplished.

In our values roads are not obstacles. When a road is to be constructed even if there exists a mosque we demolish it [and] rebuild it somewhere else. This is the essence of business. (Erdoğan 2013)

Erdoğan's cognitive predisposition toward service policy causes him to be determined and tenacious; all of these forceful tenets are signs of a nontraditional, reformist leadership.

On the other hand, how Erdoğan perceives his political opponents is another aspect of philosophical principles. Consistent with his belief in a strong sense of order in the political realm, he views his opponents as obstacles to stability. Furthermore, his perception of them contains a wide range of elements. Erdoğan's perspective on his adversaries includes those from any institution, actor, or event who cause volatility, which can carry the risk of becoming a potential threat at any time (Türk 2014: 291). Such events range from protests at Gezi Park, the December 17th – 25th Operation Raids, to terrorist acts committed by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (also known as the PKK). However, these threats differ in content and form. Indiscriminately, Erdoğan often targets enemies as a whole.

First they [protesters] talked about Gezi Park and set fires in the streets. They [disrupted] peace in and outside of Turkey for days. However, you as a nation [speaking to Turkey's citizenry] gathered in Kazlıçeşme, and 1.5 million İstanbul residents gave the demonstrators the lesson they long deserved. Similarly, in Ankara, 750,000 people gathered in Sincan and gave [the protesters] the lesson they deserved. As with every city I have visited, just like İstanbul and Ankara, Manisa is beautiful and its people are so nice; Sakarya is beautiful as well. They (the people) all gave them [the demonstrators] the necessary lessons they deserved. If God allows it, we will

continue to travel throughout all the cities in the country. I believe people will teach the protesters a thing or two, right here in the public square. (Erdogan 2014)

There is a fundamental similarity between the Gezi Park protests and the December 17<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> Operation Raids. During the Gezi Park protests, Taksim Platform opposed to building a third airport, a third bridge, power plants, and Canal Istanbul. On December 17<sup>th</sup>, contractors for these global projects were targeted. After failing at Gezi Park, they tried to succeed on December 17. Actors may be different; cat's paws may be different. Subcontractors could be involved knowingly or unintentionally. Bosses are the same, directors and guides are the same (in two instances). (Türk 2014: 216)

He condemned a terrorist massacre – whose prime suspect was the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (or ISIL; also called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIS) – when he learned that a suicide bomber had killed tens of civilians during a wedding ceremony in Gaziantep. Once again, he said there was no difference between the Gülenist Terror Organisation (also known as FETÖ), the PKK, and ISIL. “I am deeply sorry about the massacre in Gaziantep. I would like to underscore once again that there is no difference between the PKK, ISIL, and Gülenists” (Erdogan August 2016).

Behind these varying perceptions of the enemy lies another philosophical belief: Adversaries are real threats to stability and security, and should be eliminated by all means possible.

*P-2: What are the prospects for eventually realizing one's fundamental political values and aspirations? Can one be optimistic, or must one be pessimistic on this score? In what respects can a person be optimistic and/or pessimistic?*

Not only does he concentrate his discourse around the country's security; he also highlights that the essential core of the political realm (namely stability) can be achieved through public support and will. He gets his power from the public, not anywhere else. Following the constitutional referendum in 2010, his first speech displays this core belief:

Today, those who said yes and no to the referendum have won because advanced democracy for everyone. Rights and freedom are for everyone. The law holds everyone accountable. All citizens are on the winning side, whether or not they want all of the political guidance that [the referendum's] supporters have lost. (Erdogan 2010)

It is noteworthy that Erdoğan seeks popular support during times of turbulence. A recent radical example is the failed coup, which happened on July 15, 2016. In the midst of the coup, his speech on TV was historic. He addressed his nation with various comments:

- “Leave your homes, head to the airport, [and] stay outside to oppose the coup.”
- “I believe this coup will not succeed.”
- “This was done from outside the chain of command.”
- “Those who are responsible will receive the necessary punishment.”
- “We will not bow down to them.”
- “So far, I have never known any power to be above a nation’s will. Neither will I from now on...”. (Erdoğan July 2016)

During the most critical hours of the coup, he managed to mobilize thousands of people who rose up to stop the rebellion. Afterward, he won the support of most of Turkey’s citizens for having shown vision and leadership against the Gülenist junta. Indeed, being able to overthrow a military coup with the public’s help is a unique kind of leadership.

*P-3: Is the future of politics predictable? In what sense and to what extent?*

Erdoğan’s predictability is hypothetical. In other words, his flexibility and openness (especially regarding foreign affairs) gives him the opportunity to move within a wider framework. For example, at the beginning of the plane crisis with Russia, he said: “We are not the ones who should apologize; those who trespassed on our aerial territory should” (November 2015). However, Erdoğan recently sent a letter of apology to Russian President Vladimir Putin, expressing his regret for downing a Russian jet. This shift has enabled Turkey to rebuild ties with Russia, along with significant changes in foreign policy.

A very different and positive process has begun in bilateral relations between Turkey and Russia. I believe that these relations will improve and evolve into a much better position. I would also like to express my gratitude over Russia’s high-level phone call after the coup attempt. (Erdoğan, August 2016)

Although it seems at first that such moves signalize Erdoğan's unpredictability, when we reconsider his emphasis on stability, there are implications that he realized normalization with Russia would contribute to his country's economic and political stability. That is why his predictability is speculative. Apparently, his flexible moves are practical responses to the strategic realities of economic and political interests.

*P-4: How much control or mastery can one have over historical development? What is one's role in moving and shaping history in the desired direction?*

A leader can change the faith of his/her country through huge projects, as well as service policy. Erdoğan embraces a pragmatic policy that moves away from doctrinism. In other words, he neither adheres to doctrinism nor rigid ideologies. His pragmatic approach is well-reflected in his public speeches. They are clear, decisive, concrete, explanatory, and easily understood by the public.

Going beyond the level of contemporary [times], civilization cannot be achieved through verbalizing; it can only be realized via [the practice of saying]: "We have achieved it." They say, "We interwove the country with iron networks." Atatürk used this sentence, but his followers did nothing about iron networks. We did it; it was us who succeeded. Now we are connecting Turkey's [various regions] with iron networks and high speed trains. (Erdoğan 2013)

Erdoğan's idea of a "big Turkey" has been on the rise, based on the revival of Turkey's economic and geopolitical power thorough huge investments and projects. As prime minister and president, being well aware of Turkey's geopolitical significance, Erdoğan has had a political desire to shape his country's history and future. He often stresses the significance of having strong ties with countries from the former Ottoman Empire, and re-situating Turkey as a key player in the Middle East. As an ambitious political leader, with the help of service policy, Erdoğan has always wanted to turn Turkey into a regional frontrunner and role model among other Muslim countries in the region. Parallel to his faith in stability, he firmly believes this could happen if Turkey's economy is strong enough.

*P-5: What is the role of chance in human affairs and historical development?*

Chance does not seem to play a major role in Erdoğan's philosophical belief system. With the help of planning and organization, the influence of chance can be minimized.

## 5. The Operational Code: Instrumental Questions

*I-1: What is the best approach for selecting goals for political action?*

Cooperation and consultations are two key concepts of instrumental beliefs. From the very beginning, Erdoğan has collaborated with different groups ranging from Milli Görüş (National Vision) to liberals. In order to realize his goals, he has also sought to align Turkey with various countries at different times including Russia, Israel, and the European Union. Despite severe criticism from his opponents about his policy shifts, and foreign affairs in particular, he tends to make tectonic changes when he realizes that a certain policy will not bring the results he expected, or if he understands that a policy has started to destroy economic interests (which are very valuable for his service policy). Therefore, a flexible leader can make necessary changes in his approach when he feels the need to do so.

As for the promises Erdoğan makes, it would not be wrong to claim that his promises could be achieved through his service policy. Whenever he sets a goal, such as building the Marmaray rail transportation project, he is actively engaged in it from the first step to the inauguration ceremony.

*I-2: How are the goals of action pursued most effectively?*

The most effective strategy for realizing goals is good planning and organization. Consistent with his operational code, Erdoğan has calculated every single step in his political career. The chance to be mayor or president was not served to him on a golden plate. He left nothing to chance or luck. As his biography shows, he first became involved in politics at a very early age. He took real risks, continuing to deal with politics during the September 1980 coup. Following months in prison, he did not give up on his political career. His ultimate goal was most likely to become the president of Turkey. He always stressed the significance of public support, so he tried to gain it. Thus far, by means of public will and backing, he has achieved his desired status. He said: "The JDP is only based on the nation, which has kneaded the dough of the JDP. It was our nation that leavened JDP. The same nation has woven JDP's fabric" (Taşyürek 2009: 104).

*I-3: How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?*

Given Erdoğan's ambition, political risks can be controlled by keeping a high profile. This has been clear from the very early stages of his political

career. When a crisis occurs, instead of escaping from the public eye, he chooses to be at the forefront.

The night of the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, the critical turning point was Erdoğan's historic speech on TV. He invited people to stand against the rebellion. He then risked his life by landing his plane in Istanbul while coup plotters were flying over the city. He displayed visionary leadership by showing a great ability for risk management. His confidence in the people led him to be successful. He said: "Now, as the president of this country, I would like to tell you frankly that we will unite, be hand in hand in the squares of cities, and [teach] the necessary lesson that the junta has long deserved" (Erdoğan July 2016).

This risk-taking attitude includes challenging traditional institutions and perspectives. For example, theoretically, presidents are supposed to be above political parties. Erdoğan has refused to be a politically neutral president: "A president cannot be impartial. No president in this country has been neutral. And I won't be an impartial president, either" (Erdoğan 2014).

During his presidency, he has actively engaged in rallies, which the opposition parties criticized bitterly. His response was relevant to his operational code in the sense that as long as he got public support, he thought he had the right to behave unconventionally. He remarked:

There [can be] two kinds of presidents in this country: Those who prefer to side with the state and those who prefer to align with the people. I will be a president, not an impartial one but a president of the people, by taking their side. (Erdoğan 2014)

*I-4: What is the best timing of action to advance one's interests?*

Timing lies at the heart of true leadership. The best time for taking measures necessitates predicting future outcomes. An analysis of Erdoğan's operational code suggests that he is disposed to careful planning and organization; thus, when he is confident about possible positive outcomes, he leaps into action. He disapproves of delays. At the time of the December 17<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> Operation Raids, by pointing out "dirty" alliances, he signaled that he was fighting against the Gülen movement. He seems to have won the battle. He commented: "They can use whatever ugly methods they like or turn to dirty alliances, but we will not bow to any threats". (Erdoğan, February 2014)

*I-5: What is the utility and role of different means for furthering one's interests?*

Maneuverability and a resolute stance are two means of sustaining and promoting one's interests. When it comes to advancing his interests, Erdoğan is sometimes inclined to act in an uncalculated manner and make radical changes. However, he perseveres with groups or institutions that he thinks truly threaten his goals. Situating himself away from ideological rigidity permits him a wider space for maneuvers.

### **Drawing Conclusions**

One of the major aims of building an operational code of political actors is to guide people who have dealt with them. Although this study is not conclusive enough to offer a complete operational code analysis of Erdoğan due to the fact that it lacks quantitative scores, we believe it can still make a worthwhile contribution to the literature. Following are the main guidelines for people dealing with Erdoğan.

By looking at his speeches, Erdoğan can be portrayed as a pragmatic leader, rather than a politician who bases his philosophy on doctrine; this allows him greater maneuverability. He is convinced that the political realm should be firm and orderly. Erdoğan's strong attitude about the economy and stability is closely linked with his aspirations of realizing macro-projects. In Erdoğan's mindset, projects and service policy are important means of developing his country.

The next theme in the operational code is the perception of his opponents. Erdoğan is eager to confront adversaries proactively by relying on public support. It is also noteworthy that he often makes extraordinary remarks about his opponents; it seems to be his unique belief that taking risks is a reality of political life. In this context, in terms of attitude and style, he is in sharp contrast to previous Turkish politicians' conventional strategies of dealing with politics. In order to advance his interests and achieve his desired ends, Erdoğan relies solely on mass support. Thus, he often refers to his political motive as a war on military tutelage over democracy with the help of the nation.

Another fundamental tenet of Erdoğan's operational code is his ability to manage crises. During intense times of danger or difficulty, he becomes a master at handling calamities. Throughout his political career, he has been



able to turn several catastrophes into opportunities. The latest domestic developments regarding the failed coup attempt have reaffirmed that in accordance with his philosophical convictions, depending on his people, he could even challenge a military junta. Recently, following the failed military coup, he has been trying to put more effort into uniting his country around the principles of democracy. As a highly influential political actor in a top position of decision-making, with his visionary and competent leadership, Erdoğan was able to thwart coup plotters. His leadership is successful to an unprecedented extent.

As a result of his operational code, Erdoğan has displayed an ability to adapt to political developments. His future political moves are hypothetical. Norms and rules should be flexible and shift according to conjectural ups and downs. Therefore, when speculative changes occur, his rule-bound attitude might change. In the case of the crisis with Russia, when a mutually beneficial relationship became critical, his usually firm stance softened into a compromising one.

Being a high profile leader, regarding his communication with the public, Erdoğan is an expert at building good rapport with Turkish citizens during his public speeches. He plays a significant role in addressing the minds of his supporters with his openness. Without any concern or censorship, he frankly discusses and shares his goals for Turkey. Well aware of his potential and capability, he also states some guarantees to realize those aims. However, we should always remember that Erdoğan tends to be emotional at times, which might affect his decisions.

Since only specific questions are to be answered for operational code analysis, in this study we have specifically focused on concrete policymaking precepts. In order to provide a relevant profile of an influential actor, we have employed notions of political psychology as well. Overall, when dealing with Erdoğan, policymakers should consider that his assertiveness, willingness to take risks, and maneuverability are the main cluster beliefs of his operational code. The findings of this limited study have revealed that if more researchers were to conduct both qualitative and quantitative studies in the field of political psychology, specifically operational code analysis, this would contribute to understanding influential leaders and the factors behind their decision-making processes.

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# Yeni ve Etkili Bir Aktörün Operasyonel Kodu'nun İncelenmesi: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

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## Öz

Uluslararası arenada kilit konumlara sahip yeni siyasi aktörler hakkındaki doyurucu ve yeterli bilgi eksikliği onların seçimlerini tahmin etme ve açıklama görevini çok daha karmaşık hale getirmektedir. Operasyonel Kod analizi yardımıyla eksik bilgiyi tedarik etmek mümkündür. Bundan dolayı, bu çalışmanın ana tezi Operasyonel Kod kullanarak oldukça yeni olan siyasi bir aktörün davranış biçimini anlamlandırmaktır. Siyasi metotları, tavırları, kararları ve siyasi süreçlerdeki derin etkisinden dolayı Türkiye'de önde gelen siyasi liderlerden biri olan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan öncelikli olarak kendisinden öncekilerle mukayese edildiğinde nispeten yeni bir aktör olmasından dolayı incelenmiştir. İkinci olarak Erdoğan, 15 Temmuz başarısız darbe girişimi esnasında ülkesinin varlığını sürdürebilmesiyle ilgili ciddi badirenin üstesinden gelen eşsiz bir liderdir. İşte bu bahsi geçen tüm sebeplerden dolayı, Erdoğan'ın Operasyonel Kodu bu makalenin ana tartışma konusudur.

## Anahtar Kelimeler

Yeni Aktör, siyasi psikoloji, Operasyonel Kod, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, inanç sistemi, 15 Temmuz

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# Изучение нового и эффективного операционного кода нового актёра; Президент Турции Реджеп Тайип Эрдоган

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## Аннотация

Отсутствие достаточной и полноценной информации о новых политических субъектах, имеющих ключевые позиции на международной арене, делает задачу объяснения и предсказания их выбор гораздо сложнее. Можно предоставить недостающую информацию с помощью оперативного анализа кода. Таким образом, основная цель этой статьи состоит в том, чтобы понять модель поведения относительно нового политического актера, используя операционный код. Реджеп Тайип Эрдоган, который является одним из самых выдающихся политических лидеров в Турции из-за его политических методов, манеры, решения и его глубокое влияние на политические процессы, были проанализированы в первую очередь сравнению с относительно нового актёра. Во-вторых, Эрдоган является уникальным лидером, который преодолела серьезный кризис на выживание своей страны в неудачном перевороте 15 июля. По всем этим вышеупомянутым причинам, операционный код Эрдогана является основным предметом обсуждения данной статьи.

## Ключевые слова

Новые актёры, политическая психология, операционный код, Реджеп Тайип Эрдоган, системы верований, 15 июль

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