

The Analyses of July 15 Coup Attempt through the Turkish Press

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Abstract—Military interventions have an important place in the Turkish Political History. Military interventions are commonly called coup in the society. By coup we mean that the armed forces seize political power either by a group of officer in the army or by chain of command. Coups not only weaken but also suspend the democracy in a country. All periods of coup created its own victims. Two military coups which took place in May 27, 1960 and September 12, 1980 are the most important ones in terms of political and social effect in the Turkish Political History. Apart these, March 12, 1971, February 28, 1997 and April 27, 2007 e-memorandum are the periods when Army submitted a memorandum and intervened the political government indirectly. Beside the memorandums and coups there were also many coup attempts that have been experienced in the Turkish Political History. In this study, we examined the coup attempted by FETO's military members in the evening of July 15, 2016 from the point of the Turkish Press. *Cumhuriyet*, *Haber Türk*, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah*, *Star*, *Yeni Akit* and *Yeni Şafak* Newspapers which have different publication policies were examined within the scope of the study. The first pages of the newspapers dated July 16, 2016 were examined using content analysis method. The headlines, news, news headlines and the visual materials used for news were examined and the collected data were analysed.

Keywords—July 15, news, military coup, press.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE coup attempt, which took place on July 15, 2016 in Turkey and carried out by a group within the Turkish Armed Forces, has been very painful in terms of its consequences and it has been quite influential since it changed political balances. In the street fights between the civilian population who resisted the coup and coup plotters on July 15, nearly 300 people lost their lives and 2,797 people were wounded. For the first time, the Turkish Grand National Assembly was the target of coup plotters and was bombed by F-16 planes in the conflicts that lasted until morning. While the July 15 coup attempt brought the military coup to the agenda of the public opinion again, it took place as an important topic of the agenda both in politics and in the media.

In this study, we examined the news and publication contents of the Turkish written media after the 15th coup attempt. Content analysis method was used in the study. The study was limited to the first pages of the newspapers published on July 16. Within the scope of the study, the *Cumhuriyet*, the *Haber Türk*, the *Hürriyet*, the *Milliyet*, the

Sabah, the *Star*, the *Yeni Akit* and the *Yeni Şafak*, newspapers with different publication ideologies were selected for the research.

Military coups have been an important phenomenon in the history of the Turkish Republic. Coups primarily target political and social systems. While the army positions itself in the center of the political and social system in the process of the coup, it is also engaged in reconstructing the existing system in line with its own wishes. In this process of reconstructing, both the political system and the institutions that make up the system are being reshaped with a will where the army is in the center. When we look at the history of Turkey, we encounter with many recent or old-dated coups or coup attempts. The coup periods in the history of the country show us that the coup makes its presence felt traditionally in the political history. Especially from the period of *Tanzimat* where the Ottoman State changed with westernization policies until present, a "coup culture" has occurred, so to speak. This culture has caused the country to face big political, economic and social problems and to experience suffering that will not be erased from memory for many years [1].

In his study called *Army and Politics*, Kayalı explains the main sociological factor underlying this coup culture which stretches from the Ottoman Empire to present as follows, "Since the westernization movement in the Ottoman society can not completely change the existing system in the structural plan and value plan, various alliance possibilities have increased the possibility of direct or indirect intervention of the army. The fact that the structural transformation does not occur has also revealed that the 'human' element is more important, and this has created an effect that further enhances the military intervention in Turkey" [2].

In parallel with the evaluation of Kayalı [2], it should be underlined that military interventions have become a tradition in Turkish political history. While the political, economic and historical processes that nourish this tradition reproduce each other, the power of the military in the political arena continues to maintain its presence day by day.

If we confine the military coups in the political history of the country to the History of Republic, the first military coup is the one staged against the Democratic Party's power on May 27, 1960. On May 22, 1950, the Democratic Party that formally took power from the CHP and ended the one-party government lost its power with the coup on May 27, 1960 for evermore [3]. Under the decision of the Supreme Court of Justice created by the coup, the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes was executed on 17 September 1961; *Fatih Rüştü Zorlu*, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and *Hasan Polatkan*, the

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Ministry of Finance during Democratic Party government were executed on September 16, 1961. Adnan Menderes, the first and only prime minister to be executed in the political history of Turkey, was sentenced to such a punishment as a result of the May 27 Military coup, and this caused a significant social wound in terms of the coup results [4].

11 years after the 1960 coup, the second actualised coup of the republican history was carried out with a memorandum given by senior military commanders in the atmosphere of the political crisis that developed with the rising left opposition against the AP (Justice Party) power whose president was Süleyman Demirel, and which was founded on the political heritage of the Democrat Party. In the prepared memorandum, the reforms were requested from the government to be carried out with a 'Kemalist spirit'. After the memorandum, a technocratic government was established under the chairmanship of Nihat Erim, from the opposition wing of the CHP, and democracy was once again interrupted indirectly [5]. With 12 March memorandum, the Prime Minister of the period and the President of the Justice Party Süleyman Demirel was forced to resign by the soldiers. In fact, the liberal press of the period welcomed Prime Minister Demirel's forced resignation with great joy. However, the army that gave March 12, 1971 memorandum and the military that staged May 27, 1960 coup, were not the same and the coup did not produce the same results. This process was soon understood by intellectuals and the public [6]. After the March 12, 1971 memorandum, on 12 September 1980 the army seized power by intervening once more by showing the street conflicts between the left and right groups, which gave an image of civil war as a reason, and interrupted democracy once again. The thought that the United States and the CIA was behind especially September 12, 1980 military intervention passed into the history as a widespread belief [7]. On September 12, 1980, General Kenan Evren, the leader of the coup, emphasized in his message broadcasted on radio and television at 13.00 that the country was dragged to the "worst depression of its history" threatening the "the perpetuity of our state and nation". After giving details about the social divisions, economic collapse, anarchy and violence for which he regarded the parties and politicians as responsible, he came to the following conclusion: "Dear my citizens, for all these reasons, Turkish Armed Forces had to seize the state administration in order to protect the integrity of the country and the nation, the rights, law and liberty of the nation, to provide safety of life and property, to save from fear, to ensure prosperity and happiness, to reinstate law and order, in other words to reestablish state authority objectively [8].

The September 12, 1980 military intervention deeply affected Turkey in the following years in terms of political and social influences. Even some of the lasting results are still going on today. The new Constitution prepared by the Advisory Council by command of the military administration was adopted and came into force on 18 October 1982 [9].

In order to hinder the Islamist ideology that the 12 September administration had paved the way while redesigning the country, and the rising Islamist politics in the

next period; the next military intervention started with the National Security Council meeting carried out with the participation of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Ciller on 28 February 1997, in which the decisions were aken against reactionism. The decisions taken at the meeting led the 28 February process to be put into practice. The Cumhuriyet newspaper dated March 1, 1997 announced the decisions taken in the National Security Council with the heading "Recommendation like Memorandum". On the newspaper heading, "in the 9-hour meeting NSC was requested to oppose especially the sharia initiatives" took place [10].

The February 28th process will be remembered as a post-modern coup process in the following years. We can see two different coup processes in the history of the country, either the soldiers come to power directly or they stay behind the established 'civilian' powers, interfere with democracy and move into new organizations in the political system indirectly. In this regard, the February 28 period has passed into the political history of the country as a process in which the military is not directly in power, but it intervenes by using civilian politics and mass media in particular.

In the course of military interventions ranging from the 1960s to the present day, there have been changes in methods and practices over time. Especially during the intervention periods, the new possibilities brought by mass media and new communication technologies were started to be actively used in these new processes. 28 February process is a good example of this change.

We can also see another example experienced in accordance with the evaluation above in the presidential election process in 2007. The General Staff intervened in the process by an e-report published on the internet on April 27, 2007 and expressed their sensitivity about the election process. The e-report which was published on the website of the General Staff on April 27, 2007, passed into Turkish Political History as an e-memorandum [11].

When we look at the Political History of the Republic of Turkey in terms of military interventions, we can divide the troops into two groups as those whose interventions succeeded and those whose interventions remained in the phase of attempt.

In the above lines, the interventions in which the soldiers came directly or indirectly to power were listed historically. Turkey's political history does not consist only of actualized military interventions. When we look at the political history, we can also see that there are military interventions that could not be actualized and remained as attempts.

In Turkey's political history, the most important event in which the military coup failed and remained as an attempt is Talat Aydemir incident. When Talat Aydemir incident is mentioned, two different coup attempts on 22 February 1962 and on 20 May 1963 are meant. On February 22, the first attempt was made by Aydemir and a group of low-ranking army officers. In fact, it was an expected coup attempt in the current political environment. However, the command of the army did not participate in this attempt and prevented the coup

[4]. However, 14 months later, coup plotters attempted a coup to overthrow the İnönü government. After this failed coup attempt, martial law was proclaimed for one month in Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir [4].

The executions of Colonel Talat Aydemir and Major Fethi Gurcan judged after these unsuccessful attempts and whose the death penalty was approved by the Military Court of Cassation were carried out on 5 July 1964 and on June 27, 1964. In the second coup attempt that occurred on May 20, 1963, according to official statements, six people lost their lives and 30 people were injured in conflicts which continued until morning between army forces and rebellious soldiers. A colonel and a major were among those who died during the conflicts [12].

It is possible that we make different explanations and create reasons about the causes of military coups and coup attempts in the history of the Republic of Turkey. However, every officer of the Turkish army always feels himself under the responsibility of rescuing the country from the bad course of events. This emotional pressure often turns into a reason, a triggering impulse to save the country, to seize power when the country comes to a deadlock. It is expressed in the following lines in the diary of Colonel Talat Aydemir executed after two unsuccessful coup attempts in 1962 and 1963, in prison days;

"I was devoted to the army. I was ready to do whatever is needed to raise an army. Because there can be no peace inside and outside the country unless a country keeps its army honorable and remains standing. That state cannot rise in any areas. All the revolutions made within the country can be carried out on the basis of the army. The army defend the homeland. In the foreign states we can use our word of mouth on the basis of the army. I was completely convinced of this... I decided on my own. The course of this nation is not good. As an intellectual, as a staff officer, I firstly cooperated with the friends in the army whose ideas were close to mine and started to plan what would be the remedies of keeping the country from this bad situation and what could be done to put an end to this situation in which the ruling party neglected the Turkish army. All my thoughts were canalized into this direction and I began to look for friends by seeking ground in the Umayyad Rite of Harbiye "[13].

A new page was added on July 15, 2016 night while the country was thought to have moved away from this anti-democratic climate against the coup and coup attempts in the political history of the Republic of Turkey summarized in the above lines.

On Friday, July 15, at 16.00, MIT Undersecretary Hakan Fidan was informed about an extraordinary military activity. This information was forwarded to the Headquarters of the General Staff; depending on the evaluations made with the participation of chief of staff General Hulusi Akar, Commander of the Land Forces, General Salih Zeki Çolak, and MIT Undersecretary Hakan Fidan, a number of instructions were given to the necessary centers not to give permission of flight to military aircraft by closing all the air

space and to stop the movement of all vehicles, especially the tank and armored vehicles, and to take measures to prevent them from leaving. After the statements made by the General Staff, the plans of the coup plotters were deciphered. Thus, the coup plotters who planned to move at 03.00 o'clock and declare martial law at 06.00 o'clock had to start their attempts earlier [14].

The coup attempt was initiated by blocking one direction of the Bosphorus Bridge to traffic on July 15, 2016 night. A similar development also took place at the Fatih Sultan Bridge. At the same time, gunshots were heard from the General Staff Center in Ankara. While these developments were reflected in the live broadcasts of the televisions, the first explanation came from the government at twelve o'clock. It was explained that "the military attempt was made by a group of military officers from the Gulenist Terrorist Organization/ Parallel State Structure (FETO/PDY) within the army". At 00:11, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan set off towards Atatürk Airport. The rebellious soldiers who occupied the TRT had a declaration read at 00:13 on the screen. At 00:57, rebellious soldiers attacked TÜRKSAT's facilities in Gölbaşı with the helicopters because it cut off TRT broadcast. At about 02:00 security and military institutions started to act against the coup plotters and the first detentions began. At 02.20, the most bloody move of the coup attempt was made, the Special Operations Center in Gölbaşı was attacked and almost 50 police officers were martyred in Gölbaşı with bombs dropped from helicopters. At 02.42, the Turkish Grand National Assembly was bombed with F16 planes used by rebel soldiers for the first time in Turkey's history. While street conflicts were taking place all night long, there were also detentions. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan came to Istanbul at 03.20. At 08.36 in the morning, while the Gendarmerie General Command was seized by Special action forces, there were locally conflicts between the society and the coup plotters in the streets. Chief of the Staff General Hulusi Akar who was kept in custody by the coup plotters was rescued by the operation performed to Ankara 4th Main Jet Base Command. High or low-ranking officers and soldiers were arrested everywhere and 200 soldiers in the General Staff surrendered. At 08.50 in the morning, General Commander of the Gendarmerie Galip Mengi was rescued during the operation against the FETO coup which was carried out at Ankara Akıncı 4th main jet base, the center of the coup, and the base was brought under control [15]. The turning point of the coup attempt that continued all night long was that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan connected to CNN TURK live broadcast via Face Time and made explanations to journalist Hande Fırat on her mobile phone. That he called on people to take to streets against the plotters changed the course of the coup. After that time, the street domination was taken from the hands of the coup plotters after the conflicts. At the same time, the media's importance in the fight against the coup plotters emerged perceptibly.

II. THE STUDY

On the morning of July 16, 2016, the pages of all the written press in Turkey were allocated to the ongoing coup attempt which occurred the night before. Within the scope of the study, the Cumhuriyet, the Haber Türk, the Hürriyet, the Milliyet, the Sabah, the Star, the Yeni Akit and the Yeni Şafak were selected from the Turkish written press. The headings of the selected newspapers and the news on the first pages were analyzed by means of content analysis and the news on the pages were converted into numerical data. The headings of the selected newspapers' copies that came out on the morning of July 16 are as follows. While the Cumhuriyet newspaper was published with the heading of 'solution democracy', the main heading was 'against every military or civilian coup.' which intended to mean the Cumhuriyet newspaper. The headline of the Haber Türk newspaper was as follows: President Erdogan: 'There is no power on the power of the people'. The Hürriyet newspaper, which was published with the heading of "No permission for the coup", actually summarizes a country that resists the coup until morning. The Milliyet newspaper, like the Hürriyet newspaper, summarizes the events with its heading: *The extraordinary night*. Again, a remarkable heading belongs to the Sabah newspaper: *the slap of national will to Gulenist coup*. For the first time in the history of Turkey, a coup was prevented by the street resistance of the people. The Sabah newspaper attracts attention with its heading published on July 16th. The heading of the Star newspaper was *Democracy has been protected the nation*. The headline of the Yeni Akit newspaper was *treacherous attempt in Ankara*. The Yeni Şafak newspaper which appeared with the heading of *traitors* seems to unwittingly indicate the events that will happen in the country after the coup attempt.

Even though the Cumhuriyet, the Haber Türk, the Hürriyet, the Milliyet, the Sabah, Star, the Yeni Akit and the Yeni Şafak newspapers have different ideologies and publishing policies, on the morning of 16th July, they stood up against the coup attempt that took place a night before and showed a clear attitude towards democracy.

TABLE I

TABLE OF NEWS, COLUMN, PHOTO, OFF-TOPIC NEWS AND OFF-TOPIC COLUMN ON THE 1ST PAGES OF THE CUMHURİYET, THE HABER TÜRK, THE HÜRRIYET, THE MILLİYET, THE SABAH, THE STAR, THE YENİ AKİT, THE YENİ ŞAFAK ON 16 JULY 2016

Newspaper	News	Column	Photograph	Off-topic News	Off-topic Column
Cumhuriyet	7	0	7	0	0
Haber Türk	5	3	8	0	0
Hürriyet	8	0	8	0	0
Milliyet	10	1	9	0	0
Sabah	7	0	7	0	0
Star	3	5	8	0	0
Yeni Akit	6	0	5	3	3
Yeni Şafak	8	0	3	0	0
Total	54	9	55	3	3

On the first page of July 16 edition of the Cumhuriyet newspaper, there were 7 news and 7 photographs about the coup attempt that took place the night before. Against the

ever-publishing visual media, the newspaper tried to respond with striking coup night photographs from the first page. Haber Türk newspaper had 5 news, 3 columns, 8 photographs. The Hürriyet newspaper prepared its first page mainly with news and visual content. There were 8 news and 8 photographs on the first page of the newspaper. The most predominant numbers were in the Milliyet newspaper. There were 10 news, 1 column, and 9 photographs on the cover of the newspaper. On the first page of the Sabah newspaper there were 7 news and 7 photos. The Star newspaper attracts attention with the columns of its writers when the events are new. The newspaper presented 3 news, 5 columns, 8 photographs to the readers. While presenting 6 news with 5 photos to readers, The Yeni Akit newspaper has the feature of being the only newspaper that publishes 3 news articles that are not related with the coup attempt on the first page. In the Yeni Şafak newspaper, 8 photos were presented with 3 photographs.

TABLE II

TABLE OF MOST USED WORDS RELATED TO THE TOPIC ON 1ST PAGES OF THE CUMHURİYET, THE HABER TÜRK, THE HÜRRIYET, THE MILLİYET, THE SABAH, THE STAR, THE YENİ AKİT, THE YENİ ŞAFAK NEWSPAPERS ON 16 JULY 2016

Commonly used relevant words	Numbers
Coup	73
Soldier	54
Democracy	49
Attempt	41
Ankara	32
Public	30
Putschist	27
Coup Attempt	24
Erdogan	24
Tank	24
Country	24
Priminister	23
President	22
Square	21
Police	20
General Staff	17
Government	17
Police Station	17
Fetö	12
Junta	11
Bahçeli	11
Binali Yıldırım	10
Parliament	10
TRT	9
Paralel	9
TSK	8
MHP	8
CNN Türk	8
Kılıçdaroğlu	7
CHP	6
AKP	3
HDP	3

The following words which summarize the coup night in a total of 54 news articles on the first pages of the 16th July

edition of the Cumhuriyet, the Haber Türk, the Hürriyet, the Milliyet, the Sabah, the Star, the Yeni Akit, the Yeni Şafak newspapers have been examined and transformed into numerical data. The words are; Coup, soldier, democracy, attempt, Ankara, society, coup plotter, coup attempt, Erdogan, tank, country, prime minister, president, street, police, general staff, government, security, FETO, junta, Bahçeli, Binali Yıldırım, TBMM, TRT, Parallel, TSK, MHP, CNN Turk, Kılıçdaroğlu, CHP, AKP and HDP.

In the first three places, the coup appeared 73, the soldier 54 and democracy 49 times in the news content. If it is considered that the coup attempt and the resistance against this attempt by the people leave their mark on the night, the structure of the news contents is successful in reflecting the night and the events.

In terms of politicians, Erdoğan took place 24, prime minister 23, president 22, Bahçeli 11, Binali Yıldırım 10, Kılıçdaroğlu 7 times in the news texts. President Tayyip Erdogan became the most prominent politician of the coup attempt night with his announcements changing the course of the night. President Tayyip Erdogan also became the outstanding politician as a priority target among rebellious soldiers who attempted the coup.

TABLE III
TABLE OF TIMELINE OF EVENTS IN 16 JULY 2016

Time	Event
22.30	Soldiers entered the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) in Ankara.
23.31	Just before the declaration that Turkish Armed Forces took over the administration of the country, there occurred an explosion at the police special forces headquarters in Gölbaşı, Ankara
23.40	Sikorsky helicopters opened fire on police gathered near the Turkish General Staff building and the police retaliated against them.
00.00	Turkish President called upon citizens to take to the streets. Public protested coup and soldiers attempting to stop the tanks.
00.45	A helicopter opened fire on civilians trying to enter the garden of TRT.
00.49	Soldiers surrounded the Turkish Parliament Building. Tanks deployed around it.
00.54	A military helicopter opened fire in Ankara
00.59	Heavy explosion was witnessed at the districts of Kızılay, Esat and Ayrancı in Ankara and automatic rifle was heard around 100. Yıl District of Ankara.
01.08	Gunshots were reported in Harbiye, İstanbul
01.12	Another explosion was heard in the center of Turkish capital.
01.15	Gunfire was heard both in and outside Atatürk Airport.
01.22	Soldiers opened fire on protesters on Bosphorus Bridge. Erol Olçak, AKP's media and publicity campaigner was killed along with his 17-year-old son.
01.29	Gunshots were heard in Kadıköy, İstanbul.
02.00	The attacks at the police special forces headquarters in Gölbaşı killed 17 police.
02.02	A helicopter belonging to the pro-coup forces was shot down by a Turkish military F-16 fighter jet.
02.06	A man shot by a soldier in Çengelköy died.

TABLE IV
TABLE OF TOP HEADING, HEADING, SUBHEADING IN THE HEADLINES AND CATCH LINES OF THE CUMHURİYET, THE HABER TÜRK, THE HÜRRIYET, THE MİLLİYET, THE SABAH, THE STAR, THE YENİ AKİT, THE YENİ ŞAFAK NEWSPAPERS ON 16 JULY 2016

Newspaper	Head line	Sub head	Main Heading	Heading	Subtitle
Cumhuriyet	+	-	Against all coups, either military or civil	Solution is democracy	Neither the weapons of soldiers nor the AKP 's ignoring the constitution
Haber Türk		+	-	President Erdoğan: 'There is no power over people's power'	-
Haber Türk	+		-	Coup attempt 'No compromise from democracy'	-
Hürriyet	+	-	A group wanted to make a coup, people didn't allow	No gateway to coup	
Milliyet		+	A group in Turkish Armed forced tried to do a coup	Extraordinary night	-
Milliyet	+		17 martyr in Gölbaşı, many dead and casualty, President called people to streets	Coup plotters cannot be successful	-
Sabah	+	-	The coup attempt by a group of traitor in Turkish Armed Forces kicked back by people	National will slap to coup of Fetö	-
Star	+	-	All Turkey, from Edirne to Kars revolted for democracy	People lay claim to democracy	-
Yeni Akit	+	-	They will pay the highest price 78 million gathered in the main squares	Traitorous coup attempt in Ankara	-

III. CONCLUSION

July 15, 2016 includes many firsts for the coup attempt of FETO soldiers in the army. For the first time, a coup attempt was suppressed by people walking down the street, and about 300 people lost their lives in street conflicts at this coup night.

The coup attempt was monitored on the live broadcasts of the television screens from the first step and the development of a coup attempt was watched from the screens all night long. Again, the pro-democracy attitudes and publications of the media have been very influential in suppressing the coup attempt and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's statements to the journalist Hande Fırat on the CNN Turk screens and his call on the people to take to streets against coup plotters turned the power balance in favor of those who support democracy and this process has resulted in defeat in terms of coupists.

In terms of the Turkish media, it unquestionably means taking a stand for democracy. The media has stood up against the coup by its publications and has undertaken an important intermediary function in organizing the streets.

The events on July 15th do not resemble any coup or coup attempts in the previous periods. People's attitude towards the coup, the anti-democratic publications of the media, and the pro-democracy struggle that the upper management of the army has exhibited against the coupists constitute the basic elements of this separation.

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