

**The Dynamics of Successful and Failed Coup Attempts:  
The Case of Turkey**

By

Mesut Akcan

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## **Abstract**

Turkey has faced attempted and successful coups in the past due to the ideological differences in the leadership of the political leaders in the country. The military officers are in charge of the defense of the country, and they keep the country safe from both internal and external enemies. The success of the military depends on their ability to work together so that they can provide a unified front against enemies. During a coup, the military officers are divided based on the support or opposition they have towards the leader. The military has spearheaded the coups that have taken place in the country when there are political differences and instabilities among the leaders. The militants take over the resources of the country. One of the successful coups in Turkey was by the Putschists who announced their take over using the national radio station. On the other hand, the failed coups in the country were due to failed strategies and inability to influence the military for support. Coups affect the stability of the country, including the political, economic, and social well-being of the citizens. People live in constant fear and there are constant fights between the leader of a coup and the existing president for power. The economic effect leads to low standards of living among the citizens of the country who do not have a regular flow of income that can support their families. On the other hand, the aftermath of a coup disrupts the country as there must be rebuilding to restore the nation to its former status. Coups in Turkey play an important role in the country, despite being a bad approach to settling the political differences.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Late in the evening of July 15, 2016, Turkey was shocked by a coup attempt led by high-ranking officers in the military against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The putschists called their group the Peace at Home Council, a faction that claimed to be an executive body seeking to re-establish the ideals of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a military officer and hero to the people who founded the Republic of Turkey and served as its first president in 1929; in 1931, it was Atatürk who first stated the words, ‘Peace at home, peace in the world’.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the Turkish military assumed the role of defender of the secular democratic principles of Kemalism. For this reason, several coup d’états have been instigated successfully by the military since 1960 whenever the nation’s political order was challenged.

To facilitate the coup d’état, the putschists needed a communication platform to control the flow and content of information released to the public. Like the earlier Turkish coups in past decades, the putschists took control of the country’s national broadcaster, TRT, where they forced a Turkish TV anchor to read a statement on air saying that the Peace at Home Council sought to reinstate constitutional order, human rights, and freedom.<sup>2</sup> However, unlike the previous coup attempts in 1960, the latest attempt in 2016 failed in spite of the fact

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<sup>1</sup> David Phillips, *An Uncertain Ally: Turkey under Erdogan’s Dictatorship* (Oxon: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 166.

<sup>2</sup> Pelin Basci, *Social Trauma and Tele-cinematic Memory: Imagining the Turkish Nation since the 1980 Coup* (New York: Springer, 2017), 1.

that the putschists strategically seized control of key institutions and establishments such as the parliament building, mainstream TV channel offices, and other vital locations.<sup>3</sup>

The 2016 coup d'état failed despite the use of tactics similar to those that were employed in successful coups of the past. Ironically, instead of ousting a sitting President, the coup solidified the position of Erdogan as the recognized leader of Turkey. It is therefore interesting to explore, evaluate, and analyze the conditions that prevailed in 2016 and compare them with the conditions that dictated the eventual outcomes for the 1960 coup. History shows that the successful coups positively transformed the social, political, and economic landscape of the nation. It should be noted that during the 2016 coup, President Erdogan called upon the Turkish people to flock to the streets and resist the putschists, and both his supporters and detractors heeded the call in the name of democracy.<sup>4</sup> In light of the botched coup, it is perceived that Erdogan used the victory to continue consolidating power by pushing for constitutional amendments that granted him more executive power.<sup>5</sup>

Exploring, evaluating, and analyzing the dynamics of a coup d'état are very crucial not only in determining the potential outcome of the putsch but also in understanding the eventual effect of the coup on the nation. In this context, this research aims to understand the strategic factors and socio-political conditions of the military coups that occurred in Turkey. Particular focus shall be given for the 1960 and 2016 coup d'états although other Turkish

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<sup>3</sup> Phillips, 167.

<sup>4</sup> John Esposito, Lily Rahim and Naser Ghobadzadeh, *The Politics of Islamism: Diverging Visions and Trajectories* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 151.

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, 167.

coups are briefly discussed to provide a clearer picture of the political evolution of Turkish society.

## 1.2 Research Question and Puzzle

The impact of a coup d'état on the social, political, and economic landscape of the country involved is undeniable, as significant transformations in society transpire in the aftermath of a coup. The resulting transformation has been evident not only in the case of Turkey but also in the past experiences of other countries around the world. For example, the failed August 1991 coup d'état in Russia can be stated as a pivotal moment in the socio-political transformation of the country; this event gave rise to the dissolution of the Communist Party and the eventual breakup of the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in July 1944, had the coup attempt against Hitler succeeded, World War II might have ended earlier as high-ranking Nazi officials sought to overthrow the German dictator for his extremist policies.<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that the geostrategic importance of Turkey is acknowledged by major world powers and a coup can have a substantial impact on both Turkey and its surrounding neighbors. Turkey is one of the secular states with majority Muslim populations and has been a member state of NATO since 1952. The country has been a crucial ally for Western nations during the Cold War and continues to have the second largest military in Europe.<sup>8</sup> Along with other allied states, Incirlik Air Base in Turkey serves as a jump-off point

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century: 1952-1999* (Zurich: Compendio Bildungsmeiden, 1997), 128.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Wistrich, *Who's Who in Nazi Germany* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 260.

<sup>8</sup> Sinan Ulgen and George Perkovich, *Turkey's Nuclear Future* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015), 190.



for the United States in its offensive against ISIS and other enemy forces in Syria and nearby areas.<sup>9</sup> This means that a sudden change in the Turkish government, especially one that espouses anti-American sentiments, can have a global impact in light of today's globalized world. Besides these international factors, coups always have a big impact on Turkey's domestic politics. For instance, because of the fear of instability within the country, the last failed coup attempt facilitated a referendum process for the reorganization of the government. The changes give sweeping powers to President Erdogan, as he could have complete control of Turkey's budget and military, and allow him to appoint courts without a vote or dissolve the parliament whenever he chooses.<sup>10</sup>

In light of the significant impact of coup d'états on the future of a country, it would be beneficial to explore, analyze, and understand the dynamics of the successful Turkish coup d'états in 1960 which has led to the ouster of leaders and the change of regime in the country, as well as the dynamics of the failed coup in 2016 which has further strengthened the political might of the president. Understanding the primary dynamics and their effect on the outcome of coup attempts in Turkey is essential not only to maintain domestic and regional political stability but also to prevent possible attacks in the future. In view of this, our research shall focus on the two Turkish coup d'états of 1960 and 2016 to identify underlying reasons behind success or failure. Therefore, we will attempt to identify the factors that influenced the outcomes of previous coup d'états in Turkey and answer why these outcomes have differed.

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Gunter, *Historical Dictionary of the Kurds* (Maryland: Roman & Littlefield, 2018), 10.

<sup>10</sup> Cigdem Nas and Yonca Ozer, *Turkey and EU Integration: Achievements and Obstacles* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 173.

In view of these, the research question for this research is: ‘What are the underlying dynamics of a coup that dictate success or failure of the initiative?’

### 1.3 Literature Review

The review of literature investigates different subject matters of the study and establishes theoretical perspectives for the research. While there is a broad literature concerning the relationship between militaries and governments, the research on the dynamics of coup outcomes has not been examined by many scholars. However, there are some viewpoints that aim to understand factors that influence the outcomes of coup attempts, and these views can be divided into two categories. The first viewpoint argues that the success of a coup depends on the military dominance of one side over the other.<sup>11</sup> Thus, this perspective focuses on the tactical dimension of the coup attempt. If one faction has more powerful weapons or a greater number of soldiers, it will be easier for them to overcome their rivals. Thus, according to this view, the critical factor is to have more battalions than the enemy.

Additionally, successful coups should rely on certain intimidating tactics including the element of surprise.<sup>12</sup> It is stated that if coup plotters attack at night or during the holiday, it is more likely that the coup attempt will be successful. Another important tactical decision is to target strategic locations like parliamentary buildings and residential locations that are deemed critical to success.<sup>13</sup> However, the control and manipulation of communication do not

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<sup>11</sup> Hong Lee and Dal-joong Chang (Eds.), *Political Authority and Economic Exchange in Korea* (Seoul: Civil Military Relations, 1994), 104.

<sup>12</sup> Cynthia Grabo, *Anticipating Surprise: Analysis for Strategic Warning* (Washington, DC: Joint Military Intelligence College’s Center for Strategic Intelligence Research, 2012), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Simon Waldman and Emre Caliskan, *The New Turkey and its Discontents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 43.

have much value, according to this view. Also, the popularity of opposition is not seen as important because this strategy assumes that people will be reluctant to oppose a highly-intimidating force such as armed tanks.<sup>14</sup> In the aftermath of the coup, this view argues that the victorious force is more likely to aggressively enforce punishment for the defeated force through exile, execution, and prison. Such aggressive measures are intended to dishearten potential coup plotters from staging a military uprising in the future.<sup>15</sup>

Another theoretical perspective argues that staging a coup against a popularly-elected leader would not be viable, regardless of the military superiority of the putschists.<sup>16</sup> If a government enjoys the popular support of the public but has a weaker military capability, the incumbent will still survive. Hence, the success of a coup does not completely depend on military dominance over the enemy, and this highlights the collective power of the masses against an armed faction wishing to seize power. This means that the exercise of 'People Power' by the masses against an armed force can prove to be a decisive factor in the outcome of coups. For this reason, unpopular governments are more fragile than popular governments against coup attempts.

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<sup>14</sup> Ali Rahnema, *Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran: Thugs, Turncoats, Soldiers, and Spooks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 250.

<sup>15</sup> Ulgen and Perkovich, 124.

<sup>16</sup> Steven Rosefielde and Stefan Hedlund, *Russia since 1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 172.

A coup should also take into account the state of politics within the military and match it with the political ideals of the public.<sup>17</sup> In recognition of the power of the people to influence the outcome of a coup, the military must harmonize its political ideals with the standards of the people. This is because the dissatisfaction of the public with the government can be exploited by offering a better government to the people.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the government should remain vigilant in monitoring the political environment within the ranks of the military. If a gap exists between the military and the government, it is possible that the military may stage a coup, especially if majority of the military consists of economically dissatisfied soldiers.<sup>19</sup>

In such instances, a coup d'état against the regime may be seen as an opportunity to install a more generous government. Political and institutional instability in the government encourage coup attempts, and poorer countries with corrupt governments are therefore more prone to coup attempts. Governments would also be more vulnerable to military uprisings if they are in a crisis. While the tactical side of a coup is less important for election theorists, they pay more attention to the importance of broadcast facilities in providing direction and purpose to the masses, especially when the government enjoys the popular support of the people.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Sinan Ciddi, *Kemalism in Turkish Politics: The Republican People's Party, Secularism and Nationalism* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 71.

<sup>18</sup> Basci, 42.

<sup>19</sup> Ciddi, 83.

<sup>20</sup> Nas and Ozer, 87.

## 1.4 Our Argument

Existing literature pertaining to the underlying reasons behind the success or failure of coups is not sufficient, as it does not identify the required dynamics for achieving a desired outcome. Even for a military faction with a noble cause, it is highly likely that staging an armed uprising is not motivated by noble ideals alone. Tactical preparedness is a very important factor to consider, and such a faction would scrutinize the chances for success based on capabilities and skills. The effects of planned coup on the country would also be examined, as well as the possible consequences of a failed coup attempt, keeping in mind the actions of the government in the aftermath of the failed coup. For election theorists, this paper argues that their position undermines the importance of strategic actions. Even if a government is labeled by the citizens as oppressive or illegitimate, the cost of a coup could outweigh the benefits of the initiative.

On the other hand, it is possible that a coup attempt could further degenerate a society. Even if a military putsch can potentially overthrow the government, the after-effects of the coup might lead to a civil war in the country. This could damage the structure of the military, especially if its loyalty is divided between past and present leaders. As such, it can be stated that the success of a coup d'état depends on 1) the leadership behind the coup; 2) the ethical foundation of the cause; 3) aligning the ideals of the putschists with the ideals of the dissatisfied masses; 4) the financial capability to pursue the stages of planning, logistical preparation, recruitment, and execution; 5) the tactical capabilities/skills of the putschists; 6) actual recruitment of a sufficient number of personnels to overpower the opposing military faction; 7) the probability of attracting sympathizers to the cause within the ranks of the opposing faction; 8) the probability of gaining the support of the public, and; 9) the probability of success.

In view of the above-stated conditions, it can be observed that if a greater number of military and non-military people support the coup, the probability for success increases, and it would be more likely that a coup d'état would be launched. Therefore, efficient and effective coordination with sympathetic stakeholders plays a crucial role. In this aspect, the 'coordination game' can be a vital tool for achieving success. In this game, each actor's choice is dependent on his/her beliefs regarding the possible actions of others.<sup>21</sup> This implies that personal actions are dictated by the quality of information received and the level of expectation of each participant. If there is a convergence of expectations, it is highly likely that the coup attempt will be successful. Therefore, communication plays an important role in manipulating expectations, and common knowledge within the group is essential to building cooperative relationships.

The importance of coordination has been recognized by some scholars to explain dynamics of coup outcomes.<sup>22</sup> The use of coordination game provides intuition among participants [or players]. If the military effectively communicates to the general public that every faction of the military supports the coup and there is no major resistance against it, the coup attempt is more likely to result in success. Today, the main tool to shape common knowledge is mass media. In the same manner, if the government convincingly proclaims that the coup attempt can be overcome with the help of the general public, then the putsch would have a lesser chance of succeeding. This is evidenced by the events of the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey when President Erdogan effectively used Face-Time mobile application to motivate

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<sup>21</sup> William Clark, Matt Golder and Sona Golder, *Principles of Comparative Politics* (New York: CQ Press, 2017), 301.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 303.

the citizens to fight for their freedom and for the government that they elected into office, resulting in the failure of the coup.

## 1.5 Research Methodology

For this research, the main approach for analysis is through qualitative research method. It is ideal for qualitative research to limit its focus by narrowing its topic to a few cases to ensure the richness of the study. Small and manageable studies are more appropriate when making comparisons between cases. This provides a balanced combination of depth and analysis of the events and mitigates the risks of unmeasured variables.<sup>23</sup> The comparative method is ideal for examining the differences and similarities between the underlying factors that existed during the 1960 and 2016 coup attempts in Turkey. For social science, it is superior to statistical study when researchers aim to study a limited number of cases, as it provides a clearer understanding of macro-political phenomenon, behaviors, and motivations that lead to social change.<sup>24</sup>

The research will consider the coups that occurred at two different times in Turkey, justifying the comparative historical analysis as a viable method. This technique helps to identify similarities and differences between the two coups, and allows for an explanation of political changes over time. This technique consists of casual analysis, examination of process over time, and systematic and contextualized comparison of cases.<sup>25</sup> Casual analysis is

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<sup>23</sup> David Silverman and Amir Marvasti, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Comprehensive Guide* (New York: SAGE Publications, 2008), 404.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 405.

<sup>25</sup> Baohui Zhan, *Revolutions as Organizational Change: The Communist Party and Peasant Communities in South China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 6.

important in determining the causes of societal processes. The second feature analyzes historical process over time, as the researchers maintain focus on the temporal structure of the issues. Lastly, systematic comparison of the cases gives the researchers a method to examine both the theories and real-world issues, something that can be difficult to do using the quantitative method.<sup>26</sup> It should also be noted that the most suitable approach to answer our research question is through comparative historical analysis because through this technique, it would be possible to test theory, understand the causes of the coup attempts, and examine the phenomenon over time.

Casual analysis can explain why some coup attempts failed and why others succeeded. For this purpose, historical similarities and differences between the Turkish military in 1960, and 2016 shall be analyzed, along with their differences in socio-political landscape. Case study approach includes in-depth analysis of important events which has given rise to regime changes and revolutions. Through the case study, empirical inquiries on the different time periods can provide valuable information. This research shall focus on the three coup attempts in Turkey because more cases can make it more difficult to measure variables and could weaken the findings of the research. Finally, a collection of data is an important factor for a scientific work. The data will be gathered and analyzed through content analysis. The researchers shall collect data from both primary and secondary sources, such as scientific articles, newspaper articles, speeches, social media, scientific books, reports and investigations, media outlets, etc.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 8.



## 1.6 Outline of the Thesis

Following the Introduction chapter, the historical overview of two coup attempts that happened in Turkey in 1960 and 2016 shall be discussed in Chapter 2. This is to be followed by an in-depth discussion in Chapter 3 about the theoretical perspectives that are relevant to the subject matter at hand. In chapter 4, coup attempts that happened in Turkey will be analyzed to understand the consequences of coups as they apply to the theories previously discussed. Drawing on the lessons learned from past coup attempts in Turkey, the concluding chapter presents the conclusion and accordingly provides recommendations to understand the dynamics and causes of coup attempts.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Background Information about Past Coups in Turkey**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Turkey has experienced five coups in its short history as a nation. Taking into consideration the regional differences, religious issues, secular-based rule of law, and Ataturk's staunchly secular state idea of modern Turkish Republic, we can examine and explain dynamics of successful and failed coup attempts in Turkey. These aspects of the country's economic, social, political way of life of the nation are connected to all the coups in Turkey. Therefore, this research study will seek to assess the dynamics of successful and failed coup attempts in Turkey in 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997, and in 2016. This chapter will address the objectives of the study to determine the long-history of coups in Turkey.

### **2.2 KEY DEFINITIONS**

#### **2.2.1 Coup**

A coup refers to the use of force in an illegal attempt to overthrow the government or people in power. The word "coup" is derived from a French word "coup d'état" which means to "blow of state." Coups are classified as failed coups and successful coups (No regime change, democratic coup, and dictatorship to dictatorship replacement coup). A military coup occurs through a scale of the operations. This includes deployment of war machines such as tanks and fighter jets, which is an indication of a well-planned operation by senior figures in the military. A strong coup involves elements such as the Air Force, the Army as well as the

Navy. A coup can be caused by military popularity, colonial legacy, external threat, economic decline, military size, and civil society's strength, among other predictors.<sup>27</sup> Although Turkey has witnessed several coups, Europe remains the continent with the fewest coup attempts. Most coups were experienced in the mid-1960s with mid-70s and early 90s recording more coups. The number of successful coups has decreased with time as post-Cold War coups resulting in democratic systems. However, studies show that protests and demonstrations spur coups because they assist their coordination by the elite class in the state apparatus.

### 2.2.2 Modern Turkish Republic

The modern Turkish Republic is the new Turkey based on a democratic or secular rule of law that was formed by Ataturk from Ottoman Empire ashes. Ataturk is seen as a national hero who founded "the sick man of Europe" empire in the wake of a new century. Ataturk's modern outlook helped in creating a new nation, country, as well as a secular state whose understanding was different from the majority of other Islamic states.<sup>28</sup> For instance, Ataturk's statues, as well as busts, are all over Turkey Ataturk's background is military as he served in Ottoman army. He was also in charge of the Infantry at the World War I and he used his intellectual defense tactics to prevent the Allied Forces from toppling the Dardanelles as well as Bosphorus.

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<sup>27</sup> Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer, "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 5 (2003): 591-620 , doi:10.1177/0022002703258197.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Warner, *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2013), 81.

## 2.3 Brief History Of Turkish Coups

Turkey has a long history of successful military coups and after staying for almost two decades without an attempted coup, it witnessed an unsuccessful coup in 2016. This gave the older citizens of Turkey a sense of déjà vu.<sup>29</sup> However, regardless of the long as well as the illustrious history of Turkey as a regional power that dates back to the Ottoman Empire which was long a major power that was ruled from Istanbul, Turkey of a republic is a somewhat young nation. However, being founded less than a century ago did not prevent Turkey from such a large share of coups. It is not accidental that the country faces a high rate of turmoil which is the major reason behind the series of coups. The coups are related to something that is baked into the system of government of Turkey.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, the coups have made the constitution of turkey to give more power and authority to the military to “step in” if needed and also make their leaders barely beholden to the political leaders.

In 1960, after the Turkish autocratic Prime Minister Adnan Menderes was overthrown in a military coup, people described the Turkish army as one that has thoroughly observed great Kemal Ataturk’s admonition that requires them to stay away from partisan politics. However, Ataturk also charged the Army with protecting the constitution. During 1960, General Major Cemal Gursel rose into power as the Defense Minister, Premier, and President of Turkey which left people with the hope that the country was ending back to the right direction of true democracy. However, in 11 years time, several military leaders grouped to hand over a memorandum to a radio newscaster to read to the people of Turkey and tell them

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<sup>29</sup> Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu, "Turkey: How the Coup Failed," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 59, doi:10.1353/jod.2017.0006.

<sup>30</sup> Ali T. Akarca, "Single-Party Governments as a Cause and Coalitions as a Consequence of Coups in Turkey," *Turkish Economy*, 2018, 59-75, doi:10.1007/978-3-319-70380-0\_4.

that the government was once again out of order. The memo read that government has pushed our country into anarchy, fratricide and social and economic unrest.”<sup>31</sup> This is an indication that the problem was the misuse of power. The memo continued that the “Turkish armed forces, fulfilling their legal duty to protect the republic, will take power,” (The Associated Press, 1971). This was a successful technique based on the concept of protecting the constitution, also known as the “coup by memorandum.”

## 2.4 Timeline of Turkish Coups

The current president of Turkey is the only survivor of Turkish coups. On the other hand, the former Turkish president, Kenan Evren, who eventually faced charges, is among the victims of a long military line of officers who seized power through coups. This is because the military has always regarded itself as the "guardian of Turkish democracy".<sup>32</sup> The military has used created Ataturk’s staunchly secular state idea of modern Turkish republic to directly intervene in the Turkish politics five times. This includes the famous and the most recent 2016 coup which eventually turned out to be a failure.

### 2.4.1- 1960: The First Coup

In 1960, Turkey Republic experienced its first coup, after 37 years into its establishment. During this time, there was a lot of tension between the opposition in the country and Turkish government. At the same time, the primer Adnan Menderes’ and President Celal Bayar’s ruling party, Democratic Party, had started to slacken off some of

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<sup>31</sup> The Associated Press, "Turkish Regime Is Ousted By the Military Leaders," The New York Times, March 13, 1971, , accessed June 01, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/03/13/archives/turkish-regime-is-ousted-by-the-military-leaders-no-move-made-to.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Esen and Gumuscu, 68.

Ataturk-era's toughest rules that dealt with religion. By doing so, the government allowed the reopening of very many. The government also mosques legalized Arabic prayers over Turkish. Religious personnel also had new schools opened for them. Mandatory military service period was also shortened during these changes. The government of Turkey also imposed restrictive press laws and intermittently barred decisive newspapers from publishing to alienate the opposition.

Additionally, tensions were rapidly growing for Menderes government who responded in 1960 by imposing martial law. However, on May 27, 1960, the Turkish Army interceded by toppling the government. The premier, president, and some members of the Turkish cabinet were arrested. They were quickly put to the book for treason among other several offenses and Menderes was executed. Major General Cemal Gursel took over power as the premier, president and Defense minister as a military-dominated era of politics started. His tenure lasted in 1965.

#### **2.4.2- 1980: Right-and Left-Wing Groups Clash**

After the "Economic Downtown Coup of 1971," people continued to witness instability in the country's important sectors. For instance, the country her premiers 11 times in the 70s, the economy stagnated further, the left and violent clashes between right- and left-wing groups continued in the Turkish streets, and thousands of assassination were witnessed. In response to the deteriorating situation, the military started discussions of a potential coup in the final few months of 1979. By March 1980, several generals grouped to recommend that it was necessary to go ahead with the plans of a coup.

However, after several delays, the coup was staged in September 1980. Military officers made an announcement on the national television stating that they would impose martial law as well as dissolve the government. Bulent Ulusu, a naval officer became the

premier while Evren assumed the office of the president. However, after failing to achieve any economic stability, Turgut Ozal succeeded Ulusu in 1983 achieved a lot of credit for stabilizing their economy through privatization of numerous state-owned industries. They experienced growth of employment as inflation dropped significantly. Thousands of people were arrested by the military, other tortured and other executed. In 1982, a public referendum was conducted to approve the newly drafted constitution.

#### **2.4.3- 2016: Turkey's Failed Coup Attempt**

On July 15, 2016, a deadly coup attempt was witnessed in Turkey after almost 2 decades without one. However, this coup failed to mark a monumental defining moment in the political history of the country, but: what happened and why?<sup>33</sup> In this coup attempt to overthrow President Tayyip Erdogan, gun battles commenced while the Turkish Army used fighter jets and tanks. Terrifying scenes were witnessed on the Turkish streets overnight when a group of the military tried to put an end to Erdogan's government. However, civilians flooded the streets to support their democratically elected leader. Fierce clashes between the military and the civilians were enormous in Istanbul and Ankara. Over 1,500 military guys were arrested as President Erdogan announced that the attempted coup was over.

The coup attempt involved all military groups such as Army, Airforce, and the Navy. Fethullah Gulen who lived in a self-imposed exile in was identified to be the mind behind the coup. He lived in Pennsylvania, the US and he once supported President Erdogan before turning into a nemesis. However, after surviving this coup, President Erdogan has severally

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<sup>33</sup> Hussein, Amjad, and Ali Ayten. "A New Era for Turkey The Attempted Coup of the 15th of July." *International Journal of West Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2017).

accused his supporters and the cleric of trying to topple his government.<sup>34</sup> This is because the cleric upholds a type of philosophy that combines a mystic Islam with a staunch advocacy of interfaith dialogue, democracy, science, and education. On the other side, President Erdogan introduced many Islamist policies that oppose the long-standing secular views in Turkey. The military was also blamed by pro-Gülen Alliance for interfering with domestic politics.

The military intervention is explained by government actions of making enemies with the country's military over issues related to religion. The Turkish military perceives itself as the country's defender of secular traditions. President Erdogan's AK Party has Islamism roots and a long-strained relationship with nationalist and the military within the country that was established after World War I on secularist principles.<sup>35</sup> Soldiers took to the state television to announce the martial law and a countrywide curfew. The announcement contained the pro-coup faction's orders that accused President Erdogan's government of grind down the secular as well as democratic rule of law.

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<sup>34</sup> Ashour, Omar. "The Failed Coup and the Challenges of Defending Democracy in Turkey." (2016). p. 1-6

<sup>35</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz and Rasim Koç, "The Turkish Coup Attempt: The Gülen Movement vs. the State," *Middle East Policy* 23, no. 4 (2016): 136-148, doi:10.1111/mepo.12239.



## Chapter 3: The Theories of Coups

### 3.1 Coups d'état as battles

The theory of coups d'état as battles “emphasizes their tactical dimension, describing them as brief intense battles fought by armed factions for control of the country”.<sup>36</sup> Initially, the theory conceived of coups as being very similar to a civil war, and that the only factor that influenced the emergence and success of a coup is a military strength. Sing identifies that Edward Luttwak as the early proponent of this theory, noting that Luttwak distinguished the warfare in a coup d'état as being more intense than other types of armed conflict, specifically because there was nothing holding back the military of a state once it decides to stage a coup.<sup>37</sup> Once a coup was staged, its success was dependent solely on tactical capabilities, usually expressed by the quantity and quality of soldiers and their weapons. This is a fairly simplistic version of the theory, as it does not really describe why segments of the military would decide to stage a coup, nor does it have enough empirical evidence to validate its claims. Conceptualizing coups as battles seem to be supported by the increased likelihood of military regimes to experience coup attempts, with military dictatorships being five times as likely to suffer a coup d'état compared to a civilian-led government.<sup>38</sup> But since the 1950s,

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<sup>36</sup> Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups*, 15-16.

<sup>37</sup> Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups*, 16.

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Powell, ‘Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups de'etat,’ *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56 no. 6 (2012): 1035.

the trajectory of coups in military regimes has been on a steep decline.<sup>39 40</sup> Moreover, if coups d'état are indeed determined largely by the strength of the military, then the United States should have faced more coup attempts than any other country in the world, given the strength of its armed forces exceeds that of any other country significantly since after the Second World War.

The inability of the theory of coups d'état as battles to accurately describe how coups actually develop in the real world has prompted an expansion of its framework over the decades. Luttwak himself has revised the theory by recasting the issue as one of a power struggle between military forces and the bureaucratic apparatuses of its parent state.<sup>41</sup> The military, Luttwak notes, is ideally part of the bureaucratic “machine” of government, and in the status quo, political, economic and ideological controls prevent the military from pursuing avenues of violence against its parent state. When a coup does occur, the military will take advantage of its power in the form of violence to overtake the state’s bureaucratic apparatuses, which explains why coups are resolved more quickly but occur more intensely compared to civil wars. The role of the bureaucracy as a form of state power that keeps the military under control is also the reason why smaller countries do not have a high likelihood of suffering a coup d'état attempt—the leaders of smaller countries do not have a complex bureaucracy to obscure their political power from exercising control over armed forces.<sup>42</sup>

While Luttwak makes a dramatic shift towards considerations of politics and economies in

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<sup>39</sup> Andrew T. Little, ‘Coordination, Learning, and Coups,’ *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61 no. 1 (2017): 205.

<sup>40</sup> Powell, J. M. & Thyne, C. L., 2011. Global instances of coups from 1950 to 2010: A new dataset, *Journal of Peace Research* 48 no.2 (2011): 255.

<sup>41</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *Coup d'État: A Practical Handbook* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 7.

<sup>42</sup> Luttwak, *Coup d'État: A Practical Handbook*, 5.

describing the processes of coups d'état, the focus on military strength is still maintained. His revised theory simply identifies political or economic factors as obstacles that weaken the tactical capabilities of a military force.

Theories that describe approaches to prevent military coup d'états have also taken the centrality of military power in the theory of coups d'état as battles for their frameworks. While they may acknowledge different factors as playing a role in the emergence, development, and outcomes of coups, later theorists still see the military strength and tactical considerations as the principal dimensions operating in coups d'état. Coup-prone countries will implement strategies that attempt to diffuse the threat of coup d'état, and literature exploring these strategies focus on how these initiatives limit the tactical strength of groups who are in a position to stage the coup. These initiatives may be the co-optation of the government's political powers and economic wealth, the establishment of counter-balancing armed forces loyal to the state, or even the intervention from an external force who has interests aligned with the current government of a coup-prone country.<sup>43</sup> A common thread that runs through these counter-coup frameworks is the focus on the various obstacles that can potentially hamper the military's strength, which is very similar to Luttwak's revised theory of coups d'état as battles.

Other coup-prevention literature adopt this emphasis on factors that limit military strength. Jonathan Powell's survey of coup d'état data from 1961 to 2000 utilizes empirical data as a standard of assessment for coup-prevention strategies, and the results seem to counter the early iteration of the theory of coup d'état as battles. He found that a better-

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<sup>43</sup> Cemal Eren Arbatli & Ekim Arbatli, 'External threats and political survival: Can dispute involvement deter coup attempts?' *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 33 no. 2 (2016): 116.

funded, better-trained and the larger military is less likely to stage and succeed in a coup.<sup>44</sup> These results directly oppose Singh's characterization of the theory of coups d'état as battles, especially when basing coup success on military strength: "coups are successful when one side establishes clear military dominance over the other, a task that is made easier by having more men with more powerful weapons".<sup>45</sup> However, Powell's framework still emphasizes the tactical dimension of the coup. For example, he attributes the failure of large militaries staging coups to the difficulty of overcoming the "organizational cohesion challenge".<sup>46</sup>

### 3.2 Coups d'état as elections

The theory that coups d'état as election models the dynamics of a coup after the processes of an election: "one approach to modeling the dynamics of a coup attempt is to think of it as an election, a plebiscite on the incumbent, held within the military".<sup>47</sup> This theory conceives of the military primarily as a political actor, and like other political actors within the citizenry of the state, the military confers legitimacy to the rule of the state's leader/s through its support. Of course, the military is distinct from other political groups in the state, in that it has greater power to inflict violence due to its role as the defenders of the nation. In contrast to the theory of coups d'état as battles, the theory that coups are elections focuses on the political dimension rather than the tactical one as the central principle of the framework. For the theory of coups as battles, politics only serve to limit the tactical strengths of the army attempt to or staging a coup; the theory of coups as elections sees politics as both the

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<sup>44</sup> Powell, 'Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups de'etat,' 1031-1032.

<sup>45</sup> Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> Powell, 'Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups de'etat,' 1032.

<sup>47</sup> Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups*, 71.

motivator and the determinant of success for a military coup d'état. In much of the research literature that adopt the theory of coups d'état as elections, the military's political power is often tied to the interests of the elite of a nation-state.

For example, in Hiroi and Omori's examination of the role of policy changes and the staging of coups, they defined coups as "a seizure of executive power by the use or threat of force by some segment of the political elites".<sup>48</sup> Similarly, in Ronald Wintrobe's review of historical insurgencies in Asia, specifically the early twentieth century uprisings in China and the Meiji Restoration in Japan, he identifies the role of the political and economic elite as crucial in determining the onset of revolutionary activity, including coups d'état.<sup>49</sup> Establishing the relationship between the interests of the elite and the nation's army further highlights the primacy of political power as the factor most influential to the emergence, development, and outcomes of a coup. The elite may be a separate segment in a state's public, or they can be the military itself as in military regimes, but the decision to overthrow the government and the success by which a coup can do so rests on the political power that the elite are able to wield. Research on other acts of rebellion provides ample evidence for such a framework.<sup>50</sup>

The focus on politics in the theory of coups d'état as elections allow the theory to draw parallels between coups and other forms of political action, conferring the theory with a great degree of explanatory power. Alper H. Yagci, in a study of Turkish coups and their

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<sup>48</sup> Taeko Hiroi & Sawa Omori, 'Policy change and coups: The role of income inequality and asset specificity,' *International Political Science Review* 36 no. 4 (2015): 441.

<sup>49</sup> Ronald Wintrobe, 'Autocracy and coups d'etat' *Public Choice* 152 (2012): 126.

<sup>50</sup> Wintrobe, 'Autocracy and coups d'etat', 127.

relationship to the country's economic issues, demonstrates the value of examining coups d'état using political lens due to the inextricable link between economics and politics. He points out that in the case of Turkish coups d'état post-Arab Spring, "the military acts as an agent of foreign lenders who would like to reform Turkey's economic policies. In others, the military is seen rather like a technocratic arbiter that addresses problems created by populist politicians".<sup>51</sup> In the theory of coups as elections, the Turkish military coups were furthering the external and internal economic elites' interests because of their discontent regarding economic policies that they see as responsible for the economic downturn of the country. This framing of Turkish coup d'état is indeed very similar to citizens voting towards policy changes that they believe will further their interests. Moreover, the theory of coups as elections integrates the long-standing principle regarding coups d'état, the credible commitment mechanism: "The credible commitment mechanism rests on the premise that discontent among soldiers against the government intensifies when monetary transfers and political concessions to the military are low".<sup>52</sup> The theory of coups as battles had to revise its framework to account for the inverse relationship between funding to increase the strength of the military and the likelihood of coups in a state. In contrast, the theory of coups as election easily accounts for this phenomenon, as the military is seen as a political actor undergoing discontent, and thus stages a coup to exercise its political agency.

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<sup>51</sup> Alper H. Yagci 'The political economy of coups d'état: a general survey and a local theory for Turkey,' *Turkish Studies* 19 no. 1 (2018): 83

<sup>52</sup> Arbatli & Arbatli 'External threats and political survival: Can dispute involvement deter coup attempts?' 120.

### 3.3 Coups d'état as cooperative

Singh argues that the best theory for explaining the emergence, development and outcomes of coups is the theory of coups d'état as coordination games: "According to this theory, during a coup attempt, active proponents and defenders are trying to influence the behavior of the vast majority of the military who are undecided but whose support or inaction could swing the outcome either way".<sup>53</sup> The theory sees military leaders within a state's armed forces as having ideological or political beliefs that are either aligned or counter to that of the government, and their main task is to convince the rest of the military to adopt their beliefs. The success of specific military leaders in this "coordination game" determines whether a coup will be staged or not. The framework that the theory of coups as cooperative presents has striking similarities to that of the theory of coups as elections, but on a microscopic scale—while the theory of coups as elections considers the large-scale political and economic pressures that would push the military to exercise their political power into legitimizing executive leadership that is aligned with their interests, the theory of coups as cooperative instead focuses on the power relations and spheres of influence operating within the military.

In both theories, internal and external forces affect the motivations, execution, and outcomes of a coup, but the scale is smaller and more localized in the theory of coups as cooperation. A unique aspect of the theory of coups d'état as cooperation is that it avoids casting the military as a homogenous entity. In the theories of coups as battles and elections, the military is always conceptualized as a unified force, whether they are exercising their ability to use violence or applying their significant political power. In the theory of coups as

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<sup>53</sup> Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups*, 73.

cooperative, a coup d'état is a product of individuals and groups with differing motivations and strategies acting within the military. A consequence of this framework is that individual factors can be highlighted as significant influences in a coup d'état. For example, in Gabriel Leon's investigation of the relationship between military spending and coups d'état, he observed that "the coup plotter's talent or ambition can affect both a coup's outcome and the plotter's ability to increase military spending after a successful coup".<sup>54</sup> This approach is very useful because it acknowledges the importance of processes and mechanisms operating within the military itself, which is able to identify a more comprehensive set of factors influencing a coup d'état compared to an approach that only considers factors that engage with the military as a whole.

This is not to say that the theory of coups as cooperative discards macroscopic factors altogether in describing the mechanisms and processes of a coup d'état. Indeed, as Andrew Little's study on the role of cooperation and learning within the military in regimes that have suffered coup d'état shows, the officers participating in the coordination games taking place that consider whether to stage a coup or not still consider larger factors such as regime strength in their calculations: "the model highlights conditions when learning about the regime strength over time leaves officers unable to coordinate on ousting the regime even if some or many officers would prefer to do so".<sup>55</sup> The theory of coups as cooperation has an advantage of theoretical inclusivity—while it posits that coups d'état rely on coordination games and military officers attempting to spread their beliefs and ideology to gain support for status quo or staging a coup d'état, part of winning these coordination games requires

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<sup>54</sup> Gabriel Leon, 'Loyalty for sale? Military spending and coups d'etat,' *Public Choice* 159 (2014): 380.

<sup>55</sup> Little, 'Coordination, Learning, and Coups', 206.



considering national or international pressures. Little's employment of the theory of cooperation ends up aligning with the reality of civilian regimes being more prominent compared to military regimes.<sup>56</sup> Another instance where both macro and local level pressures to coup d'état interact in describing coups using the cooperative model is the study by Miller, et al., which examines the validity of the claim that coups d'état are contagious. The authors argued that despite the concentration of coups d'état in specific regions around the world, there are no empirical and theoretical evidence to support the conception that coup d'état can spread from nation-state to nation-state.<sup>57</sup> On one hand, they adopt some concepts from the theory that coups are elections, pointing to the political elite in a country as a major force in determining whether a coup may be staged. But at the same time, they recognize that this elite will not benefit from three mechanisms that operate in the cooperative framework, namely emulation, learning, and focal points.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Little, 'Coordination, Learning, and Coups', 224.

<sup>57</sup> Michael K. Miller, Michael Joseph & Dorothy Ohl, 'Are Coups Really Contagious? An Extreme Bounds Analysis of Political Diffusion,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62 no. 2 (2018) 411.

<sup>58</sup> Miller, et al., 'Are Coups Really Contagious? An Extreme Bounds Analysis of Political Diffusion', 434.

## Chapter 4: The Analysis of Coup Attempts

In this chapter, we will analyze successful and unsuccessful coup attempts occurred in Turkey. 1960 and coups as successful coup attempts and 2016 coup attempt as an unsuccessful attempt will be examined. First of all, we will examine how each of the coups should shape the expectation that the coup will be successful. In the next chapter, we will examine whether the coup attempts have taken the necessary steps to create an anticipation. In the last part, it will be examined how the aforementioned theories explain the dynamics of these coup attempts.

### 4.1 Coup Attempt: 2016 Coup Attempt

#### 4.1.1 Creating Ideal Case Expectations

One of the factors that played a role in the failure of the 2016 coup attempt is that it cannot be seen that the coup will be successful. In this context, television channels, strategic institutions, and politics have a great importance. So it is not enough to be numerically superior in order to achieve success. It will be easier for the party which manipulates the current situation and takes advantage of it to be the winner of the coup.

The group that made the 2016 coup attempt is a team of low and medium-ranking soldiers.<sup>59</sup> This section explores how to expand the population area with the splash effect.

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<sup>59</sup> Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu, "Turkey: How the Coup Failed," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 59, doi:10.1353/jod.2017.0006.

Considering the level of authority of the soldiers who carry out the coup, it is concluded that there is sufficient authority for them to act on their own; but a soldier does not have direct authority to direct all troops. Although they have the advantages of being able to move in groups and to be harmonious, there is a need to manipulate the thoughts of other medium-ranking soldiers and act cooperatively with this group in order to be successful. Thus, the necessary coordination will be ensured for the success of the coup; but shaping the beliefs of these actors will not be easy for these middle-ranking soldiers; because they do not have the soft power tricks possessed by high-ranking soldiers, so they need to use hard power.<sup>60</sup>

First of all, what these soldiers have to do is to take control of television organizations, the parliament building and the strategic locations of the state. When mass media are seized, the perception of the legitimacy of the coup can be made easier and the views of the governmental opponents trying to counter the coup could be manipulated. This will make it easier to convince the remaining undecided soldiers and the current regime defending troops. In addition, the seizure of strategic locations will create the perception that even if the conflict continues or bad scenarios are experienced, the coup d'état will not be defeated, but it is necessary to try to keep the damage to a minimum when considering the authority and powers of those who are trying to accomplish the coup while doing all these.

The expectation-building process is more prominent than the process that high-ranking soldiers must create and is higher than that of high-ranking soldiers who are likely to fail in this process. For example, it is more likely to be caught when seizing a radio station or seizing a strategic location. Therefore, the main goal of those who plan the coup is to avoid

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<sup>60</sup> Bruce W. Farcau, *The Coup: Tactics in the Seizure of Power* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 47.

movements that will raise suspicion and attention. This process is worse for countries that have suffered so many coups, and this process is easier for countries that do not have a coup tradition.

The soldiers who trust each other and serve each other will be more successful in conspiring. Trusting one another is a more important factor than armament in building a coalition. Untrusted soldiers must be consulted in case of a need due to fear of being monitored by military intelligence and lack of loyalty of the soldiers have some risk. Some young soldiers are more reluctant to join the coup and will wait until they are confident of transferring the power to their side. This will increase the risk of getting caught.<sup>61</sup>

Another point to note is that the order of importance of the soldiers is different. Naturally, more emphasis should be placed on armed forces than on support forces. These armed forces must be deployed meticulously to protect strategic locations. In addition, the land forces should be given more importance than the air or naval forces, because the main goal is to deal with control rather than the destruction of strategic locations.<sup>62</sup> In addition, excessive use of air forces will reduce the confidentiality of the coup attempt.

Another factor that is rare but important in coups is the support of civilian politicians. It can be expected that post-coup politicians will play an active role, making propaganda against the current government and increasing the legitimacy of the coup.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Naunihal Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 108.

<sup>62</sup> Bruce W. Farcau, *The Coup: Tactics in the Seizure of Power* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 58.

<sup>63</sup> "Turkey's Coup At- Turkey's Coup Attempt," 8, accessed May 31, 2018, <https://www.bing.com/cr?IG=BFEA1956CD714488998E9B7C4F0ED3FA&CID=>

The manipulation of information is an important tool while the expectation that the coup will be successful is being created. Therefore, the targets to be controlled must be well-defined. This will make it easier for undecided troops to join the soldiers who advocate the coup d'état. The most important one of these targets is the domination of communication tools such as television and radio. Thus, the information reaching the public can be manipulated. It will be more difficult to provide this control because of the increasing number of press releases. So the main strategy will be to seize the most popular media organizations and give the main message from these publications. Other broadcast organs must also limit their activities and provide the same message.

Another important factor in directing the expectation is the seizure of strategic locations. These strategic locations are often places such as parliament, airports, places where managers live. Some locations have special significance for countries. For example, the Republic of Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk gave great importance to aviation activities in the modernization project.<sup>64</sup> So it is symbolic that is more important than how much troops can be transferred to the airport. Thus, the occupation of these places is important for other actors to feel the power of the coup and join them. Thus, the occupation of these places is important for other actors to feel the power of the coup and join them. The basic message to be given here is the message that the government lost its power.

It is expected that the strategy to be undertaken by mid-ranking troops, such as the coup attempt that failed in 2016, is to be carried out late at night or early in the morning. This will

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<sup>64</sup> Daniel Lerner and Richard D. Robinson, "Swords and Ploughshares: The Turkish Army as a Modernizing Force," *World Politics* 13, no. 01 (1960): 26, doi:10.2307/2009261.

reduce both the risk of awareness to a minimum and the resistance against the coup because of the low number of people in the street.<sup>65</sup>

For coup planners, the first stages of the coup are the most important period in terms of driving the coup. At this stage, mass media must first be seized and the communication between the civilians and the soldiers should be avoided. Although such an action may increase the likelihood of being noticed, it is important that the government give its message to the pro-government and other military units that the government has lost control. When the mass media are seized, the message to be given here is important and it should be emphasized that all the soldiers support this coup as a whole. A strong figure in the army will increase the perception that the coup will be successful. If there is no such figure, concealing identity may be an advantage in this case.

The most positive possibility for the coup will be the support of other military units with this message. This support, which first starts in the big cities, will then spread throughout the country. If everything goes as planned, resistance to the control of strategic locations will be reduced and anticipation of the inevitability of the coup d'état will be established. Thus, both the soldiers who do not participate in the coup as well as the soldiers who are afraid of participating in the coup may be directed. After this point, the effect of personal, ethnic or partisan thoughts that may prevent the coup can be mitigated.<sup>66</sup>

The ideal scenario for the coup-plotters is that the different units in the army join the soldiers who make a rapid impact. The fact that this attendance takes place quickly will create

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<sup>65</sup> Bruce W. Farcau, *The Coup: Tactics in the Seizure of Power* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 125.

<sup>66</sup> Naunihal Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 111.

a sense of unity for the whole army to achieve the coup d'etat. If the process is managed properly, even the soldiers, who have a sympathy for the government, can get involved because it is a strategy rather than the choices that are essential for the actors in the coups.

Another factor that must be taken for the success of the coup is that it should not be too far away from the capital of the country in which it is engaged. It will be easier to control strategic locations and manipulate information in an initiative from the capital. If there is a movement from outside the capital, the military must be able to move this movement quickly, or there must be military units that can coordinate and work in coalition in that region to be successful.<sup>67</sup>

In summary, we can summarize the entire range of rules that medium-ranking soldiers who have carried out the 2016 coup d'état should follow in order to direct anticipation and succeed in the coup d'etat. In the next chapter, we will examine how the planners of the 2016 coup do not fulfill these arguments.

#### 4.1.2 Creation of Expectations in the Coup of 2016

It seems that the coup attempt in 2016 is quite unsuccessful in giving the impression that the coup will be successful. Thousands of people could be prevented from going out to block the coup, especially if this perception could be made through the media.

First, it seems that the military sector that planned the coup failed to take the support of other military units because it could not show a hard and decisive resistance. The number of people who lost their lives in the coup attempt that surrounded the streets of Istanbul and

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<sup>67</sup> Bruce W. Farcau, *The Coup: Tactics in the Seizure of Power*(Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 116.

Ankara with tanks and weapons is 265.<sup>68</sup> Although this coup was recorded as the coup that led to most civilian death, considering the tanks and guns in the streets, that number would be much more if the soldiers didn't leave the tanks and guns. Therefore, it is seen that coup-potters didn't risk to fight to the death. It is observed that troops having attended the coup had suspicious and were ready to yield. So it cannot be mentioned about taking the support of other troops. In fact, the most influential factor in this behavior is that medium-ranking soldiers who plan a strike manipulated low-ranking soldiers with misinformation. Many low-ranking soldiers have been removed from their beds by military exercise to be executed, and no information has been given. Soldiers in front of the Istanbul Governor's Office on July 15, 2016, learned from the television that they had a coup and they started crying when they heard about it.<sup>69</sup> This, in contrast to the coup planners who planned to increase their power with false information, caused them to feel the betrayal of their country and their resistance decreased. As a result, while some soldiers left their weapons and stopped firing at the public, some soldiers continued to attack, even though their beliefs about gaining their fate were low.

Although the Coup-potters have controlled the main state television, TRT, and have announced that they have taken over the administration to protect the constitutional rights of the armed forces and to prevent increasing terrorist activities<sup>70</sup>, they have not been able to take control of other private TVs and have not stopped these channels from connecting with civilians and soldiers. In this regard, the influence of the ruling party AK Party's work since

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<sup>68</sup> "TSK: Darbe Girişimine 8,651 Asker Katıldı, 35 Uçak, 37 Helikopter Kullanıldı - BBC News Türkçe," BBC News, July 27, 2016, , accessed May 31, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-36904517>.

<sup>69</sup> Nagihan Haliloğlu, "TRAUMA, HISTORICAL SYMBOLISM AND THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED: THE 15 JULY 2016 COUP ATTEMPT IN TURKEY," *Asian Affairs* 48, no. 1 (2017): 9, doi:10.1080/03068374.2016.1269477.

<sup>70</sup> Francesco F. Milan, "Turkey: What Hides Behind a Failed Coup Attempt," *The RUSI Journal* 161, no. 4 (2016): 29, doi:10.1080/03071847.2016.1228291.



2002 is great. The party has strengthened the control of the media every year and has made it possible for most private channels to be bought by loyal businessmen.<sup>71</sup> What is ironic beyond all this is that while Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is linked to CNN Türk with FaceTime program, has changed the course of the coup by inviting the public to the streets while the coup declaration was read on state television TRT.<sup>72</sup> Erdogan, who has always been very successful in mobilizing the people, has reduced the belief that the soldier who has used this advantage well is fully in control of the events. CNN Türk is also a media organization belonging to the Doğan Group, which is not controlled by Erdoğan. The fact that the message was given from this television also helped Erdogan to convince a larger mass than his own mass that it would be unsuccessful.

An important difference between the 2016 coup attempt and another coup attempt took place in Turkey in excess of expectations due to the presence of the media and social media is that it's a very difficult orientation. Only a few hours after the coup attempt, important figures of the AKP announced that they would repress this coup and that the people should help themselves with twitter messages.<sup>73</sup> The anti-coup hashtag was tweeted more than half a million and became number 1 in the world trend-topic list.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu, "Turkey: How the Coup Failed," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 59, doi:10.1353/jod.2017.0006.

<sup>72</sup> Ateş Altınordu, "A Midsummer Night's Coup: Performance and Power in Turkey's July 15 Coup Attempt," *Qualitative Sociology* 40, no. 2 (2017): 140, doi:10.1007/s11133-017-9354-y.

<sup>73</sup> Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu, "Turkey: How the Coup Failed," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 65, doi:10.1353/jod.2017.0006.

<sup>74</sup> Eylem Yanardagolu, "The Media and the Failed Coup in Turkey: Televised, Tweeted and FaceTimed, Yet so 20th Century," *Global Media and Communication* 13, no. 2 (2017): 198, doi:10.1177/1742766517699342.

With the seizure of the media, resolving has begun slowly. The other troops needed support were not persuaded, and a resistance was encountered in the soldiers. This resistance, carried out individually or as small units, played a major role in the course of the coup. For example, the resistance of Ömer Halis Demir can be considered in this context as a resistance against a generic soldier, the generals who are operating to seize Special Forces. Similarly, 1st Army commander general Umit Dundar's condemnation of the coup by tying to the televisions demotivated the coup.<sup>75</sup> The dissemination of information that Gen. Hulusi Akar was imprisoned for being against the coup reinforced belief that the coup would fail.

Having not been able to get the support of top-ranking troops and planning the coup, the opposition parties could not direct the parties in line with their own aims. However, support for the opposition parties before the coup was taken in all the successful coups before this. During this coup, two main opposition parties, CHP and the MHP, were reported to have been in contact, but the two parties have made the assessment that the coup d'état is not too strong, and they have been on the side of democracy in this direction.<sup>76</sup> In this respect, why these parties are adopting this attitude can be explained by the principles of these parties. Clearly supporting the coup d'etat would cause the future legitimacy of these parties to be questioned. The main criticism of these parties against Erdogan is the destruction of democratic institutions, so the support of the parties, which placed their main foundation on democracy, to support a non-democratic movement has the potential to significantly reduce the voting base of these parties in the long run.

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<sup>75</sup> Acar Kutay, "From Guardianship To Civilian Control: How Did The Turkish Military Get Here?" *Outlines of Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, Law* 10, no. 3 (2017): 79, doi:10.23932/2542-0240-2017-10-3-68-82.

<sup>76</sup> Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu, "Turkey: How the Coup Failed," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 66-67, doi:10.1353/jod.2017.0006.

In short, the failure to control the media has not convinced the people, other military units, and opposition parties that the coup would succeed.

Another strategic mistake of the group that is planning the coup is that it can not provide the captivity of important figures in the country. Although the coup attempt started at 10 pm, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey Binali Yildirim had the opportunity to make a statement through television at 11 pm. He pointed out that this initiative would be an act of overthrowing the government by a small minority, which would be punished severely.<sup>77</sup> The important ones of the Turkish armed forces also stated that they did not support the coup by media.<sup>78</sup> Although the hotel where President Erdogan stayed in Marmaris was raided, Erdogan was able to travel from Marmaris to Istanbul. All of these events have created the belief that those who initiate the take have weak powers.

Those who carried out the coup attempt also had a very poor time for the decisions taken in the struggle. Instead of initiating the coup attempt against the midnight or morning, this operation was initiated at 10 o'clock. The jets flying in the air, the tanks in the streets were easily spotted and the privacy of the coup was damaged. It also shows that a wrong strategy has been followed in terms of influencing anticipation, after the minister who planned the coup took the control of the government, the high-ranking soldiers did not support the coup, and the Prime Minister gave the knowledge that it was a very weak attack on a coup. The

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<sup>77</sup> Will Worley, "Turkish Prime Minister Claims There Has Been an Attempted Coup," The Independent, July 15, 2016, , accessed June 01, 2018, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turkey-prime-minister-claims-there-has-been-an-attempted-coup-a7139611.html>.

<sup>78</sup> Kareem Shaheen, "Military Coup Was Well Planned and Very Nearly Succeeded, Say Turkish Officials," The Guardian, July 18, 2016, , accessed June 01, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/18/military-coup-was-well-planned-and-very-nearly-succeeded-say-turkish-officials>.

coup d'état had to be declared in the first phase without allowing any other explanation. Though there is a possibility that the prime minister and senior military personnel have become ineffective after the coup d'état, this suspicion has been resolved at 12:30 PM by the connection of President Erdogan to CNN Turk.

One of the rare events that coup planners successfully accomplished in this initiative was the control of strategic locations. The strategic places such as the Bosphorus Bridge and the parliament building was controlled; but with the loss of media play, this control largely lost its significance.

Finally, an important event unique to this coup, which is rarely seen in other battles, is that the agency plays an active role against the coup attempt. In Muslim majority countries such as Turkey, religious sentiments may be used as an important apparatus to mobilize people. From the night to the morning, the prayers were repeatedly read, and people were encouraged to come together and resist the coup.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, it became clear that the units that carried out the coup could control not only civil and military decisions but also any important institutions that could change expectations.

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<sup>79</sup> Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu, "Turkey: How the Coup Failed," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 65, doi:10.1353/jod.2017.0006.

### 4.1.3 Evaluation of 2016 Coup Attempt by Theories

#### 4.1.3.1 Coup As Conflict

According to the theory, which sees the coup as a conflict, the most important factor that will determine the success of the conflict is the military strength of the war sides.<sup>80</sup> According to this theory, the rule for the success of the 2016 coup is that the party that implements the coup should be stronger than the forces loyal to Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government. It is thought that the total number of personnel participating in this coup may be between 8,000 and 8,500. In this respect, the participation in the coup corresponds to only 1.5 percent of the total amount of armed forces. The ratio which is 0.6 percent in non-commissioned officers is 3.6 percent in officers and 42 percent in admirals.<sup>81</sup> As the rank increases, the increase in the participation rate is planned, but it points to a coup attempt that has not been achieved due to force inadequacy. It also limits the capacity of the upper arms of the armed forces and the critical weapons and equipment capacity that can be used by the insurgents and the insufficiency of the resistance and the number of personnel at all levels.

It was able to use 7 percent of the total fleet of aircraft, 8 percent of the current helicopters, 2.7 percent of the existing tanks, 1 percent of the existing ship, and 0.7 percent of the existing light weapons of the armed forces participating in the coup.<sup>82</sup> Coup-potters also did not use an important part of the elite units. For example, a small proportion of the

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<sup>80</sup> Stephen D. Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press, 2006), 14-28.

<sup>81</sup> NTV, "TSK, Darbe Girişimine Katılan Personel Sayısını Açıkladı," NTV, July 27, 2016, , accessed June 01, 2018, <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/tsk-darbe-girisimine-katilan-personel-sayisini-acikladi,ns92udU75k2vw-1OIEK4gQ>.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*

operational capacity of the Special Forces Command took place beside the coup. Soldiers who did not support the coup prevented much equipment, such as hundreds of planes, helicopters, tanks, long-range artillery guns to get under control of coup plotters. With the inability of the 1. Army Command to be drafted, the coup d'état could not obtain the military capacity they requested. Units that participated in the coup by the addition of the police organization to the side of the soldiers fighting against the coup were neutralized. Despite limited communication and ability, the police organization, which has adopted an initiative and a professional mode of operation, has been a major factor in the elimination of the coup.

Given all these factors, one can say that the theory is the insufficiency of force as one of the reasons for the failure of the 2016 coup attempt. The insufficient force has also been combined with strategic mistakes, and most of the smaller troops are easily besieged and inactivated by the civilian population and law enforcement.

It is necessary to examine the extent to which the military secrecy, which will strengthen the strength with the military power. During the coup attempt, as predicted by this theory is Turkey's lack of any local or international conflict decreased the likelihood of a successful coup.<sup>83</sup> But contrary to what this theory predicts, the military budget does not increase the likelihood of a coup d'état, even though the national income rate is falling.<sup>84</sup> It is expected that mobilizing is more modest in the budget to ensure tactical secrecy, but we can see that this strategy does not affect the result of the coup attempt very much. The ratio which was 3,532

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<sup>83</sup> Rosemary H.T. OKane, *The Likelihood of Coups* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1987), 85.

<sup>84</sup> Naunihal Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 111.

in the year 1960 coup d'état, decreased to 1,714 in 2016.<sup>85</sup> Although it can be argued that it has an advantage in tactical terms, the weakness of military power in this narrow has overcome this tactical advantage.

#### *4.1.3.2 Coup as Choice*

The AK Party government has made great efforts to increase the control and pressure on the soldiers throughout their tenure. In 2007, e-memorandum and controversial Ergenekon-Balyoz lawsuits which were given by the General Staff on the grounds that the government damaged the secular values were eliminated and the soldiers thought to be connected to Kemalist values were eliminated and the military intervention force decreased. The vacated positions were filled with soldiers believed to be sympathetic to Fethullah Gülen's community, a religious leader living in the United States. However, with the collapse of Erdogan-Gülen partnership in 2013, he continued his existence in a large mass soldier who had antipathy towards the ruler. Considering that the remaining minority is made up of soldiers belonging to Kemalist values, it can be considered that there is a wide mass in Erdogan who has a hostile role in the soldier.

When we look at civil support for the government, it is seen that the Turkish people are divided into two as pro-Erdogan and anti-Erdogan. Although Erdogan has won every election, we can say that it is an anti-Erdogan mass because of the recent internal and external developments. Increasing terrorist activities, the damage that is given to the democratic institutions by the Erdogan government, Turkey's isolation from the outside world, the impact of the actual war in Syria are some of them. Despite all this, every political class has come

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<sup>85</sup> "Military Expenditure (% of GDP)," GDP Growth (annual %) | Data, , accessed June 01, 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>.

together to prevent the 2016 coup. The different political parties condemned the coup and civil society opposed the coup. As a result, the reaction against Erdogan's practices was not enough for the success of the coup. Therefore, this theory does not provide a valid argument for explaining the consequences of the 2016 coup d'etat.

#### *4.1.3.3 Coup as Coordination*

Seeing the 2016 coup attempt as a coordination game not only shows why gravity has failed, but it also provides satisfactory explanations of the dynamics of the coup d'etat. As we examined in the previous section, coordination is the main factor in ensuring success. The weakness in this coup attempt negatively affected the coordination and mobilization of troops. Firstly, the method of intervention to the events that coup entrepreneurs applied was not seen in previous coup attempts. In this regard, it is seen that the coup plotters in Turkey set a campaign-style incompatible with civilian and military value. This has created the feeling that the coup deemed ineffective in planning, referral, and administration. In addition, the belief that the coup will be successful has been undermined by the absence of a visible leader of the coup operation. If this declaration was read by a top-ranking soldier, not by a television spokesman, we might think that this is more difficult to suppress.

In the absence of specific norms for coordinating beliefs, the coups predicted how much support they could receive, but they misestimated the support they could receive from soldiers. However, the power of the civilians against the coup was underestimated, and the stability of these civilians also affected the military personnel. So while the undecided and those supporting the government got encouraged, those who oppose it became passive. The upper stage of the armed forces opposed to the impact, so the coups had problems in coordination, creating discipline and stability and establishing sufficient power. Due to the



absence of objective factors, subjective perception of achievement could not be established and coordination could not be achieved.

As a result, the 2016 coup attempt shows that the General Staff and the upper echelons of the army resisted against the coup as the perception of the coup's fail could not be prevented and there was the lack of power, the political establishment acted against the coup with all its elements, the private television channels resisted against the media, and the coup faced a large civilian movement. Failure in this coup attempt was inevitable because of these factors.

## **4.2 First Successful Coup Attempt: 1960 Coup**

### **4.2.1 Creating Ideal Case Expectations**

The coup attempt in 1960 was accomplished with the participation of 38 low-rank military members.<sup>86</sup> Considering the degree of authorization of the military members in this coup, it was not possible to use soft power like generals, or hard power like colonels. Therefore, the possibility of a successful coup had been low.

Due to the disadvantage of these young, yet inexperienced military members in organizing a conspiracy, it is expected that they have difficulties at all stages towards seizing power. And it is not easy for such military men to gather and coordinate without drawing the attention of other members of the military. They may overcome such obstacle by colloquing in special occasions and meetings.

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<sup>86</sup> George S. Harris, "Military Coups and Turkish Democracy, 1960–1980," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011): 204, doi:10.1080/14683849.2011.573181.

Such military men tend to gain leverage from the dissatisfaction of the existing order, therefore, the reaction against the government to establish the legitimacy of the coup; however, this cause by itself is not sufficient for such military members to achieve military success. It is obvious that a collective movement must be ensured.

In terms of tactics, a policy similar to the tactics of medium rank military members than those of high-rank members must be adopted. As although they have almost no authorization for the use of soft power, they may apply certain hard power tactics. For example, it is the low-rank military members that ensure transportation and communication of soldiers, load and unload the guns and direct the tanks. But they will not have the level of hard power use as the medium rank members do. While medium rank members can command independent groups, low-rank military members have the chance to command smaller troops under larger military units. The important aspect here is not having a lot of arms and ammunition, but a coordinated, hierarchical troop.

On the other hand, use of soft power is highly challenging. Such military men will not gather information from the National Intelligence Organization or pave the way for the coup by using bureaucratic privileges. Furthermore, individual charisma or position of coup plotters is not enough for ensuring an extensive movement or send ultimatum.

Another possible obstacle in this type of military coup is the fact that military members with higher ranks than the coup plotters may not want to lose their privileges. Therefore, they will have to persuade generals, who do not want to lose their hierarchical power, that the coup will be successful.

In general, it is expected that most chaotic and bloody coups take place in a coup attempt by such military men. As the expectation of a successful coup will be lower due to the

inferiority of ranks, which will cause more opposition. The skill to command armed forces must be demonstrated in order to prove tactical power. Furthermore, such riot can be perceived as a revolt against the hierarchical order in the military. Determination and cogency of leading to chaos and ensuring more bloodshed are more common in this type of military coups.<sup>87</sup>

And it is further expected that the period of the revolt will be longer than others. Many players need to make decisions under high-risk and chaotic circumstances. And it will take time to persuade high-rank military members.

Coup plotters must ensure that military members of both equal and higher ranks are impressed by them in order to create a perception towards a successful coup. As in all military coups, seizing the means of communication is of great importance in this coup. Additionally, it is important that strategically significant locations are seized. However, a control must be established over the symbols that are important for the military or civil authority. Thus, the image of power can be made certain to other soldiers that cannot understand what is happening. Such persuasion process can be carried out in smaller groups. For example, each troop must be convinced that the support of other groups is received. It can be so ensured that the riot spreads throughout the military.

Aside from manipulating the information, coup plotters impose the advantages of risk avoidance on abstainers and anti-coup soldiers. Thus, the support of military members, thinking that both their own safeties and integration of the military as an organization can be in danger, can be received.

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<sup>87</sup> Stephen D. Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press, 2006), 28-51.

In order that the coup is accomplished, the riot must spread as an uncontrollable sequence of events. Although it is easier in other coup attempts to establish the perception that the riot is unstoppable through bringing means of communication under control, it is rather difficult in such type of coup attempt. As it is obvious that an extensive support will be needed, and military members with significantly higher ranks need to be persuaded. In such case, the number of people to be persuaded is excessive, and it is a lot more difficult to establish a perception of success.<sup>88</sup>

As a result, if the number of low-rank members participating in the coup is greater, it will be easier to seize certain objectives and increase the cogency of the coup. A successful coup attempt needs to rapidly spread throughout the armed forces as a sequence of events, and pro-regime members must be weakened in the meantime. If the coup is accomplished, several military men opposing the coup will lose the submission of low-rank members under their control. In such case, they will not want to defend an overthrown regime. Considering a possible civil war, they will have to lay down their offices. Therefore, the decisions during the coup will be made in consideration of their future they may have in the military rather than their ideologies.

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<sup>88</sup> Naunihal Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 148-154.

#### 4.2.2 Creation of Expectations in the Coup of 1960

Even though execution and conclusion of the 1960 military coup took place in a short period of time, the coup had been planned for 6 years. Despite such long period of time, a plan was not achieved. Therefore, an unplanned night raid had been plotted.<sup>89</sup>

Being pro-regime means being pro-government. Therefore, under the existing circumstances, it is impossible to plan the intervention within the chain of command. For this is a grassroots movement. The central point of the movement is the Military Academy. There is no other force than the Military Academy to be relied on. Moreover, it is possible that units such as Central Command may put up a resistance. Therefore, the coup started with uncertainties and risks.<sup>90</sup>

They need to be backed up by other troops before capturing the target places and objectives. Because the history of Turkish military is based on a strong system of chain of command. Thus, it is important to receive the support of authorized generals, even if they are not included in the coup plotters, in order to ensure the cogency and legitimacy of the coup.

During the coup, initially, the armored forces in Istanbul were mobilized, which was followed by the riot of four squads from the military academy.<sup>91</sup> The first mission was

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<sup>89</sup> Mustafa Burak Çelebi, "Türkiyenin Darbe Geçmişi Ve 15 Temmuz Karşı Darbesi: Anayasal, Toplumsal Ve Siy," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 12, no. Volume 12 Issue 16 (2017): 125-146 , doi:10.7827/turkishstudies.12060.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ulvi Keser, "27 Mayıs 1960 Askeri Darbesi Ve Kıbrıs Türk Mücadelesine Yansımaları," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 12, no. Volume 12 Issue 16 (2017): 173, doi:10.7827/turkishstudies.11710.

determined to be the capture of central commander. If the central command joints the revolution, a significant military force would be attained, and otherwise, the resistance can spread further. Upon successful seizure of the central commander, units under the central command supported the coup. Thus, the greatest obstacle to the perception of a successful coup was overcome. However, coup plotters faced with a resistance when they arrived at the officers' club to seize the soldiers, Therefore, hard power was used to capture these objectives, and arms and tanks were brought in.<sup>92</sup> These objectives were also sized with the support of the central command. Finally, upon support gaining the support of Full-star General Cemal Gürsel, the course was set to civil objectives. Radio is the primary objective. At the time, there had not been any media organs other than the State radio. Therefore, seizure of the radio meant seizure of the whole media. The radio was sized only with a military officer and two soldiers.<sup>93</sup> The absence of private television institutions at the time prevented the government from carrying out a counter-attack and persuading people that the coup would fail. Announcing in the release that the whole armed forces supported the coup and the control had been established without bloodshed increased people's support for the coup.

Time schedule of the 1960 coup, unlike the 2016 coup attempt, had been extremely correct. Even though this coup had first been planned in 1958, presuming that national and international circumstances would further deteriorate, they anticipated that a coup carried out a few years later would further satisfy every segment of the society. Furthermore, visit of India prime minister Nehru in Ankara on 20th of May, 1960, and Athens visit of Republic of

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<sup>92</sup> Tanel Demirel, *Türkiyenin Uzun on Yılı: Demokrat Parti İktidarı Ve 27 Mayıs Darbesi* (Şişli, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2011), 28-35.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p.37

Turkey prime minister Adnan Menderes on 26th of May 1960 had been taken into consideration.<sup>94</sup> As in case of a coup carried out while the prime minister is abroad, the prime minister could form an alternative coup abroad and reappropriate his/her own rules. Therefore, delaying the coup until May 27th had been a correct move. And the fact that the coup was carried out at 3 in the morning reduced the possibility of a resistance.

And the key points besides the radio were captured only within one and a half hours.<sup>95</sup> Starting a resistance with the support of the whole armed forces created a sequence of events and created the perception that the coup is inevitable. Council of Ministers members, followed by the national assembly members, were arrested and taken to the Military Academy. In Istanbul, the Presidential palace was surrounded, and President Celal Bayar was captured. Upon such developments, Prime Minister Menderes and Minister of Economy Hasan Polatkan surrendered. Words uttered by Hasan Polatkan are important for demonstrating how the common information that the coup had been inevitable had spread: "It was obvious that such a tense atmosphere would not last forever. The army, as an impartial arbitrator, would intervene sooner or later".<sup>96</sup> As it can be understood from such views, these statements are a reflection of people's opinion at the time, thinking that the army would do what is best for the people.

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<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, p.48-63

<sup>95</sup> Ulvi Keser, "27 Mayıs 1960 Askeri Darbesi Ve Kıbrıs Türk Mücadelesine Yansımaları," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 12, no. Volume 12 Issue 16 (2017): 181, doi:10.7827/turkishstudies.11710.

<sup>96</sup> Atiye Emiroğlu, "27 MAYIS 1960 İHTİLALİ VE DEMOKRAT PARTİ'NİN TASFİYESİ," *Sosyal Ve Teknik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (May 2011): 19

Another significant factor that convinced people of the legitimacy of the coup was that arms were not resorted unless it had been absolutely necessary. Despite the bloody political events before and after 1960, there were only 1 or 2 civilian casualties.<sup>97</sup> Of course, the determinant of this had been the fact that there was a weak resistance. This raised the morale of juntas, helped them persuade other military members of the correctness of their decisions.

Another reason behind successfully establishing the image that the coup would success is the tone of the speech in the address to the nation. In the message given in the coup declaration, the group, calling themselves the National Unity Committee, stated that unity against communism ideology must be secured.<sup>98</sup> And this helped mobilize the people. The impartiality message was particularly emphasized. When the 2016 coup attempt is considered, it is seen that the perception of movement on behalf of the whole country was not ensured and that not a conciliating but a rather radical, discriminating tone was adopted.

Another important matter in the 1960 coup is that the support of Republican People's Party, the opposition party, had been received. It had been considered that cogency of the coup would be enhanced by using the disordnance caused by the military, chaos, political developments or election. It was thought that legitimacy could not be ensured in the eyes of the people without a story to persuade the people. Opposition Party leader İsmet İnönü gave

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, p.20



the message, when several soldiers and generals visited the war office in Ankara, that an intervention made at the right time might receive their support.<sup>99</sup>

And the coup plotters transmitted the right messages in order to minimize the potential questions after the coup. It was emphasized that the military had intervened only with the purpose of changing the administration and that a civil government would be established after the change. They convinced the people that they cared about not a specific group but the whole society.

### 4.2.3 Assessment of the 1960 Coup with Coup Theories

#### 4.2.3.1 Coup as a Conflict

Despite the fact that having enough arms in a coup attempt is one of the important rules, this theory is better in explaining the failure of a coup rather than its success. Although 1960 coup was dramatically more organized compared to the 2016 coup, a complete explanation has not been given regarding the step by step accomplishments of the coup.

It is clearly seen that when the coup started, coup plotters had not sufficient military force. The coup was set off with the ammunition of only 38 military officers and 1 troop.<sup>100</sup> Such armament forms a very small part of the whole armed forces. Moreover, upon increasing rumors of a coup after 1950's, the government took a series of measures in the military, and some of the military members thought to be Kemalists were discharged. The government

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<sup>99</sup> Tanel Demirel, *Türkiyenin Uzun on Yılı: Demokrat Parti İktidarı Ve 27 Mayıs Darbesi* (Şişli, İstanbul İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2011), 55.:

<sup>100</sup> Ömer Aslan, "Introduction: Military Coup D'état as a Two-Level Game," *The United States and Military Coups in Turkey and Pakistan*, 2017, 5, doi:10.1007/978-3-319-66011-0\_1.

assigned loyal military men especially at higher ranks of the military.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, the rioting segment lacked the power of the pro-government members. Very few casualties after the coup demonstrate that different factors than arms and tyranny had been more influential.

Additionally, when the coup is examined in terms of tactics, it is seen that a series of organized and unorganized actions existed. According to the statement of Alparslan Türkeş, one of the coup plotters and a member of the National Unity Committee, Cemal Madaroğlu, who is the one that planned the coup, changed his mind several times on the day of the coup and thought of canceling the coup due to not having a plan.<sup>102</sup> Likewise, he did not prepare a statement before the seizure of the radio.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, the movement lacked a real leader at the beginning of the coup. A military action within the chain of command had not been possible. Therefore, it cannot be expected that the military acted in a complete harmony. If the coup developed as anticipated by the theory, it would be expected that a few low ranked military members would fail against many pro-government members. However, unlike the anticipation in the theory, when the soldiers arrived at the central command, the coup did not collapse but got more and more powerful. In persuasion of the Central Command, weaknesses and fears of the pro-government soldiers rather than the power of the coup plotters played a significant role. When the pro-government military members dissented and failed to act in coordination, suppressing the revolt got more difficult. Upon participation of many troops in the coup without a sign of resistance, the power of the coup plotters increased every passing

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 8-13

<sup>102</sup> Suavi Aydın and Yüksel Taşkın, *1960tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2015), 61.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

second. Even after getting highly powerful, coup plotters tried to infamize the opposite side rather than using power. As a result of all these events, pro-government military members either laid down their offices or joined the organization staging the coup.

On the other hand, the fact that there had been a series of tactically organized actions allow this theory to explain a part of the coup's success. It can be said that coup plotters had a successful secrecy process. Despite the fact that the idea of a coup had been around for a while, such idea had not been revealed until the coup process. And the fact that there weren't any written documents before the coup indicate that special attention had been paid to secrecy. Furthermore, the day of the coup was delayed until the suitable conditions were met. The fact that action was taken during chaotic domestic politics when the economy fell into a decline, the prime minister was within the country borders, and the support of the opposition party was received indicates the foregoing.<sup>104</sup> However, as stated before, even though this theory is partially successful in explaining the accomplishment of the coup, it cannot explain the dynamics in all stages of the coup.

#### *4.2.3.2 Coup as a Choice*

According to the choice theory, the most significant factor in the success of this coup is enmity of the low-rank military members against the higher rank members. As the factors necessitating a coup increase, the chances of staging a successful coup increases.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Suavi Aydın and Yüksel Taşkın, *1960tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*(İstanbul: İletişim, 2015), 62-68.

<sup>105</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*(Cambridge:MA: Harward University Press, 1968), 194.

It is doubtful to explain the reasons behind the success of the 1960 coup. Especially the fact that pro-government military members joined to coup unquestioningly seriously cast a shadow upon the theory's explanation capability. Furthermore, although there were great political and lifestyle differences between the Military members, they were united during the coup. An ideologically homogeneous structure was not established even in the National Unity Committee, which started the coup.<sup>106</sup> If this theory could explain the outcomes of the 1960 theory, a resistance against the coup by the higher ranked members would be expected. However, a severe resistance was not seen in this sense. As a result, pro-government and anti-government troops intertwined during the coup, and whether they supported the government did not matter. They might have acted in this way in order to ensure the safety of themselves and their families rather than their attitudes towards the government. Although there are not any pieces of evidence, threatening could have been a significant means.<sup>107</sup>

And the number of soldiers stating the coup weaken the explanations of this theory. Despite several low ranked military men, the resistance started only with 38 people.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, indicating that these people had such attempt in order to seize the powers of higher ranked members and due to their enmities towards them cannot explain the dynamics of the coup.

On the other hand, considering the actualization process of the coup, the theory can provide a series of explanations. All significant figures were detained and all strategical

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<sup>106</sup> Cem Eroğul, *Demokrat Parti: Tarihi Ve İdeolojisi* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2003), 52.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55

<sup>108</sup> George S. Harris, "Military Coups and Turkish Democracy, 1960–1980," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 2 (2011): 204, doi:10.1080/14683849.2011.573181.

locations were captured only within one and a half hours. There was not a pro-government resistance. Such rapid gathering of an anti-government movement can also be seen as a uniting factor due to the anger towards the government; it can be said that there was a conflict between the new elite segment and the infamized army due to the policies implemented by the democratic party. Furthermore, according to the opinion of the military, actions against the nationalism principle of the country had been taken, and glorification of Islam condemned by the military.<sup>109</sup> Republican People's Party on the opposition, having governed the country for a long time, was of the opinion that the Democratic Party government disrupted the secular values and excessively violated the values determined by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.<sup>110</sup> It is known that despite all the support, higher positions of the army had been pro-government. Moreover, although the Democratic Party lost its impression, it still was a popular party. It came to power along with 52.7 percent of the votes in 1950, 57.5 percent in 1954, and 47.9 of the votes in 1957.<sup>111</sup> As a result, although this theory offers an insight on certain points of the 1960 coup, it cannot be fully explained why the coup was successful.

#### *4.2.3.3 Coup as A Coordination*

Explainability of this theory can be discussed through consideration of how common information had been established in the 1960 coup. Firstly, a letter of advice written by

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<sup>109</sup> Cem Eroğul, *Demokrat Parti: Tarihi Ve İdeolojisi* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2003), 58.

<sup>110</sup> Mustafa Burak Çelebi, "Türkiyenin Darbe Geçmişi Ve 15 Temmuz Karşı Darbesi: Anayasal, Toplumsal Ve Siy," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 12, no. Volume 12 Issue 16 (2017): 67, doi:10.7827/turkishstudies.12060.

<sup>111</sup> "Demokrat Parti Ve Atatürk'ün üç İlkesi: Cumhuriyetçilik ...," accessed June 1, 2018, [https://www.bing.com/cr?IG=C67C56CDB6254FD3859EA2FA06A2E9AA&CID=26CC184EED896985169F144FEC7468CE&rd=1&h=7rBVdkWdrMldw23LxDONMULnjwP5adi2s\\_prcE7Q68M&v=1&r=https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286523272\\_Demokrat\\_Parti\\_ve\\_Ataturk'un\\_uc\\_ilkesi\\_Cumhuriyetcilik\\_Laiklik\\_ve\\_Devecilik\\_1950\\_-\\_1960&p=DevEx.LB.1,5514.1](https://www.bing.com/cr?IG=C67C56CDB6254FD3859EA2FA06A2E9AA&CID=26CC184EED896985169F144FEC7468CE&rd=1&h=7rBVdkWdrMldw23LxDONMULnjwP5adi2s_prcE7Q68M&v=1&r=https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286523272_Demokrat_Parti_ve_Ataturk'un_uc_ilkesi_Cumhuriyetcilik_Laiklik_ve_Devecilik_1950_-_1960&p=DevEx.LB.1,5514.1).

Colonel Samet Kuşçu in 1958 was the precursor of a coup.<sup>112</sup> Kuşçu stated in this letter that a group within the military had been involved in junta activities to overthrow the government.<sup>113</sup> Although no hard evidence was obtained in the investigation, the idea that a coup could be staged sooner or later was announced to a wide population. On the other hand, developments throughout the outside world supported the idea that the Democratic Party could be overthrown with the domino effect. The process starting with the Egyptian coup in 1952 continued with the 1954 military intervention in Syria and lastly 1958 Iraq coup. This changed the power relations in the region, and psychologically encouraged possible coup attempts. Furthermore, governments overthrown with coups had close relations with the Democratic Party.

Student protests between 1958 and 1960 established a common information regarding a dissatisfaction towards the government. Students were supported also by academicians. The idea that a coup was inevitable must have been noticed even by the government, as discussions about an early election were started.<sup>114</sup>

The society was being slowly prepared for a coup with such developments. Therefore, pre-coup conditions had been convenient for diffusion to large masses. The remaining factor for a successful coup was how to ensure coordination during the coup.

Within this respect, coup plotters masterfully managed the coordination among the behaviors of other troops. The radio announcement was supported by the tank sounds in the

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<sup>112</sup> Cem Eroğul, *Demokrat Parti: Tarihi Ve İdeolojisi* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2003), 67

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 68

<sup>114</sup> Suavi Aydın and Yüksel Taşkın, *1960tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2015), 74.

streets, and the feeling that the coup plotters are strong and that resistance could lead to a fragmented society was established. The fact that none of the important political figures made an appearance supported the opinion that the government lost the control.

Although the coup plotters brought higher ranked military members into the fold, it was seen that lower ranked soldiers had not been so enthusiastic to join the revolt. Even though these soldiers had been willing to join the coup attempt from the very beginning, it is seen that they waited until thinking that coup plotters had full sized the control. And an extensive participation was ensured after the declaration on the radio. Therefore, the sense of success was placed before feelings of ideology, solidarity, and brotherhood. That is to say that the main factor settling the decisions had been the change of the opinions. Tactical advantage was pushed into the background.

Outcomes of a possible conflict were avoided due to the determination and deterrence emphasized in the radio declaration. And facing a coup for the first time in the Republican period triggered such fear. Such weak resistance by the government indicates that they preferred a peace settlement made under poor circumstances rather than a continuing conflict that disrupts the social order.

Another remarkable matter is that the use of military power was not often preferred despite having received the support of the whole military. This military power was rather used to increase the cogency of the coup. No firearm was used during the arrest of high profile politicians.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Tolga Ersoy, Pervin Erbil, and Zekeriya Boztepe, *Türkiyede Darbeler Ve Provokasyonlar: Kısa Tarih* (Kızılay, Ankara: Yönetim Yeri, 1998), 33.

The biggest step towards establishing a coordination was persuasion of the central command. As staging, a successful coup had been highly challenging against the disadvantages such as low firepower and lack of the chain of command. Thus, the two most significant means of establishing coordination in the 1960 military coup had been the participation of the central command in the coup and seizure of the radio.



## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

Turkey has faced a large number of coups in the past, supported by the pro-government and anti-government troops. The difference in ideological differences has seen the country go through attempted and successful coups, some dated as far as the early as the 1960s. Bad leadership and unlawful ascension to power have high probabilities of triggering coups. The military officers are at the forefront as they put up a support or opposition against the leader of a coup. The political field in the country goes through challenges, which is common to all countries, but the approach in solving issues is wrong. Coups are well organized and it takes the intervention of some political leaders and militants who are against the government to achieve the success they need to overthrow the sitting president. Most of the organizers from the military occupy top positions which is easier for them to influence the subordinates through coercion or by instilling fear in them. The articulate organization and coordination of the supporters determines the success or failure of the coups that take place in Turkey. Citizens have no choice but to follow the current and existing force in the country.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

Turkey citizens should elect leaders who have the interest of the country at heart. Such leaders will focus on building the country as opposed to using the country's resources for their personal needs. This will reduce the possibility of having coups taking place in the country since they are fueled by people against bad regimes in the leadership. The military will also pledge its allegiance to the able leadership in the country if the president is doing

things in the right way. The military officers will dismantle the plans of the coup leaders and inform the president of the plans against his or her leadership. For instance, bad regimes are given a short lifespan, which allows the country have the proper leadership in the top positions. It leads to political stability in the long-term since elected leaders are cautious to maintain professionalism in their conduct of duties to prevent the possibility of a coup happening. A good regime is given the opportunity to lead the country for the benefit of its citizens.

There should be peaceful ways to resolve the political issues facing Turkey to avoid the constant coups taking place in the country. This is because the coups destabilize the country and the lives of citizens making it hard for them to live normal and meaningful lives. Countries that depend on Turkey for business and economic relations are also affected indirectly by the coups that keep taking place in the nation. For instance, political indifference should be addressed by a committee of experts who understand the current status of the country and the future objectives of the nation, both in the short-term and in the long-term.

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