

Consequences of Internal Destabilisation of Key Eurasian States on Regional Security: A Case Study of the 2016 Coup Attempt in Turkey

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Abstract: The attempted military coup in Turkey in 2016 represents an extremely complex military-political phenomenon that threatened to cause very negative implications for the stability of not only Turkish society but also on a broader regional level. One of the main characteristics of this coup was its suddenness and rapidity in the phase of immediate execution, which is ultimately the main characteristic of these forms of political violence. Although there were many unknowns in the beginning, with the passage of time and multi-layered analyses, the key actors of this failed coup became crystalized, especially those who were “behind the curtain”. If, by any chance, the coup had succeeded, it would certainly have represented the foundation of the architecture of new geopolitical relations in the Middle East and Central Asia, which, by all accounts, would have been significantly less favourable when it comes to processes aimed at creating an environment for the greatest possible degree of regional stabilisation in overall social relations. The scientific and social goal of this work is focused to a significant extent on the performance of certain experiences and relevant conclusions, which would contribute to the strengthening of the scientific research fund with the tendencies of its practical usability in terms of protecting society and the state from illegal and violent forms of political struggle such as military coups.

Keywords: Military coup, Turkey, army, constitutional order.

Introduction

A military coup or putsch is an extremely militant form of *coup d'état* carried out exclusively by the national armed forces and not by mercenary or foreign interventionist troops. After the coup, power is exercised by

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military personnel alone (junta), or they predominantly participate in its exercise within the framework of mixed military-civilian governments (Simeunović, 1989, 75). Based on this, it is evident that the coup represents a militant way of violently seizing power, carried out exclusively by the national armed forces, unlike other forms of political coups in which foreign interventionist troops, mercenaries, and other paramilitary formations can participate. It follows that this kind of coup action during the immediate execution has an exclusively national character, although the actors of the coup may be in a public or secret relationship with an external factor that has certain interests in supporting such activity (Parezanović, 2013, 157).

When it comes to the attempted military coup in Turkey in July 2016, it is important to emphasise that it represents an extremely complex military-political process with a much wider and deeper background than just an attempt to forcefully change the government in Turkey. The scope of the afore-mentioned coup was to reach the constitution of a new geopolitical framework not only in the Middle East but also in Central Asia and Transcaucasia, an area of particular interest to the Russian Federation. The fact that there is a tradition of carrying out military coups in Turkey should not be overlooked either. In the 20th century alone, the Turkish army carried out three coups: in 1960, 1971, and 1980. The 1997 coup interfered with the military memorandum when it forced the resignation of then-Prime Minister Nejmetin Erbakan. In fact, since 2003, Erdoğan, as prime minister, has begun to reform civil-military relations in such a way that he has reduced the role of the military factor in the political life of Turkey.

In this context, not a few years pass without the arrests of Turkish officers accused of preparing a coup. For example, in February 2010, by order of the state public prosecutor, more than 200 high-ranking officers of the Turkish army were arrested, including several generals and colonels. In addition, the former deputy chief of the general staff and the air force and navy commanders were arrested on suspicion of planning a coup in 2003. As Turkish media announced, the goal of the conspirators' putsch action under the pseudonym "Hammer" was to prevent further Islamization of the country and strengthen the secularisation of Turkey, all for the sake of destabilising the political and security situation in the country. A statement was also issued that the coup plotters planned to plant explosives in Istanbul mosques to liquidate the holders of high political positions as well as

provoke the Greek army to shoot down a Turkish military plane over the Aegean Sea, which would introduce additional tensions into the already tense bilateral relations between Turkey and Greece (Parezanović 2013).

On the other hand, after a turbulent and controversial political history, Turkey has reasserted itself as a highly significant factor on the world political and economic stage. There is almost no current issue within the world community without Turkey having some indirect or direct role in some way. Turkey has long since stopped dealing only with regional issues in the Middle East and the Balkan Peninsula and strives increasingly to impose itself as an indispensable actor in global international movements and processes. As a country with about 85 million inhabitants and despite decades of internal political tensions, Turkey has developed into a strong military and economic power, which has been especially evident in the last twenty years. Along with economic expansion, Turkey took an increasingly offensive foreign policy course, particularly cautiously reviving and desiring a return to the positions of the former Ottoman Empire, which is why numerous authors rightly qualify such a direction of Turkish state policy as neo-Ottomanism. As a member of NATO, according to the official data of the North Atlantic Alliance, Turkey is second in power, right after the US, which gives it additional foreign policy weight. Although it tried to maintain a neutral position during and after World War II, Turkey balanced between the poles of the Cold War until 1952, when it became a member of NATO. During the Cold War, it played a very important role, and what Cuba represented for the US in the military-territorial sense, Turkey meant for the former USSR. If you look at the geopolitical position of Turkey, even at first glance, it can be established that it is extremely interesting and favourable in every sense. Turkey spans two continents and is surrounded by four seas: the Black, Mediterranean, Aegean, and Marmara. It borders eight countries: Greece, Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. If we consider that Turkey sovereignly rules the northern part of the island of Cyprus as part of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, it is completely clear what kind of geopolitical potential it has. Otherwise, the internationally unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus represents a serious point of dispute between not only Greece and Turkey but also the European Union and Turkey. The problem is compounded by the fact that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is home to over 30,000 Turkish troops, as well as electronic reconnaissance systems that cover the entire Mediterranean and

much of the Middle East. In such a social environment, the conditions for “some action” are almost always created. The character of that action is directly conditioned by other social parameters, primarily political, economic, social, military-security, cultural, religious, and the like. If we consider the turbulent history of Turkey, the complexity of modern Turkish society, and the numerous contradictions that burden it, it is quite understandable that Turkey is still a potential source of crises and conflicts, which cannot always be controlled and channelled (Parezanović 2013) with certainty.

The Importance of Turkey for the Regional Security of Eurasia

As a pivotal “middle power”, Turkey can play an important role in fostering regional stability in the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans, the Black Sea, and Central Asia. As other middle powers can and do, Turkey needs to forge and refresh regional partnerships and alliances as much as possible rather than fuel enmities and rivalries. The path to Turkey’s regaining and extending its influence regionally and globally lies in recommitting to a pro-Western axis underpinned by a Kemalist foreign policy (Colakoğlu 2019, p. 4). In recent times, Turkish politicians, under the leading Party of Justice and Development (AKP), have promised to contribute to the security, stability, and prosperity of a wide range of territories beyond Turkey’s immediate neighbourhood, such as Central and South Asia. Turkey’s renewed interest in these territories is the result of its desire to play an influential role in world politics. In accordance with the leadership of the AKP, Turkey’s new activism towards the Russian Federation, Caucasia, and Central Asia has opened new horizons in its relations with Eurasia. This new foreign policy orientation results from reform and change in Turkey’s domestic landscape. Geopolitical justification for a relatively new foreign policy turn towards Eurasia under the AKP was given in a statement by Ahmet Davutoğlu, who said: “Turkey is a country with a close land basin, the epicentre of the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus, the centre of Eurasia in general, and is in the middle of the Rimland belt cutting across the Mediterranean to the Pacific (Turkish Time 2004)”.

Turkey’s profile is rising in the region at a time when Eurasian actors face increasingly complex challenges. Eurasia has been considered by Turkish policymakers as a potential area of influence and opportunity since

the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Bearing in mind the historical importance of the Eurasian region for Turkey, its new regional discourse and policy aim to pursue an active foreign policy in order to achieve the goal of a zero-problem policy in its relations with countries in the region. Ankara's new approach seeks to benefit from closer economic and political relations in order to make Turkey an energy hub through regional energy projects (Bülent & Fidan 2009, 199-200) and to engage with international actors and institutions with the reputation of regional power, which ensures regional stability and security. Trying to transport the region's rich energy resources to world markets via its own territory, Turkey aims to secure and diversify oil and gas transportation to Europe, which is an important aspect of its new policy and geopolitical vision, which includes Eurasia. Bearing this in mind, Turkey is trying to represent herself as a mediator (Lazić 2022) and factor of stability, especially because of so-called "frozen conflicts" in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Crimea, and Donbas that may cause significant problems for Turkey's pipeline plans. Currently, Turkey continues to develop a strategic partnership with Azerbaijan and Georgia (Erşen & Çelikpala 2019, 590). Also, thanks to engagement during the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh during 2020, the Armistice Agreement, and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Russian Federation, Turkey is trying to affirm itself as a reliable and persistent ally, while at the regional level (Eurasia), it has imposed itself as an actor with growing political influence and a strengthened military presence (Janković & Lazić 2021, 358).

Another priority in Turkish foreign policy regarding Central Asia is to ensure that its states acquire the capacity to establish stability and security at home and develop the capability to effectively cope with regional and domestic problems. In this regard, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) has played a crucial role as an official development aid organisation (Fidan & Nurdun 2008). Through TIKA, Turkey has provided funds to Central Asian countries since their independence, and its role has only grown under the auspices of Turkey's new foreign policy vision. Substantial development aid and diverse activities in various fields provided by TIKA are important in terms of demonstrating Turkey's vision of sharing its gains with its sister states and communities. Sixty percent of TIKA's USD 702 million in development aid in 2007 went to Central Asia and the Caucasus. These funds sponsored

projects in economic and industrial infrastructure development, the health and education sectors, academic cooperation between Turkish and Eurasian universities, internship programmes in Turkey for Central Asian and Caucasian university students, Turkish language programmes, and the promotion of business and trade (Aras & Fidan 2009).

In the Turkish concept of Eurasianism, much greater emphasis has been placed on the former Ottoman territories than on ethnic identity (Tüysüzoğlu 2014, 97). Turkish foreign policy, rooted in the concept of *Strategic Depth* created by Ahmet Davutoğlu, has been interpreted in academic discourse within the context of the conservative approach that makes reference to the Ottoman territories. Eurasianism, as formulated by Davutoğlu, is an initiative that fosters multiculturalism throughout Eurasia as a whole and in the former Ottoman territories in particular; it seeks justification in terms of shared values, issues, and opportunities that bring communities together; and it aims to set up cooperation with the civilizations outside the Afro-Eurasian confluence (particularly Western civilization) in a spirit not of conflict but of shared interest. Also, the Turkish vision of Eurasianism can be considered a “geopolitical approach based on civilization”, in view of the emphasis that it attaches to Ottoman heritage and Islamic civilization (Ersen 2003, 16-17). However, it must be noted that Turkey’s new foreign policy is rooted in pragmatism and in defining itself with reference to Ottoman heritage and Islamic civilization, since Turkish identity merits reference in the Caucasus and Central Asia. According to previous findings in the literature, neo-Ottomanism assigns Turkey a leading role within the Eurasian paradigm. Turkey structures the neo-Ottoman conception by fostering sound communication and cooperation between Western and Eastern civilizations. Turkey is thus set to acquire the position of a bridge between the Euro-Atlantic world and Islamic civilization (Ersen 2003, 16-17).

Constructive Eurasianism recognises Turkey’s *sui generis* character, not in the sense that it is superior to other countries but in the sense that it is inherently and uniquely positioned geographically, culturally, and politically. Per constructive Eurasianism’s understanding, Turkey does not try to position itself as a purely Western, Eastern, European, or Asian country. Although established on strong secular foundations, Turkey keeps in mind its position as a leading Muslim-majority country and that many

Muslims around the world look up to Turkey in this regard. In this regard, Turkey plays multiple roles, so it is and must be all of these at the same time (Ertuğrul Tulun & Oğuzhan Tulun).

Turkish policymakers have also demonstrated greater interest in the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the two most prominent symbols of a multipolar world that has been defended vehemently by Russian and Chinese leaders for many years as the antithesis of the Western-led liberal international order. While the BRICS is mainly focused on fostering cooperation on economic, financial, and developmental problems, the SCO has become a strong inspiration for the supporters of Eurasianism in Russia and elsewhere, mainly due to its security-oriented agenda and distinctively regional scope that includes not only most of the former Soviet states but also the major actors of Eurasian geopolitics like China, India, Pakistan, and Iran. In this sense, Turkish analysts tend to make particular reference to Turkey's expanding ties with the SCO whenever they attempt to explore the meaning of Eurasianism in Turkish politics (Ersen 2013). Also, it is more likely that SCO will remain one of the two most important platforms shaping Turkey's Eurasian strategy in the foreseeable future.

Compared to all these other external powers, Turkey enjoys a comparative advantage embodied in its shared ethnic, linguistic, and cultural ties with most states in this region, so it has continued to capitalise on these values. The eighth meeting of the Turkic Council, which took place in November 2021, allowed Turkey to articulate a new vision for the Turkic nations, so one significant move resulting from this meeting was the renaming of the Turkic Council into the Organisation of the Turkic States (OTS), giving it special status among world organisations and affirming pan-Turkism as a binding connection between the member states. In addition, the newly-founded OTS announced the "Vision for Turkic World – 2040" as a road map for deepening cooperation over the next twenty years and unveiled plans for a new Turkic Investment Fund to boost investment across the region. The event, as a whole, marked an important development in Turkey's presence in Central Asia, especially if we keep in mind that Turkmenistan agreed to join as an observer. This continued institutionalisation of Turkic connections also attracted Russia, which expressed interest in becoming an observer in the OTS.

The orientation of the AKP government's "new" foreign policy is in accordance with certain principles mentioned above, which direct Ankara's attention to Turkey's neighbouring regions and the various activities that Turkey needs to pursue to develop good relations with them. The major challenge for Turkey comes from the Caucasus and the Black Sea, supplying and transshipping energy, plus concerns over Russia's resistance to NATO's expansion in those regions. With respect to the Caucasian states, there are additional concerns about Azerbaijan-Armenian relations, the Georgian security situation, and the developing relations with Russia. Within the framework of its new foreign policy, while Turkey has an active policy and takes initiative in the region of Central Asia and the Caucasus, it also tries to keep good relations with Iran and Russia, who are the main actors in the region. Apparently, Turkey has adopted a new foreign policy that aims for cooperation, or at least good relations, instead of competition with Russia regarding its relations with the Central Asian countries (Caman & Akyurt 2011, 57-60). Eventually, the Turkish pivot to Eurasia was renewed following Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, which started in February 2022 (Androulaki 2022) and simultaneously shaped a new multipolar world order and represented a catalyst for changes in world politics (Proroković 2022, 751).

All these have led us to the conclusion that Eurasia is an important area of influence for Turkey but also a region that depends to a large degree on Turkish foreign political moves, including security, diplomatic, economic, and energy support. In that sense, Eurasian states are aware that every escalating situation in Turkey can spill over to their territory and have implications for their regional security. One of these events was a failed military coup in 2016, which marked an internal destabilisation that could have been poured onto the region of Eurasia.

The Events that preceded the Military Coup

Observed from today's time distance, it can be responsibly stated that if the military coup had succeeded, it would have certainly further complicated the already tense relations between Turkey, Syria, Greece, Israel, Egypt, and indirectly the Russian Federation, as well as the leading

countries of the Persian Gulf, primarily Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran.

The goal was to militarise Turkey fully and, in alliance with Qatar, to tighten relations in the region of the Middle East and Central Asia as much as possible, with the ultimate goal of displacing the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China from these areas, primarily through breaking their foreign policy and economic cooperation with the states from those regions.

As far as Israel is concerned, two segments of American society have a pronounced interest in the additional tightening of relations between that country and Turkey. The first is the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE Wall Street), and the second is the military-industrial complex. When it comes to the Russian Federation, today it is quite clear that the main goal was the subversion of Russian-Turkish relations, which until the coup and after was done not only by political, economic, and intelligence methods but also by direct military action. One only needs to recall the circumstances of the downing of the Russian Su-24 bomber, the murder of the Russian ambassador in Ankara, and the armed conflicts between Russian and Turkish military units in Syria, where it can be reasonably assumed that there are many more examples that are not available to the general public. In any case, one gets the impression that someone persistently wanted to stop and destroy the Russian-Turkish cooperation, which in the last ten years has received a huge expansion in almost all social areas, starting with foreign policy, the economy, the military-industrial complex, energy, tourism, agriculture, and other strategic branches.

The army in Turkey has all the features of a closed social structure based on strict hierarchy and family inheritance, which is why it can be said that it is a kind of caste. The professional composition of the Turkish army is assembled according to social status. For example, a janitor's son may become a soldier, but he will never rise to a serious rank and will never enter what can be called an elite military circle. Moreover, young men with specific political attitudes passed down from their fathers, grandfathers, etc., also join the army. When it comes to officers, it is the warrior caste. And like any caste, it is strong in its internal positions. Therefore, it is difficult to recruit someone within the caste, and it is almost impossible to infiltrate the ranks of the Turkish army. This explains why Erdogan's special services were unaware of the preparations for a military coup. It is interesting that

even within the military caste, there are clans. That is, the pilots' clan, the tankmen's clan, the naval officers' clan, etc. And it also weakens the Turkish army internally because there is no unity. Specifically, in 2016, pilots and tankers tried to carry out a military coup, and the other officers were initially completely unaware of what was happening (Eliseeva 2021).

It is interesting that two days before the coup, Erdogan signed a law granting members of the Turkish army immunity from prosecution for participating in military and security operations inside the country. That law regulates that the initiation of criminal proceedings against commanders within the Turkish army is possible only with the approval of the President of Turkey, and against lower-ranking officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers, criminal proceedings can be initiated by governors. This law was an attempt by the political authorities to relax relations with the military structures, primarily in light of the engagement of the Turkish army in suppressing Kurdish separatism, but essentially it enabled the full dominance of the political structures over the military, increasing the dependence of the military on the "good will" of the political authorities. However, it later turned out that this law was also one of the triggers for the military coup.

Military Coup

On July 15, 2016, Turkey experienced the most violent military coup attempt in its history. Among the main perpetrators of the bloody coup attempt was the Islamist organisation Gulen, which aimed to overthrow President Erdogan and the ruling party. According to some data, 8,651 soldiers, 171 generals (out of a total of 358 generals), 35 fighter planes, 37 helicopters, 246 tanks, and 3 naval ships (Aslan 2020) participated in the attempted military coup (Tuncay & Balci 2019).

The immediate execution phase of the military coup began on the evening of July 15, 2016, while President Erdogan was on vacation with his family in the Turkish resort of Marmaris. When the coup started, he managed to reach a nearby airport and take a plane to Istanbul. Later analyses established that if the evacuation of Erdogan from Marmaris (about the Turkish army's attack on the hotel where Erdogan stayed with his family, see Milliyet 2016) had begun 15 minutes later, he would certainly

have been captured by a special unit of the Turkish army tasked with arresting the Turkish president (Yavuzer 2021, 52). So, someone informed Erdoğan about the plans for his illegal arrest and isolation, but even today, no official information has appeared in the public. In international political and media circles, there were comments that Erdogan was warned at the last moment by the Russian side about the evil that had been prepared for him in Marmaris. However, there were no official announcements about this from either side.

Not long after that, in the late hours of the night, there were problems with the Internet in the entire territory of Turkey, and access to the most important social networks was blocked. The members of the Turkish army, in armoured and mechanised units, appeared on the streets of Istanbul and soon opened fire on strategic state facilities. At the same time, planes and helicopters of the Turkish Air Force flew over Ankara, which operated on the presidential palace, the parliament building, the general staff, the facilities of the Turkish special service, the police, and other vital facilities (it is interesting that when complex political and security events began in Turkey, Erdogan failed to establish a telephone connection with Hakan Fidan, the director of the Turkish intelligence service MIT, who at that time “was not in a position to answer phone calls”, about which Erdogan later spoke publicly in his interviews). At the same time, the Turkish army closed the Turkish side of the border with Bulgaria, Georgia, and Iran. The Chief of General Staff of the Turkish army, Akar Hulusi, was taken hostage by the coup plotters.

Soon, both bridges in Istanbul across the Bosphorus River were blocked by military forces (the Bosphorus Bridge and the Sultan Mehmed Fatih Bridge). It was actually the main road connection between Europe and Asia. Also, the navigation route through the Bosphorus Strait was stopped. The putschists also established control over the international airports in Ankara and Istanbul and, at the same time, closed the entire airspace over Turkey.

After forcefully occupying the most important state and commercial radio and television stations, the army broadcast that it had taken over power in the country. The putschists also announced that a curfew was in effect on the entire territory of Turkey and that all state institutions must inevitably submit to the military command. Practically, the two largest and most important Turkish cities, Ankara and Istanbul, were cut off from each other.

In such a complex political and security environment, the domestic and international public did not know what was happening with the Turkish president, which was a suitable ground for the emergence of numerous misinformations and speculations. At one time, the news was published in the foreign media that, after taking off from Marmaris, Erdogan was forbidden to land in Istanbul. Immediately after that, the plane of the Turkish president continued to Germany, from whose authorities Erdogan allegedly requested political asylum. Also, in the sea of disinformation, there was an announcement that the German authorities refused hospitality to Erdogan and, accordingly, the plane with the Turkish president was sent to Great Britain. A few days later, Erdogan explained in a television interview that on the night they took off from Marmaris, he was informed by the pilot that the control tower at the Istanbul airport was occupied, that the runway was in complete darkness, and that they had fuel for a three- to four-hour flight. Then, according to his statements, Erdogan asked the pilot if he could land on an unlit runway. The pilot said that he could, but that he did not want to risk it. However, considering the state of emergency in the country, despite the risk, they managed to land safely in Istanbul (Daily Sabah 2016).

Then, President Erdoğan “crossed the Rubicon” and managed to address the citizens of Turkey through one of the television channels that, at that moment, were not yet in the hands of the coup plotters. On that occasion, through a phone video call, he called on the citizens to go out on the streets to defend the constitutional order and democratic values and to oppose the coup plotters.

Thanks to the positive reaction of the people, the police, and the part of the army that remained loyal to the state leadership, as well as the largest number of spiritual leaders of the Turkish Islamic community, the putschists were met with strong and massive resistance. This soon resulted in the first defeat of the rebels from the army in the fighting at the Istanbul International Airport, who failed to maintain control over that strategically important airport. A similar scenario happened fifteen minutes later on the Bosphorus Bridge. Accordingly, the situation on the ground began to change significantly in favour of Erdogan. Then a schism arose among the putschists.

In the early morning hours, the surrender of military units began. At that time, Umar Dunder, the former commander of the First Army, was appointed as the new chief of the Turkish General Staff.

It is interesting that, due to strained Greek-Turkish relations, the Greek armed forces went into full combat readiness immediately after the outbreak of unrest in Turkey. Since the coup failed, the following morning a Turkish helicopter landed at the Greek airport in the city of Alexandroupoulos with eight officers on the run, who were immediately arrested by the Greek security authorities. The Turkish authorities immediately requested that the Greek side hand over the mentioned officers to them, to which the Greek authorities handed over the aircraft after two days, but when it came to the Turkish officers, it took much longer, given that the Greek side complied with the legal procedure and deadlines for extradition.

However, just as every coup or attempted coup carries numerous enigmas, one of the doubts and an insufficiently clarified fact relates to the processes that took place on the critical night at the NATO airbase in Incirlik, Turkey. The following day, the Turkish authorities, after establishing complete control in the country, banned NATO planes from taking off from the mentioned base, where planes of the American and Turkish air forces were stationed. Through subsequent negotiations between the Pentagon and the Turkish authorities, the base became operational at full capacity. The bottom line is that the Turkish side remained suspicious of certain controversial processes that took place that night at the afore-mentioned NATO base.

The Real Situation after the Collapse of the Coup

After the collapse of the coup, the Turkish authorities consolidated the situation and immediately launched a counteroffensive. The procedural and criminal-legal epilogue was embodied in the arrest of over 9,000 people on suspicion of being part of a conspiracy and participating in the organisation and immediate execution of a military coup.

In that extremely turbulent period that reigned in Turkish society, the Turkish authorities, made cardinal mistakes during their “witch hunt” and belatedly recognised the true causes and background of the complex political and security events that engulfed the country in July 2016. As a glaring example of this wandering, one can point out the unprovoked accusation of the Palestinian politician Mohamed Dahalan for the alleged organisation of the military coup in Turkey. Today, it is completely clear

that the disinformation mentioned was planted on the Turkish side by the very party that was the real organiser of the coup for at least two key reasons. The first reason was to direct attention in the opposite direction by diluting the essence and diverting responsibility from the real inspirers and organisers. The second key reason was the fear of certain power centres that Mohamed Dahalan would establish power in Palestine because that would automatically mean the establishment of a new architecture of international relations in the Middle East, primarily in the direction of increasing regional stability and reducing tensions. Dahalan, as an indisputable regional authority, would certainly not have allowed or participated in certain inactions happening in the Middle East today, and that was precisely the cause of this indirect Turkish attack on him. The term “indirect attack” is deliberately used here since it is well known who was actually the main attacker in this case. In addition, in this way, an attempt was made to discredit the United Arab Emirates, considering that Dahalan was in a responsible position within the political system of the UAE, which at that moment was not only a direction in the foreign policy agenda of Turkey but also of Qatar.

However, according to subsequent analyses published by the Turkish authorities and scientific research institutes of the Republic of Turkey, as well as based on the assessments of other international eminent institutions, the following conclusions were reached:

1. The main ideological-political patron of the coup attempt was Muhammad Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish politician currently living in exile in the United States who was one of the close associates and allies of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan until 2013, when they parted ways, nominally due to a corruption scandal but essentially due to an apparatus struggle within the Turkish political order. Since then, Gülen and his followers in the “FETO” movement have been blacklisted in Turkey, and the movement has been officially declared a terrorist organisation by the Turkish authorities.
2. The main organisers and financiers of the coup were the US special services.
3. The immediate perpetrators were a conspiratorial structure made up of officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers of the Turkish army.

In addition to the above, several years before the military coup, a series of events took place that, from today's perspective, can be seen as a potential trigger for the launch of offensive foreign policy mechanisms by the American administration.

- Turkey, after a particularly dominant (subversive) role in the Syrian crisis, gradually distanced itself from that conflict.
- Turkey did not join the aggression against Libya, and at one time, then US President Barack Obama expressed this as a public political criticism against Erdogan and his government.
- Turkey became an observer in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. It is the first NATO country to join this organisation. When Turkey signed the memorandum of accession as an observer, the Turkish representatives did not even mention the Syrian crisis.
- After several decades of attempts to become a full member of the EU, Turkey is still waiting for accession with extremely uncertain (and problematic) terms and conditions.
- Turkey once signed an agreement with Palestine on the joint construction of facilities for the exploitation of natural gas from the Mediterranean Sea.
- European officials, and above all, the then German Chancellor Angela Merkel, condemned the action of the Turkish police against the demonstrators in Taksim Square in 2013, judging that it was an excessive use of force. The Turkish Prime Minister strongly rejected this, warning Merkel not to interfere in Turkey's internal affairs.
- John Kerry, the US Secretary of State at the time, joined the German criticism of Erdogan, which indicates that there has been a certain divergence in American-Turkish relations.
- Various protests in support of protesters and Turkish opposition activists were held across Europe. In the past period, all the organisers of these protests were unequivocally in the function of "globalists". One of the most striking events that attracted the attention of the world public was the protest of the members of the feminist group "Femen" at the Istanbul airport.

- Several years ago, Turkey settled the last installment to the International Monetary Fund and ended 52 years of indebtedness to this financial institution. Moreover, Turkey has become a creditor country of the IMF.

There are several options as to who initiated and organised the military coup. The first option is the Turkish army itself. Furthermore, according to some Western political scientists, Russia was the organiser. As the main arguments, they cite the history of relations and connections between the Kemalists and Soviet Russia, plus the downing of the Russian Su-24 plane, as well as Russia's efforts to change the leadership of Turkey in order to resolve the Syrian issue as quickly as possible. Also, according to the opinion of Western authors, a change of government in Turkey under Russian direction would allegedly call into question the continued existence of the Incirlik NATO base and strengthen Russian positions on the Bosphorus Strait. Specifically, the vector of political orientation of one of the most important geopolitical players in the region would change. Furthermore, as stated by EU political scientists, the initiator was Erdoğan himself, which partially makes sense. Erdoğan wanted to keep his power and, ultimately, his life. He staged a military takeover to observe how people behaved and who would stand by him within the system. Additionally, the Turkish president had the chance to observe how the international community would respond and act. In addition to the above, many political scientists believe that this coup was initiated by the US. First, Turkey has ceased to be a reliable partner for the United States and has tried to drag NATO into an open conflict with Russia. Turkey "made promises" to everyone: Russia, NATO, the US, and the EU, while at the same time trading with the terrorist organisation "Islamic State". In this sense, there are versions that say this coup was launched by Gülen, who currently lives in the United States. In any case, it is currently impossible to name the specific initiator of the coup, and it will most likely become clearer in about ten years. And as for the economic situation in Turkey after the coup, the Turkish economy has suffered serious consequences. In the future, everything will depend on which course Erdoğan chooses if he remains president: with whom he will be "friends" and with whom he will not. When the Russian plane was shot down by the Turks, NATO stepped back and said, "Solve the problem yourself." However, the North Atlantic Alliance will not try to radically solve things with Turkey because it is about the loss of key straits and military bases, which can certainly lead to the loss

of control over the Black Sea but also over the entire region of the Middle East, primarily over Syria, Iran, and Iraq.

In addition to the above, viewed from today's perspective, it is completely clear that the coup organised by middle-ranking officers who had no connection with the leading parties, the media, or high-ranking officers, who failed to arrest and isolate the highest state officials, or to address the people in a clear and organised manner (with the exception of a short e-mail message read in a television studio, which did not produce a significant mobilising impact), was doomed to failure (Koval 2016).

There are also points of view that say it is quite logical that the coup plotters would not dare attempt a military coup without support from outside, especially the United States. Erdoğan's words that "a group of putschists who encroached on the unity of the nation received instructions from their leaders who live in the United States" warn of that. First of all, the Turkish president alluded to one of the opposition leaders, Gülen, who has been living in Pennsylvania for many years. In this sense, Erdoğan's mention of the US in this context was also a political manoeuvre aimed at using that moment to reactivate the old topic of extraditing Gülen. By the way, Turkey is a heterogeneous country with many different political movements and religious groups supported by various structures in the West, especially the CIA. All these structures are guided by the principle of "divide and rule". In contrast to that approach, the Russian state leadership immediately opposed the coup attempt.

In addition, the military, which has traditionally put things in order in Turkey during political crises, is unable to perform this function. After the 2016 coup, the army was reduced by a third, and many officers were either arrested or given political asylum in one of the European countries. The current military is loyal to Erdoğan, just like the business community. Turkish businessmen prefer not to comment on what is actually happening in the country, among other things, because all significant business systems depend on the current Turkish government.

Consequences for the Regional Security of Eurasia

An important phase in Turkey's foreign policy outreach in Central Asia began after the failed coup attempt in July 2016. Turkey's confrontation with

the Gülen movement facilitated a corrective policy that created an opening for a reset to strengthen even further relations with states in Eurasia. In this period of correction, Turkey has developed deeper security links, particularly with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, whereby, in turn, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev was the first head of state to visit Turkey after the coup (Alrmizan 2022, 30-37). At the same time, some authors used this trend in theoretical discussions as an argument to improve their thesis on how the evolution of foreign policies can be engaged with domestic political goals. Also, scholars achieved consensus that the failed coup played a critical role for Western actors because the perception of the United States as a crucial ally of the Kurds was rising (Kirişçi & Sloat 2019).

When it comes to Russia, a few weeks before the coup, Turkey announced the normalisation of its relations with Moscow, which have been damaged since November 2015, when Turkey shot down a Russian warplane. The first moves, beginning with a personal telephone call from Putin to Erdoğan after the coup attempt and an announcement of the desire of the two leaders to work towards a meeting in a matter of weeks, suggest that the failed coup has speeded up the reconciliation process. At a time when Turkey is well aware of the deteriorating tone in its relations with Washington and Brussels, opening up this channel of dialogue with Russia was a move against being isolated and also a way of sending a message to its trans-Atlantic allies that they should not play with fire. Russia's interest was also clear and not only related to economic matters because the Kremlin was always on the lookout for any opportunity to fan the flames of discord in the trans-Atlantic alliance, especially after the NATO Summit in Warsaw. Therefore, at that moment, Turkey provided the perfect way to go about it (Lecha 2016).

One consequence of the failed coup was Erdoğan's focus on consolidating presidential power while paying the price of reduced involvement in regional conflicts and even having to make more conciliatory gestures regarding Kurdish matters, both within and beyond Turkey's borders. Another matter that should also be considered are the implications of the rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow, including the possibility of some kind of initiative in Syria, eventually dragging in other regional powers. As for the normalisation of relations with Israel, messages exchanged after the coup attempt suggested that the thaw would be continued (Lecha 2016).

Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan urged Kyrgyzstan to crack down on groups linked to the Fethullah Gulen movement that Ankara blamed for a failed 2016 coup, something Bishkek has refused to do. A network of schools and colleges sponsored by the US-based cleric and his supporters has existed for decades across ex-Soviet Central Asia. After the 2016 coup attempt, Ankara asked governments in the region to shut down the network, but some were reluctant. The Kyrgyz president at the time, Almazbek Atambayev, refused to close the schools. However, at a meeting with the new president, Sooranbai Zheenbekov, Turkey raised this question again, insisting that the Gülen network presented a security threat. Despite this, Zheenbekov stopped short of promising to comply, saying the school network was now under the government's control. Kyrgyzstan's neighbour, Kazakhstan, has also refused to shut down Gülen-sponsored schools and renamed them (Reuters 2018).

Unlike Kyrgyzstan, which was sitting on the fence, fellow Turkic state Azerbaijan, for instance, stands firmly among Ankara's best buddies. The country had already begun clearing out Gülen-linked institutions in 2014 after the cleric's very public split with Turkish leader Erdoğan. Following the coup attempt, Baku duly finished the job. Turkmenistan, too, has cracked down on Gülen supporters in the country. Others who joined the anti-Gülen effort late have made up for lost time. For example, according to Amnesty International, Moldova deported seven Turkish nationals who were teachers at a Gülen-linked school in the capital. All of them are believed to be imprisoned in Turkey, where tens of thousands of teachers and civil servants have been jailed over supposed Gülen links since the coup attempt (Eurasianet 2018).

Following Uzbekistan, several countries avoided the infiltration of Gülenists to protect themselves from the threats of Islamization and radicalization. Also, the Uzbek authorities have recalled hundreds of students studying in at least three madrasas and other religious schools in Turkey (Tuna 2021). Besides that, the freeze in Turkey's European Union (EU) accession bid after the July 2016 coup attempt has caused Ankara to strongly pivot towards Central Asia as part of a broader divestment from Western markets. Turkish investors have singled out Uzbekistan as an especially useful economic partner due to its extensive natural gas resources, large textile industry, and robust real estate market. As Uzbekistan suffered

from the pernicious effects of a currency crisis and high unemployment, the Uzbek government responded more favourably to Turkish investment proposals than in years before the coup attempt (Ramani 2016).

According to the statement of Georgian authorities, “military coups are unacceptable for any democratic country” and “Turkey is our strategic partner, and stability in Turkey is very important for us”. Georgia’s United National Movement (UNM) also made a statement, saying “Peace, stability, and the functioning of democratic institutions in our neighbour and strategic partner is of vital importance for Georgia”. Considering the previous, Tbilisi was keen to demonstrate that the country’s close relationship with Turkey has strong bipartisan support, especially in light of the parliamentary election coming up in October 2016 (Ajeganov 2016). The considerable urgency with which the Georgian leadership has acted unabatedly, reaffirming its support for the Turkish government and President Erdoğan, should be viewed as a reflection of Tbilisi’s unilateral dependence on Ankara’s economic prowess. Aside from the European Union, Turkey has been and remains Georgia’s single largest trade partner, with a turnover worth USD 777.9 million, a 3% year-on-year increase (Ajeganov 2016). Turkish businesses have invested over USD 1 billion in Georgia’s economy in the past 14 years. Georgia and Turkey have also been strengthening a symbiotic relationship as regards military cooperation as well as energy and infrastructural projects, which has them keen on ensuring each other’s stability. Regarding energy, Georgia’s untapped hydropower potential has Ankara eagerly investing in new projects to help complement its lagging domestic electricity production. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway and the TAP and TANAP projects, as part of the Southern Gas Stream (SGC) (Ajeganov 2016), also necessitated political coordination after the coup attempt.

Even though the literature recognises the implications of a coup attempt on Turkish foreign policy, there is no evidence from academic sources about potential consequences or scenarios for the Eurasian region derived from internal tensions in Turkey. Based on the above, we can conclude that the coup attempt was a factor in bringing Turkey closer not only to Russia but also to the Eurasian region. However, there is always the question of what the consequences would be for Eurasian countries if the coup had succeeded. According to Avni Ozgurel, “if the coup had succeeded, the name [of the Turkish Armed Forces] would not have changed. But in

practice, it would have been the Fetullah Armed Forces". He also believes that if the coup had not fallen through, Gülen would have been invited to Turkey by the coup's leaders. He would not, however, have taken any official position as state leader, preferring to play his game behind the scenes as he has always been known to do in his life (Sofuoglu 2020). If the coup had succeeded, the US would have used Gulenists to control the political and security situation not only in Turkey but also in other Eurasian countries. Thus, there would be a deepening of the tension between Moscow and Washington, bearing in mind that the US would intensify its efforts to squeeze out the Russian presence and influence in the post-Soviet republics. Besides the repercussions mentioned, Turkey would be a puppet in the hands of the US, without any strategic autonomy in international relations. The main road for Eurasian countries would be Euro-Atlantic integrations instead of cooperation with Turkey, which could possibly include only connections on religious grounds through the Gulenist movement and education. Also, energetic, economic, and other arrangements between leadership in Ankara and Eurasian countries would be questioned, but there is an option that Western actors would monitor such initiatives. The potential scenarios should be the object of research in the future since some observers after the failed July 2016 coup expressed skepticism about Turkey's ability to manage the situation and the possibility of similar situations repeating (Zanotti 2016, 15-16).

Conclusion

The failed military coup in Turkey in 2016 was not only a public manifestation of an extremely violent and illegal attempt to seize power but also represents the first victory of Turkish political over military structures in the recent history of Turkey. In 2016, the Turkish army definitely received a lesson from Erdogan, which it will certainly remember for a long time. Erdoğan prepared for a long time and systematically dealt with disaffected structures within the army. At the same time, he broke conspiratorial relations within the Turkish army, which could rarely accept its position within the constitutional order of the state, often placing itself above the order and the state system. However, despite this, the military coup surprised Erdoğan as well as the entire Turkish society.

There are several significant determinants that characterise this coup. First, the Turkish army has always been the traditional protector of secularism, which does not fit into the model of cooperation with Fethullah Gülen, who is first of all a religious preacher and former imam and only then an opposition politician. The Turkish army was not unified on the night of July 15, 2016, and subsequent analysis showed that an insufficient number of army members participated in the coup. The revolutionary structures did not secure any support among the political parties and citizens of Turkey. Also, the technical-technological expansion of modern forms of communication and information technology did not favour the putschists, who completely ignored the importance of propaganda activities. They focused their engagement in that field only on the mere seizure of radio and television stations and shutting down the Internet, neglecting the importance of psychological and propaganda action through these informational capacities.

It is evident that the major responsibility for the untimely establishment of preparatory actions for the implementation of the coup lies with the Turkish special services, primarily the MIT intelligence service, with whose director Erdogan could not even establish telephone communication in the first hours of the military coup.

After the purges in the army, Turkey today has an army in which loyalty to Erdogan is more important than professionalism and expertise. Certainly, the question of loyalty is at the very top of the list of priorities, if not the most important element in the constitution of the forces responsible for the protection of the constitutional order of each country. But that kind of loyalty must relate to the state, the people, and the political authority. All different interpretations fall within the scope of unconstitutional action. However, regarding the relationship within the Turkish army after 2016, it is evident that it is a question of some other form of loyalty, which will certainly contribute to the additional accumulation of numerous contradictions within Turkish society and the state.

The fact that Erdogan used the failed military coup to carry out personnel purges in the entire Turkish system should not be overlooked, but this did not help him stabilise the internal political scene and achieve complete political dominance. The current ratio of the political forces of the government and the opposition is approximately half-half, with a tendency

for further decline in support for Erdogan. However, crises and conflicts are, conditionally speaking, Erdogan's natural state and periods in which the Turkish president manages very well, which is why the Ukrainian crisis of February 2022 came at the right time for him. With skillful foreign policy manoeuvres in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and then in the Russian conflict against the collective West, he raised the importance and role of Turkey, and thus his role as the bearer of supreme power, in increasingly complex and tense international circumstances.

The failed military coup in Turkey in 2016 indicates the importance of timely establishing all forms of subversive activities for the sake of their timely elimination and preservation of the constitutional order. Elections are a gendered process of government, and democracy is something that must be defended by all means in modern society and the state. Therefore, short periods of carelessness and lack of vigilance on the part of the authorities responsible for the protection of the constitutional order can cause, or rather, allow, very harmful and destructive consequences for a nation or a state. Of course, sometimes the scope of political upheavals can be positive, bringing freedom and progress to a society, but when it comes to the military coup in Turkey in 2016, it should certainly have a dark character, not only in terms of Turkish internal political relations but also much wider.

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