

The History of Military Coups In Turkey

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Abstract

The history of military coups has a considerable place in Turkish political life. The Janissary revolts in the Ottoman period are accepted as the beginning of the military coup tradition and interventions in Turkish political life. The founder of the Turkish Republic, Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, took off his military uniform and wore his civilian attire when the War of Independence started. This is because Atatürk believed that real and powerful democracy could only be achieved by civilian governments. However, the military juntas argued that the soldiers were permanent guards of the Republic and had the right to protect the integrity and interests of the country under all circumstances. These are the May 27, 1960 military coup, March 12, 1971 military memorandum, September 12, 1980 military coup, February 28, 1997 Post-Modern coup and the July 15, 2016 military coup attempt. All military coups inevitably destroyed the Turkish democracy. In fact, in every military coup, traces of foreign powers, the US being in the first place, can be seen. That's why this study aims to enlighten the history of coups in Turkey in order to prevent possible future military coup attempts in Turkey. During this study, important newspapers and magazines, as well as archival documents, books, and articles were benefited from.

Keywords: Turkey, military coups, the US, the USSR, democracy

1. Introduction

“The treaty between the superstates is as dangerous for us as they are at war.” [1] İsmet İnönü

“One evening, we went to visit Nihat Erim with political advisors in Ankara. Draper's wife said she could read palms, looked at the lines on Nihat Erim's palms and said, ‘You will soon become the Prime Minister.’ Everyone smiled, but soon Erim became the Prime Minister.” [2]

By definition, a coup means “the process of forcing a government to resign by pressuring, using force or using democratic ways or to overthrow the government in a way that changes the regime in a country.” [3] When the history of coups in Turkey is analyzed, it is seen that it must be based on a regulation for the intervention to be legitimate. The Law No. 2771, dated 1935, is as follows: “The duty of the Army is to watch and protect the Turkish homeland and the Republic of Turkey, which was established by the Constitution (Teskilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu). The army has the duty to learn and teach the military art. The necessary facilities and organizations for the performance of this duty are established and measures are taken.” In accordance with the Law No. 211 of 1961, Article 35 of the TSK (Turkish Armed Forces) Internal Service Law stating that “the duty of the Armed Forces is to watch and protect the Turkish homeland and the Republic of Turkey, which is established by the Constitution” simply prepared the basis of legitimacy for the activities that the military would do. In addition, the only article that legitimized the actions of the TSK was not Article 35. While in Article 110 of the 1961 Constitution preparation of the Armed Forces for war was stated, in Article 117 of the 1982 Constitution this expression was turned into the ‘homeland defense.’ [4]

In general, different approaches are seen regarding the cause of coups. Among them, the institutional culture of the armed forces, the inadequacy of societies to solve their internal problems, the spread of violence in society and the acceptance of the armed forces as the legitimate problem-solving institution in the solution of political and social

crises are seen. In general, military coups are experienced as a result of international politics, geopolitics, certain international economic interests and ideological and strategic considerations as well as social, economic, and institutional structures and at the junction point of all these.

According to historian Prof. Dr. Mete Tunçay, behind every military coup that occurred in such a state as Turkey which has critical and geopolitical importance and is located in a vital region, there are external factors. According to Prof. Tunçay: “Turkey entered in such ties After World War II that I don't think that any of those coups could be done without receiving approval and without getting a green light from both the US and NATO. They must definitely have been informed. More precisely, I'm guessing that those who prepared the coup must have contacted them and expressed their intentions. But it is not possible for a NATO-affiliated military to do so without telling NATO or without informing the US General Staff. But it would be too much to say ‘the US got it done.’ Probably there are also people who want to encourage coup in Turkey among American experts. Then, it is not something that could be said enough.” [5]

Military coups have an important place in Turkish political life. Although it has been claimed by coup juntas and some external actors that all the military coups, from the first military intervention to the democracy of Turkey, May 27, 1960, to the July 15, 2016 coup attempt, were done for the sake of protecting the security, political system, and perpetuity of the country, each was actually a blow on Turkey's independence, progress, and democracy. For whatever purpose, no aim such as democracy and restoring the corrupted order can legitimize military coups. It is essential that the governments that come to power through public support will leave the power with the will of the people, too. Of course, the wrong policies of governments should be controlled by some important state institutions. When we look at the history of the coups in the Republic of Turkey, foreign powers are encountered behind the interventions conducted in order to protect the state, nation, and regime. It can be said that these powers were neither inside nor outside of the coup processes. But it is seen that

in the periods when Turkey adopted a “multi-dimensional foreign policy” and great economic steps would be taken, the ground was prepared for military coups by creating social and political chaos.

1- May 27, 1960 Military Coup

Two important developments are observed in the foreign policy of Turkey towards the May 27 military coup. The first is Ankara government’s attempt to rapprochement with the Soviet Union, and the other is that it had entered a period of joining the “Common Market”, that is, the “European Economic Organization.” Looking at Turkey’s relations with the USSR, it is seen that as of the years 1958-1959, the idea of adopting the “multi-dimensional foreign policy” by enhancing the relations with the USSR, instead of Turkey’s US-centered foreign policy, started to come up. The statement of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper [6] and the statement of President Celal Bayar, given during his speech at the opening session of the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November 1, 1959, saying that; “In the last year, we have seen a series of arising events that dishearten the hopes that cherished regarding peace and stability. In general, as well as the events of international communism occurring in various regions, the policy of creating a relief by means of procuring personal contacts which Soviet Russia follows is gradually developing in a broader way and these moves encourage even a little hope of optimism in the democracies which are afflicted with insecurity and long for the true peace. I would like to express once again that Turkey greets all attempts directed to the purpose of improvement of relations between East and West with approval and appreciation.” accelerated the détente process in relations [7].

In a period when there was scarcely any relation between Turkey and the USSR, a diplomatic statement made in Moscow and Ankara on April 11, 1960 created a tremendous impression on the international community. In the statement, it was announced to the public that Prime Minister Adnan Menderes would officially visit Moscow on July 12, 1960 and that the USSR President Nikita Khrushchev would respond with a return visit [8]. It was emphasized that Prime Minister Menderes would make this important visit upon the special invitation of the President of the delegation of USSR congressmen. One day later, the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper reported on its headline: “The Turkish-Soviet joint communiqué created tremendous repercussions all over the world.” In the rest of the news, it reported the behavior of Moscow as; “The visits will be an important step for world peace”, while the behavior of Washington regarding these visits was given as; “The US hopes that these visits will clear the air in the Middle East.” One of the columnists of the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, Mithat Piri, commented on his column: “Turkey’s entering into a friendships spirit with Russia based on mutual security will be of great help to peace since it will reduce the unrest in the Middle East on a large scale.”

According to the author Oral Sander, the impact of the economic crisis that Turkey was in formed the basis of Menderes’ visit to the Soviet Union. Sander says, “The Prime Minister of Turkey planned to go to Moscow with the new spirit of Turkish-American relations and with the impact of economic challenges. “ The famous historian Feroz Ahmad also points to the blackmail side of this visit while attributing it to economic reasons: “President Eisenhower refused to give money to Menderes in October 1959. Menderes, a determined pro-cold war to this day, decided to visit the USSR in the following July. This decision was quite striking because Menderes warned the Americans who were listening to him while he was in the United States to ignore the Soviet’s attempt to detente and that such an enemy could

not be trusted.” Mete Tuncay, a political scientist, stated that this visit was not welcomed by the United States and was made to provide funds. He also states that the US retaliated to the visit by turning a blind eye to the May 27 coup [9].

Another development that emerged in this period and affected Turkey’s political future is the establishment of “the Special Warfare Department.” The training, weapon, and technical equipment needs of the Special Warfare Departments, established by CIA and MI6 in NATO member states after the Second World War, were provided by the US [10]. In Turkey, the establishment of this “secret army” started while the Korean War was continuing after Turkey becoming a NATO member on April 4, 1952 [11]. While a new world order was being established, the establishment of the Special Warfare Department in Turkey was important for the United States because it was located in a crucial position geographically. Henry Kissinger, who would later serve as the US Secretary of State, was saying: “The most important point among the main aims of the new war strategy is to quell communist provocations that spread starting from neighboring countries of the communist countries to the Latin American countries.”

The secret report which was referred by the journalist Nur Batur, who published an important series of articles in February 1989 titled “Menderes-US Fight in British Secret Documents and Towards May 27”, must be remarked. According to the report, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, Deputy Prime Minister of the time, was exposed to the reactions of the UK regarding foreign policy strategies and implementation. In the report sent by the British Ambassador James Bowker to his government on June 8, 1955, it was stated that the United States and the UK were tired of Zorlu’s behavior and he was referred to as a fixed-minded politician. Continuing his words, Bowker emphasized that it would be better if Zorlu was relieved of his duty and replaced by someone with whom the Americans could agree and stated that Zorlu was henceforth discarded. The fact that the negotiations which Fatin Rüştü Zorlu made with the US in that period in order to provide the loan that Turkey needed did not end successfully and that he returned to Turkey with 30 million dollars instead of the amount that Turkey needed, 300 million dollars, were monitored by the UK closely [12].

It is still controversial to what extent the overthrow of the DP (Democratic Party) with the May 27 military coup served the interests of the United States. In this context, it can be said that the enhancement of the Turkey-USSR relations was already postponed for a while due to the coup. Surely Turkey’s entering a détente (softening) period with the Soviet Union before the United States as the first NATO ally must have caused uneasiness in Washington [13]. The fact that putschists published the message of “we’re loyal to the alliances and our commitments” as the first thing after May 27 indicates that the Americans already knew that the ones who made the coup would not change the national policy of Turkey.

2- March 12, 1971 Military Memorandum

It is seen that in the 1960s, some important issues came to the fore regarding the Turkish-Soviet relations. Probably, the most important one of these is Johnson’s letter. It is seen that anti-Americanism started to appear in the Turkish public opinion with the effect of the letter which caused serious displeasure between Turkey and the US. In the letter, sent by US President Johnson to the Prime Minister İnönü on June 5, 1964, the results of Turkey’s possible intervention in Cyprus due to the escalating violence on the island were evaluated. President Johnson, who emphasized that in such a situation the possibility of USSR’s involvement in the issue would emerge, wrote that the NATO allies would not enter into obligation regarding defending Turkey against the Soviets

and Turkey could not use military materials provided by the United States in this possible intervention [14].

Another important effect of the Johnson letter, which shook the Turkish-American relations to the foundation, is that it caused a switch in Turkish foreign policy. Turkey began to embrace “multi-dimensional” foreign policy with the effect of “anti-Americanism” which prevailed in the society and took the decision to enhance its relations with the third world countries, particularly the Soviet Union. An increase was observed particularly in reciprocal visits between Turkey and the USSR. Süleyman Demirel, who became the prime minister after the Justice Party (AP) became the sole ruling party in the general elections of 1965, aimed to get closer to the USSR and improve economic relations as a foreign policy strategy. Süleyman Demirel expressed improving relations with the USSR as follows: “Turkey will follow a multi-dimensional foreign policy. Even if we are against Communism, we will maintain intergovernmental relations with Communist countries.” [15] Afterwards, Demirel emphasized that improving relations between the two countries would make a great contribution to the regional and global security and stability and that the relations should improve in a multi-dimensional way in that regard.

The official visit of Alexei Kosygin, the Soviet Prime Minister of the period, to Turkey between December 20-27, 1966 was the first official visit to Turkey made by USSR at the prime minister level. International issues such as Vietnam, Cyprus, East Germany, and Palestine were held during the bilateral talks. According to the information given in the *Aksam* newspaper, while Prime Minister Demirel stated that the Turkish-Soviet relations were laid on solid foundations in the time of Atatürk and Lenin, Kosygin stated that there was no disagreement between the parties and that there was no territorial issue in question. The Prime Minister of the Soviet Union invited President Cevdet Sunay to Russia. Also, Kosygin offered assistance for the establishment of the third iron and steel plant in Turkey [16]. According to the *Ulus* newspaper, the most important issue of the joint communiqué to be published after the meetings was the economic and technical assistance that the Soviet Union would provide for Turkey. It was stated that a full agreement was reached between the two prime ministers [17].

It is seen that a historical record was set in the Turkish-Soviet relations with the 44 million dollar trade agreement signed on March 22, 1965. This figure was the highest among the trade agreements signed between the two states until that date. According to the *Aksam* newspaper, the Soviet Union would purchase 22 million-dollar tobacco, cattle, fruits, and other agricultural products from Turkey and sell 22 million-dollar machinery, trucks, oil products, and raw steel in accordance with the agreement [18]. Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel went to Moscow upon receiving an official invitation from the USSR in 1967. Surely, although the foreign policy pursued by the AP government was rapprochement, communism remained as the biggest threat seen in the domestic policy. One of the best examples of this is the news titled “The Communism snake must be crushed wherever it is seen” published in the *Tercüman* newspaper [19]. Despite anti-Communist expressions, especially trade relations continued without slowing down. *Cumhuriyet* newspaper reported that a Trade Agreement was signed between the USSR and Turkey in Moscow on March 25, 1967. According to the news, the Soviet Union would provide assistance to Turkey in the construction of a steel plant, the annual capacity of which was one million tons. As per the agreement, the USSR would provide machines and technical assistance to the construction of seven plants that would be built in Turkey [20]. Ihsan Sabri Çağlayangil, who served as the minister of foreign affairs between 1965

and 1971 during the period of AP governments, was actually opposed to communism but made an effort to improve relations with the USSR during his term of duty. In this context, Çağlayangil went to Moscow for four days to pay an official visit on July 8, 1968 [21].

The visit of President Cevdet Sunay to the USSR between November 12-21, 1969 had a broad repercussion in the press because this visit was the first visit to the USSR by Turkey at a presidential level. During the visit, which was performed upon the invitation of Podgorny, the President of the USSR Supreme Council Presidium, Cevdet Sunay was accompanied by a delegation of 36, including his wife and Minister of Foreign Affairs Çağlayangil. Sunay, the first Turkish President to visit the USSR, said in the statement he gave to the reporters before his departure to Moscow: “I hope that this first visit of mine at the presidential level will be beneficial for our improving good neighbour relations”. [22]

Those improving relations between the USSR and Turkey had undoubtedly caused a great disturbance in the USA because in that period, the US was trying to turn Turkey into a stability center in the southeastern flank of NATO. But the things demanded from Turkey were not reasonable at all. Besides, in this way, the ground was prepared for military intervention. Agreements such as the Aliaga Oil Refinery and the aluminum facilities in Seydisehir which were made with the USSR during the Demirel period were not welcomed by Washington at the time when the Cold War was at its peak. There are other aspects of external factors in the emergence of the March 12 memorandum. The first of these is the fact that the US was drawing a parallelism between the poppy cultivation in Turkey and drug use in its own country at that time and Turkey was objecting to it. The second is Turkey’s position in the process of Arab-Israeli wars, and the third is the banning of the flights of U-2 spy planes. It can be said that the ruling party of the period, AP, contradicted with the Washington administration in these matters and the army was enabled for intervention under extreme provocation by the instigating activities of the US in Turkey.

On the morning of March 13, 1971 at 11:40, in his phone call to President Nixon, US National Security Advisor Kissinger said that there was a coup in Turkey, the prime minister was overthrown, and a new government was tried to be established. The question of President Nixon, asking “Is it in our favor?”, was answered by Kissinger, saying “Yes.” [23]

4. September 12 Military Coup

Regarding September 12, 1980 military coup, which was recorded in history as Turkey’s third military coup, foreign policy and international relations must be assessed as well as the domestic policy. Besides analyzing the impact and the profoundness of the foreign powers on the coup process, the cost of the coup process to Turkey in the context of international relations must be calculated well. It is seen that the coup plotters had serious plans to build a suitable ground while the coup environment was being prepared. The society, overwhelmed by the incitement of anarchy and terror, was almost rendered to want the military to stage a coup. Kenan Evren, the leader of the September 12 military coup, expressed the situation of the society as [24]:

“The citizens would be in such a state that they would say: ‘God damn it! No matter what comes instead of the republic as long as we go out to the street comfortably, walk comfortably, do business comfortably’.”

In order to understand the role of the US and foreign factors in September 12, it is necessary to look at the foreign policy developments in the period from March 12, 1971 to September 12, 1980. As on March 12, the Prime Minister, who was overthrown by the coup plotters in the process of

September 12, was Süleyman Demirel. In fact, it is seen that the US could not reach the aim it wanted under the conditions after March 12. The following words of Süleyman Demirel are important in this respect [25]:

“Mr. Evren has to account for this. Why was the blood that stopped on September 13 shed on September 11? No sir! His answers cannot save himself. He knows better why that blood did not stop. Blood was shed because Mr. Evren had to be the president.”

What Süleyman Demirel and Bülent Ecevit were trying to imply, who were the prime ministers before the September 12 coup, was actually a secret organization nested in the state seeing the world through the eyes of the Americans, and the role of this organization in preparing September 12 [26]. The role and effectiveness of the Special Warfare Department in this process must be considered. For example, during the US embargo that was ongoing as the result of the Cyprus operation that Turkey had performed, the letter written by Democratic Left Party (DSP) leader Bülent Ecevit to the president of the period, Fahri Korutürk, on May 7, 1977, after the deadly event of May 1, 1977 in which there were 34 deaths and hundreds of serious injuries, is extremely important [27]:

“Mr. President,

The organization in question makes plans and trains people for all kinds of underground activities for guerrilla and counter-guerrilla wars. It works in secrecy and it is outside the democratic law. Until 1974, it was secretly receiving financial support from the Americans. It worked in the same building with the American military mission. It was reported that American support ended in 1974. It is a strong possibility that apart from the group with good intentions, there may be people in this organization who use the training they received for homeland defense in acts of violence in Turkey in terms of their political opinions.”

Before the March 12 Memorandum, the United States asked the Demirel government to ban poppy cultivation, but Demirel persistently resisted this request. Then, Nihat Erim was put into power with the approval of the US following the overthrow of Demirel, who was completely weakened in the domestic policy, after the March 12 memorandum, and soon the negotiations started regarding the complete ban of the poppy production. The US offered to give 30 million dollars to Turkey in order to meet the damage to be suffered by producers due to the ban on poppy production. The government of Erim accepted this offer and completely banned opium production in the country. But the fact that the United States sent only one-third of its promised aid caused nearly a hundred thousand villagers to suffer great damage [28].

The CHP-MSP coalition led by Ecevit, who came to power after the 1973 general elections, allowed poppy cultivation again on July 1, 1974 to compensate the producers' losses. Of course, the US's response to this decision of Turkey was very harsh. Right after, on July 2, the US took a decision regarding the immediate cessation of the loans given to Turkey and the suspension of the military and economic aids. This was followed by decisions regarding the placing of a total embargo. In the middle of 1974, after the coup staged by Nikos Sampson in Cyprus, even if Turkey's intervention in the island put the poppy issue out of the agenda, it became the driving force for the US to aggravate the sanctions. Following the Washington administration taking embargo decisions one after the other, Turkey stated that the intervention it made on the island was in accordance with the guarantee agreement, that the Cyprus issue should be independent of the relationships with the US, and that the embargo would cause the southeast wing of NATO to be weakened against the USSR. The embargo caused the strengthening of anti-US tendencies in Turkish society and

the weakening of American prestige in Turkey. Especially the army began to demand the development of the national defense industry in order to avoid such a situation.

Considering Turkey's relations with the Soviet Union in this period, it is seen that it moved away from the multi-dimensional foreign policy that the AP government had continued since 1965 as a result of the March 12 interim regime and that Turkey turned its direction to Washington because of the poppy cultivation ban. Besides, Turkey kept its distance from the Arab countries. Baathist regimes in Iraq and Syria began to develop their relations with the USSR, especially the “Friendship and Good Neighborly Relations Agreement” signed between Iraq and the USSR in 1972 bothered Turkey along with the US's ally Iran and Israel [29

USSR

Prime Minister Kosygin's visit of December took place in Moscow on June 9, 1975 after the signing of the Second Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement in Moscow. With this agreement, an industrial investment of 700 million dollars was achieved in 5 years period. An agreement was reached to increase the capacity of Iskenderun from 1 million tons per year to 4 million tons as of 1980, to expand Seydisehir and to construct thermal power plants in Can and Orhaneli [30]. The economic relations between the two countries were upgraded with an 8 billion dollars loan agreement including the establishment of a nuclear power plant in Turkey on June 5, 1979 and the expansion of the existing refineries, iron, and aluminum plants [31].

The most powerful instrument for Turkey to be ready for a military coup environment, of course, was to create a severe economic crisis effect. Before September 12, Mahir Kaynak, Head of Economic Affairs Department of MIT (National Intelligence Organization), said that margarine would be turned into a problem and the government would be overthrown when he talked about the economic impacts of the overthrow technique. To deprive the people of essential foods was perhaps one of the most effective methods [32]. In addition, Mahir Kaynak stated that he delivered a report to the higher authorities containing the fact that the Turkish government would be destroyed by the Americans while Turkey progressed towards the multi-directional cooperation with its economy and diplomacy. Prime Minister of the period, Bülent Ecevit, said that Turkey had signed a comprehensive aid agreement with the IMF and the OECD in early 1979, but this aid was constantly delayed. In addition, Ecevit said that he worried that this aid would be completely cut if there would be a coup in the country, but on the contrary, the foreign aid was accelerated further after the coup. In other words, some forces holding the cords of aid had waited for the military coup for help [33]. Another important example is that right after the coup of September 12, Greece, which had drawn from the military wing of NATO following the 1974 Cyprus operation of Turkey, imposed the “Rogers Plan” which was named after NATO's American commander General Rogers on General Evren, leader of the coup. Accordingly, Turkey would remove the veto that it imposed regarding the return of Greece to the military wing of NATO. Greece returned to the military wing on October 20, 1980 with Kenan Evren's accepting the plan without getting compensation and Turkey lost the biggest trump card it had on the Cyprus issue without any gain [34]. At a press conference on September 16, 1980, Evren answered the question about the current state of Turkish-Greek relations as: “All kinds of efforts will be showed for Greece to return to NATO alliance.” [35] Evren forfeited his right to veto against the Washington administration, which wanted Greece to return to NATO most and caused Greece to be accepted into the alliance again. Finally, journalist Hasan Cemal's words will shed more light on the situation [36]:

“The main issue that I had difficulty in understanding was the integration of Greece into NATO’s military wing. Though this problem was solved more easily later. A little thanks to General Rogers. He was very close friends with Mr. Evren. “This problem would not be solved without the well-intentioned approach of Mr. Evren, this powerful leader, which I admire very much. We had been trying for years, making promises, and could not succeed but we made it through friendship. This would not have been possible without the 1980 Operation.”

So just like in the eves of the other military coups, Turkey’s close relations with the USSR and especially the rapprochement started in the economic field in this period bothered NATO, particularly the US. Paul Henze, who was the chief of the CIA bureau in Ankara, sent many analyses containing the current situation of Turkey between the years 1977-1977 to Brzezinski, the key advisor to US President Carter. But what made Henze famous in Turkey was his words when he was breaking the news to President Carter on September 12: “Our boys have done it. “ As the crisis deepened during the period through March 12 memorandum, Süleyman Demirel, who was identified with the US at times, suddenly found himself unable to satisfy both sides. In a statement he gave, while Demirel was expressing that he did everything that displeased the US, from poppy cultivation to the improvement of relations with the USSR, according to him Turkey’s interests were over everything and each country, whether the US or the USSR, could be close or away for this purpose [37].

5. February 28, 1997 Post-Modern Coup

This is an MGK (National Security Council) declaration dated February 28, 1997 which passed into Turkish political history as a “**Post-modern coup.**” During the process through February 28, Turkey had experienced one of the most important days of its political history. With the decision taken at the meeting of the National Security Council, the Welfare Party (RP) was closed and the coalition government that it established with the True Path Party (DYP) was dissolved. In the general elections held on December 1995, RP, led by Necmettin Erbakan, won the elections and gained 158 of the 550 seats in the TBMM (Grand National Assembly of Turkey) with 21% voting rate. Then, on June 28, 1996, a coalition government with DYP of Tansu Çiller was established, with Erbakan being the Prime Minister.

During the Refahiyol Government (a portmanteau of the Turkish names of the two parties), arguments stating that “Turkey will be Iran” increased rapidly. Close contacts with Iran disturbed some parts of society. Also, the visits of Prime Minister Erbakan to countries such as Nigeria, Libya, and Egypt had an accelerating effect on the process. “Secularism” and “reactionism” centered discussions are considered as a harbinger of a new political era in Turkey. At the other end of the process, there is economic and commercial cooperation with Muslim states.

5.1. Iran Visit

“Iran Visit” was in the first place in the Prime Minister Erbakan’s overseas itinerary. This visit made the United States very uncomfortable because the United States, just like Libya, included Iran in its list of terrorist states. Moreover, the United States adopted a law called “D’amato” and announced that it would impose sanctions on companies that invest more than 40 million dollars in terrorist states such as Iran and Libya in accordance with this law [38]. The army and the government came face to face when Erbakan announced that he would sign a “Defense Industry and Cooperation Agreement” with Iran. Not only the military but also the bureaucracy in the Foreign Affairs were disturbed by the agreement to be signed. Along with the army, the US

reacted to the State Minister Abdullah Gül, a member of RP, stating that “they aim to produce helicopters together with Iran” and the visit of President of Iran, which had the official nature, to Turkey. The military announced that it would sabotage the agreement due to the fact that Iran was a country that helped the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party). This situation reveals that the military intervened in foreign policy as well as domestic policy. The idea of the RP to cut the 50 trillion liras from the Ministry of National Defense budget and to establish close relations with Iran increased the military-government tension [39].

5.2. Libya Visit

Erbakan’s visit to Libya in order to solve the economic problems caused intense reactions both inside and outside due to Libya’s being included in the list of terrorist states by the US and its support to the PKK. Meeting with the Turkish delegation, Libyan leader Gaddafi criticized Turkey by pushing the limits of diplomatic courtesy. The fact that Erbakan did not respond to this criticism with the same dose and stayed on the good side of him in a sense led to the increase in the political tension in Turkey and this event did not come down from the headlines for months. Opposition parties also reacted to the scandal that happened during the Libya visit, and CHP (Republican People’s Party) gave a motion of no confidence regarding the government to overthrow the Refahiyol Government. In addition, some members of parliament from DYP who were uncomfortable with RP stated that they would act together with CHP in the motion of no-confidence. Çiller met with the congressmen of her party in order to continue the coalition and tried to dissuade them from supporting the no-confidence. In the media and universities, the government formulas in which the Welfare Party would not take place started to be expressed.

5.3. D-8 Initiative

It is known that Prime Minister Erbakan was a politician known for his opposition to NATO, the EU, the US, and Israel. It can be said that Erbakan, known for his anti-Westernism, mostly acted with the “sense of ummah.” In this direction, he looked for ways to bring the Islamic countries together under one roof and made an intensive effort to establish Islamic unity. Prime Minister Erbakan, who lost his reputation in Turkish public opinion with Libya visit, took action for the “Islamic Common Market” after this visit and stated that they would build the group of D-8s involving 1,5 billion Muslims in response to the group of G-7 of the West [40]. As soon as he took office, Prime Minister Erbakan looked for solutions to the economic problems of the country and began to work to unite Islamic countries under one roof. The studies, which started with Iran visit, proceeded to the institutionalization stage with the establishment of D-8. These initiatives of Erbakan bothered the United States and the EU [41].

D-8 community was officially established with the summit met in Istanbul and led by Prime Minister Erbakan on June 15, 1997 with the participation of Muslim states of Turkey, Malaysia, Egypt, Iran, Nigeria, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. With the D-8 project, it was aimed to develop economic cooperation between Muslim countries and to establish an “Islamic Common Market”.

On February 4, 1997, the Sincan district of Ankara woke up to tank sounds. The parade of the convoy consisting of 15 tanks and 20 armoured vehicles was perceived as a military coup warning. It was said that the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the period, Çevik Bir, described the parade in Sincan as “balancing democracy.” Later, Çevik Bir would argue that this statement did not belong to him, but that he was quoted incorrectly from a speech made in the

United States. The retired Army General Hikmet Köksal, the Commander of the Land Forces of the period, said in his defense during the trial on February 28 that the issue of the tanks was exploited, the tanks had passed through Sincan within the annual training plan and there was a bridge repair in the road which was always used [42].

A declaration consisting of 18 articles, which would pass into history as the “post-modern coup”, came up at the end of the National Security Council meeting, which lasted for nine hours, on February 28, 1997. In the declaration, the government was harshly warned about secularism and the implementation of laws and the listed precautions were demanded to ensure secularism. Closing sects, transferring the schools affiliated to sects to the Ministry of National Education, 8-year continuous education, supervision of the Quran courses, implementation of the Tevhid-i Tedrisat (the law on unification of education), controlling the media which was defending the ones who were discharged from the army due to the reactionism and showing the army as the enemy of religion, obeying the dress code law, and punishment of the actions against Atatürk were among the precautions demanded from the government to implement [43]. When the Refahiyol government protocol is examined in terms of foreign policy, the statement of “the cooperation with both Western countries and Islamic countries, Central Asian Turkic Republics and Balkan states to which we are connected with moral and historical values will be improved” shows that there was no orientation other than traditional policies and it does not claim any radical change of attitude towards the US, NATO or Western countries [44].

Despite the efforts of Abdullah Gül inside the government to produce an alternative course in foreign policy, the fact that the DYP leader took control of the area by taking the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the position of deputy prime minister, reflects a choice made in the direction of West. RP, on the other hand, acted with the knowledge of the limits of the politics that it would conduct outside and inside during a short term of power; although it sometimes flattered its subjects with the breakthroughs it made from time to time, it did not deviate from the mainstream acceptances and realities of diplomacy in the final analysis.

6. Coup Attempts in Turkey

After the May 27, 1960 coup, the general elections held in 1961 brought Turkey to the brink of another crisis. Serious disagreements and jars began to appear within the army. A certain group led by some military officers such as Talat Aydemir called for the annulment of general elections, the dissolution of political parties and the National Unity Committee, and the establishment of a military junta regime. Chief of General Staff of the period Cevdet Sunay and his team had realized the danger. If the army was to make a political move, it would be more appropriate to do so in the chain of high command. The fact that two parties, Justice Party and the New Turkey Party, which were the successors of the Democratic Party, received approximately 48.5% of the votes in the general elections held on October 15, 1961 caused discomfort, especially in the army. This led to fear in the junta that performed May 27 regarding that the Democrats would come to power again. Among these soldiers, Colonel Talat Aydemir thought that it was too early for the country to move to the civilian government and wanted the army to maintain its administration of the country for a while [45].

It is seen that the coup attempt performed by Colonel Talat Aydemir on February 22, 1962 had three reasons on his side. The first is that the objectives of the political, economic and social structure envisaged by the 1961 Constitution were not actualized, that is to say, that the objectives of May 27 were not achieved; the second is that the CHP-DP polarization before the coup gave its place to the CHP-AP polarization

similarly after the coup; the third is that some politicians, both in TBMM and Republican Senate, wanted to confront the army [46]. Commander of the Military Academy, Colonel Talat Aydemir, led the failed coup of February 22, 1962. It is seen that he designed the continuous open threats to demoralize the government and the army so that there wouldn't be serious resistance when the coup began. The army had no difficulty in suppressing this semi-coup attempt against the coup plotters and Aydemir surrendered to the General Staff [47]. Colonel Talat Aydemir's second coup attempt took place on May 21, 1963. With the start of the operation, first, Ankara Radio was taken under control and a statement signed by Talat Aydemir was announced [48]. It could not be a surprise that Aydemir's rebellion had already failed, as there was no significant support from the armed forces. After midnight, Ankara Radio was rescued from the hands of the coup plotters. Colonel Aydemir was just able to resist until the first hour of the morning in which the jets departing from Eskisehir airbase made low altitude flight over the city and he blazed away at the War Academy with machine guns to force the students of the war school to surrender. At dawn, the rebellion was suppressed. Talat Aydemir was arrested and sentenced to death.

A coup attempt to the state was initiated by a group of junta members belonging to the Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) nested in the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) at the headquarters of the General Staff on the evening of July 15, 2016. The coup attempt which was tried to be performed by a junta inside the Turkish Armed Forces, which called themselves “Peace at Home Council”, was announced on the official website of the Turkish Armed Forces and with a declaration published on the TRT (The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation), stating that they took over the government and declared a curfew. This coup was the first direct coup attempt since the September 12, 1980 coup. The coup attempt, which was designed by an extensive network, was a failed coup attempt organized outside the chain of command in Turkey [49]. The coup attempt started with one-way closure of the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul by a group of soldiers and continued with the invasion of TRT and announcement of the coup statement, and death of many police officers with the bombing of Ankara Golbaşı Special Operations Department. In addition, the hotel where President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was on holiday in Marmaris was put under fire by the coup soldiers and TBMM was bombed by jets. Within 24 hours, 5171 people were taken into custody, 16,899 people were arrested and 246 people died [50].

One of the biggest obstacles to the success of the coup was the fact that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan connected to the CNNTURK channel and invited the Turkish people to the streets and airports against the coup plotters after the coup declaration was read at TRT forcefully. After the start of the coup attempt, the people who hit the streets, particularly bridges and airports, showed an example of national resistance and heroism against the coup junta. As a result, the state and nation joined forces and repulsed the coup. It is seen that the coup attempt of July 15 had gone through a long preparatory phase. In fact, the most important feature that differentiated July 15 from other previous coups was that it was a movement of invasion of the state. It is seen that FETO, which was behind the coup attempt, is more complex than a classical organizational structure. It is seen that it has a unique mechanism with its financial structure, international relations, internal communication, regime, and archives [51]. July 15 coup attempt can be regarded as a rehearsal of a major civil war that was wanted to be planned in Turkey. In this process, it was aimed to confront the soldiers and the police who are responsible for the security

of the country.

7. CONCLUSION

It is seen that all the coups, from May 27, 1960 military coup to the July 15, 2016 military coup attempt and other coups and memorandums between these have caused great damage to Turkish democracy and the functioning of the state. Founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, took off his military uniform during the War of Independence, wore his civilian clothes, and carried out the Turkish Revolution. Of course, the Turkish army is the backbone, protector, and guardian of the Turkish state tradition. However, intervening against the national will has provided no benefit other than involving the army in politics and weakening it. Of course, even before the coups in Turkey, whenever Turkey moved with "multi-dimensional foreign policy" in the international relations and intended to make economic expansions, a chaos was crafted by provoking the social events, governments were rendered fragile in the domestic politics, and the ground was prepared for society to see the army as the only savior.

In his book titled Nutuk (The Great Speech), Mustafa Kemal Atatürk stated that we never let anyone, no matter how glorious, to intervene in the fate and independence of our country established by our nation and he foresaw that the foreign powers would intervene in the future of Turkey, as it happened in the War of Independence, and they would want to confront the army with the politics. Therefore, it is of great importance that the army will not meddle in politics and to respect the national will, but also to have the power and determination to fight against the internal and external threats in the future of Turkey.

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