

## **New political consensus after coup in Turkey**

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The Gülenist Terror Organization's (FETÖ) July 15 coup attempt was a dark night in Turkey's history. The brave resistance and sacrifice of the Turkish people from all walks of life, however, turned it into a bright day. In the aftermath of the coup, there is an emerging societal and political consensus - one that is critical for the structural strength of Turkish democracy.

The consensus is about defending democracy, freedom and the rule of law against all internal and external threats. On the night of July 15, millions of people from different social backgrounds and political circles took to the streets to stop the Gülenist coup attempt. All political parties took a principled stance. On July 25, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a meeting with opposition chairmen from the Republican People's Party (CHP) and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and Devlet Bahçeli, respectively, to discuss the coup attempt and the post-coup process. On July 26, Kılıçdaroğlu said that Fethullah Gülen, the top person behind the coup, should be extradited to Turkey. Bahçeli and others echoed his call. The demand for Gülen's extradition is supported by the vast majority of Turkey's publics, political parties and nongovernmental organizations with different political angles.

It would be a huge mistake for the U.S. and Europe to miss out and disregard this consensus. Most people in Turkey have the impression that the U.S. is harboring Gülen by letting him abuse the American legal system to his advantage. We are confident that the U.S. government will collaborate with Ankara on Gülen's extradition. Gülen is a national security threat to Turkey and a dangerous criminal for the U.S. There are already a number of investigations into Gülen schools, visa fraud and money laundering in the U.S. If Gülen is allowed to use the American system in one way or another, many will see this as support for him - a course of action that will only fuel anti-American sentiment in Turkey.

Regarding the demand for evidence, here is a sample of testimonies from Gülenists captured after July 15:

I Chief of General Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar told prosecutors that Brig. Gen. Hakan Evrim, one of his captors, offered him a phone call with Gülen in the hope of changing Akar's mind about the coup.

Lt. Col. Levent Türkkan, Akar's aide de camp, told prosecutors that he is a member of Gülen's organization. Türkkan confessed to taking orders from his "older brother," i.e., his immediate superior in FETÖ. In his statement he said he learned about the coup on July 14, the day beforehand. "There was absolute secrecy and discretion within the organization," he added.

Brig. Gen. Özkan Aydoğdu, who served as commander of the 2nd Armored Brigade stationed in Istanbul, said he deployed tanks and troops to the city's intercontinental bridges because, as he

described: "I have been raised to follow orders and I strive to fulfill orders. I followed an order that I believed to be legitimate."

Kemal Işıklı, a former expert at the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BDDK), said that he served as an "older brother" in the FETÖ hierarchy and oversaw the special forces unit that raided the president's hotel in Marmaris during the coup attempt.

Maj. Erhan Karlıdağ, a former head of the intelligence unit at the gendarmerie's provincial headquarters in Ankara, told authorities: "FETÖ orchestrated the coup attempt. We received word that a list of 3,000 people had been compiled [by the authorities] and that we would be discharged at the Supreme Military Council [YAŞ] meeting in August 2016."

Non-commissioned officer Oğuz Haksal, who raided a social club during the coup attempt to take hostage Gen. Abidin Ünal, the commander of the Air Force, and eight other generals. He confessed to raiding the venue under instructions from FETÖ operative Yılmaz Bahar, also a non-commissioned officer.

Former police Chief Gürsel Aktepe said it would have been impossible to carry out a coup without the knowledge of and instructions from Gülen. "We received messages via a messaging app called Tango," he told prosecutors. "The message read: 'The coup is underway. Everybody should go out for support, stay close to their former workplaces and get in touch with General Mehmet.' "

Most Europeans and Americans seem to fail to fully grasp the magnitude and severity of what happened on July 15 and how people bravely fought against the Gülenist putsch. Instead of supporting Turkey in its fight against Gülenists, EU officials are busy lecturing Turkey about democracy and rule of law. Some go so far as to blame us as if we did the coup.

There is a widespread sense of surprise and disappointment that Turkey's Western allies downplayed the severity of the coup when we lost so many innocent civilians and averted a major threat to our democracy. Western countries condemn the coup but refrain from saying anything about the putschists. It is a shame that no EU head of state, minister or high-ranking official has yet to visit Turkey since July 15.

Gülenist infiltration in the Turkish state has caused much harm and instability, resulting in the July 15 coup. Like the PKK, Gülenists abuse the legal and political system in Europe and the U.S. for their own protection. This must come to an end. Now, people want closure and justice.

As far as removing Gülenists from state institutions is concerned, this is not very different from what happened during the unification of East and West Germany in 1990 with the famous "Einigungsvertrag" process. Under this agreement, around 500,000 civil servants from East Germany were sacked from their positions or suspended. After six months, most of them were fired. Shortly after the unification, all generals and admirals in the 88,000-strong East German military were expelled. Only a small number of low-ranking soldiers were allowed into the new

German military. In addition to civil servants and soldiers, many academics, teachers, diplomats and journalists were also fired by the German state on charges of links to the old regime in East Germany.

The German authorities took these extreme steps to ensure a smooth transition to a unified Germany. Turkey just botched a bloody coup and is trying to recover from its deadly consequences. Those who really care about democracy in Turkey should support the country's fight against would-be putschists and Gülenist cult members.

The nationwide consensus on the July 15 coup attempt and the role of FETÖ in it is a source of strength and resilience for Turkish democracy. The government, in consultation with the opposition parties, is introducing structural reforms to prevent any future coup attempts. These measures will establish transparency and accountability as foundational elements of democracy and governance in Turkey. This is the way to instill confidence in the state and the military and to make sure that such crimes as the July 15 coup attempt never happen again.