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## EDITORIAL OFFICE

Nenehatun Caddesi No: 66 GOP/Çankaya, 06700 Ankara/Turkey

Tel: +90.312.551-2100 • Fax: +90.312.551-2190

editor@insightturkey.com • www.insightturkey.com



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

MUHİTTİN ATAMAN

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The date of July 15, 2016 is a watershed in the history of democracy as well as in the history of Turkey. On the night of July 15, the world witnessed an exceptional and historic event. The Turkish people heroically stood up against the brutal coup plotters; they became an example for other peoples on how to defend your nation and on what is the real meaning of national self-determination. At the same time, they gave a valuable lesson to the Western governments on how to support a democratically elected government. But more than anything, Turkish people proved to themselves that it is they who decide for themselves, for their future. After all, isn't that what democracy is all about?

The memory of what happened on July 15 will never be erased from the minds and hearts of the people who were in Turkey that night. We all lost someone on the night of July 15 –a mother, a father, a child, a friend or someone that we did not even know but we broke into tears when we saw them giving their life for this country.

On the night of July 15, the world saw the real face of FETÖ, a chimera hidden behind the façade of religious discourses. In the late hours of Friday night, the coup plotters started to block the main streets in İstanbul and Ankara. Afraid of a possible terrorist attack people began to go home and follow the situation through the media. Soon it became clear that this was a coup attempt to overthrow the legitimate government. As the people responded by pouring out in to the streets, especially after the call of President Erdoğan, the coup plotters realized that their plan was about to fail. Nevertheless, at this point, they started to bomb the governmental buildings such as the Grand National Assembly (TBMM), the Presidential Complex, the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), the Special Forces Headquarters, the Turkish National Police, the AK Party Headquarters and some television channels. Furthermore, the coup plot-

ters shot at civilians in cold blood, killing more than 240 people. More than 2000 people were wounded. The coup plotters betrayed their people and used the nations own weapons against them. However, this did not stop the Turkish people, who with an admirable bravery stayed on the streets until the last unit of coup plotters had surrendered. The coup attempt was then followed by a 25-day long ‘democracy watch’ where people gathered every night in the city centers of each province in the whole of Turkey to condemn the coup attempt and protect democracy.

The July 15 coup attempt is more than a failed coup, it is a process that is still going on and needs to be analyzed thoroughly. After approximately five months, it is fair to ask what does “July 15” mean for Turkey?

First and foremost, it was the struggle of the people and the national will against tanks. Turkish people from all ranks, ages, genders, classes, ethnicities and religions took to the streets on the night of July 15 to protect their democratically elected government. The cover photo of this issue shows one of the main hotspots, the Bosphorus Bridge, which was re-named the “July 15 Martyr’s Bridge” as a mark of respect for the citizens who gave their life while protecting their country. Many people who had no time to change their clothes were in pyjamas and wearing slippers. Those standing in front of tanks did not think twice about leaving their families at home and going out in to the streets to defend their nation. On the other hand armed soldiers, pointed their guns towards civilians, who had no armor but their Turkish flag to claim their rights and protect their lives.

July 15 was the triumph and consolidation of Turkish democracy. The coup plotters intended to kill the President of Turkey and overthrow the democratically elected government. However, it was the people –both supporters and detractors of the AK Party– who did not allow the coup plotters to achieve their aim. Moreover, the main political parties, leaving aside their political differences, united with each other and condemned the coup attempt. The mass demonstration of more than 4 million people on August 7 at Yenikapı, İstanbul was clear evidence of the national unity.

It was the victory of the world’s most non-violent resistances against one of the most brutal coup attempts. Turkey has suffered from many coups; however, none of them directly targeted the civilians. Ironically, the July 15 coup attempt became the bloodiest one in Turkish history with more than 240 people being killed. Some of them were killed by tanks and with the heavy artillery. Had the coup attempt been successful, the bloodshed would have been greater.

July 15 has shown the democratic awareness and further increased the political consciousness of Turkish people. Now Turks are aware of their power and

what they want. On the night of the July 15 coup attempt the people chose democracy against a military regime, which would have symbolized the end of democracy for Turkey as in other states of the region. Not only the societal groups, but also the main body of the armed forces, the police forces, the judiciary, all political parties and media, resisted against the coup attempt.

Furthermore, it has shown that Turkey became a success story against military coups, and a symbol of peaceful democratic resistance. Turkey could not only break the cycle of coups internally but also, unlike the other states in the region, it showed that military regimes are no longer welcomed. After strengthening the Turkish society and democracy, a large-scale process of state reconstruction was initiated.

Lastly, the July 15 coup attempt has shown that the Western countries do not care about democratic developments in non-Western countries. Western states, which did not condemn the anti-democratic coup attempt, not only immediately started a campaign against the democratically elected government but also tried to protect the coup plotters. An example of this is the U.S., which keeps the mastermind of the coup attempt, Fetullah Gülen, under strict protection. Similarly some of the coup plotters who escaped to Greece were not extradited to Turkey.

*Insight Turkey*, in this special issue about the coup attempt, has intended to present different perspectives of the events focusing on political, economic, sociological and psychological aspects of July 15. At a time when the West has failed to present the coup attempt objectively, this issue aims to present accurately what July 15 was about. History, current events and possible future scenarios are analyzed through an academic perspective, creating a full picture to better understand the July 15 coup attempt.

Six commentaries and six articles, focusing on the failed coup, can be found in this issue. H. E. İbrahim Kalın, with optimistic tones about the future of Turkey, asserts that a time when the main aim of the coup attempt was destabilizing Turkey, it had the opposite effect. Accordingly, Kalın argues that Turkey will continue this spirit of unity and solidarity and stay on the course of democracy, freedom and prosperity.

Serdar Karagöz and Pınar Kandemir focus on the media's role in the failure of the coup. Turkish media has always supported coup attempts in the past due to a close relationship between the press and the military leaders. Nevertheless, as AK Party came to power, this situation started to change and the results became obvious on the night of July 15. Karagöz and Kandemir assert that both the conventional and social media had a twofold impact. First, politicians, military personnel and bureaucrats were able to communicate their anti-coup

messages to the general population. Secondly, social media, in particular, made it easier for activists to share updates and coordinate their actions to halt the coup plotters.

Beril Dedeoğlu and Ian Lesser focused on the post-July 15 Turkey by presenting Turkish and Western perspectives respectively. Dedeoğlu, in her commentary, conceptualizes the eventual consequences of the July 15 coup attempt for Turkish foreign policy and presents two possible scenarios for the future of Turkish foreign policy and its relation with the West. The worst-case scenario is further “otherization” of Turkey by the West and the increasing Western support of anti-Turkish forces in the region. The best-case scenario is the change of Western anti-Turkish perspective into an anti-terrorism position. On the other hand, Ian Lesser contends that the Turkish-Western relations are headed for a rough but highly consequential period especially after the coup attempt in Turkey.

Gamal Nassar and Ahmed Yousef analyze the coup attempt in Turkey by presenting the coup in terms of Middle Eastern politics. Nassar compares the coup attempt in Turkey with the one in Egypt and analyses how different actors such as the political actors, religious actors, media and member of the public contributed to the promotion and success of the coup in Egypt while in Turkey, all these actors united against the coup attempt. Yousef, on the other hand, asserts that while in some cases the Arab authoritarian regimes at the beginning expressed their support for the coup attempt, the Arab public opinion strongly condemned the coup attempt mainly due to the role that Turkey and President Erdoğan have played in the region by standing behind the people in need, such as in the case of Palestine, Somalia, etc. Ahmed Yousef, when analyzing the reaction of the Arab media towards the coup attempt maintains that some broadcasts misinformed the people and that the Arab media played a huge role in the world-wide media-chaos on the night of July 15.

Atilla Yayla’s article offers a comprehensive analysis of the coup attempt. Yayla focuses mainly on FETÖ and its leader Fetullah Gülen and how this terrorist organization in several cases plotted against the democratic government and President Erdoğan. For Yayla what people did on the night of July 15 will never be forgotten and he calls this historical moment as a Glorious Resistance. Tim Jacoby brings yet another perspective of the coup attempt by analyzing the history of the coup attempts in Turkey going back to the Ottoman State. According to Jacoby, the interventionist tendencies of the Turkish military can be understood based on three impetuses: (i) concerns over its civilian colleagues’ policy towards external threats and internal dissent, (ii) the military’s promotion of its own version of Islamic practice and identity, and (iii) its determination to protect and, where possible, advance its economic interests.

Şener Aktürk, remarkably postulates that after the “silent revolution” of the AK Party, which created an equal citizenship and ended the longtime segregation of the Kurds and religious conservatives in Turkey, terrorist organizations such as PKK and FETÖ lost their *raison d'être* and each encountered an existential crisis. In this case, violence turns to be the main and sole strategy of these terrorist organizations. Aktürk also criticizes the Western media's Islamophobic misperception and its ambiguous reaction to the coup attempt. Another standpoint is presented by Nebi Miş in his article which focuses on the social perception of the coup attempt. Based on interviews with 176 people during the democracy watch, Miş argues that love for the country, the call of President Erdoğan and media had a high impact on the way in which the people reacted during the coup attempt and afterwards.

When analyzing coup attempts, economic factors are largely overlooked. Sadık Ünay and Şerif Dilek in their article present in detail FETÖ's colossal economic power amounting to billions of dollars and they conclude by stating that the July 15 coup attempt was perpetrated to prevent an interruption in flow of financial resources into a murky network of business enterprises around a messianic cult. Lastly, Farhan Mujahid Chak argues that the failed *coup d'état* is the result of a clash of social images, in which the Gülenist social image was vanquished by the AK party's social imagery. Therefore, as it became clear that FETÖ was acting secretly with a general disdain for millions of Turkish citizens, it failed to establish dominion of its social image. On the other hand AK party's inclusivity attracted people from all segments of Turkish society into its fold. According to Chak, this was the main reason behind the failure of the coup attempt in Turkey.

### ***Dedication***

In response to the Western hypocrisy, which turns a blind eye to what the Turkish people have to say, this special issue of *Insight Turkey* aims to present the reality of the July 15 events and how it is perceived by the Turkish citizens who successfully thwarted the coup plotters from destroying Turkish democracy and at the same time exposed FETÖ in the eyes of the world. Above all, this issue is dedicated to *the Turkish people* who resisted against the coup attempt to protect the national will and especially to all *the martyrs of July 15* who heroically sacrificed their lives for their country and for the Turkish democracy. May Allah bless their souls! ■