



JULY 15, 2016, TURKEY

**A GENUINE ATTEMPT OR A “SYNTHETIC” COUP
FOR MEDIA CONSUMPTION?**

A REVIEW OF THREE NARRATIVES

By Alliance for Shared Values

New York, NY

2 July 2019



About the Alliance for Shared Values

The Alliance for Shared Values is an umbrella non-profit serving as a unified voice for several civic, culture and service organizations around the U.S dedicated to promoting community service, education and interfaith dialogue. The Alliance's local partners are founded by individuals who are participants in the Hizmet social initiative originated by Turkish Islamic scholar, preacher and social advocate Fethullah Gulen. The Alliance works with people and organizations of all backgrounds and faiths to promote greater mutual understanding, cooperate on meaningful projects, and build solidarity among all members of the human family.

About Hizmet Movement

Beginning as a grassroots community in Turkey in the 1960s, Hizmet today is a transnational social initiative that advocates for the ideals of human rights, equal opportunity, democracy, non-violence and the emphatic acceptance of religious and cultural diversity.

Hizmet's culturally and religiously diverse supporters are inspired by the life and works of Fethullah Gulen, one of the world's most influential Muslim figures for his decades-long commitment to empowerment through education, interreligious dialogue and altruism.

Hizmet participants bring to life these ideals by promoting philanthropy and community service, investing in education for cultivating virtuous individuals, and promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue for peaceful coexistence.

DISCLAIMER

This report does not reflect the official stance of the Alliance for Shared Values.

The purpose of this report is to discuss publicly available information about the July 15 incident. The observations and opinions in this report are not intended as an accusation against any individual. Any of the individuals mentioned in the report must be assumed innocent until proven guilty at an independent and impartial court.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION: THE PLACE OF JULY 15 IN ERDOGAN’S PATTERN OF POWER GRAB	3
THE WITCH HUNT	5
ERDOGAN GOVERNMENT’S JULY 15 JUNTA NARRATIVE	7
RESPONSES OF THE WESTERN GOVERNMENTS TO ERDOGAN GOVERNMENT’S NARRATIVE	9
WHY WAS ERDOGAN GOVERNMENT’S NARRATIVE NOT FOUND CREDIBLE BY THE WEST	10
DOMESTIC REACTION TO ERDOGAN’S NARRATIVE	15
THE BROAD COALITION NARRATIVE	17
THE COLLUSION NARRATIVE	18
AN ATMOSPHERE OF EXPECTATION FOR A MILITARY COUP	19
EXPECTATION OF MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST NATIONWIDE TERRORIST ATTACKS	21
COMPELLING IMAGES FOR MEDIA CONSUMPTION	22
THE ABANDONMENT OF LOWER RANKING OFFICERS BY THEIR COMMANDERS	23
JULY 15 DOES NOT FIT THE PATTERN OF A MILITARY COUP	24
STRANGE SUB-EVENTS OF JULY 15 THAT AWAIT AN EXPLANATION	26
THE ABSENCE OF A MILITARY LEADER	26
THE ATTACK ON THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING	28
THE ATTACKS ON POLICE HEADQUARTERS	28
THE ALLEGED ATTACK ON ERDOGAN’S VACATION RESIDENCE IN MARMARIS	31
SHUTTING DOWN BRIDGE TRAFFIC	33
DELIBERATE TARGETING OF CIVILIANS	34
THE FATE OF THE ARMY MAJOR WHO ALERTED AUTHORITIES TO THE IMPENDING COUP	35
ALLEGED GULEN SYMPATHIZERS ARE BOTH VILLAINS AND HEROES OF JULY 15	36

HOW THE COLLUSION NARRATIVE EXPLAINS THE STRANGE SUB-EVENTS OF JULY 15	38
EVIDENCE OF COLLUSION BY MILITARY ACTORS	41
GEN. ZEKAI AKSAKALLI, COMMANDER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES	42
GEN. YASAR GULER, SECOND CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF	43
ADM. BULENT BOSTANOGLU, COMMANDER OF THE NAVY	44
GEN. ABIDIN UNAL, COMMANDER OF THE AIR FORCE	44
GEN. UMIT DUNDAR, COMMANDER OF THE FIRST ARMY, ISTANBUL	46
GEN. AKAR, THE CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF	47
EVIDENCE AGAINST POLITICAL ACTORS	49
PRESIDENT ERDOGAN	49
HAKAN FIDAN, DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION (MIT)	51
BINALI YILDIRIM, FORMER PRIME MINISTER	54
GOVERNMENT’S “EVIDENCE” AGAINST GULEN AND RESPONSES	55
CONCLUDING REMARKS	59
APPENDICES	61
APPENDIX A: ERDOGAN’S ALLIANCE WITH THE VATAN PARTY AND THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION	61
APPENDIX B: ADIL OKSUZ: THE ALLEGED CIVILIAN LEADER OF THE ATTEMPT	62
APPENDIX C: EXCERPTS FROM INDEPENDENT COMMENTARY ON THE ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES	64
APPENDIX D: EXCERPT FROM REPORT BY U.K. HOUSE OF COMMONS ON U.K. TURKISH RELATIONS	65
APPENDIX E: CATEGORIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES UNDER THE STATE OF EMERGENCY FOLLOWING JULY 15	66
REFERENCES AND NOTES	68

Executive Summary

On July 15, 2016, Turkey experienced a horrific and historic event. During what appeared to be a military coup attempt, the Turkish parliament was bombed, and hundreds of civilians and soldiers lost their lives. This attempt appeared to have been planned and executed with remarkable incompetence and was crushed quickly. The failed attempt has been used as a pretext to launch an unprecedented crackdown by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on his political opponents and the free press, clearing the way for the president to further consolidate power. In this report we examine three narratives about the July 15 attempt. The *junta narrative* that is voiced by Erdogan and his government, and two narratives voiced by observers, the *broad coalition narrative* and the *collusion narrative*.

- Many outside observers noted the convenience of a weak coup attempt that was crushed easily and enabled Erdogan to purge all his critics and subjugate the military. Lack of access to key witnesses and Erdogan government's remarkable unwillingness to fully investigate the incident made it nearly impossible to piece together a fact-based, coherent narrative.
- This report argues that the *collusion narrative*, which implies that some military commanders colluded with Erdogan to stage a limited mobilization of military units that gave the appearance of a coup, has the most explanatory power.
- Per his *junta narrative*, Erdogan rushed to accuse Pennsylvania-based Turkish Islamic Scholar Fethullah Gulen as the mastermind of the coup attempt as early as midnight July 15, despite the impossibility of a proper investigation by that time. Gulen has publicly condemned the attempt while it was ongoing, denied any involvement with it, and challenged Erdogan to allow for an independent investigation conducted by international observers. He pledged to abide by the conclusion of the investigation and return to Turkey if found guilty. Erdogan has not responded to this challenge.

- Erdogan's *junta narrative* was not found credible by Western observers and governments. Reports by government agencies and declarations by intelligence officials within the European Union and the United States have rejected the allegation that Gulen orchestrated the attempted putsch.
- Erdogan's *junta narrative* has an ever-growing number of contradictions. More importantly, it fails to explain actions that are counter-productive to a military coup such as the closure of Bosphorus bridge, the bombing of the parliament, the attack on police headquarters, the alleged attack on Erdogan and the deliberate targeting of civilians.
- The *broad coalition narrative* which is put forward by some observers and implies that a broad coalition of officers planned the attempt but stumbled upon being discovered early, has some explanatory power but fails to explain some of the aforementioned curious incidents during the attempt.
- The *collusion narrative*, which implies that some military commanders colluded with Erdogan to help create an atmosphere of expectation among the lower-ranking officers, mobilize a limited number of military units to give the appearance of a coup and trap unsuspecting officers, has the most power to explain the curious sub-events of July 15.
- The collusion narrative also implies that *the neo-nationalist, anti-American, Eurasianist clique* within the military was part of the collusion, explaining in part Erdogan's getting closer to Russia in 2016 with his apology for the downing of a Russian jet, culminating in the purchase of Russian-made S400 missiles.

INTRODUCTION:

THE PLACE OF JULY 15 IN ERDOGAN'S PATTERN OF POWER GRAB

On July 15, 2016, Turkey experienced a horrific, unsuccessful coup attempt. The Turkish parliament was bombed, and hundreds of civilians and soldiers lost their lives. The coup attempt appeared to have been planned and executed with remarkable incompetence and was crushed quickly. Neither President Recep Tayyip Erdogan nor any of the top government officials were arrested or harmed. July 15 provided Erdogan with an excellent excuse to subdue the last institution that was outside of his total domination: The Turkish Armed Forces.

During the early 2000s Erdogan transferred ownership of several media holdings to his loyalists through the use of the government's financial regulatory agencies. Starting with Uzan Media Group, he went on to transfer the media organs of Sabah Media Group, Dogan Media Group and Aksam Media Group.

During the same period, he also nurtured loyalist capitalists through government contracts and intimidated others to submission by punitive regulatory measures. Holding companies that did not exist or were miniscule in the pre-Erdogan era became some of the largest holdings in the country within a decade. By 2013 Erdogan controlled, directly or indirectly, nearly 90% of Turkish news media and the big capital.





In December 2013 Erdogan faced two corruption probes involving ministers of his cabinet and his son. Instead of letting the probes go forward, Erdogan labelled them as a “judicial coup”, shuffled and purged hundreds of police detectives, prosecutors and judges. By a combination of changing the laws and dominating the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK in Turkish), he completely subjugated the judiciary to his will. His existing control over the news media helped him stage a very effective media propaganda campaign to justify his extraordinary measures.

By 2016, the Turkish military was the only institution that was outside of Erdogan’s total political control. With the help of the July 15 incident Erdogan purged thousands of military officers, damaged the credibility of the Turkish Armed Forces as an institution, changed the military’s hiring and promotion system, and even modified the military educational institutions for finer political control. July 15, 2016 was the last before the final step of Erdogan’s power grab.



In the wake of the “failed coup attempt” Erdogan reignited the idea of an executive presidency that he began promoting in 2011. He secured a narrow victory in a constitutional referendum in April 2017 — despite many reported electoral irregularities — to become the executive president of Turkey in June 2018. As the executive president, he “constitutionally” obtained powers that are not subject to any checks or balances, completing his process of power grab.

THE WITCH HUNT

On the night of July 15 within hours of the start of the military action, Erdogan rushed to accuse Fethullah Gulen as the mastermind of the coup attempt despite the impossibility of a proper investigation by that time. While Gulen has denied any involvement with the coup, and has publicly condemned it, the Turkish government has launched a coordinated and concerted effort to defame Gulen and seek his extradition from the United States where he has been residing since 1999.

In the days following the incident, the Erdogan government declared a state of emergency and began a massive purge of alleged sympathizers of Gulen and other critics of Erdogan. It quickly became clear that the arrests of the bulk of military officers were unrelated to whether they participated in the events of July 15 or not. The arrested commanders, including 240 generals, had collectively nearly a third of the Turkish army and more than 200 fighter jets under their command. If they truly intended it, these commanders were certainly capable of executing an effective military coup. However, most of the officers charged with coup-related crimes were not active that night. Some of the officers charged with coup participation were not even in the country on July 15, serving in NATO missions in Afghanistan or at NATO headquarters in Brussels¹.



Seventy-four former Turkish pilots on Thursday received life sentences on charges of attempting to overthrow the government in a trial related to a 2016 failed coup, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported. Fifty-six of the defendants received aggravated life...

(<https://turkeypurge.com>)

May 31, 2019

During the hearings at 17th, 23rd and 25th High Criminal Courts in Ankara, the sources of the military purge lists became public. These were lists prepared by neo-nationalist officers who were tried in previous military trials, expelled or retired from the military at the time. During the court hearings, it became clear that the lists were prepared and shared with AKP officials months before July 15². The collaboration among AKP officials and the neonationalist officers was part of the alliance made between Erdogan and neonationalists in order to establish their joint dominance in the judiciary in 2014 and later in the military post July 15, 2016.



But the purges and arrests went far beyond the members of the military. According to TurkeyPurge.com, a site that tracks the victims of the purge, as of July 2019 150,348 people were sacked, including 6,021 academics. Of judges and prosecutors, 4,463 were dismissed and around 3,000 were arrested, of whom 2,745 on July 16, 2016. On the media front 189 media outlets were shut down and 319 journalists were arrested³.

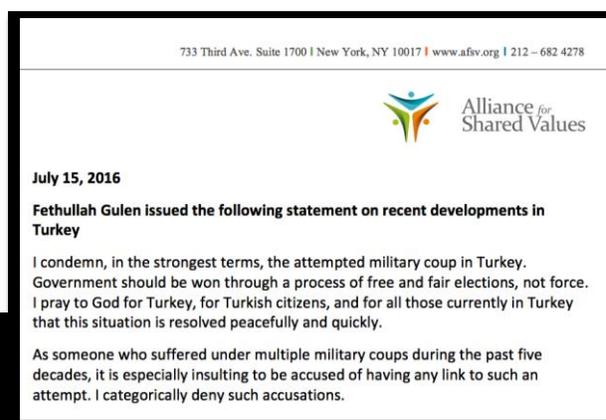
The state of emergency declared right after the event caused systematic and persistent human rights abuses. The extreme measures taken during this state of emergency that denied victims recourse to due process were later transformed into constitutionally legitimized powers for the president through the new constitution that was passed by a narrow margin in April 2017.

Amnesty International⁴, Human Rights Watch⁵ and the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Torture⁶ reported strong evidence of systematic and widespread torture in detention centers and prisons. Human Rights Watch reported that the state of emergency that was authorized on July 20 resulted in denials of due process rights to detainees and encouraged both wrongful detentions and inhumane treatment of detainees⁷. The *New York Times* reported that due to its scale and cruelty, analysts compared Erdogan's crackdown with "Joseph McCarthy's Anti-Communist witch-hunt in the 1950s America, the Stalinist purges of the 1930s and the Cultural Revolution in China in the 1960s and '70s"⁸. Some analysts considered the purges as an unraveling of Erdogan's "inner Stalin"⁹. The various categories of human rights abuses committed under the state of emergency are summarized in Appendix E.

ERDOGAN GOVERNMENT'S JULY 15 JUNTA NARRATIVE

President Erdogan, speaking on national TV around midnight that fateful day, immediately blamed Fethullah Gulen, a retired preacher and a vocal Erdogan critic who has been living in Pennsylvania since 1999, as the mastermind of the incident. Gulen condemned the attempt while it was in progress¹⁰ and repeatedly denied any involvement¹¹ (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Gulen's condemnation message posted at 1:48am Turkish time.



He challenged Erdogan to allow for an international investigation into the event¹². Gulen pledged to abide by its ruling, and if found guilty — even based on false testimony — promised to buy his own ticket to return to Turkey (Figure 2). Erdogan did not respond to this call.

Figure 2 Gulen's 11 August 2016 Le Monde op-ed challenging Erdogan to allow for an international investigation into July 15 and promising full cooperation and his willful return to Turkey if found guilty.





The Erdogan government's narrative about what happened on July 15th, which we will call the *junta narrative*, is the following:

- 1.** Gulen-affiliated officers in the Turkish military were alarmed by the news of an impending purge at the upcoming meeting of the Military's Supreme Council in August 2016.
- 2.** In order to pre-empt such a move and to take over the Turkish state, they planned a coup to start at 3 am in the morning of July 16th.
- 3.** However, their plan was discovered, and they had to start early in the evening of July 15th, which led to it being hastily arranged and ultimately fail.

RESPONSES OF THE WESTERN GOVERNMENTS TO ERDOGAN GOVERNMENT'S NARRATIVE

Western governments, intelligence services and observers did not find Erdogan's narrative of July 15¹³ credible. In particular:

- Then-U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry Mr. Kerry said the Turkish government, as part of the extradition process, must provide evidence linking Gulen to the incident that withstands scrutiny in an American court¹⁴. As of July 2019, approximately three years after the incident, there is no confirmation from the U.S. Department of Justice that the Turkish government has submitted evidence that meets this criteria.
- James Clapper, then-director of U.S. National Intelligence, when asked whether the Turkish government's allegations that Fethullah Gulen was behind the attempt passed the "smell test" of credibility: "No. Not to me." According to *The Washington Post*, Clapper also said that Secretary Kerry was right to press the Turkish government to back up its extradition request with evidence of Gulen's involvement. Clapper added, "We haven't seen it yet. We certainly haven't seen it in intel."¹⁵
- When asked by *Der Spiegel*, whether Gulen was behind the coup as claimed by Erdogan, Bruno Kahl, Head of Germany's BND Foreign Intelligence Agency responded, "Turkey has tried to convince us of that at every level but so far it has not succeeded"¹⁶.
- A report by the European Union Intelligence Center (INTCEN) on the incident concluded that the coup was mounted by a range of opponents to Erdogan and his ruling AK Party. The report found it unlikely that Gulen himself played a role in the attempt, according to the *Times* of London, and Erdogan's purges were planned well before the incident¹⁷.
- A report by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the British Parliament on U.K.-Turkish relations stated that the "U.K. government does not have any evidence that U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen organized Turkey's July coup attempt."^{18 19} (Please see Appendix D for the relevant excerpt from the report.)

WHY WAS ERDOGAN GOVERNMENT'S NARRATIVE NOT FOUND CREDIBLE BY THE WEST

Observers noted that there was a big gap between the perspectives of the Western governments and the Turkish government narrative of July 15²⁰. Some of the cited reasons are:

- 1. *Purges Started the Next Day within the Judiciary:*** The government began purging thousands of members of the military and the judiciary on July 16. Western observers noted that it would be impossible for the Turkish government to identify those responsible for the incident in such a short time. It was clear that the purge lists were prepared well in advance²¹. A failed coup attempt that allowed Erdogan to purge his critics *en masse* appeared too convenient to be true²². The purge of 2745 members of the *judiciary* the next day, on July 16, was particularly symbolic. There were more members of the judiciary purged in the immediate aftermath of the incident than military officers.
- 2. *Self-Contradictions of Erdogan's Narrative:*** Erdogan's own narrative had self-contradictions. Erdogan claimed that neither he nor his intelligence service knew

anything about the coup attempt up until 9:30 p.m. the night of July 15²³. Western observers found it inconceivable that an event of this magnitude, which would require weeks — if not months — of preparation, could be orchestrated from another continent and not be discovered by Turkish Intelligence and a host of other intelligence agencies. Erdogan claimed to have learned about the event not from his intelligence service but from his brother-in-law, giving four different times as to when he received the call (Exhibit A). Yet, he did not investigate or dismiss the Director of National Intelligence (MIT) Hakan Fidan who, per his own story, failed to inform or protect him after receiving a tip from an informant in the afternoon of July 15²⁴. Similarly, the chief of general staff was not investigated or dismissed despite having failed to stop the incident, or protect his office, after being alerted to it five hours earlier.

EXHIBIT A:
Erdogan's Contradictory Reports of
When He Learned About the July 15 Attempt

July 16

Erdogan at Istanbul Ataturk airport, around 4:20am, stating that "as it is known there was mobilization within the military in the afternoon hours".



July 18

Erdogan telling CNN that he learned about the event from his brother in law around 8pm.

July 21

Erdogan telling Reuters that he learned about the attempt around 4:30pm.



July 30

Erdogan telling Turkish news channel A-Haber that he learned about the attempt around 9:30pm.

3. ***Lack of Gulen-Sympathizers at the Top-brass of Turkish Military:*** The top brass of Turkish military consists of sympathizers of the ideology of the founder of Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, known as Kemalists. There has never been a credible allegation that the top commanders had any Gulen-sympathizers among them²⁵. More specifically, none of the top officers, the chief of general staff, assistant chief, force commanders, army commanders or army corps commanders has been accused of being a Gulen sympathizer. A coup attempt carried out by mid-level officers without the knowledge and approval of the top commanders should have faced a strong reaction from within the military itself. On the night of the coup, there was very little reaction from within the military. Most

of the resistance to the attempt was by the police and the civilians on the streets.

4. ***No Evidence Implicating Gulen:*** Despite assistance from the U.S. Department of Justice, Turkish government failed to provide concrete evidence linking Gulen to the incident that would stand in an independent court²⁶. The few testimonies extracted from officers who “confessed” their links to the Hizmet movement were not found credible because the soldiers were tortured. Ironically, pro-government media channels themselves published photos of those officers showing clear signs of torture (Exhibit B). More importantly, none of the officers claimed to have received orders from a civilian or anybody other than their commanders or the General Staff Headquarters.

EXHIBIT B:
Photos of Military Officers
Showing Signs of Torture



Colonel Levent Turkkan, aide de camp of Chief of General Staff, allegedly “confessed” to being affiliated with Gulen. In his court testimony, Turkkan said that his previous statements are invalid as he was subjected to torture.

Gen. Akin Ozturk, former commander of the air force, showing signs beating. Ozturk was accused by the government to be the military mastermind of the coup despite being exonerated by the Chief of General Staff Akar. Ozturk was sentenced to life in prison.



Gen. Timurcan Ermis, commander of the Gendarmarie forces in Konya.

Soldiers piled up during detention.



5. *Irrationality of Risking Hizmet Movement Projects Around the World:* At the time of the attempt there were over 500 Hizmet movement affiliated institutions of elementary and higher education in more than 150 countries. A coup attempt instigated by Gulen, if successful, would send an alarming message to world leaders and spell the end of the movement

presence around the world. All other governments would begin to see Gulen-sympathizers as a threat and quickly shut down their institutions and expel their personnel. It doesn't make sense to sacrifice hundreds of institutions, collectively worth hundreds of millions of dollars, and reputations built through decades of work for the sake of political power in Turkey²⁷.

Erdogan's Remarkable Unwillingness to Help Illuminate July 15

Adding to the suspicions about the government narrative was the Erdogan government's unwillingness to fully investigate the incident. The parliamentary investigatory commission was delayed by two months because the ruling AKP party delayed appointing members to the commission. Once formed, the commission²⁸, per the votes of the majority AKP members, failed to call key witnesses for testimony²⁹, such as the chief of national intelligence and the military's chief of general staff³⁰. Mithat Sancar, an opposition member of the commission said the following:

The ruling AKP did not form this commission to illuminate the coup attempt. They constructed a coup narrative. The ruling AKP has a narrative about the coup attempt. They were expecting (this commission to produce) a work that would support this narrative....³¹

Only the information or rumors that support the government narrative were allowed to be disseminated, and information that point to other scenarios have been censored by government authorities and a compliant media. Scores of lawyers have been arrested, and attorney-client privilege has been revoked under a state of emergency, leaving the accused individuals unable to defend themselves through due process.

DOMESTIC REACTION TO ERDOGAN'S NARRATIVE

Opposition party leaders were quick to point out that Erdogan's junta narrative was simply too convenient to be true. Opposition CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu was harassed by Erdogan-loyalists under government's watch after using the term "controlled coup"³² and opposition HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas was jailed shortly after declaring that Erdogan had prior knowledge of July 15 and certain sub-events were added for dramatic effect³³.



Figure 3 Opposition HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas proclaiming in a parliamentary group speech that Erdogan's claim that he learned about the incident from his brother in law is a "complete lie". (4 October 2016)



Figure 4 Opposition CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu explaining the meaning of the "controlled coup" term he used to refer to July 15: It was known beforehand, it was not prevented and it was taken advantage of.

Kemal Kilicdaroglu, chairman of main opposition party CHP said, in a speech to a group of CHP members of the parliament:

“

The real coup was done on July 20, after the controlled coup of July 15th was over. Nobody should forget July 20th. This is the date when the executive branch got the approval for the state of emergency from the parliament. Now, the real putschists of July 20 want to constitutionalize the current situation. That is why they brought this constitutional amendment to the parliament. ³⁴

(Translation and emphasis by authors) ³⁵

”

The CHP members of the parliamentary investigation commission stated that President Erdogan’s and Prime Minister Yildirim’s claims that they knew nothing about the coup attempt were weird as the National Intelligence Organization had advance knowledge of the incident and informed multiple parties beforehand³⁶.

Several narratives have been proposed by Turkish journalists and Turkey observers about what happened on July 15, 2016, as an alternative to Erdogan government’s junta narrative. In Appendix C we give excerpts from a number of commentators of diverse political orientations

questioning the government narrative and suggesting an alternative.

Below we focus on two narratives voiced by some journalists and Turkey observers that are supported by the testimonies of accused officers, or the declarations of lawyers, relatives and friends of accused individuals. The aim of this document is not to make a definite claim about what happened on July 15, 2016, or to accuse any individual, but to raise questions about the government narrative and provide alternatives that deserve to be considered as part of an independent investigation.

The Broad Coalition Narrative

A narrative that was expressed by some Turkish journalists³⁷ and Turkey observers in Europe and the United States that we call the *Broad-Coalition Narrative* is the following³⁸:

1. A broad-based coalition of officers in the military has been discussing an intervention against Erdogan's increasing authoritarianism. They believed Erdogan undermined the Turkish state's democratic institutions and secularism. This coalition included, but was not limited to, military officers who feared being purged at the August meeting of the Military Supreme Council.
2. They planned a coup to start in the early hours of July 16 with the intention of removing Erdogan and restoring Turkish democracy and secularism.
3. An informant alerted National Intelligence Organization (MIT) to the plan during the afternoon of July 15, forcing some officers to start the action early. However, many commanders gave up and refrained from participating, and hence the effort failed.

Part of the evidence for the broad coalition narrative is the fact that among the officers purged, arrested or forced to retire after July 15, there were many known as Kemalists. The noteworthy examples of these are Gen. Adem Huduti, the commander of the 2nd army based in the eastern city of Malatya, Gen. Galip Mendi, the commander of the Gendarmaries (Military Police), and Gen. Erdal Ozturk, commander of the 3rd Army Corps based in Istanbul. The so-called Peace in the Motherland Council (Yurtta Sulh Konseyi), the self-proclaimed leader group of the attempt, issued a declaration that made references to Kemal Ataturk's principles³⁹. Ironically, the emerging declarations by pro-Erdogan political commentators and AKP members also supported the broad coalition narrative. For example, Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag⁴⁰ and pro-Erdogan commentators Cem Kucuk and Rasim Ozan Kutahyali, among others, suggested that there were non-Gulen-affiliated groups within the Turkish military that were supportive of a military intervention against the Erdogan government⁴¹.

The broad coalition narrative provides valuable insights into the events of July 15 and helps explain the apparent ambivalence and confusion of commanders who are known to be Kemalists at the news of a military coup as well as the lack of a significant response from within the military against the attempt. However, the broad coalition narrative does not sufficiently answer many other questions as will be detailed below.

The Collusion Narrative

The collusion narrative asserts the following:

1. During the months leading to July 2016, *an atmosphere of expectation* for a military coup was generated. Lower-ranking officers were given, deliberately or through the widespread rumors, the impression that the military's top brass was planning an intervention. In parallel to the coup expectations, military units were informed that large-scale terrorist attacks were expected that could not be dealt with by the police force alone. The military would be expected to stage counterterrorism operations against these potential attacks. The necessary legal framework to facilitate this, the so-called renewed "EMASYA" protocol where the acronym stands for Security, Safety, Fire, and Aid, was passed just before July 15⁴². This legal step removed the potential resistance of the military units to stage operations within city limits.
2. A set of commanders within the Turkish military secretly colluded with Erdogan and his close circle, to plan the night of July 15 in advance. In collaboration with the National Intelligence Service, they ensured Erdogan's safety and a set of flagship events that would be appealing to the news media. Initially, these commanders gave the impression to their fellows and subordinates that they were in favor of a military intervention to stop Erdogan's authoritarian drift.
3. During the days leading to July 15, they helped prepare a number of military units to mobilize on July 15 in the name of defending against a terrorist attack, protecting vital government offices or simply participating in a military exercise.
4. On the night of July 15, they deserted the units they helped mobilize, leaving them to be charged as coup participants.

Below we will give a more detailed account of the Collusion Narrative.

An Atmosphere of Expectation for a Military Coup

Starting in the fall of 2015, a broad base of top-level and middle-level commanders in the Turkish military allegedly held meetings discussing a military intervention in order to stop Erdogan from becoming an elected autocrat, and to help realign Turkish government with the founding ideology of Atatürk. During the last few months of 2015 and throughout

the spring of 2016, there were widespread rumors, numerous articles and claims in the domestic and foreign media of an impending military coup. The rumors of a brewing coup reached such a level that the Turkish general staff felt compelled to issue an unprecedented statement on March 31, 2016, refuting the allegations⁴³.

The image shows a screenshot of a press release from the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff. The header features the logo of the Turkish Armed Forces and the text "TÜRK SİLAHLI KUVVETLERİ GENELKURMAY BAŞKANLIĞI". Below the header is a navigation bar with links for "ANASAYFA", "TSK HAKKINDA", "GENEL BİLGİLER", "BASIN YAYIN FAALİYETLERİ", "OLAYLAR", "İNSAN KAYNAKLARI", "ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER", and "EĞİTİM ÖĞRETİM / TATBİKATLAR". The main content is titled "BASIN AÇIKLAMASI" and includes the date "TARİH: 31 Mart 2016", time "SAAT :08:35", and reference number "NO :BA-89 / 16". The text of the press release is in Turkish and discusses the military's commitment to the rule of law and its response to rumors of a coup. At the bottom of the page, there are social media sharing buttons for Twitter and Facebook, and a footer with the text "Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri" and "Turkish Armed Forces" alongside icons of military aircraft and tanks.

Figure 5 A press release dated March 31, 2016, by the office of the chief of general staff, refuting the rumors of an impending military coup.

In December 2015, a delegation of pro-Eurasian Vatan (Homeland) Party, formerly known as Workers Party, headed by Mr. Dogu Perincek visited Moscow⁴⁴. The Vatan Party members in this delegation were ret. Gen. Ismail Hakki Pekin, former director of Military Intelligence, ret. Adm. Soner Polat and ret. Gen. Beyazit Karatas. The Vatan Party delegation met, among others, with Alexander Dugin, a Russian ultra-nationalist known for his Eurasianist views and Konstantin Malofeev, “a multimillionaire with ties to the Russian Orthodox Church” who was under European Union and U.S. sanctions for financing illegal military groups in Eastern Ukraine^{45,46}. The delegation expressed concerns about a looming pro-American coup⁴⁷ and encouraged Russian leadership to repair their relationship with Erdogan. Statements by Alexander Dugin and Konstantin Malofeev about this visit are available on YouTube⁴⁸.

Vatan Party leader Perincek has been a vocal critic of Erdogan for years, and he was imprisoned as part of the Ergenekon trials. Perincek’s Vatan party has a Marxist-Maoist ideology that is diametrically opposed to the religious leanings of Erdogan’s AKP. The party is also publicly anti-American and anti-NATO. However, following the 2013 corruption probe, Erdogan decided to bring the judiciary under his control and purge all Gulen-sympathizers within the judiciary. Lacking significant number of qualified supporters to replace the alleged Gulen-sympathizers, Erdogan made a Machiavellian alliance with Perincek to take advantage of Vatan Party sympathizers and other so-called “neo-

nationalists” within the judiciary. More information about the Erdogan-Perincek alliance and the Russian connection of Vatan party-affiliated civilians and retired military officers are in Appendix A.



Figure 6 Vatan Party video depicts Konstantin Malofeev, a Russian multimillionaire. Malofeev relates the Vatan Party delegation’s message: There is an impending, “pro-American”, military coup in Turkey.



Figure 7 Alexander Dugin meeting with Dogu Perincek, head of Vatan Party and members including ret. Gen. Ismail Hakki Pekin, former head of Military Intelligence in Turkey.

After their visit to Moscow, the Vatan Party arranged a visit by Alexander Dugin along with a Russian delegation to Turkey in March 2016, during which they met with AKP officials and Erdogan's relatives. It is reasonable to assume that in addition to discussions about repairing the relationship with Russia, they discussed measures against the impending coup, which they claimed would be "pro-American." It is not clear whether there were other visits by Alexander Dugin, but on July 15, 2016, he was in Ankara and flew out of the city during that night⁴⁹.

In reports that emerged later, there was a claim that a Russian ship *Ekvator* was near Turkish waters on the night of July 15 allegedly providing reconnaissance support to Erdogan⁵⁰.

In the aftermath of July 15, Perincek claimed that Erdogan was protected on July 15 by military officers ideologically close to his party and the list of military officers to be cleansed from the military were prepared by his people⁵¹.

As another sign of Erdogan's awareness of the coup discussions, an article published in a Pro-Erdogan outlet *Turkiye* on April 21, 2016, penned by columnist Fuat Ugur threatened Gulen-sympathizers in the military with the following language: "Do you think that our government is not aware of you? They are just waiting for you to act, and they will summarily execute you."⁵²⁵³

On the night of July 14, 2016, National Intelligence Chief Fidan, who is a close confidant of Erdogan, held meetings with Special Forces Commander Aksakalli and Chief of General Staff Akar⁵⁴. As of this writing, the contents of these two crucial meetings the night before the failed coup attempt have not been revealed. Neither Akar nor Fidan were called to answer questions before the parliamentary investigation committee, and in their written responses to the questions by the committee, neither of them referred to these meetings.

Expectation of Military Operations against Nationwide Terrorist Attacks

In parallel to the rumors of an impending coup, there was also a preparation in the military for operations against nationwide terrorist attacks at a scale requiring intervention by the military. Ironically, a law that allowed the military to stage counterterrorism operations within cities without judicial oversight or permission by the governor was passed just before July 15⁵⁵. There is no doubt that the discourse among the military that they would be needed to counter terrorist attacks and the passing of the law to give them legal protection led many officers to believe that on the night of July 15 they were facing a real terrorist threat. Indeed, many officers stated in their testimonies that they were called to duty in order protect government offices against terrorists. However, these officers were charged with participating in a coup in the morning of July 16^{th56}.

Compelling Images for Media Consumption

What happened on July 15, 2016, does not match the pattern of a coup planned by the military, but rather one planned by an intelligence service where a small number of military units played roles unwittingly. We will detail how July 15 differs from previous coups in Turkey below.

According to the collusion narrative, July 15th was a *synthetic* coup attempt planned for domestic and international *media consumption*. July 15 was synthetic in the sense that it was not a coup attempt planned by the military commanders but a mobilization of a very small portion of the armed forces to give the appearance of a coup. The middle and low-level military officers were not aware of the

bigger plan and hence they played crucial roles by simply following commands of their superiors. July 15 lacked crucial steps that are jugular to the success of any military coup, such as securing political leaders and communications centers. What it had, on the other hand, did not serve any military purpose but was very compelling for media consumption.

Dramatic moments such as the closure of the bridge traffic by tanks, citizens getting on top of tanks, fighter jets flying low over capital Ankara, the bombing of a corner of the parliament and the deliberate targeting of civilians are examples. Heroes and villains were generated, and some “villains” were killed that night.



Figure 8 Different versions of the “citizens on a tank” photo was one of the emblematic themes of July 15 attempt. Observers quickly pointed out that the tanks on the Bosphorus bridge served no purpose in a military coup.



Figure 9 The “villain” and the “hero”. Special forces’ Gen. Semih Terzi, the “pro-coup” general, was shot by the “hero” uncommissioned officer Omer Halisdemir.



Figure 10 The damage to the parliament building was a show case for promoting the government’s narrative to visiting international delegations. Bombing the parliament goes completely contrary to the military logic of presenting themselves as on the side of the public against corrupt and incompetent politicians.



Figure 11 Erdogan speaking in front of the Police Special Operations headquarters building that was bombed on July 15. Turkish police did not resist in previous military coups and there were no signs that it would do so on July 15.

THE ABANDONMENT OF LOWER RANKING OFFICERS BY THEIR COMMANDERS

Numerous military officers were positioned on the night of July 15 in certain locations by their commanders only to be portrayed as coup-plotters the next day. Their commanders simply denied allegations and were not held accountable. The most common reason for calling military officers to duty was to protect a critical government office or center against a terrorist attack. The case of the special forces Col. Firat Alakus vs. Gen. Zekai Aksakalli is a case in point and will be detailed below. Col. Alakus claimed that he was ordered to protect the military general staff headquarters against a terrorist attack by his commander only to be accused of being a coup participant the next morning⁵⁷. The testimonies of an eight-person crew of a search-and-rescue helicopter is another example.

The crew of a search-and-rescue helicopter from an air base near Istanbul, sought asylum in Greece the morning of July 16. In their asylum application, the officers said they were

part of an army search-and-rescue unit with three helicopters and were told by their commanders to pick up casualties on the night of July 15. However, when they approached the designated locations of the casualties, their helicopter, along with two others, received fire from the ground. They returned to a nearby army base, but they could not reach their commanders as the police broke into the base and started shooting at soldiers. The crew of the three helicopters decided to re-group and fly together in one helicopter to seek asylum in Greece because they thought they would be charged with participation in the coup attempt and would not receive a fair trial in Turkey⁵⁸.

There are numerous reports of officers called to duty by their commanders — in some cases after being recalled from their vacation — to perform actions apparently unrelated to a coup only to be abandoned by their commanders and charged the next day with participation in the coup attempt.

JULY 15 DOES NOT FIT THE PATTERN OF A MILITARY COUP

Military experts suggest that the pattern of actions on the night of July 15th does not fit the pattern of a military coup but rather a coup-like action that is designed by an intelligence service. The July 15 event lacked crucial actions of a military coup and included counterproductive actions that did not serve any useful purpose in that context. Crucial missing pieces of a military coup included preparing the public opinion, starting the action after midnight during the early

hours of the day to minimize civilian casualties, securing key politicians first, then securing control of media outlets and communications centers with the participation of land forces. In the case of July 15, these crucial steps were missing. Instead a number of actions that don't make sense in a military coup took place including the closing of a busy bridge to traffic⁵⁹, bombing the parliament, bombing police headquarters, allegedly targeting Erdogan and targeting civilians.



May
27,
1960



Sep
12,
1980



July
15,
2016

Previous Military Coups	July 15, 2016
Public opinion was prepared for an intervention.	Public opinion was not prepared.
Action started after midnight, during the early hours of the day.	Action started during rush hour at 9:30pm.
The leader(s) of the intervention was (were) clear and they made public declarations.	The leader(s) of the intervention was (were) not clear. No person made a public declaration. A declaration by the “Peace at Home Committee” was read by an anchor on TRT without disclosing the members of the committee.
Communications centers were secured.	Communications centers were not secured.
Radio and TV stations were secured.	With the exception of a handful of soldiers sent to TRT and CNN-Turk, broadcast satellites or pro-Erdogan TV channels were not secured.
Lead politicians such as Prime Minister and Interior Minister were detained.	President Erdogan, PM Binali Yildirim and the Interior Minister were not detained.
The military was careful to avoid civilian casualties.	Hundreds of civilians were killed.
The military did not target the parliament or the police.	Parliament and police headquarters were bombed.

Below we discuss some of these and other strange sub-events of July 15 that do not make sense in the context of a military coup.

STRANGE SUB-EVENTS OF JULY 15 THAT AWAIT AN EXPLANATION

Erdogan government's media campaign made extensive use of the damage sustained by the parliament building in the government's July 15 publicity material. Bombing of the parliament building is only one of the sub-events of July 15 that do not make any sense in the context of a military coup. However, these events make perfect sense in the context of a synthetic coup designed for media consumption. Some of these strange or suspicious events are the following:

- The absence of a military leader of the attempt
- The attack on the parliament building, in conjunction with pilots missing Erdogan's palace,
- The attack on the police headquarters,
- The alleged attack on Erdogan,
- The closure of traffic on Bosphorus Bridge,
- Deliberate targeting of civilians,
- The fate of the military officer who alerted the National Intelligence Service

THE ABSENCE OF A MILITARY LEADER

Observers noted the absence of the leader for the attempt, which is unprecedented in the history of military coups in Turkey. During the May 27, 1960 coup, a junta with known members was the leader and col. Alparslan Turkes was their spokesman. During the March 12, 1971 intervention the top brass of the military were together as the leaders of the intervention. During the September 12th, 1980 military coup, again the top brass was together as the leaders, under the direction of Gen. Evren, the chief of general staff.

For the July 15th incident, the government accused Gen. Akin Ozturk, the former commander of the Air Force and a member of the High Military Council at the time, of being

the military leader of the coup. However, the Office of Gen. Hulusi Akar, the Chief of the General Staff posted a press release on its website describing him as a hero who tried to stop the pro-coup officers and prevent bloodshed⁶⁰. Logically, with such conflicting stories about a key figure, either Gen. Ozturk should have been exonerated or Gen. Akar called to testify why he posted a press release clearing Gen. Ozturk. Neither of these happened. Instead gen. Ozturk was arrested, charged, and imprisoned. The press release on the website of the Office of Chief of the General Staff exonerating him was later removed. However, previously downloaded copies are available on the web⁶¹ (Figure 9).



BASIN AÇIKLAMASI

TARİH: 21 Temmuz 2016

SAAT : 14.55

- Daha önce açıklandığı üzere; 15 Temmuz 2016 Cuma günü saat 16:00 sularında Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı tarafından verilen bilgi, Genelkurmay Karargâhında; Genelkurmay Başkanı, Kara Kuvvetleri Komutanı ve Gnkur. İl'nci Başkanı'nın katılımıyla değerlendirilmiştir. Bu değerlendirmeye bağlı olarak;
 - Genelkurmay Başkanı tarafından;
 - Silahlı Kuvvetler Komuta Harekât Merkezi telefonla aranarak, Türk hava sahasında ikinci bir emre kadar hiçbir askeri hava aracının (uçak, helikopter vb.) havalandırılması, havada bulunanların derhal uçuşlarına dönmesi,
 - Kara Havacılık Komutanlığına gidilerek orada bulunan personel konuları ve hava araçlarının uçmaması dahil gereken her türlü tedbir alınması,
 - Etimesgut'taki Zırhlı Birlikler Okulu ve Eğt.Tüm. Komutanlığına gidilerek tank ve zırhlı araçlar başta olmak üzere tüm araçların hareketlerinin durdurulması ve hiçbir şekilde dışarı çıkmamaları yönünde gereken tedbirlerin alınması emirleri ilgili personele verilmiştir.
 - Gnkur.İl'nci Başkanı tarafından da; Gnkur.Bşk.nın emriyle Hava Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı Harekât Merkezi aranmış ve Türk Hava Kuvvetlerine ait tüm hava araçlarının uçuşlarının durdurulması talimatı verilmiştir.
- Bu kapsamda;
 - Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerinin ayrılmaz bir parçası olan ve milleti için var olan Hava Kuvvetlerine sızmış olan illegal çete mensubu terörist hainlerin (FETÖ) girişimlerine yönelik olarak Genelkurmay Başkanı Orgeneral Hulusi AKAR'ın talimatları doğrultusunda büyük çoğunlukta mensupları ile mücadele edilmiş ve durum kontrol altına alınmıştır.
 - Genelkurmay Başkanlığının, uçuşların durdurulması ve havadaki görevli uçakların indirilmesine ilişkin talimatı Hava Kuvvetleri Harekât Merkezine iletilmiş, bu direktif Eskişehir'deki Hava Harekât Merkezi tarafından tüm birliklere tebliğ edilmiş, uçuşların durdurulmasına ilişkin işlemler saat 19:26 itibarıyla tamamlanmıştır. Direktif, 19:56 ve 20:31 itibarıyla tüm birliklere teyiyden tekrar iletilmiştir.
- Hava Kuvvetleri Harekât Merkezi ve Eskişehir'deki Hava Harekât Merkezinde görevli ekiplerce direktifin gereği yakından takip edilmiştir. Tüm bu ikaz ve uyarılara rağmen 21:45'ten itibaren bir kısım meydanlardan değişik tanıtıcı kodlar ve çağrı isimleri kullanılarak kalkış yapıldığı tespit edilmiştir.
- İllegal çete mensubu hain teröristlerce (FETÖ) öncelikle Hava Kuvvetleri Harekât Merkezinin kontrol altına alınmasının istenmesi üzerine İstanbul'da bulunan Hv.K.Komutanı Org. Abidin ÜNAL tarafından Ankara'da Hava Kuvvetleri Kurmay Başkanı Vekiline Hava Kuvvetleri Harekât Merkezinin teröristlerden temizlenmesi ve tüm bağlantıların kesilmesi talimatı verilmiştir. Talimatın gereği yapılarak Hava Kuvvetleri Harekât Merkezi işlevsiz hale getirilmiştir. Aynı anda tüm yetkilerin Eskişehir'deki Hava Harekât Merkezinde olduğu, Hava Kuvvetleri Harekât Merkezinin hiçbir talimatının yerine getirilmemesi, Hv.K.Komutanı talimatı olmadan hiçbir uçuşa izin verilmemesine ilişkin direktif, mesaj ile tüm birliklere yayımlanmıştır.
- Ayrıca Hv.K.Komutanı Ankara'da AKINCI Üssü lojmanları bölgesinde bulunan Orgeneral Akın ÖZTÜRK'ü arayarak kendisine 4'üncü Ana Jet Üssü AKINCI'dan kalkan uçakların yasa dışı olduğunu, ivedilikle AKINCI'ya giderek oradaki kalkışmada bulunanları ikna etmesini istemiştir.
- Üs Komutanlarına verilen doğrudan direktifler sonucu, kalkışmanın 3 meydan ile sınırlı olduğu belirlenmiştir. Eskişehir Hava Harekât Merkezinde bulunan personeli takviye amacıyla üst rütbeli generaller görevlendirilmiştir. Bu işlemlerden sonra İstanbul'da Karargah dışında bulunan Hv.K.Komutanı Org. Abidin ÜNAL ve beraberindeki Muh.Hv.Kv.Komutanı Korg. Mehmet ŞANVER illegal çete mensubu terörist hainler (FETÖ) tarafından gözaltına alınmıştır.
- Bilahare Sn.Başbakan ve Milli Savunma Bakanı'nın bilgisi ve direktifleri doğrultusunda planlamalar yapılmış, öncelikle illegal kalkışlara reaksiyon olarak, değişik meydanlardan F-16 alarm reaksiyon uçakları kaldırılarak havadaki uçaklar inişe zorlanmış; talimatlara uymamaları durumunda vurulacağı bildirilmiştir.
- Müteakiben uçakların kalkış yapmalarını engellemek amacıyla meydan üzerinde baskı kurulmuş, AKINCI meydanındaki uçuş pistleri F-4 uçakları ile bombalanarak kapatılmıştır. Ayrıca aynı meydana kalkış yapmak isteyen helikopterler taciz ateşiyle engellenerek, AKINCI meydanı kontrol altına alınmıştır. Tüm bunlara ilave olarak illegal çete mensubu terörist hainlerin (FETÖ) teslim olmalarını sağlamak amacıyla, üs içindeki bazı noktalar bomba ile vurularak baskı devam ettirilmiş ve eylemin kırılması sağlanmıştır.
- Bu zilleti ve rezaleti, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devletine, mazisi şan ve şerefle dolu Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerine ve asil milletimize yaşatan alçaklar en ağır şekilde cezalandırılacaktır.
- Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri en genç erinden en yüksek rütbeli general/amiraline kadar tüm personeliyle demokratik hukuk sistemi içerisinde Devletimizin ve yüce Milletimizin emrinde, görevinin başındadır.

Kamuoyuna saygı ile duyurulur.

Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri



Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri

Son Güncelleme: 22.7.2016

Figure 12 On July 21, 2016, the office of Gen. Akar, the chief of general staff issued a press release exonerating Gen. Ozturk, the alleged military leader of the attempt. The press release stated that Gen. Ozturk intervened at the request of Gen. Unal, the commander of the air force, to stop the coup attempt. This press release was later removed from the military web site. Gen. Ozturk was indicted, tried and sentenced to life in prison.

THE ATTACK ON THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING

Bombing the parliament is an illogical and counter-productive action in a military coup because even if the coup leaders are against Erdogan's AKP, the representatives of each of the opposition parties are also in the parliament building. During the past real military coups, the military always portrayed itself as the savior of the people against corrupt and incompetent politicians. The parliament represents people's will. From a military perspective, bombing the parliament sends the wrong message that the military is against people's will. Because of these reasons, the bombing of the parliament was very puzzling to both domestic and international observers. Testimonies of some of the pilots accused of bombing the parliament helped illuminate what happened that night.

Pilots who were not on duty and were simply spending time with their families were summoned to their air bases on July 15 to ostensibly defend against a major terrorist attack⁶². Pilots were threatened at gunpoint and with threats to their families to drop bombs at the parliament and the police headquarters. One of the pilots who were accused of bombing the parliament building stated in his court testimony that he was called from his home under the pretense of defending against a terrorist attack. When he found out that his bombing target was the

parliament, he initially attempted to evade the order by jamming the fighter jet's ammunition control mechanism, but he was coerced to carry out the order at gunpoint and by threatening his family⁶³. He stated that he dropped a bomb at a corner of the parliament that he thought would be empty to avoid casualties. Indeed, there were no casualties at the parliament that night.

There are other problems with the government's narrative about the bombing of the parliament. Government officials claimed that the parliament building was attacked by two-stage penetrating bombs dropped from F-16s. Authors of a report, who identify themselves as purged NATO officers, disputed this claim and pointed out that the video images and the impact of the explosions at the parliament building match the pattern of an internally-placed bomb rather than a penetrating bomb dropped from a fighter jet⁶⁴ (Exhibit C). When combined with the pilots' testimonies that they were threatened with their families to bomb the parliament, it is possible that the internally placed bombs were detonated to ensure that the building would be sufficiently damaged in case the pilots refused to directly target the parliament⁶⁵.

EXHIBIT C:
Visuals of Damage
to the Parliament Building



Parliament room allegedly damaged by aerial bombing. Observers note that the doors hinges show no sign of explosion damage.



Parliament room allegedly damaged by aerial bombing. Observers note that the HDTV on the wall shows no sign of explosion damage in contrast with the furniture.



Ex-military observers noting a visual pattern inconsistent with a penetrating two-stage bomb damage.



A site devoted to analyzing government claims about July 15 contrasts the visual pattern of the alleged aerial bombing of the parliament with the video footage of a real aerial bombing with the ammunition claimed to have been used.

Another argument that surfaced recently about aerial bombings is that retired pilots who were investigated during the Ergenekon trials and were retired at the time entered the Akinci air base and potentially flew some jets without identifying themselves that night⁶⁶. If this claim is true, it might indicate that the bombing of the parliament was a crucial part of the synthetic coup and to ensure that it happened, three separate measures were taken: (1) Threatening active duty pilots at gunpoint, (2) Setting up an explosion from within the parliament building and (3) Bringing in retired pilots to ensure that the bombings are carried out.

These different measures do not contradict each other but rather point out that damaging the parliament was an essential component of the plan to convince the world that this was a “real coup”. Indeed, photos of and visits to the damaged portion of the parliament was

used extensively by the Erdogan government in their publicity around the event.

How Could Pilots Miss Erdogan’s Palace?

According to the government’s narrative, the parliament was bombed as a show of force or out of an anger at Erdogan and his party. But Erdogan’s palace was left alone by the bomber jets. Only a corner of the front yard of the palace was damaged. It is inconceivable that air force pilots or their commanders, angry enough to bomb the parliament would miss Erdogan’s massive presidential palace despite the state-of-the-art military aircraft and precision bombs under their disposal. The only explanation for this apparent contradiction is that Erdogan was in control of directives and coordinates given to the pilots and he did not want his palace to be damaged.

THE ATTACKS ON POLICE HEADQUARTERS

Targeting police headquarters does not make sense in the context of a military coup. The Turkish police does not have the power to stop a military coup staged by Turkish Armed Forces. During the previous military coups, the police never attempted to stop the coup. However, the attack on the police headquarters makes

sense in a synthetic coup, if the goal is to enrage the police and push them to action. Since the military itself will not stop the actions of other military units, the government needs the police to stop the small number of military units that are mobilized.

THE ALLEGED ATTACK ON ERDOGAN'S VACATION RESIDENCE IN MARMARIS

Erdogan claimed that his residence in the Yazici Vacation Resort in the town of Marmaris was attacked by military personnel during the night of July 15 with the purpose of assassinating him.

The first problem with this claim is that it does not resonate with the pattern or logic of military coups. In the past military coups, the military arrested and secured leading political figures for the purpose of bringing them to trial in a public court. Their goal was to expose the corruption and incompetence of the politicians and hence justify the coup. Harming or killing Erdogan would not help the cause of a military coup but instead turn Erdogan into a hero.

The second problem concerns the alleged timing of the attack. On the night of July 15, a team of commandoes from different branches of special forces arrived at Erdogan's vacation residence with the purpose of taking him into custody and transferring him to a secure location. However, by the time they arrived at his vacation place around 3:20 a.m., Erdogan was long gone. Erdogan gave his first public interview to TVs around 00:04 a.m. His second, highly publicized, interview was to CNN-Turk over facetime at 00:24 a.m. He left his vacation place around 1:00 a.m.

Gen. Gokhan Sonmezates, the commander of the military units that were tasked with taking Erdogan into custody, stated in his

testimony that his team was ready to fly to Marmaris from Izmir by 11 p.m. but they were delayed by three hours by the air command center in Ankara. By the time they arrived at Erdogan's vacation residence at 3:20-3:30 a.m., they saw signs of an armed encounter that had already taken place. They also faced resistance by police guards and engaged in a skirmish.

The question of why police guards were left at the vacation resort after Erdogan left the place at 1:00 a.m. was never answered. Whom were they protecting? Were they simply positioned as sitting ducks for an attack that had to happen to depict Erdogan as a hero?

Erdogan claimed, on public TV, that he narrowly escaped an assassination attempt at his vacation place. However, the arrival of the military units at his residence around 3.30 a.m. was actually two and a half hours after he left at 01:00 a.m. It is likely that the signs of the attack that Gen. Sonmezates observed upon arrival at Erdogan's vacation place were the signs of a staged attack, that Erdogan was referring to as escaping narrowly. Indeed, police officer Cengiz Eker was killed at the location. However, the time of his death was initially recorded as 00:43 a.m., about two and a half hours before the arrival of the military team. The time of death was later revised to 3:43, as if in an attempt to match the arrival time of the military team.

Another tell-tale sign about the alleged attack on Erdogan in Marmaris is a piece of forensic evidence that emerged during the court hearings. A weapon that was allegedly used to shoot the police officer Mehmet Cetin, who was guarding Erdogan's residence, was identified with the number W349539. The problem is that the same weapon was identified as the source of a bullet that hit the Sikorsky military helicopter that carried the special forces team to the vacation resort. So, if we were to believe the authenticity of the forensic analysis report, the same weapon was used to attack Erdogan's police guards and then shoot the approaching military helicopter. This, of course, makes no sense unless there were other actors who attacked both Erdogan's guards and the incoming military team. Indeed, it was revealed during the course of the proceedings that three other helicopters flew to Dalaman, near Marmaris, prior to Gen. Sonmezates' team. The flight records of these three helicopters were erased and were not available for the review of the lawyers of the defending officers.

The demand by the accused officers of a forensic analysis of the weapons and ammunition used in the incident was ignored. The demand by the defending officers to review the security camera footage of Erdogan's vacation residence was also rejected⁶⁷.

All these pieces of information indicate that a false flag attack was staged at Erdogan's vacation place just after his departure around 1:00 am, and two hours

before the actual military team tasked with taking Erdogan into custody arrived. The attack on Erdogan's life was an important part of the story for media consumption and it was not left to chance.

Erdogan made other counter-factual statements about the Marmaris attack. He claimed that on his departure from his vacation resort, his airplane was assaulted by pro-coup fighter jets but protected by pro-government jets. The Greek Air Force refuted Erdogan's claims and said that no such air fight occurred⁶⁸. It is also inconceivable that if loaded F-16s targeted Erdogan as he claimed, they would not be able to shoot down his plane or force it to land.

As a side note, there is the Aksaz Navy base only a few miles away from Erdogan's vacation place in Marmaris. The commander of that navy base, Admiral Namik Alper was arrested on July 16 as a coup participant. Had Admiral Alper been a coup-participant, he had thousands of soldiers, navy ships and aircraft at his command to stage an attack on Erdogan's vacation residence. There would be no need to bring in special forces units from bases hours away to take Erdogan into custody. The fact that no such action took place is a testimony that the accusation against this commander was completely baseless and is illustrative of the politically motivated prosecution of military officers post July 15.

SHUTTING DOWN BRIDGE TRAFFIC

Shutting down Istanbul's busy Bosphorus bridge to traffic was not only senseless as a coup tactic, it was counterproductive. This action did not help achieve any military objective in any way and instead made the public angry. The military units sent to shut down the bridge traffic were abandoned on the bridge and faced lynching by angry mobs in the morning.



Figure 13 One of the infamous images of the morning of July 16 where abandoned soldiers were beaten by vigilante civilians in Bosphorus bridge

Gen. Umit Dundar, the commander of the 1st Army in Istanbul who pledged allegiance to Erdogan, did not intervene to remove the military unit that occupied the bridge. The inaction of 1st Army led to civilians attacking the military unit, receiving fire and ultimately severely beating and killing some soldiers. On the night of July 15, a sniper allegedly shot at and killed civilians from atop one of bridge's poles. The sniper himself was shot and killed by police snipers and the case was never fully investigated by the government despite the use of civilian deaths on the bridge as an element of the media campaign against Gulen⁶⁹. Among the civilians allegedly killed on the bridge was Erol Olcok, a former pollster and communications consultant of Erdogan, who tweeted days before the incident that Erdogan was preparing for a historic transformation of the Turkish military⁷⁰.

DELIBERATE TARGETING OF CIVILIANS

Deliberately targeting civilians during a coup is unprecedented in the history of military coups in Turkey. Video footage of the night reveals that some officers and soldiers were distressed by the fact that they were abandoned by their commanders and angry crowds were approaching them, possibly to lynch them. It appears that some of the civilian deaths are a result of the actions of panicked soldiers. It is also alleged by eyewitnesses that non-military individuals shooting from black colored vans or vehicles were responsible for

some of the civilian deaths. Pro-Erdogan sources confirmed that members of the pro-Erdogan SADAT international defense consulting organization, and pro-Erdogan retired military personnel association ASDER, headed by Erdogan's adviser retired General Adnan Tanriverdi, were active that night⁷¹. Two witnesses reported that individuals shot at civilians from black vans or other black colored vehicles⁷². A civilian vigilante can be seen in a video claiming that he has a battle to fight with his weapon⁷³.

EXHIBIT D: **The Accounts Of Armed Non-Military Agents Shooting Civilians On July 15**



Muteber Ayabak, mother of a young man killed on the night of July 15, claims her son was shot from behind by individuals shooting from a black van.

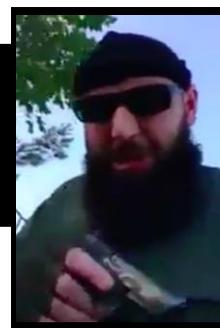
Witness claiming that civilians were shot by individuals in a black vehicle on the Bosphorus bridge.





Dr. Nevzat Tarhan, psychological counselor for Erdogan's paramilitary SADAT force, stating that former members of military affiliated with ASDER, were active on the night of July 15.

An armed civilian in the morning of July 16 stating that they have "a battle to fight".



While using the civilian deaths as a crucial component of their messaging around the attempt, the Erdogan government made little effort to actually illuminate the specifics of those deaths. Ironically, it was the accused military officers who asked for forensic examination of the firearms and bullets used by the soldiers under their command along with the autopsies

of the killed civilians. These requests were rejected by the courts⁷⁴. The government's refusal to investigate the sniper on the Bosphorus bridge, who allegedly shot civilians, was also suspicious, as the regular units that were sent to the bridge that night did not include a sniper⁷⁵.

THE FATE OF THE ARMY MAJOR WHO ALERTED AUTHORITIES TO THE IMPENDING COUP

In the afternoon of July 15, around 2:30 p.m. an air force major who had been initially identified as O.K. came to the offices of National Intelligence Service and informed that an attack was planned to arrest and detain the director of National Intelligence, as part of a bigger

military coup plan⁷⁶. There were six hours between the receipt of this information by the intelligence service and the tanks shutting down traffic on Bosphorus bridge around 9.30pm. During these six hours, Hakan Fidan, the Director of National Intelligence did not inform or

protect President Erdogan. Instead he informed and then personally went to meet with Gen. Hulusi Akar, the Chief of General Staff, who himself did not take any significant measures to stop a military coup or protect the government's leaders. If July 15 incident were a real military coup, this informant officer would have been declared a hero by the civilian government and given a medal of honor. Instead, he was initially fired from the military based on the claim that his

name was on an appointment list allegedly prepared by coup planners. Indeed, the officer himself, later revealed to be major Osman Karacan, stated that he was sympathetic to Gulen during his school years. Perhaps because of this fact he was never given public recognition. Later, he was hired to serve in the National Intelligence Service⁷⁷. The treatment of this officer and the effort to conceal his identity is very striking.

ALLEGED GULEN SYMPATHIZERS ARE BOTH VILLAINS AND HEROES OF JULY 15

The government's treatment of certain individuals, whose affiliation with Hizmet movement discovered after the July 15 incident, is revealing. The government effectively publicized the alleged connections of certain military officers with Gulen, such as Lt. Col. Levent Turkkan, the military aide of President Erdogan, Gen. Semih Terzi, the second-in-charge of the special forces who was killed in the incident. These were labeled as villains and were showcased as (Explanations in parentheses by the authors):

evidence of the involvement of Gulen-affiliated people in the incident. However, it was revealed later that several other military officers or individuals, who were initially declared as heroes were also associated with Gulen at some point in their life. This striking fact led Abdullatif Sener, an AKP founding member and former member of the parliament, to satirically ask the following question via a tweet on January 1st, 2018⁷⁸

The police guard who protected Erdogan in Marmaris turned out to be a Gulen-affiliate. So did the pilot who flew Erdogan from Dalaman to Istanbul. So did the five pilots who bombed the center of the coup attempt (Akinci air base, in order to render it unusable by the "pro-coup" jets). So did the major who was declared as a hero (for informing the Intelligence Service). It appears that Gulen-affiliated people protected Erdogan. Who were trying to kill him then?

We will discuss some of these cases in more detail below.

Captain Baris Yurtseven was the pilot of the Gulfstream G450 airplane that carried Erdogan from Dalaman, near his vacation place, to Istanbul on the night of July 15. Captain Yurtseven was later fired from Turkish Airlines, the operator of the small VIP jet, for having links with Hizmet movement⁷⁹. If July 15 were planned by Gulen-sympathizers, as Erdogan claimed, they definitely had a person in a crucial position to deliver Erdogan to pro-coup military units. The fact that Erdogan arrived in Istanbul safely is a small but meaningful testimony to the falsity of Erdogan's claims. Yurtseven also risked his own life by flying that airplane that could be forcefully landed by fighter jets or shot at.

One of the heroes of the night in the government's narrative was the non-commissioned special forces officer Omer Halisdemir. Halisdemir was declared a hero that night for shooting and killing Gen. Semih Terzi, who was declared a villain. Gen. Terzi arrived at the command center of special forces allegedly to take command of the special forces in favor of the coup attempt. Halisdemir shot Terzi at the command of Gen. Aksakalli, the commander of the special forces. Terzi was declared to be a Gulen sympathizer, resonating with the government's junta narrative. However, problems with this

story began to emerge shortly thereafter. First, it was revealed through photographs that Halisdemir himself was also at some point affiliated with the Hizmet movement. Secondly, Gen. Terzi actually did not die as a result of Halisdemir's shot but was taken to a hospital⁸⁰ and sent text messages to his wife from there, according to his wife's testimony⁸¹. Finally, Halisdemir himself, a hero of July 15 was shot and killed by another officer⁸².

The third person whose treatment is suspicious is the air force major Osman Karacan who alerted the National Intelligence Service to the impending attempt. Instead of being declared a hero, he was fired from the military on the grounds of being a coup-supporter only to be hired by the Intelligence Service later. Karacan also declared in his testimony that he was sympathetic to Hizmet movement during his school years.

These cases illustrate three individuals who were associated with the Hizmet movement at some point and did heroic actions on the night of July 15. Their actions run completely contrary to the government's narrative of a coup attempt driven by Gulen-sympathetic officers.

HOW THE COLLUSION NARRATIVE EXPLAINS THE STRANGE SUB-EVENTS OF JULY 15

The logical and scientific approach to explaining phenomena require that a hypothesis that fails to explain observed phenomena be abandoned in favor of a hypothesis that has a better explanatory power. In the table below we summarize how the *junta narrative* put forward by Erdogan government fails to explain the strange events of July 15 while the *collusion narrative* has a much better explanatory power.

Strange Sub-Event	Government's Junta Narrative	Why the Government narrative is not convincing	Collusion Narrative
Why is the military leader of the attempt still a matter of controversy?	Gen. Akin Ozturk, the former commander of the air force was the military leader.	Gen. Ozturk was exonerated by a press release by the office of the chief of general staff and the testimonies of other officers.	There was no military leader because this was not a military coup. Gen. Akin Ozturk was called in to stop the air force personnel only to be accused of leading the attempt later.
Why did the military units shut down busy Bosphorus Bridge during rush hour traffic?	As a show of force, the timing was a result of their being pushed to start the action earlier than planned.	In no previous coup did the public or the police put up any resistance to the military. So, this "show of force" was completely unnecessary from a military strategic viewpoint.	To enrage the public, help antagonize them to attack soldiers, and generate a compelling image for media consumption.
Why was the Parliament building bombed?	As a show of force.	The parliament includes delegates from all parties and represents the people's will. It does not make sense for the military to be seen as against people's will.	To enrage the public, to give the message that the "pro-coup" officers are against "people's will" and generate a compelling image for media consumption.

Strange Sub-Event	Government's Junta Narrative	Why the Government narrative is not convincing	Collusion Narrative
Why did the pilots miss Erdogan's huge palace?	No response.	Erdogan's palace is a massive building, impossible to miss by fighter jets equipped with precision guided missiles and bombs.	Pilots were threatened at gunpoint to drop bombs at the parliament and police headquarters by Erdogan's colluders. Erdogan did not want his palace damaged.
Why were a handful of soldiers sent to Erdogan's palace, which would be well-guarded?	Incompetence of the coup plotters.	First of all, Erdogan was not even in his palace. So, the action was meaningless. Secondly, any military officer would know that Erdogan's palace would be well-guarded. It doesn't make sense to send a handful of soldiers to attempt to take over the palace.	The "attack" at Erdogan's palace was simply a show to depict Erdogan as a victim.
Why were police headquarters bombed?	The military wanted to intimidate the police and stop them from resisting.	The police did not resist the past military coups. There was no indication that there would be a strong resistance this time either. If anything, bombing police headquarters amplified the police reaction.	To enrage the police and push them to attack the military units active that night, and to generate a compelling image for media consumption.
Why did President Erdogan report four different times as to when he learned about the attempt?	Forgetfulness.	It is hard to believe that Erdogan would not remember the precise moment when he learned about this potentially life-threatening event.	He is lying about when he learned about the event. He knew what would happen weeks beforehand.

Strange Sub-Event	Government's Junta Narrative	Why the Government narrative is not convincing	Collusion Narrative
Why didn't the intelligence director inform or protect Erdogan?	Lapse of intelligence gathering.	In the event of an intelligence failure of this magnitude, the director should have been investigated. He was not.	He didn't need to inform Erdogan because Erdogan already knew what would happen and his life was not in danger.
Why didn't the chief of general staff inform Erdogan or recall force commanders to their commands and protect general staff headquarters?	Chief of general staff made calls to halt military flights and movement of armed vehicles near Ankara.	Actions taken by the chief of general staff were too weak to stop a real military coup attempt. He could have simply issued a command ordering all military units to stay in their bases until further notice.	He knew beforehand that this would not be a real military coup. His "detention" was part of the plot.
Why did the pro-coup units fail to occupy/control communications centers, TV stations other than TRT and CNN-Turk?	Coup-plotters faltered as a result of being forced to start the coup earlier than they planned.	Control of the communications and TV/radio broadcasts are integral to a successful military coup even if it started earlier than planned. It is inconceivable that a military coup would not have a clear plan to take over communications centers.	This was not a real military coup; therefore, the crucial pieces of a military coup plan were not there. Only small groups of soldiers were sent to a couple of TV stations.
Why was the informant military officer who alerted the National Intelligence Service to an impending coup fired from the military instead of being declared a hero and given a medal of honor?	To protect the officer.	There is no indication that officer's life was in danger. The best protection for him would be to make him a public figure so that any attempt to harm him would be scrutinized.	The informant officer was not declared a hero and honored because he broke Erdogan's scenario. The National Intelligence Service and Erdogan planned to claim that they were caught completely off guard and had no prior knowledge of the incident.

EVIDENCE OF COLLUSION BY MILITARY ACTORS

The government narrative claims that officers associated with Gulen staged the coup with directives from civilians affiliated with Gulen. However, there is not a single officer who states in his testimony that he acted on the night of July 15 by the directives of a civilian. Military units were mobilized on July 15 by military sources. Activation of military units can be traced to one of the following primary sources:

1. The office of Gen. Yasar Guler, the Second Chief of General Staff.
2. Gen. Zekai Aksakalli, Commander of Special Forces.
3. Gen. Bulent Bostan Bostanoglu, Commander of the Navy
4. Gen. Abidin Unal, Commander of the Air Force
5. Gen. Mehmet Disli, Commander of Strategic Transformation and a close friend of Gen. Akar, the chief of general staff.

There were three reasons for the mobilization:

- To perform their duties under *martial law* issued by the office of the assistant chief of general staff⁸³
- To protect a military or government compound from a *terrorist attack*
- Participate in a regular, educational or “unconventional” *exercise*.

Secondary sources of mobilization, such as Colonel Cemil Turhan, Gen. Mehmet Partigoc and Gen. Ilhan Talu, who were on duty at the headquarters of the general staff that night claimed that they simply followed the orders they received from the primary sources or were threatened by the pro-coup officers.

However, out of these five sources of military mobilization, only Gen. Mehmet Disli was charged with participation in the coup attempt. All other commanders were never charged, and some were even declared heroes. Below, we will discuss the evidence that indicates a collusion among military and political actors. We would like to note again that none of the discussion below is intended to be an accusation of criminal conduct, but simply an intellectual exercise based on publicly available information.

GEN. ZEKAI AKSAKALLI, COMMANDER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES

During the days leading to July 15, a group of officers from special forces were given orders to participate in an “unconventional exercise” according to officer testimonies⁸⁴. The goal of this exercise was described as protecting the general staff headquarters against a terrorist attack. However, the units who fulfilled their orders on the night of July 15 were later arrested as coup participants. Col. Firat Alakus, one of the special forces commanders arrested as a coup plotter, said in his testimony that he received his orders from Gen. Zekai Aksakalli, the commander of the special forces⁸⁵.

In their testimonies, accused military officers claimed that a plane carrying the alleged pro-coup commander Gen. Semih Terzi was allowed to fly despite the general ban on military flights by Aksakalli’s close aide Col. Umit Tatan, commander of Etimesgut Special Forces Air Command. Col. Umit Bak of special forces stated that Gen. Aksakalli told him to allow only Gen. Semih Terzi to special forces headquarters that night⁸⁶. Terzi was shot at by a non-commissioned officer Halisdemir inside the special forces headquarters that night. He later died in a military hospital. Special forces Lt. Enes Yilmaz, a coup suspect, said at a hearing at the Mugla 2nd High Criminal Court in May 2017 that Brig. Gen. Semih Terzi was invited to Ankara by Gen. Aksakalli himself. Yilmaz said Gen. Aksakalli must be heard in court⁸⁷.

The orders for special forces units to participate in an “Unconventional Exercise” were related to other officers starting on July 11 by Col. Bak, who claimed that he received his orders from Gen. Aksakalli, the commander of special forces. Gen. Aksakalli claimed the orders were issued without his knowledge or approval. If Col. Bak issued orders without Aksakalli’s approval, during the four days from July 11 to July 15 an officer who received the orders could easily have brought it up in a meeting with Gen. Aksakalli. In that case, Colonel Bak would face court martial. Therefore, Gen. Aksakalli’s denial is suspicious. Furthermore, special forces Col. Alakus also stated in his testimony that the orders for mobilization came from Gen. Aksakalli.

The special forces training program diploma ceremony that was originally scheduled for July 15 was re-scheduled to July 14 by the orders of Aksakalli. On July 14, following the ceremony a confidential meeting was held at special forces headquarters by Gen. Hulusi Akar, the chief of general staff, Hakan Fidan, director of National Intelligence Organization (MIT) and Gen. Aksakalli, commander of the special forces. After the conclusion of this meeting, Gen. Aksakalli and intelligence chief Fidan held a



separate meeting⁸⁸. The contents of these meetings have never been revealed. Neither Aksakalli nor Fidan were questioned in an open court. Aksakalli refused to give testimony as a witness.

Aksakalli denied the claims against him and was never charged. Instead, he was given the task of commanding the Turkish Military units that staged the Fırat Shield Operation into Syria.

GEN. YASAR GULER, SECOND CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF



A number of military units, including Navy ships received orders to mobilize on July 15 based on an order issued from the office of Second Chief of General Staff Gen. Yasar Guler.

The orders were issued by his aide de camp, major Mehmet Akkurt, who was killed by another officer that night. Gen. Guler claimed that his aide de camp issued these orders without his knowledge or approval. Guler's claim is found to be implausible because it is extremely unlikely for an aide de camp at the level of major to take such an action without the approval of another superior officer. If Major Akkurt indeed sent the orders without the approval of his superiors, those orders would not be obeyed by army commanders without verification with a superior officer due to the nature of the order. Therefore, Major Akkurt would have taken a risk of life-threatening magnitude with no possibility of success. The only other two officers who could have initiated the orders are Gen. Hulusi Akar, the chief of general staff, and Gen. Mehmet Disli, who was known to be a close friend of Gen. Hulusi Akar.

Gen. Disli implicated Gen. Akar in his testimony by saying that Akar's "detention" was only a show. Gen. Disli himself was charged, tried and found guilty. Gen. Hulusi Akar denied having anything to do with the orders and was never charged.

Certain military units were sent directives to mobilize by officers on duty at the general staff headquarters, such as Gen. Mehmet Partigoc, commander of the Office of General Staff Personnel, Gen. Ilhan Talu, and Col. Cemil Turhan. These officers claimed that they followed orders from the office of the second chief of general staff or were threatened by the putschists.

Gen. Guler claimed that after discussing preventive measures against a potential military coup with the chief of general staff and intelligence chief, he returned to his desk to continue "routine work." The question remains unanswered as to why he would return to routine work against the threat of a military coup instead of working with the chief of general staff and force commanders around a crisis desk until the threat is completely thwarted.

Another piece of evidence against Gen. Guler is that armed special forces units

were able to enter the General Staff headquarters and take the Chief of General Staff Akar into custody with little difficulty. The General Staff headquarters are protected by a force of several hundred heavily armed soldiers

and it is not clear how a relatively small special forces team were able to get to the office of the chief of General Staff with no resistance. The commander of the General Staff headquarters protection unit reports to Gen. Guler.

ADM. BULENT BOSTANOGLU, COMMANDER OF THE NAVY

According to navy officer testimonies, Admiral Aykar Tekin and Admiral Levent Kerim Uça, who were in touch with Admiral Bulent Bostanoglu, the Commander of the Navy, gave orders to Navy ship commanders to mobilize on the night of July 15. The commanders of the mobilized ships were subjected to completely contradictory treatment despite receiving the same order and performing the same action⁸⁹. Some ship commanders were charged with being part of the coup while others were not charged at all. Admirals Tekin and Uca were never charged despite giving orders to mobilize loaded ships. Adm. Bostanoglu himself was never questioned.



GEN. ABIDIN UNAL, COMMANDER OF THE AIR FORCE

According to officer testimonies, Gen. Unal made multiple secret visits to Erdogan's palace prior to the incident, using a vehicle other than his official military vehicle.

On July 15, Unal made an unusual visit to the summer camp of students of Air War College in Yalova. During the lunch he gave a speech to the students and then spoke with their commanders. He asked about the day's activity schedule. Upon learning that the schedule included field training and sports activities, he told the commanders to relax the afternoon program and that the students who survived the incident were charged with participating in the coup and sentenced to life in prison, including two female students⁹⁰.



Gen. Unal gave conflicting testimonies about when he learned about the coup attempt, just like Erdogan. Initially he claimed that he learned about the incident from his wife at 21.30PM. Later he changed his declaration and said that he learned about the halting of the military flights at 7.06PM.

Gen. Unal was the one who called Gen. Akin Ozturk, the former commander of the air force to intervene and stop the coup attempt. However, Gen. Ozturk was still charged with being a participant in the coup and Gen. Unal was never investigated or questioned at the court.

On the night of July 15, Gen. Unal claimed that he was detained by putschists. However, despite the fact that many commanders were detained with hand cuffs, Unal is seen on video recordings as moving freely while being escorted to a helicopter. Inside the air base where the alleged coup organizers were based he is seen as moving freely and having a conversation with the alleged military leader Gen. Ozturk.



Figure 14 Gen. Unal is seen in security camera footage of Akinci air base walking with Gen. Ozturk, the alleged military leader of the attempt.

On the night of July 15, Gen. Unal was attending the wedding of the daughter of Gen. Mehmet Sanver, the combat commander, i.e. second in charge, of the air force. Upon learning about the unscheduled flights, he proposed to Gen. Unal to send Gen. Kadioglu to take control of the Eskisehir air base. Gen. Unal refused this offer only to order the same hours later.

On July 16, as the attempt was winding down, Air Force officers who went to the Eskisehir air base by the command of Gen. Unal and took control of the military air traffic and helped stop the “pro-coup” planes were themselves charged with being part of the coup attempt⁹¹.

GEN. UMIT DUNDAR, COMMANDER OF THE FIRST ARMY, ISTANBUL

Gen. Umit Dundar pledged allegiance to Erdogan during the early hours of the attempt, according to Berat Albayrak, Erdogan's son-in-law⁹². As early as 12:52 am, Dundar confidently declared the attempt to be the work of a small faction within the military and hence doomed to fail⁹³. He was later declared the acting chief of general staff as the whereabouts of Gen. Akar were not known.

Military experts note that it is very difficult to stage a coup in Turkey without the participation of the 1st army. Indeed, the famous Sledgehammer military coup plot, which resulted in the trials of many officers, was discussed at the headquarters of the 1st army in Istanbul in 2003. It is unlikely that a military leadership would consider committing to a coup without the participation of the commander of the 1st army⁹⁴. Indeed, during the early hours of the incident, Fatih Tezcan, a famous pro-Erdogan political commentator, labeled Umit Dundar as a putschist⁹⁵. However, Gen. Dundar came out publicly in support of the Erdogan government early on during the night of July 15. This might indicate

that early on he gave the impression to other officers that he was in favor of a military coup, only to reveal his real intention on the night of July 15. But evidence against Dundar is not limited to this.

During the night of July 15, tanks from a military unit far from central Istanbul occupied one direction of the traffic on Bosphorus bridge that connects the Asian and European sides of Istanbul. It is later revealed that these units were under the impression that they were participating in an exercise⁹⁶. Despite declaring himself to be pro-government, and despite the fact that the 1st Army headquarters are literally a couple of miles away from the Bosphorus bridge, Gen. Dundar did not nothing to remove those tanks. Furthermore, Gen. Dundar did not send units to bring the tank personnel back to barracks to save them from being lynched by angry crowds and machete wielding vigilantes.⁹⁷



GEN. AKAR, THE CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF



According to the statements by Hakan Fidan, the Director of National Intelligence, Gen. Akar was informed of a potential coup attempt around 4.30 PM on Friday, July 15. Director Fidan first sent his deputy and later himself came to the General Staff headquarters to have a meeting with Gen. Akar

and deputy chief Gen. Guler. Despite reliable and urgent evidence, Gen. Akar failed to take sufficient measures to stop a potential coup attempt. He could have simply issued a general order keeping all military units in their bases until further notice and stopped the incident. The measures taken by Akar, such as halting military flights and sending the Commander of the Army to inspect armored divisions near Ankara were nowhere sufficient to stop a coup attempt.

Gen. Akar was also criticized for not recalling force commanders — who were attending wedding ceremonies — to return to their headquarters and resume command of their forces. Despite receiving the director of intelligence personally, Akar did not contact force commanders for hours. The actions of force commanders were also suspicious. Their self-reported actions to try to stop the coup attempt were meager and raise the question of whether they were aware of the plan themselves⁹⁸.

Gen. Akar also neither attempted to contact nor took measures to protect key government leaders such as the prime minister Binali Yildirim, interior minister or president Erdogan.

Gen. Akar also did not increase the security around the General Staff headquarters and was eventually taken hostage himself, according to his testimony. However, video surveillance recordings and officer testimonies hint at something strange going on during this “hostage” situation. For instance, the video recordings of Akar leaving the General Staff headquarters show him unrestrained. There are multiple eye witness testimonies that at the air base where Akar was supposedly taken hostage he was very comfortable and was drinking tea, having a relaxed conversation and making phone calls to his wife.

Akar’s statements about what happened that night raise serious questions. Akar claimed that a lower ranking officer threatened him with a gun to his head and asked him to lead the coup. This statement is found incredible by observers⁹⁹. If Akar did not approve of the coup, then the officer who threatened him at gunpoint would risk his life if Akar survived. If Akar did approve of the coup, then there would be no need to threaten him. In either case, a chief of staff who is threatened at gunpoint would make the lower ranking officer’s

life miserable. Finally, trying to convince the chief of staff on the night of the coup to lead the coup does not make any sense.

Gen. Disli, commander of strategic transformation, who was also known as a close associate of Akar implicated Gen. Akar in his testimony but Akar was never investigated. There were three opportunities for Gen. Akar to be questioned. The parliamentary investigatory commission did not ask Akar to give testimony in person, due to the domination of the AKP members in the commission. Instead he was allowed to send written responses to a set of questions. In the court case about the military general staff headquarters, Akar was not called to give testimony at the court where other defendants were tried. Instead, a special, closed-doors court session was set up for Akar to give his

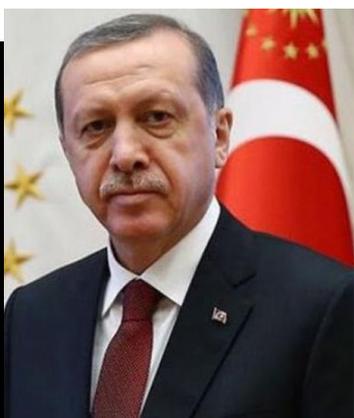
testimony in private and was not cross-examined by the lawyers of the defendants. The third opportunity was the case on Akinci air base, the alleged headquarters of the pro-coup officers. Although Akar was listed as a complainant on the case, he again opted not to participate in this hearing, and hence avoided questioning by the lawyers of the defendants. Akar's consistent avoidance of the questioning by the parliamentary commission and by the lawyers of the defendants, and the AKP government's support for his avoidance is noteworthy.

After the incident, rather than being investigated for his apparent failure to prevent the incident, he was instead promoted to become the minister of defense.

EVIDENCE AGAINST POLITICAL ACTORS

The statements made by President Erdogan and Hakan Fidan, the director of National Intelligence Service (MIT) include many contradictions and leave many important questions unanswered. Some examples are given below.

PRESIDENT ERDOGAN



President Erdogan reported four different times for when he learned about the coup. Before dawn on July 16, he held a press conference at the Istanbul airport,¹⁰⁰ where he said, “as it is known, there was mobilization in the military in the afternoon”¹⁰¹. In an interview to CNN on July 18, he said he learned about the

attempt from his brother-in-law around 8 pm¹⁰². In an interview with Reuters on July 21, he said he received a call from his brother-in-law between 4 and 4:30pm. In an interview to Turkish A-Haber on July 30, he said that he misremembered the time of the call earlier, and the correct time was around 9:30 pm (See Exhibit A above). In an event like a military coup, Erdogan would be the primary target and his life would be in danger. It is difficult to believe that he did not remember exactly when he first learned about the incident, if indeed that was the time when he first learned about it.

Erdogan’s refusal to fire, or even investigate, his intelligence chief despite his failure to inform or protect him is

another sign that he had prior knowledge of the events. In an interview with France24, when pressed by the host to explain why he did not seek the resignation of his intelligence chief,

Erdogan argued that there were security lapses in other events as in the case of the Paris terror attacks. This of course is not a satisfactory answer as a terrorist attack, which is carried out by a few individuals, is a poor analogy to a military coup that requires advanced planning and collaboration by key military commanders¹⁰³.

Erdogan’s claim that he was first informed about the event by his brother-in-law around 9:30 pm and that he could not reach Intelligence Chief Fidan was contradicted by Chief of General Staff Akar. In his written statement to the parliamentary investigation committee, Akar said that Intelligence Chief Fidan called and spoke with the head of Erdogan’s security guard during their meeting before 8:30 pm. In order for Erdogan’s account to be true, we have to assume that the head of Erdogan’s security guard did not inform him despite being

asked about their preparations for a possible attack. Questions such as why Fidan did not ask to speak with Erdogan, why he did not specify the nature of the threat to the head of security, and why Erdogan claimed that he could not reach Fidan until 10 pm were never answered.

Erdogan's disappearance from public view days before July 15 is noteworthy. The last public event before July 15 where Erdogan was publicly visible was on July 9th in the southern town of Antalya. Erdogan then disappeared from public view and went to Marmaris without his military aide on July 11. This was unusual because as the head of the state Erdogan is also the commander in chief. After arriving in a small-town airport near the shore town of Marmaris, Erdogan took a private helicopter, which belonged to the owner of a vacation complex, to arrive at the Grand Yazici Hotel and resort. Erdogan's military aide was later charged with being a participant in the coup attempt and sentenced. Despite leaving his military aide behind, Erdogan did have contacts with other military commanders. Multiple military commanders visited or were with Erdogan on or just before July 15. As an example, while all high ranking air force commanders were attending the wedding of the daughter of air force's #2 commander, Gen. Sanver, Gen. Yılmaz Özkaya, the commander of the air force's evaluation and monitoring command, remained in Marmaris and helped coordinate Erdogan's departure on July 15 as well as helped stall the arrival of special forces units who were coming to take Erdogan into custody. All of these pieces of evidence support the collusion narrative, namely that Erdogan had foreknowledge of July 15 and certain

military commanders were collaborating with Erdogan before and on July 15.

We discussed Erdogan's counter-factual claim that he barely escaped an assault on his vacation residence above. This claim is an indication that an attack on Erdogan was part of the narrative to depict Erdogan as a hero.

President Erdogan's failure to respond to Gulen's call for an international investigation is also noteworthy. Gulen made this open invitation in interviews on international TVs and through an op-ed published in *Le Monde* in France (Figure 2). He promised to buy his own ticket and return to Turkey if he was found guilty by this international investigative committee. Later, the Foundation of Journalists and Writers, where Gulen serves as the honorary chair, submitted a formal petition to the United Nations to launch such an investigation. Assuming Erdogan was sincere about his claim, there would be no reason from his perspective not to accept this challenge. If Gulen were to be found guilty and returned to Turkey as he promised, he would be tried and the case would be over. If Gulen were to be found guilty but backed out from his pledge, then he would incriminate himself in both domestic and world public opinion and justify Erdogan's purges. Of course, the committee could also determine that Gulen was innocent. Furthermore, the committee could also want to investigate other aspects of the July 15 incident besides Erdogan's accusation against Gulen and reveal a collusion between Erdogan and military actors. Were these the reasons why Erdogan refused to accept Gulen's challenge? We may never know.

HAKAN FIDAN, DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION (MIT)



On July 14, a confidential meeting was held at special forces headquarters by Gen. Hulusi Akar, the chief of general staff, Hakan Fidan, director of National Intelligence Organization (MIT) and Gen. Aksakalli, commander of the special forces. After the conclusion of this meeting, Gen. Aksakalli and intelligence chief Fidan held a separate meeting.

The contents of these meetings have never been revealed. Neither Aksakalli nor Fidan were questioned in an open court. Aksakalli refused to give testimony as a witness.

In the afternoon of July 15, an air force major referred to as O.K. informed the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) headquarters that an attack on the MIT headquarters was planned to capture the MIT director. The officer also stated that he believed this to be part of a coup attempt. Under normal circumstances, the time between this tip and the start of the military action at 9:30pm in the evening should have been sufficient to stop a coup attempt. The fact that the attempt was not stopped raises many questions.

MIT Chief Fidan sent his deputy to the office of general staff at 4 pm and later himself met with the military chief, Akar, at 6 pm. According to the accounts of President Erdogan and Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, the intelligence chief did

not inform or protect either of them. In fact, prime minister Yildirim and president Erdogan claimed they could not contact intelligence chief Fidan until 10 pm.

Fidan's informing, then visiting the military's chief Akar raises questions. In the last military coup in Turkey in 1980, the chief of general staff was also the leader of the coup. How did Fidan know that Gen. Akar himself was not involved in the coup? Fidan never answered this question.

Fidan's account of the events of the night is full of puzzles and contradictions. According to Gen. Akar's testimony, Fidan called Erdogan's guards and asked them if they were prepared against an attack, without specifying the nature or the scale of the attack and without asking to speak with Erdogan.

Instead of staying with Gen. Akar to investigate and take precautions against a possible coup, Fidan left the general staff headquarters to attend pre-arranged meetings. Special forces units stormed the chief of staff's headquarters and took the chief into custody only minutes after Fidan left, as if the whole event was planned precisely beforehand. Another piece of evidence implicating Fidan emerged during the last few months in the official records kept at the headquarters of the 8th army corps. Gen.

Yılmaz Uyar, commander of the 8th Army Corps, had it recorded that an officer of the National Intelligence Service by the name of Sadik Ustun who happens to be a personal friend of Gen. Uyar, called him to inform that a coup attempt led by Gulen-sympathizers was in progress under the leadership of Gen. Akin Ozturk the former commander of the air force¹⁰⁴. The problem with this story is the fact that by the time Sadik Ustun made the call, at

11:17pm, Gen. Akin Ozturk was not actively involved in the attempt. He was with his grandchildren at the residential complex of the Akinci air base. According to the testimonies of multiple commanders, he was called half hour later, around 11:47 pm, by the commander of the air force Gen. Abidin Unal to intervene and stop the fighter jet pilots, which he did.

23:17	CEB TIF	Ankara'ya Görüşme (S.U.)	Bunun bir FETO darbesi olduğunu, darbeye mütemmel askerî liderlerin de C deşifrelenmiş bir bakanlığı ve bu kalkışmanın engellenmesi için süratle göre
23:19	TAFİCS	48'üncü Komd Tug K	8'inci Kur. K. tarafından, biriken hiçbir kanunsuz hareketle bulunmayaca onaylanmayan hiçbir emir uygulanmayacağı, sıkıyönetim / darbe / vb. ko verilen emirlere işlem yapılmayacağı, tüm personelin kıyılarda bulunaca suretle çıkarılmayacağı konusunda emir verilmiştir
23:20	TAFİCS	51'inci Tug K. Vnr Pertek Td K.	8'inci Kur. K. tarafından, biriken hiçbir kanunsuz hareketle bulunmayac onaylanmayan hiçbir emir uygulanmayacağı, sıkıyönetim / darbe / vb. ko verilen emirlere işlem yapılmayacağı, tüm personelin kıyılarda bulunaca suretle çıkarılmayacağı konusunda emir verilmiştir. Ancak Tug K. Yrd. ta erkanının Tugaya davet edilmiş olduğu benzer şekilde Pertek Garnizon K başlattığı öğrenilmiştir. Bunun üzerine derhal bu işlemlere son verilmelidir çok ağır olacağı ihtar edilmiştir. (Mülki ve adli makamları tutuklamak üzere ERDOĞMUŞ, Kur Bşk. Yr. Comert BONCUK ve Pertek Td K. S. Eyüp ŞEN
23:20	GOR TIF	8'üncü Kur K	8'inci Kur. K. tarafından, meydana gelen olayların kabul edilmez olduğu yapıldığını açıkça belirtildiği gelen sıkıyönetim emirlerinin geçersiz ve fahişyet içine edilemeyeceği, birliklerin emir komuta zincirine bağlı olmaları koordine yapılmıştır
	CEB TIF	10'uncu Komd Tug K	Bir önceki konuşmada sesinin tereddütü geçmediği herhangi bir tereddütü kanunsuz emirlerin uygulanmayacağı aksi takdirde

Figure 15 Records of the 8. Army Corps in Elazığ Documenting A Call at 11:17 PM by Intelligence Officer Sadik Ustun Claiming a Coup Attempt led by Gulen-sympathetic Officers

The record of the 8th Army Corps commander Gen. Uyar (Figure 9) indicates that the National Intelligence Service either had prior knowledge of the attempt or already designated Gen. Ozturk as the military leader before Ozturk took any action. Intelligence officer Sadik Ustun was instrumental that night in putting pro-Erdogan commanders in touch with the TV

stations. Ustun has a background in the military where he served as the commander of the military academy. After retiring from the military, he initially ran a security company getting contracts from Erdogan government. Later he was hired to the Intelligence Service by Fidan. Ustun was also known as a close associate of military chief Akar¹⁰⁵.

The Curious Case of Private Citizen Berat Kulunyarab

The testimony of citizen Berat Kulunyarab, a complainant in the Bosphorus bridge trial is noteworthy. In his testimony he said that he lived in the central Turkish city of Nevşehir and he had some contacts in the National Intelligence Service. He was informed by his intelligence service contacts that a military coup would take place on July 15.

He took a bus to arrive in Istanbul and waited in the neighborhood of Umraniye near the Bosphorus bridge. As soon as he heard the news of the coup attempt he moved to the Bosphorus bridge.¹⁰⁶ The national intelligence service officers' informing regular citizens about an approaching military coup but not the President makes no sense, unless both intelligence chief Fidan and President Erdogan are lying about when and what they knew about July 15.

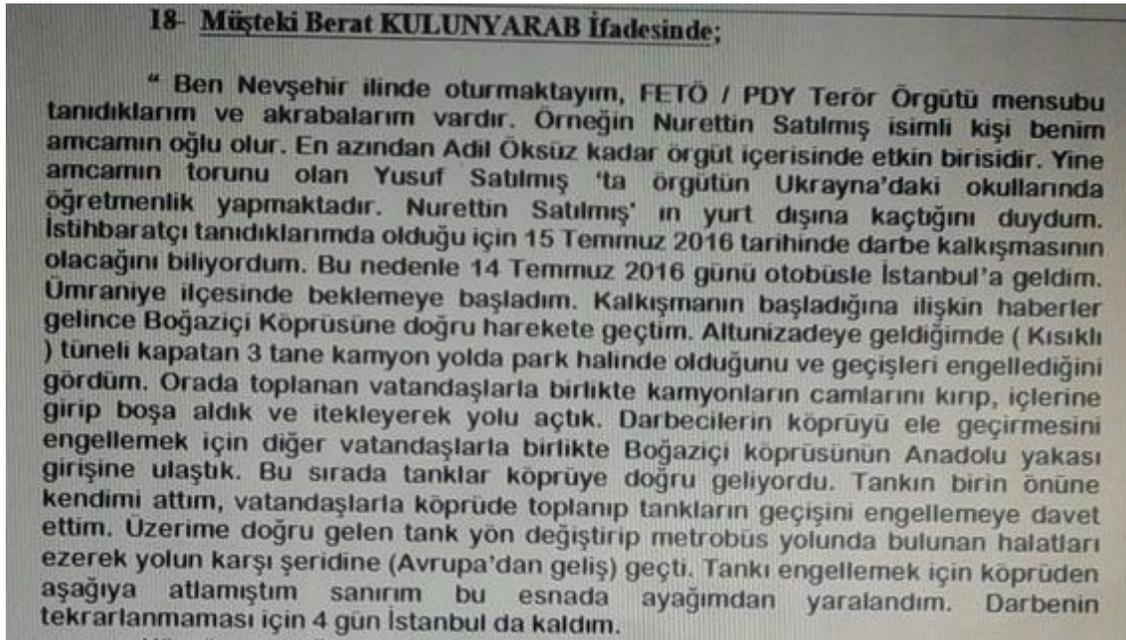


Figure 16 An excerpt from the testimony of private citizen Berat Kulunyarab where he claims that he was informed by his contacts in national intelligence service about July 15 before the incident.

BINALI YILDIRIM, FORMER PRIME MINISTER

During the night of July 15, there was no attempt to arrest Binali Yildirim, who was the prime minister at the time. He claimed that he called but could not reach the Intelligence chief Fidan or President Erdogan. In a roundtable meeting with the editors of government-owned Anatolian News Agency in July 2018¹⁰⁷, Binali Yildirim was asked which was the “project” that he was most displeased with during his tenure as prime minister. Yildirim answered, while laughing, that “the project that I disliked most is July 15”¹⁰⁸. Referring to the July 15 incident in which over 200 citizens died as a “project” was found very revealing by observers. The use of this term might be a Freudian slip of the tongue, i.e. a sign of the pre-planning that went into July 15 on the part of the political actors.



Figure 17 Former Prime Minister Binali Yildirim referring to July 15 as a “project” that he was displeased with in an interview with the editors of Anatolian News Agency.

GOVERNMENT’S “EVIDENCE” AGAINST GULEN AND RESPONSES

The Erdogan government offered several elements of alleged “evidence” implicating Gulen and his sympathizers in the July 15 incident¹⁰⁹. Here we explore some of those claims and offer responses. The case of Adil Oksuz, the alleged civilian leader of the coup, is discussed in more detail in Appendix B.

Claim 1: Three police officers allegedly affiliated with Gulen were among the putschist soldiers.

Response: These three officers were not among the thousands of police officers purged before July 15 by the Erdogan government. Therefore, their links with Gulen is questionable. If Erdogan’s claims of Gulen having thousands of sympathizers within the police force were true, it would not make sense that only three would participate in the attempt.

Claim 2: Levent Turkkan, aide de camp of Chief of General Staff, “confessed” to being a Gulen affiliate.

Response: Turkkan showed clear signs of torture when he first emerged from detention. His testimony is unreliable. At his court hearing, Turkkan stated that he gave his initial testimony under duress¹¹⁰. Also, Turkkan stated that he received his orders to mobilize from another military commander, Col. Orhan Yikilkan, not from a civilian.

Claim 3: Confession of Brigadier General Sagir

Response: Similar to Col. Turkkan, Gen. Sagir showed signs of torture when he emerged from detention. His testimony, therefore, is not reliable.

Claim 4: Task List Recovered on Putschist General

Response: The alleged task list is full of contradictions. Many important civilian posts that are supposed to be filled by military officers are missing. The allocation of military officers to the posts on the list does not line up. Gen. Akin Ozturk, for instance, who was labeled as the military leader of the coup by Erdogan government, is assigned a post that is inferior to the post he had prior to July 15. Major Osman Karacan, who informed the Intelligence Service of an impending coup, is also included in this list. In any case, the relatively easy recovery of such a list is simply too convenient to be true.

Claim 5: Air Force officer Offered to Put Chief of General Staff Akar on a Phone Line with Gulen

Response: The claim was that Gen. Hakan Unver, who was at the Akinci air base offered to put Gen. Akar on a phone line with Gulen. Both Gulen and Gen. Hakan Unver, who allegedly made the offer to Gen. Akar, denied this claim. Gen. Akar was not called to give testimony to the parliamentary commission about this or other allegations against him. He did not address this issue in his written responses to the commission.

Claim 6: Adil Oksuz, who was a student of Gulen during the 1990s, was the civilian mastermind of the coup and he received Gulen's approval for staging the coup.

Response: The government claimed that Adil Oksuz, who is a professor of Theology at Sakarya University, was the mobilizer of the Gulen-sympathetic air force officers on the night of July 15 and the civilian leader of the coup attempt. This claim is contradicted by the fact that it is impossible to stage a military coup with the air force alone, and no military officer stated that they mobilized based on a directive by Oksuz or any other civilian. There are other problems with the government narrative about Oksuz. The government claimed that Oksuz was arrested near the Akinci Air Base, the alleged headquarters of the attempt. According to an interview by Oksuz's family to a Turkish TV station, when he met with them before his disappearance, Oksuz claimed that he was brought near the Akinci Air Base forcefully against his will by the police after being detained at a check point. After being detained near the air base that night, and despite reportedly having an Intelligence Service file on him, Oksuz was let free by two judges on July 16 on the condition of reporting to a courthouse on July 18. Oksuz reported to the courthouse on July 18 as required and then he then traveled on a commercial flight to Istanbul going through airport security checkpoints with his own ID, met with his family in the city of Sakarya and then disappeared. It appears the government wanted Oksuz to disappear so that the claims against him and the alleged link to Gulen could be circulated without challenge. A more detailed discussion of this case is given in Appendix B.

Claim 7: Other Civilians Found at Akinci Air Base, TRT and TURKSAT.

Response: There are many problems with the arguments made by the Erdogan government regarding the accused civilians allegedly found at key locations on the night of July 15 including the Akinci air base, TRT broadcasting center and TURKSAT satellite center: First, the reliability of the “confessions” of these individuals is questionable due to the overwhelming atmosphere of blame and indicators of torture while in detention. Exacerbating this are reports of at least some of the accused having been brought to those locations against their will, including Adil Oksuz, the alleged civilian leader of the attempt. Some civilians with technical skills were brought to TRT by force by the putschists to stop its broadcast¹¹¹. However, it was not clear why the putschists would want to stop the TRT broadcast rather than occupy and control it. Finally, whatever the intentions and actions of the civilians allegedly involved in the events of July 15, there appears to be no military action that can be traced to civilians according to officers’ testimonies. All military officers report receiving orders to mobilize from military channels, either their superiors or through the military communications systems originating from the Office of General Staff.

Claim 8: Individuals Allegedly Connected with Gulen Hint at an Impending Coup on Social Media Posts and Media Interviews.

Response: While it is true that certain social media posts by certain individuals hint at an impending coup, that does not offer evidence to implicate Gulen or Hizmet participants for three reasons: First, prior to July 15, the rumors of an impending coup were so widespread and by individuals of all orientations, including Erdogan sympathizers. Second, the nature of the relationship between the accused individuals and Gulen is highly debatable. It is possible to find posts by Hizmet sympathizers that are highly critical of the aforementioned posts and that accuse those individuals of being moles planted by the Turkish Intelligence Service. There have been no statements by credible affiliates of Gulen that confirm the affiliation of those individuals with him. Finally, some of those posts and media interviews have been edited and disseminated out of context. For instance, a video interview segment by Dr. Osman Ozsoy, a history professor, author and TV program host, has been circulated by pro-Erdogan media as evidence of Gulen sympathizers’ involvement in the July 15 attempt. In the segment, Ozsoy says that he would be able to serve his country much better as a colonel in Turkish army rather than in his current role as an academic and commentator. What is edited out of this segment is the part where Ozsoy explains what he means. According to his explanation, many of the Turkish military anti-terror operations are commanded by colonels. He is expressing his wish that as a colonel he could be part of counterterrorism operations that the Turkish army has been conducting for years.

Claim 9: Gulen-sympathizers Used “ByLock,” an Encrypted Communication Program.

Response: The “ByLock” software was commercially available on Apple’s App Store and Google Play. The main server for the ByLock software was brought down several months before July 15, according to its author, making it unusable¹¹². In their briefing to foreign reporters, the Turkish Intelligence Service stated that none of the ByLock messages that they intercepted referenced a coup plot¹¹³. Nevertheless, the use of the ByLock software has been used by Turkish courts to establish “guilt by association”¹¹⁴ and incriminate thousands of Turkish citizens including academics¹¹⁵, business people¹¹⁶ and housewives¹¹⁷.

Claim 10: Secret witnesses code-named Kuzgun and Sapka (raven and hat) testified about the meeting of civilians and military personnel for planning the coup days before July 15.

Response: The reliability of the secret witnesses is questionable. Reports appeared in the media that the secret witnesses were coerced into testifying in support of the government’s thesis that civilians affiliated with Gulen organized the coup attempt. There were inconsistencies in the witness testimonies. For instance, one of the witnesses could not identify Gen. Akin Ozturk, the alleged military leader of the attempt, whom he claimed to see at the meeting place of civilians and military offices. The key piece of evidence in the secret witness testimony, that is civilian Adil Oksuz instructing military officers, was not witnessed by but overheard by one of the secret witnesses. Furthermore, in the court trials of military officers, no officer stated that they acted based on instructions by a civilian. Instead, every military officer acted based on an order coming from a military source.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

On July 15, 2016, a horrific and an unprecedented incident occurred in Turkey. An action that looked like a military coup, one that cost the lives of hundreds of soldiers and civilians, was crushed quickly. The July 15 incident gave Erdogan an excellent excuse to pursue his goal of consolidating power. In particular:

1. *Massive purges and arrests targeted members of the bureaucracy and the civil society.* In the morning of the coup, a big purge started with the dismissal and later arrests of 2,745 members of the judiciary. During the remaining months, more than 120,000 government employees were sacked. Purges continued to unprecedented proportions, and tens of thousands of civilians, including housewives and mothers of infants¹¹⁸ were targeted.
2. *Erdogan's bid for executive presidency gained momentum.* Prior to the July 15 coup attempt, opinion polls consistently showed that the majority of the Turkish electorate was opposed to the executive presidential system proposed by Erdogan¹¹⁹. In the aftermath of the incident, Erdogan began pushing for the change. In a constitutional referendum in April 2017, he secured by a narrow margin the path to executive presidency in June 2018.
3. *Purging and restructuring the military became much easier.* In the morning of the coup, a big purge started, where eventually 8,000 military officers were sacked, including 150 NATO officers (half of the NATO staff in the Turkish military). Erdogan started a complete overhaul of the Turkish military's system of education, recruitment, reporting and promotion.
4. *Turkish army entered Syria.* It was well known that Erdogan wanted the Turkish military to intervene in Northern Syria to support the Free Syrian Army against the group known as the "Syrian Democratic Forces" led by Kurdish YPG forces. That desire, however, was met with resistance by some commanders of the Turkish military, for instance Gen. Adem Huduti, commander of the Second Army, and Gen. Erdal Ozturk, commander of the 3rd Army Corps, both known as Kemalist/Secularist commanders. These commanders were arrested after July 15. Another commander who resisted the Syria incursion was Gen. Semih Terzi, commander of Special Forces' 1st Brigade. Terzi was killed by an inferior officer that night. Turkish Military started an incursion into Syria in August 2016¹²⁰.

Many aspects of the July 15 incident baffled observers and questions persist to this day. Actions such as President Erdogan having reported four different times as to when he learned about it, the Intelligence Chief not informing or protecting Erdogan, the military Chief of General Staff not communicating with Erdogan or protecting himself, the soldiers' failure to take President Erdogan or Prime Minister Binali Yildirim into custody, the lack of any attempt to control 100 plus media outlets friendly to Erdogan, the starting of the action at rush hour, the shutting down of Istanbul's very busy Bosphorus traffic, and the bombing

of the parliament building and police headquarters do not make sense in a real military coup. However, there is an alternative narrative under which all of these actions make sense.

The alternative narrative, which is referred to as the “Collusion Narrative” here, is that a group of military officers, in collusion with Erdogan and his Intelligence Service, started a weak military action only to be crushed by the police force and angry crowds. The move was designed to lack essential components of a military coup, and hence was guaranteed to fail. According to this narrative, President Erdogan reported four different times as to when he learned about the incident because he was not telling the truth. The Intelligence Director did not inform or protect Erdogan because Erdogan did not need to be informed or protected. The military action was set up to fail and there was no real threat to Erdogan’s life. Police special operations headquarters was bombed before police took any action against the military, in order to aggravate the police. The action began during rush hour, Istanbul’s busy Bosphorus bridge was shut down, the parliament building was bombed to aggravate the public and generate compelling images for media consumption. According to the collusion narrative, July 15 was a synthetic coup, planned for media consumption and executed by unwitting military officers trapped by their commanders.

At this point, there is not enough evidence to claim that the collusion narrative is what actually happened on July 15. And this discussion is not intended to serve as a definitive assertion or accusation, but rather as a call for an independent investigation comprised of an international committee of experts. For such an investigation to succeed, the Turkish government must also guarantee the safety of the accused military officers and their families so they can testify without fear of reprisal by the government. Ironically, the clarification of what really happened on July 15 is in the hands of the Erdogan government, which, despite claiming to be the victim of the incident, so far has shown little interest in helping discover what really happened that night.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Erdogan's Alliance with the Vatan Party and the Russian Connection

In the aftermath of the 2013 corruption probes, Erdogan decided to bring the judiciary under his control and purge all Gulen-sympathizers within the judiciary. Lacking significant number of qualified supporters to replace the alleged Gulen-sympathizers, Erdogan made a pact with Vatan (Homeland) Party leader Dogu Perincek to take advantage of Vatan Party sympathizers within the judiciary. In October 2014, in the elections to the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors, both leaders supported a group called "Unity in Judiciary Platform"¹²¹. When the candidates of this group won the majority of the seats in the Council, both Vatan Party and AKP officials were joyous. This alliance and victory gave Erdogan the power to influence the judge and prosecutor appointments, turning the Turkish judiciary into a political instrument for targeting his critics. After the establishment of the alliance, Perincek was no longer targeted by prosecutors, and he surprised everybody by speaking of the need to keep Erdogan in power so that Turkey can resist the United States.¹²² The loss of judicial independence in Turkey has been noted by the U.S. Department of State's annual Human Rights Report¹²³, Human Rights Watch¹²⁴, Amnesty International¹²⁵, the European Union's progress report for negotiations with Turkey¹²⁶ and the International Commission of Jurists¹²⁷, among others.

It is an open secret that the Vatan Party has significant presence in the state's security and intelligence services¹²⁸. The so-called "Eurasianist clique" within the Turkish military¹²⁹ was described in a 2003 leaked cable by U.S. Embassy in Ankara as pursuing Eurasianism as an alternative to the U.S. "without understanding the Russia-dominated nature of the 'Eurasia' concept". In 2003, the pro-U.S. and pro-NATO group called the "Atlanticists" were seen as losing influence within the Turkish General Staff.

Perincek's Vatan Party is favorite among retired high-ranking military officers. Perincek's deputy is retired Col. Hasan Atilla Ugur. Party leader Perincek said on a number of occasions that the party is "strong in the military, in the judiciary". Other ex-military members of the party include ret. Gen. Hasan Kundakci and the aforementioned ret. Gen. Ismail Hakki Pekin, the former head of Turkish Military Intelligence. Perincek issued the following message upon the death of Admiral Aziz Cem Cakmak who was tried for participation in the Sledgehammer coup plot: "We are sending Admiral Cem Cakmak, our comrade during the Sledgehammer and Ergenekon trials, to his final journey¹³⁰. In an audio recording dating to 2012 and attributed to Adm. Cakmak, he claimed that thanks to an agreement made between their side and Erdogan, Gulen sympathizers would soon have to leave the country and would not even find water to drink¹³¹.

The Vatan Party is also known for its anti-American views¹³² and opposition to Turkey's membership in NATO, which they label as an instrument of U.S. imperialism¹³³. After July 15, half of the Turkish NATO officers of the Turkish military were purged and replaced. When Gen. Joseph Votel, the head of U.S. Central Command expressed his concerns over the impact of the purges on the relationship with their Turkish military, President Erdogan scolded Votel by saying, "It's not up to you to make that decision. Who are you? Know your place! You are taking the side of coup plotters instead of thanking this state for defeating the coup attempt."¹³⁴ Reuters reported that 149 military envoys posted to the alliance's headquarters and command centers in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Britain were ordered to return to Turkey within three days based on a classified military dispatch seen by the agency¹³⁵. It was clear that the reason for the recall and the prospective indictment of these officers was not participation in the incident of July 15¹³⁶.

Gen. Ismail Hakki Pekin later became one of the interviewees of a video documentary to promote the Erdogan government's narrative about Gulen in the United States.¹³⁷ The project was part of an agreement between former Michael Flynn — later President Donald Trump's short-lived national security advisor — and Ekim Alptekin, a Turkish businessman with ties to Erdogan government. Alptekin's family also has ties with Perincek's Vatan Party¹³⁸. According to news reports, Alptekin arranged for a meeting between Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and Energy Minister Berat Albayrak — who is also Erdogan's son-in-law — with Flynn in which the Turkish side wanted to discuss the possibility of removing Gulen from the United States and taking him to Turkey¹³⁹.

APPENDIX B: Adil Oksuz: The Alleged Civilian Leader of the Attempt

Turkish government has claimed that Dr. Adil Oksuz, a professor of theology at Sakarya University was the civilian organizer behind the July 15th incident. The government claimed that he traveled to the United States, allegedly to meet with Gulen and get his approval for a coup attempt. Oksuz was detained on the night of July 15th near Akinci air base in Ankara, the alleged headquarters of the attempt. The information that surfaced about him, however, raises several questions about the government's story. Let's examine the evidence against him:

1. A photograph of Oksuz at the Akinci air base, dated July 16th, together with detained officers. [VISUAL]
2. A video of Oksuz, entering and exiting Sincan court house in the morning of July 18th. Two related video recordings show Oksuz at Ankara's Esenboga airport and Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen airport around 9am the morning of July 18th. [VISUAL]
3. Testimonies by two secret witnesses, named Sapka (Hat) and Kuzgun (Raven), that Oksuz traveled to the U.S. to get Gulen's approval for the coup and was actively organizing officers the night prior to the coup.

Oksuz was captured near Akinci air base on the night of July 15. The government alleged that he was there to touch base with the military officers. He was arrested and kept at the air base and photographed there before being taken to Sincan court house along with 99 military officers. While all the officers were arrested, Oksuz was released by judge Koksal Celik due to lack of evidence with the conditions that he report to the court house two days later and with a ban on foreign travel. Prosecutor Mehmet Yilmaz appealed the release decision to a higher court (Asliye Ceza). This time, judge Cetin Sonmez denied the prosecutor's appeal on the basis that there was no evidence to justify an arrest. Pro-government media alleged that the judges were Gulen-sympathizers. However, it was revealed later that one of the judges issued a supervisor/trustee ("kayyim" in Turkish) to a Hizmet-sympathetic company as part of Erdogan's crackdown on Hizmet. Two days later, Oksuz reported to the court, spending 21 minutes at the courthouse and then took a flight to Istanbul from Ankara's Esenboga airport. Oksuz was welcomed at the Istanbul airport by his brother-in-law and taken to his house. He spent the day at his house and then headed to Sakarya, his workplace and where his in-laws were living. He spent the night of July 19 in their home, told his story, and left in the morning, presumably for work, never to be seen since.

While at his in-laws' home, Oksuz told them that he was detained against his will by the police in Ankara and dropped at a highway near the Akinci air base. He was immediately arrested there and taken to the base. He was interrogated and released later.

The case of Adil Oksuz raises many questions for the government narrative. If Oksuz indeed played a role in the preparation of July 15 and had previous relationships with military officers, then it is inconceivable that Turkish Intelligence Service MIT did not have a file on him. While 99 soldiers who were brought to the court were arrested, Oksuz was released by two separate judges. In the video of his returning to the court house for reporting, as asked by the judge, he appears comfortable and ready for travel with a suitcase in his hand. He enters and exits the court house with the suitcase. When he is welcome by his brother in law in Istanbul, the latter makes a visual call, presumably to Oksuz' family, and Oksuz waves his hand. Oksuz' general appearance at the courthouse on the morning of July 18, his taking a flight to Istanbul by showing his photo ID, fully aware of security cameras recording his actions, spending July 18 at his own residence and then spending the next night at his in-laws' residence do not reflect the psychology and expected behavior pattern of a man involved in orchestrating a military coup and being lucky enough to be released by mistake. AKP government purged 2745 members of the judiciary the day after the coup attempt and more than 2000 of them were also arrested and imprisoned. The two judges who released Oksuz, however, were not dismissed or imprisoned. They were simply subjected to an inquiry, an incomparably favorable treatment in contrast to the thousands of judges and prosecutors who were first dismissed and then arrested starting on July 16.

APPENDIX C: Excerpts from Independent Commentary on the Alternative Narratives

***German intelligence expert and author Erich Schmidt-Eenboom, speaking on a German public broadcaster ZDF*¹⁴⁰:**

“According to CIA analyses, the so-called coup attempt was staged by Erdoğan to prevent a real coup. The BND, CIA and other Western intelligence services do not see the slightest evidence showing Gülen instigating the coup attempt.”

***Veteran Turkish Journalist Cengiz Çandar on Al Monitor, Posted July 17, 2016*¹⁴¹**

While the Turkish coup was underway, The New York Times was asking me whether I was surprised, expecting my answer to be, “Of course I am.” I bluntly wanted to respond “No” and remind New York Times correspondent Sabrina Tavernise that only two weeks ago, in our lengthy chat in Istanbul, I had told her of the “Faustian bargain President [Recep Tayyip] Erdogan made with the military, which therefore, in my opinion, opened the way for a coup or a coup attempt to take place in Turkey within the upcoming two years.” But I conceded and told her, “Yes, I’m surprised. I did not expect that to happen in two weeks.”

German Focus magazine reported the following in their July 2016 issue:

British signals intelligence agency GCHQ intercepted communication between top Erdogan brass about half an hour after shooting started that the coup would be blamed on Gulen and purges would start the next day^{142 143}.

HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas in a speech at Turkish parliament:

“I heard it from my brother-in-law.” He says. Lie! He knew about it before you, me, MIT (Turkish Intelligence Service). You knew about the coup, took your precautions, and just to consolidate your power you let all those people die. We are facing one of the biggest setups in the history of Turkey¹⁴⁴. “

Demirtas was arrested in February 2017 under terrorism charges¹⁴⁵.

Aykan Erdemir, former Turkish parliamentarian and senior fellow at Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies questioned the relative speed in which the coup attempt was foiled:

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s allegations about exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen’s involvement in the July 15 coup d’etat bid in Turkey is not being taken seriously by many analysts based in various world capitals. However, governments are maintaining silence on the matter in deference to the ‘legitimate democratic government’ in Ankara.

Most analysts are indeed questioning the way the Turkey coup was foiled before it actually got implemented on the ground. Was the plot set up for a guaranteed failure? Was it aimed to strengthen Erdogan's rule while his grasp over his electorate was loosening thanks to failure in Syria, economic losses due to Russian sanctions imposed for shooting down its plane and mistrust vis-à-vis Iran?¹⁴⁶

Joe Lauria, a veteran foreign-affairs journalist wrote:

Because Erdogan knew of the coup hours before, there is a stronger possibility that he let it happen to smoke out disloyal officers, confident his handpicked brass would crush it. They may have played along with the coup and then double-crossed the coup leaders once it was underway. It would be a seriously amateurish attempt to go ahead without the consent of the top military leadership¹⁴⁷.

Mithat Sancar, member of the Parliamentary Commission Investigating the July 15th Incident representing opposition HDP¹⁴⁸:

“Many individuals, who would have provided valuable information to illuminate the coup attempt were not called to testify at the parliamentary investigation commission. The ruling AKP did not form this commission to illuminate the coup attempt. They produced a coup narrative. The ruling AKP has a narrative about the coup attempt. They were expecting a work that would support this narrative....

In our opinion, AKP leadership and the President knew about the coup plan a while ago. The president and his team knew about it. Instead of stopping it, they allowed it to start. Their purpose was to capture the coup plotters on the night of the attempt. Not only that. When the President called the coup attempt “a gift from God”, he was publicizing his plan for the aftermath of the attempt. They used the coup attempt as an opportunity and implemented a counter coup.”¹⁴⁹
(Translation by authors)

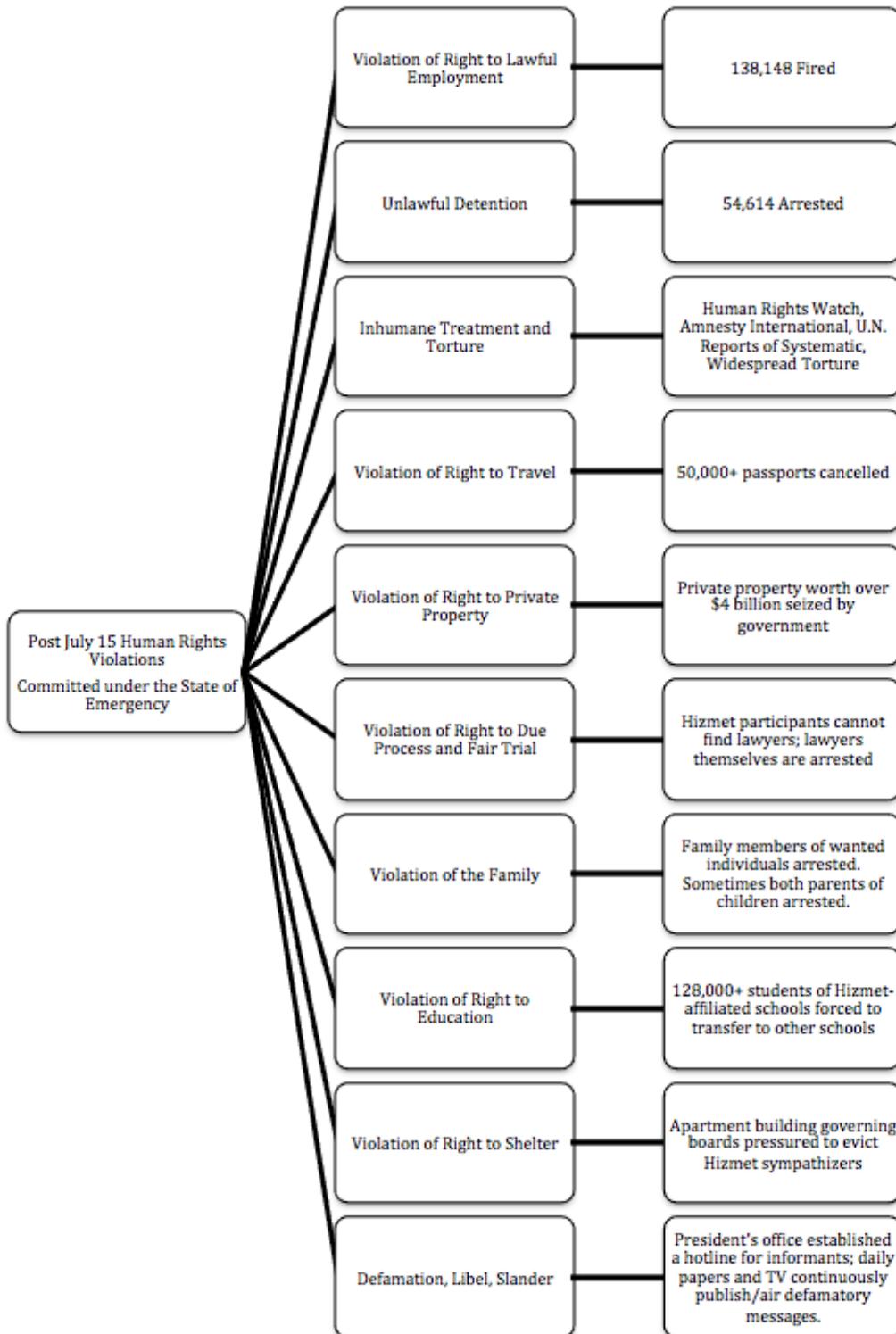
APPENDIX D: Excerpt from Report by U.K. House of Commons on U.K. Turkish Relations¹⁵⁰

“Given the brutality of the events of 15 July, the severity of the charges made against the Gülenists, and the scale of the purges of perceived Gülenists that has been justified on this basis, there is a relative lack of hard, publicly-available evidence to prove that the Gülenists as an organisation were responsible for the coup attempt in Turkey. While there is evidence to indicate that some individual Gülenists were involved, it is mostly anecdotal or circumstantial, sometimes premised on information from confessions or informants, and is—so far—inconclusive in relation to the organisation as a whole or its leadership. As we publish this report, nine months after the coup attempt, neither the UK nor Turkish governments can point us to one person who has been found guilty by a court of involvement in the coup attempt, let alone anyone being found guilty with evidence of involvement with Gülenist motives. We also note that, despite Turkey purportedly submitting 80 boxes of ‘evidence’ to the US to achieve the extradition of Fethullah Gülen on the basis that he masterminded the coup attempt, the US judiciary has not yet moved to deport him.”

Appendix E: Categories of Human Rights Abuses under the State of Emergency Following July 15

In total, 500,650 citizens were investigated for alleged association with the Hizmet movement, of whom 96,885 were arrested. Literally all institutions associated with the Hizmet movement were shut down. The categories and numbers of institutions shut down by Erdogan gives a good summary of the areas in which the Hizmet movement has been active during the five decades prior to 2016: 3,003 educational institutions were shut down, including hundreds of private K-12 schools and 15 universities. These closures forced 128,000 students to relocate to other schools, sometimes facing bullying and other forms of abuses in their new schools. Many of the Hizmet-affiliated schools known for their secular curriculum and success in science education were converted into religious schools. Thirty-five hospitals were shut down, resulting in hundreds of doctors and nurses losing their jobs and patients having to be transferred to other hospitals. The humanitarian relief organization Kimse Yok Mu, which helped the victims of every major disaster around the world, with an annual budget of around \$50 million, was also shut down. Intellectual organizations such as the Foundation of Journalists and Writers, a pioneer in rekindling the spirit of interfaith dialogue and respect in the mid-1990s was closed. Professional organizations with thousands of members from among physicians, healthcare professionals, teachers, and engineers were not only shut down, but membership in these associations were later used in courts as evidence of “membership in a terrorist organization.”

Among the targets of the purges were the organizers of the International Festival of Language and Culture¹⁵¹ which brought together students from more than 150 countries in events dedicated to the celebration of linguistic and artistic diversity in the world and to the promotion of global human solidarity. Having been banned in Turkey, the organization relocated to the United States and has been organizing smaller-scale events in several countries since then¹⁵².



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142. <http://beforeitsnews.com/alternative/2016/07/report-british-intel-proves-erdogan-staged-the-turkey-coup-will-blame-gulens-hizmet-sack-millions-3390262.html>
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- 145 <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/turkey-kurdish-politicians-face-up-143-years-jail.html>
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- 147 <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2016/08/04/mystery-turkeys-failed-coup>
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- 149 Original: "Dinlenmeleri halinde darbeye ilgili pek çok noktayı açığa çıkartacak kişiler çağrılmadı. AKP bu komisyonu belli ki darbeyi açığa çıkarmak gibi bir amaçla kurdurmamıştı. Bir tür darbe hikayesi kurguladılar. Bir anlatısı vardı AKP'nin darbeye ilişkin. Bu anlatıyı destekleyecek çalışma bekliyorlardı. Neydi bu anlatı; 15 Temmuz darbesi Gülen cemaatine mensup subaylar tarafından organize edilmiş, hayata geçirilmiştir. Bütün sorumluluk, bütün planlar Gülen cemaatine aittir... Darbeye kalkışanların siyasi bağlantıları, Gülencilerin sayısı, cemaat dışından ne kadar kişinin katıldığı gibi sorular

hiçbir şekilde tartışılmadı. AKP'nin anlatısı, darbe sonrasında ilişkin siyasi stratejisi bu soruları mümkün olduğunca sordurmamaktı. Böyle bir stratejinin doğal sonucu olarak darbeye kimlerin rol aldığı, siyasi ayağının ve amacının ne olduğunun ortaya çıkmasını istemediler. AKP kendi anlatısına uygun bir çalışma için komisyonu araçsallaştırdı." "Bize göre AKP yönetimi, başta Cumhurbaşkanı darbe girişiminden belli bir süre önce haberdar olmuşlardı. Cumhurbaşkanı ve ekibinin darbeye haberi vardı. Darbe girişimini önceden engellemek yerine yol verdiler darbecilere. Onların darbe girişimine başlamasına izin verdiler, imkan tanıdılar. Darbe gecesi darbecileri kısıvrak yakalamaktı amaçları. Sadece bundan da ibaret değil. Cumhurbaşkanı 'Bu bize Allahın bir lütfü' derken darbe gecesi sonrasında ilişkin stratejisini net bir biçimde açığa vuruyordu. Darbeyi fırsat olarak kullandılar ve karşı darbe gerçekleştirdiler."

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcaff/615/615.pdf>

¹⁵¹ <http://www.intflc.org>

¹⁵² <http://internationalfestival.us>

TURKEY'S POST-COUP CRACKDOWN

500,650

INVESTIGATED

96,885

ARRESTED

6,021

ACADEMICS LOST
JOBS

3,003

SCHOOLS,
DORMITORIES AND
UNIVERSITIES
SHUT DOWN

4,463

JUDGES,
PROSECUTORS
DISMISSED

319

JOURNALISTS
ARRESTED

189

MEDIA OUTLETS
SHUT DOWN

150,348

DISMISSED

SINCE JULY 15, 2016

Source: www.turkeypurge.com
as of March 4, 2019

Alliance for
Shared Values

