



Civilian Actors in the Turkish Military Drama of July 2016

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Wayward elements of the Turkish armed forces, on the night of Friday 15 July 2016, blocked access to the Bosphorus Bridge and Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge, severing Turkey's Asian and European territories, and deployed in critical locations in Ankara and Istanbul.¹ These same elements fired on protestors who had swarmed the streets in confrontation with the coup perpetrators. The conspirators' immediate aim was to unseat President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (apparently while he was on vacation in Marmaris).² Violence was in evidence as loyal police officers fought back; pro-coup helicopters fired on crowds of Turkish citizens and targeted the parliament building, where a lawmaker died; tanks rolled over demonstrators, crushing them; and a military helicopter attacked Ankara's police headquarters.³ Rebel soldiers overran the state broadcaster but it was back on air after hours of silence.⁴

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¹ Tim Arango and Ceylan Yeginsu, "Turkish President Returns to Istanbul in Sign Military Coup Is Faltering," *The New York Times*, 15 July 2016, http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/07/16/world/europe/military-attempts-coup-in-turkey-prime-minister-says.html?_r=2&referer=https://www.google.com/ [accessed 15 July 2016]; *Al Jazeera*, "Turkey prime minister says coup attempt foiled," 15 July 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/07/turkey-military-blocks-bridges-istanbul-160715195444742.html> [accessed 16 July 2016]; Erin Cunningham, Liz Sly and Zeynep Karatas, "Erdogan says his government is in control after bloody coup attempt in Turkey," *The Washington Post*, 16 July 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/turkeys-prime-minister-says-military-attempted-coup-against-government/2016/07/15/1709b04a-4ac6-11e6-8dac-0c6e4acc5b1_story.html [accessed 16 July 2016].

² It is possible the armed forces tried to assassinate Erdogan—which means they knew the dangers of allowing him enough space to speak to Turkish crowds. Proponents of this theory note a bomb detonated in Marmaris that night. Erdogan himself said it seemed the rebel military faction had thought he was there and tried to assassinate him. See Arango and Yeginsu, "Turkish President Returns to Istanbul in Sign Military Coup Is Faltering."

³ Cunningham, Sly and Karatas, "Erdogan says his government is in control after bloody coup attempt in Turkey," and *Al Jazeera*, "Turkey prime minister says coup attempt foiled."

⁴ While this article primarily deals with the civilian side of the coup equation, I acknowledge that the coup's failure is due in part to the loyalty of police and other security officials; the loyalty to the current regime of factions within the military, or "anti-coup" military groups; and to operational mistakes the perpetrators committed, such as leaving Erdogan enough space to address Turkish Islamists and request their help. In short, I do not claim coup success or failure is caused by only

President Erdogan cut his vacation short and flew to Istanbul airport amongst a din of gunfire and explosions to greet the cheering crowds who had gathered at Ataturk Airport.⁵ The coup was dead shortly after it began. The perpetrators' failure, however, can teach scholars and policy-makers a great deal about military takeovers—from their start to finish.

This article examines three questions about a single theme, which is the role that civilians play in the drama of the military *coup d'état*. First, what part, if any, did civilians play in encouraging or orchestrating the Turkish coup? Civilian actors and military officers do not always have divergent interests. That is, it is sometimes in a civilian politician's interest to encourage the military to take out his/her political adversaries.⁶ Second, what was the civilian contribution to preventing the coup attempt's success? Third and finally, how can we expect civilians to react to coups in different institutional and social environments, starting with the Turkish case?

Civilian Coups?

At face value, the Turkish coup seems to be of a more standard variety, meaning it fits the conventional story of the coup. A clique of disgruntled officers attempted to usurp power⁷ in the name of state and national progress. The question of whether or not civilian political actors had any hand in the 15 July affair does not have a clear answer. While the main accusations, that Gülen had instigated the coup, came from Erdogan and the Turkish state, some inconclusive evidence has been floated in Middle East focused news outlets that Fethullah Gülen was somehow involved in the attempted takeover. While this allegation should be considered cautiously, it indicates that it is not entirely inconceivable that civilians encourage or participate in coups. Indeed, civilians encouraged or took part in coups in the historical record, such as in Ecuador in 1963 and in Syria during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.⁸

civil resistance to the conspirators. For instance, prior to the coup Erdogan had friends in the security services monitoring "cells" of potential conspirators, and members of the law enforcement were also largely loyal to Erdogan during the attempted *coup d'état*. See, for instance, Ben Hubbard, Tim Arango, and Ceylan Yeginsu, "Failed Turkish Coup Accelerated a Purge Years in the Making," *The New York Times*, 22 July 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/23/world/middleeast/failed-turkish-coup-accelerated-a-purge-years-in-the-making.html> [accessed 12 September 2016]. These groups' loyalty to Erdogan certainly gave the perpetrators trouble when they attempted the coup.

⁵ Arango and Yeginsu, "Turkish President Returns to Istanbul in Sign Military Coup Is Faltering." See also David Kenner and David Francis, "Erdogan Flies to Istanbul, Declares Coup Dead, and Vows Payback," *Foreign Policy*, 15 July 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/15/heres-what-we-know-about-the-attempted-coup-in-turkey/> [accessed 21 August 2016].

⁶ Little, if any, research exists on this specific point. Secondary stories, such as that in Nabil M. Kaylani, "The Rise of the Syrian Ba'th, 1940-1958: Political Success, Party Failure," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3:1 (1972), pp. 3-23, offer examples of the manifestations of these convergent interests. Because of the lack of theoretical research on that topic, this is in fact the subject of my doctoral dissertation.

⁷ Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962).

⁸ On Ecuador, see Martin C. Needler, "Ecuador, 1963," in *The Politics of the Coup D'Etat*, ed. by William G. Andrews and Uri Ra'anan (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1969). Right-wing party the ARNE had been staging fake communist terrorist attacks to provoke the military into a coup against the perceived-to-be-communist President Arosemena. At the same time the Conservative Party and the Social Christians began to make suggestions to the military about communist infiltration into their ranks. Moreover, the magazine *La Calle* had been urging the military to takeover and form a junta with members from all three branches of the armed forces, and take supreme powers. Most shockingly, Needler writes, "The Right was not confining its activities to working on public opinion through the general communications media, however; after the failure of the previous December's petition for a special session of Congress to debate the impeachment of the President, Conservative political leaders had begun direct conversations with military officers to urge the desirability of a military assumption of power" (p. 21). On Syria see, for instance, Kaylani, "The Rise of the Syrian Ba'th, 1940-1958." Kaylani especially provides excellent information on a political actor named Akram Hawrani (SSNP/Ba'ath Party) who was deeply involved with military coups in the 1940s-1960s.

For Fethullah Gülen's story, the most convincing piece of evidence, so far, came from the *Middle East Eye*. The *MEE* alleged Mohammad Dahlan—a Palestinian political actor who keeps a close relationship with Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan—indeed “transferred money to the plotters in Turkey” and that “in the weeks before the coup attempt [... he] communicated with Fethullah Gulen, the cleric alleged by Turkey to have masterminded the plot, via a Palestinian businessman based in the US.”⁹ The UAE is therefore also implicated in the event,¹⁰ but distanced itself from Dahlan following the attempt. Even if the charge is accurate, this is not implicating proof. Gülen may have met with Dahlan about an unrelated subject. Again, the evidence does not provide a direct link between the coup's timing and Gülen's authority over the perpetrators.

Still, Gülen had both an interest in ousting Erdogan and some power to do so. Gülen and Erdogan, once political allies, became bitter enemies after a corruption scandal rocked Turkey's political elite and President Erdogan charged Gülen with spearheading the investigation through the latter's network in the police and judiciary.¹¹ The corruption scandal exposed and widened a split between the two men, whereby Gülen attempted to gain electorally for his Hizmet Party at the expense of Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP).¹² Gülen denounced Erdogan's response to the investigation—which the current President called a “dirty operation”—which was to purge the police and judiciary of Gülen supporters.¹³ Adding to the rift, “years of disagreements between the two men spilled out into the open over a government plan to abolish private ‘prep’ schools—including those run by Gulen's Hizmet movement.”¹⁴

Gülen and his Hizmet movement, according to the *Washington Post*, have connections in the judiciary and police, that allows the cleric added influence in the country from his self-exile in Pennsylvania.¹⁵ Gülen indeed had followers in the police and judiciary (one of the reasons Erdogan blamed him for “concocting” a graft investigation against the police). Erdogan did not blame a random political rival for the attempt, but rather a civilian with deep connections in the state—connections that likely had some capacity to influence events on the ground in Turkey.

⁹ David Hearst, “EXCLUSIVE: UAE ‘funnelled money to Turkish coup plotters,’” *Middle East Eye*, 29 July 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/exclusive-uae-funnelled-money-turkish-coup-plotters-21441671> [accessed 30 July 2016].

¹⁰ The United Arab Emirates' (UAE) motive for supporting such a coup is unclear (Gülen's is much clearer, to be detailed in the text). Sources for *MEE* claim UAE officials dislike Erdogan personally. That does not explain the decision to oust him from power. It is possible that Turkish-UAE relations deteriorated as a result of differences over their involvement in the Syrian civil war, which began in 2011 and has seen proxy efforts by parties inside and outside the region, like Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members, Turkey, Jordan, Israel, the United States, and Russia. See Hearst, “EXCLUSIVE: UAE ‘funnelled money to Turkish coup plotters.’”

¹¹ Arango and Yeginsu, “Turkish President Returns to Istanbul in Sign Military Coup Is Faltering.”

¹² Humeyra Pamuk and Andrew Heavens, “Dozens of police officers ousted as corruption scandal roils Turkey's elite,” *NBC News*, 22 December 2013, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/dozens-police-officers-ousted-corruption-scandal-roils-turkeys-elite-f2D11791467> [accessed 18 July 2016]. I should note that Gülen denied all involvement in the corruption scandal.

¹³ *Reuters*, “Extradite Exiled Cleric Fethullah Gulen to Turkey, Erdogan says,” *NBC News*, 29 April 2014, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/extradite-exiled-cleric-fethullah-gulen-turkey-erdogan-says-n92226> [accessed 19 July 2016].

¹⁴ Elisha Fieldstadt and *Reuters*, “U.S.-Based Cleric Fethullah Gulen Blamed by Erdogan in Turkey Coup Bid,” *NBC News*, 16 July 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/turkey-military-coup/who-u-s-based-cleric-fethullah-gulen-blamed-turkey-coup-n610681> [accessed 17 July 2016].

¹⁵ Valerie Strauss, “Fethullah Gulen: The Islamic scholar Turkey blames for the failed coup,” *The Washington Post*, 16 July 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/07/16/fethullah-gulen-the-islamic-scholar-turkey-blames-for-failed-coup/> [accessed 16 July 2016].

Gülen denied involvement in the events of 15/16 July,¹⁶ but he did not suggest any absurdity in accusations of a civilian holding convergent interests with secular, anti-Erdogan officers. (Although, to be sure, he did mention civilian suffering under military juntas in his rejoinder to the accusations.) Gülen said via email that, “As someone who suffered under multiple military coups during the past five decades, it is especially insulting to be accused of having any link to such an attempt.”¹⁷ Moreover, the pro-Gülen organization Alliance for Shared Values condemned the attempt to oust Erdogan, stating that, “For more than 40 years, Fethullah Gülen and Hizmet participants have advocated for, and demonstrated their commitment to, peace and democracy. We have consistently denounced military interventions in domestic politics. These are core values of Hizmet participants. We condemn any military intervention in domestic politics of Turkey.”¹⁸ His message was clear: civilians make democracy and the military subverts it. Civilians do not subvert democracy, so Gülen must have been innocent.

Civilian Actors during the Coup

Gülen might very well have had nothing to do with the attempted takeover in July, but civilians definitely played a role in thwarting the coup. This section encourages an avenue for future research on the ability of civilians to turn-back coup plotters with civil resistance;¹⁹ it is therefore about coup success. A recent *Newsweek* article pointedly states:

The simple answer of whether or not a military coup was successful is if there was displacement of the previous authorities (preferably with all limbs and vital organs intact) and a failure of any organized resistance to manifest—either organized by the deposed regime or an unhappy civilian populace.²⁰

The coup failed. The regime was not deposed, but was the target for ouster. Moreover, an unhappy civilian populace mobilized to face down the military. *Newsweek* here suggests, at least partly, that the resistance or opposition by civilians affects a coup’s chances for success. Scholars usually do not study extra-military reasons for coup failures/successes as much as the inner-workings of the

¹⁶ Alistair Bell and Mary Milliken, “Group close to Gulen denies involvement in Turkey coup bid,” *Reuters*, 15 July 2016, <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN0ZV2YW> [accessed 17 July 2016].

¹⁷ As quoted in Arango and Yeginsu, “Turkish President Returns to Istanbul in Sign Military Coup Is Faltering.”

¹⁸ Fieldstadt and *Reuters*, “U.S.-Based Cleric Fethullah Gulen Blamed by Erdogan in Turkey Coup Bid.”

¹⁹ This is probably completely free of violence only in the rarest cases. The regrettable cost to human life when confronting a violent takeover of government is probably almost unavoidable. I do not intend to paint a rosy picture of collective political action. Indeed, reports suggest upwards of 200 people, and wounded thousands in the streets of Istanbul and Ankara in protest at the attempted takeover in July. There action is commendable, as there are more than a few cases in which military juntas take thousands of lives successfully while assuming the reigns of power. One such case is Augusto Pinochet’s brutal military rule in Chile in the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, the harsh reaction by the regime following an unsuccessful coup is always a worry. Erdogan has already faced criticism from rights groups about treatment of political prisoners implicated in the attempted takeover. Reports just one day after the coup had documented 2,839 officers and foot soldiers in detention as well as close to 3,000 prosecutors and judges. See David Dolan and Gulsen Solaker, “Turkey rounds up plot suspects after thwarting coup against Erdogan,” *Reuters*, 16 July 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-primeminister-idUSKCN0ZV2HK> [accessed on 17 July 2016]. The documentation of abuses committed against those detained were soon to follow. See *Amnesty International*, “The aftermath of the failed Turkey coup: Torture, beatings and rape,” 25 July 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/aftermath-failed-turkey-coup-torture-beatings-and-rape> [accessed 25 July 2016].

²⁰ *Quora*, “Quora Question: What Makes A Military Coup Successful?” *Newsweek*, 30 July 2016, <http://europe.newsweek.com/quora-question-what-makes-military-coup-successful-484330?rm=eu> [accessed on 30 July 2016].

operations.²¹ Most tend to focus on the military's planning or capabilities, and the conduct of the subversive operations.²² Some, however, have indeed studied this problem.²³ A dated study (1975) in fact suggested civil disobedience as a form of opposition to governmental vulnerability to *coups d'état*.²⁴ More recently, a student of military politics wrote in the *Washington Post* that Twitter and other social media affect coup failure.²⁵ The author offered Timur Kuran's influential study on civilian willingness to engage in protest in combination with Naunihal Singh's work on coup success/failure. This is a welcome effort to add to Adam Roberts' early study on civil resistance and coup success.²⁶

From the non-military side of the equation, Kuran argues that civilians are willing to hit the streets based on an internal calculation that combines risk and willingness to publicly falsify (or hide) their true feelings. During coup attempts, bodily risk is crucial—Turkey in July as *testimonium*. If civilian politicians can speak directly to their followers, demonstrate they are safe from harm, and convince the masses the coup is failing, then people may be more willing to confront tanks and guns. On the other hand, if the coup conspirators convince the population that they are fully in control then the masses may hide their true feelings about the junta and stay indoors to avoid injury or death.

From the military faction's side of the equation, Singh argues that during military takeovers, projecting success is as important as actual success.²⁷ If the coup's operatives can project their triumph—even if such a claim is wildly off the mark²⁸—they are more likely to succeed in reality. This is why, and the July coup plotters in Turkey are no exception, that gaining access to media platforms are always part of the plot.²⁹ While the perpetrators were able to takeover state media, they were not able to stop people—including Erdogan himself—from using social media, and private outlets continued coverage. Singh's and Kuran's approaches combined tell us that civil-resistance could be a game civilian politicians and the coup operatives play to “win” the consent of the

²¹ Above, I acknowledged the force of explanations that focus on the military operation itself when explaining success and failure of coups. I instead opted to focus on the civilian side of the equation for the sake of this essay. To be sure, loyal police, loyal and alert security services, anti-coup factions of the military and other factors helped the conspiracy itself to failure. Here, my goal is to merely emphasize a too often neglected set of factors, all of which are related to civil resistance.

²² For an argument about increased military capabilities—via largesse as a “coup-proofing” strategy—leading to a higher probability of success, see Jonathan Powell, “Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups d'état,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 56:6 (2012), pp. 1017-1040. See also Adam Roberts, “Civil Resistance to Military Coups,” *Journal of Peace Research*, 12:1 (1975), 19-36.

²³ For an analysis of how the media can connect elites and populaces to see how protests interact with coups—despite the analysis deals with protests preceding coups—see Brett Allen Casper and Scott A. Tyson, “Popular Protest and Elite Coordination in a Coup d'état,” unpublished paper, <http://home.uchicago.edu/styson/COUPFINALCOPYCOMPLETE.pdf> [accessed 28 July 2016].

²⁴ Roberts, “Civil Resistance to Military Coups.”

²⁵ I approach “new media” and “technological” arguments with caution. However, it does seem to have mattered in Turkey that the perpetrators could not centrally claim authority from state media because private media and personal media disrupted their message. In tandem with Naunihal Singh's message that coup perpetrators must display success, it seems Twitter and other social media had diffused the nodes of power involved in fostering legitimacy in a political system. This, then, only facilitates civil resistance to political violence like coups.

²⁶ Roberts, “Civil Resistance to Military Coups.”

²⁷ Naunihal Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

²⁸ Perhaps the perpetrators are actually failing, or it is simply too early on in the *coup d'état* operation to gauge success, but the conspirators claim success anyway as part of a strategy to demonstrate authority.

²⁹ Timur Kuran, “Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989,” *World Politics*, 44:1 (1991), 7-48.

masses.³⁰

The Turkish attempt is an exemplary case of civilian actors doing a better job than the perpetrators at convincing the masses of their governmental authority. After 15 July, civilian actors across the political spectrum—whether members of the opposition (including Gülen) or supporters of Erdogan and the AKP—unequivocally voiced their objection to the military intervention. One Turkish paper reported that Turkey was “united” following the attempt.³¹ Every political party condemned the coup attempt,³² which was striking to some, given Erdogan and the AKP’s autocratic rule.³³ Opposition leaders repeated the line. “This country has suffered a lot from coups,” said the leader of the secular Republican People’s Party (CHP) Kemal Kilicdaroglu. “It should be known that the CHP fully depends on the free will of the people as indispensable of our parliamentary democracy.”³⁴ The point all politicians made was simple: Erdogan may have autocratic tendencies, but a military coup is a quicker path to autocracy.

The conspirators may have succeeded if they had arrested Erdogan—shut him off and shut him up—and other politicians. He was instead able to issue a statement from the airport at which he landed to encourage the masses to take to the streets—a turning point for the failure of the coup.³⁵ Erdogan had even urged people to the streets with his FaceTime application on his iPhone. “There is no power higher than the power of the people... Let them do what they will at public squares and airports.”³⁶ The mosque loudspeakers echoed Erdogan’s pleas by urging supporters into Turkey’s public space.³⁷ Turkey’s Islamist crowds listened and took to the streets in opposition, hassling the conspirators and complicating their plans. Eventually, images of soldiers abandoning their tanks to flag waving civilians made international news.³⁸

For those who view the military side of the equation, the perpetrators were unable to convince the public and the politicians they were in charge. Seen this way, the military takeover failed. For those concerned with civil resistance, the public succeeded. Seen this way, a critical aspect of the coup’s failure was the fact that the Turkish crowds were more willing to overpower the military, which did not anticipate the prospect of civil (Islamist) resistance and, therefore, was unprepared to use extensive force against unarmed Turkish civilians. Researchers of civil-military relations can combine these two seemingly divergent perspectives as written above—and like Roberts suggested in 1975.

³⁰ It’s worth noting that I have no evidence that the coup plotters had certain expectations or lacked expectations about civil resistance. Many of these plotters are in jail, and so access to their side of the story is limited. Regardless of whether or not they did or could have planned for such resistance, the outcome is what matters: Islamists confronted the coup perpetrators and disrupted the latter’s plans.

³¹ Bulent Uzun, “Turkey unites amid failed coup attempt,” *Anadolu Agency*, 16 July 2016, <http://aa.com.tr/en/anadolu-post/turkey-unites-amid-failed-coup-attempt/608736> [accessed 18 July 2016].

³² *ITV*, “Turkey opposition denounces coup attempt,” 18 July 2016, <http://www.itv.com/news/update/2016-07-16/turkey-opposition-denounces-coup-attempt/> [accessed 20 July 2016].

³³ Yüksel Sezgin, “How Erdogan’s anti-democratic government made Turkey ripe for unrest,” *The Washington Post*, 16 July 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/07/16/how-erdogans-anti-democratic-government-made-turkey-ripe-for-unrest/> [accessed 25 July 2016].

³⁴ Arango and Yeginsu, “Turkish President Returns to Istanbul in Sign Military Coup Is Faltering.”

³⁵ *The Wall Street Journal*, “Live Updates: Failed Coup in Turkey,” 15 July 2016, <http://blogs.wsj.com/dispatch/2016/07/15/live-updates-coup-in-turkey/?mod=e2tw> [accessed 22 July 2016].

³⁶ As quoted in Arango and Yeginsu, “Turkish President Returns to Istanbul in Sign Military Coup Is Faltering.”

³⁷ Arango and Yeginsu, “Turkish President Returns to Istanbul in Sign Military Coup Is Faltering.”

³⁸ Arango and Yeginsu, “Turkish President Returns to Istanbul in Sign Military Coup Is Faltering.”

The Turkish Case is not Unique

Examples of civil resistance thwarting coups outside of Turkey are on offer. As the Soviet Union unraveled in the early 1990s, Boris Yeltsin stood atop a tank in defiance as a putsch failed in front of international TV cameras. Yeltsin did not defeat the coup single-handedly, but he held the megaphone that encouraged opposition to the coup attempt. Large portions of the armed forces refused to violently suppress the dissenting crowds as demonstrations roared.

Before the USSR's rise and fall, there was the Kornilov Affair. Unrest ensued only months after the Tsar was overthrown in Russia's February 1917 Revolution. During that tumultuous period, the Commander in Chief of the Army, General L. G. Kornilov, staged a coup aimed at the Provisional Government. Alexander Kerensky, who headed that government, rallied the Russian people to oppose the operation. "The majority of the population rallied to the support of the Provisional Government and the Soviets," writes Harvey Asher, "*thereby dooming Kornilov's enterprise to failure.*"³⁹ The affair is a profound example of how civil resistance can push back coup conspirators.⁴⁰

In Germany, the 13 March 1920 Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch, carried out by Lieutenant-General Von Lüttwitz and installing Dr. Wolfgang Kapp—an extreme nationalist—failed when crowds of Germans flooded the streets in response to the government's request for a general strike.⁴¹ Members of the bureaucracy refused orders from the putschists. Secretaries refused to type proclamations for the conspirators. Politicians of the *ancien régime* escaped their offices before the coup perpetrators found them, thus avoiding arrest (*a la* Erdogan and Yeltsin). They established an alternate base of legitimacy with a sitting government at Stuttgart. Detractors might argue violence would have crushed the resistance. The putsch, however, was not peaceful; the perpetrators of the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch killed hundreds—like in Ankara and Istanbul in July.⁴²

Loyalist soldiers in Ethiopia influenced inhabitants of Addis Adaba by distributing leaflets, with the support of the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Church, in the capital after an attempted coup in 1960. In the papers, the anti-coup soldiers urged loyalty to Haile Selassie. Ethiopians subsequently demonstrated in support of the loyalists. This was an effective counter-measure to demonstrations by university students in support of the coup.⁴³ The attempted takeover is interesting because the conspirators believed student support had secured their success for the operation. The loyalists, for their part, made an attempt to secure their own piece of legitimacy by garnering support among the capital's residents. Clearly, these soldiers knew the power of civilian support. This is reminiscent of the 2011/2013 Egyptian coups, in which popular support not only allowed, but encouraged the military to oust unpopular leaders in Hosni Mubarak and Mohammed Morsi, respectively.

In 1961, a quartet of officers who were opposed to Charles de Gaulle's reversal on French policy toward *Algérie Française*, threatened a takeover. The coup began in Algiers and ended in Paris. The First Foreign Legion Parachute Regiment first seized power of the Algerian capital. A parallel takeover was in the planning for the French capital. Back in Paris, De Gaulle delivered a

³⁹ Harvey Asher, "The Kornilov Affair: A Reinterpretation," *The Russian Review*, 29:3 (1970), 286.

⁴⁰ Roberts, "Civil Resistance to Military Coups."

⁴¹ Roberts, "Civil Resistance to Military Coups."

⁴² Roberts, "Civil Resistance to Military Coups."

⁴³ Christopher Clapham, "The Ethiopian Coup d'Etat of December 1960," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 6:4 (1968), 495-507.

speech directed at the French armed forces and the French populace. He called, in particular, on Frenchmen to “help” him.⁴⁴ After De Gaulle’s broadcast, Prime Minister M. Debré issued his own, in which he told the French people, “From midnight, take-offs and landings at all airports in the Paris region are forbidden. As soon as the sirens sound, go there, by foot or by car, to convince the mistaken soldiers of their huge error.”⁴⁵ Conscript soldiers refused the conniving officers’ orders and a round of “vigorous” civil disobedience began, which involved a general strike called for by French trade unions in direct response to De Gaulle’s broadcast. The power of civil opposition foiled the perpetrators’ plans.

The above should suffice to receive a warrant for additional research. The empirical record should be evaluated more thoroughly. An understanding of the dynamics of civil resistance *vis-à-vis* coup operatives exacts an updated theoretical and empirical literature. For example it is possible, in that context, that social media has empowered civilians in the face of coups because they are more capable to quickly project failure of coups through social media.⁴⁶ This can be folded into a theory that combines non-military and military factors to explain coup success/failure, like the theoretical account provided above.

To be sure, researchers must study success and failure *vis-à-vis* civilian opposition systematically. Such a study would not be able to rely merely on affirmative evidence. Rather, scholars of this topic might consider surveying all cases of coup failure within a certain time period (for instance, 1945-1990) to see how often civilians resisted those coups and how influential that resistance was in their failure. This would involve a lot of qualitative research prior to statistical formulations. Researchers in the field of civil-military relations should be up to the challenge, for this would be a finding policy-makers would be interested to learn. Even a moderate finding in support of this theory may help politicians lording over restive militaries sleep better at night.

Civilian Actors after the Coup

What happens after a coup? It depends on political circumstances prior to the coup and whether or not the coup was successful. Even before the attempted coup in Turkey, scholars interested in the country and in democratization were concerned about an authoritarian slide under Erdogan and the AKP.⁴⁷ Such a slide confounded pundits because Turkey did not fit the empirical record on per capita GDP and authoritarianism. The Republic was too well-off economically to be sliding “backward” toward authoritarianism. To spite this, scholars argued Erdogan was moving Turkey

⁴⁴ Charles De Gaulle, “Message radiodiffusé et télévisé,” *L’Institut National De L’Audiovisuel*, 23 April 1961, <http://www.ina.fr/video/CAF88026998/message-radiodiffuse-et-televiser-video.html> [accessed 26 July 2016].

⁴⁵ As quoted in Roberts, “Civil Resistance to Military Coups,” 26.

⁴⁶ Joshua Tucker, “Tweeting Turkey, or how social media may have fundamentally changed the future of coups,” *The Washington Post*, 19 July 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/07/19/tweeting-turkey-or-how-social-media-may-have-fundamentally-changed-the-future-of-coups/?wpisrc=nl_cage&wpmm=1 [accessed 20 July 2016].

⁴⁷ See for instance Yüksel Sezgin, “Why is Tunisian democracy succeeding while the Turkish model is failing?” *The Washington Post*, 8 November 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/11/08/why-is-tunisian-democracy-succeeding-while-the-turkish-model-is-failing/> [accessed 23 July 2016] and Jason Brownlee, “Why Turkey’s authoritarian descent shakes up democratic theory,” *The Washington Post*, 23 March 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/23/why-turkeys-authoritarian-descent-shakes-up-democratic-theory/> [accessed 19 July 2016].

toward competitive authoritarianism in the least.⁴⁸

Not everyone agrees that prior to the coup, Erdogan was bolstering the authority of the presidential institution. Some have argued, for instance, the secular-Islamist divide is too simplistic. Focusing on a referendum about “court-packing,” Asli Bali argues Erdogan’s amendment to the constitution was actually a step toward correcting the ills of a prior coup-era (the 1980 takeover) constitution.⁴⁹ After all, it was the 1982 constitution the military junta promulgated that gave the president extensive powers.

Gamze Çavdar suggests the opposition is the real culprit for propagating a vision of Erdogan’s “moderate” Islamist party, the AKP, as something other than moderate. The President’s critics charge his moderate stance is a “cover” for something darker and more Islamic. His actions, that is, aren’t what they are criticizing,⁵⁰ but rather his perceived future actions. Within the context of this criticism of Erdogan, scholars like Kerem Öktem write that Kemalists still demonstrate contempt for the masses. The basic story is that *hoi polloi* must be acted for, because they cannot act for themselves. If the AKP is winning, then, it is because the masses do not know what is good for them. Öktem’s analysis echoed a CHP deputy’s remarks, following the 2007 elections, where he said the people have done something “illogical,” i.e., Islamism is irrational.⁵¹

The question here is not whether Erdogan is a staunch Islamist, but whether or not he is a democrat. Even before the coup, there were examples of autocratic behavior. Erdogan issued an amendment to the constitution that would remove parliamentary immunity for 140 parliamentarians. The move, according to Yuksel Sezgin, was intended to “expel” Kurdish MPs. Erdogan had academics and intellectuals arrested for signing petitions *vis-à-vis* Turkish military action against the Kurdish regions.⁵² After a campaign of fear mongering and violence, Erdogan’s party regained its electoral majority in November 2015.⁵³ Early in 2016, Turkish governmental authorities seized control of *Zaman* newspaper, an opposition newspaper critical of the government. The authorities claimed *Zaman* was loyal to Gülen.⁵⁴ After Erdogan refused to recognize a loss in the election of 2015 for his AKP, many Turks no longer believed it was possible to remove Erdogan from power via democratic means.⁵⁵

The post-coup civilian behavior in the Turkish case is especially interesting because, while we should be optimistic about Turkey’s democratic credos given the bi-partisan opposition⁵⁶ to the foiled coup—especially for a country in which the armed forces’ interventions have been openly

⁴⁸ On competitive authoritarianism, see Steven Levitsky and Lucien A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁴⁹ Asli Bali, “Unpacking Turkey’s ‘Court-Packing’ Referendum,” *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 5 November 2010, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero110510> [accessed 18 July 2016].

⁵⁰ Gamze Çavdar, “Behind Turkey’s Presidential Battle,” *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 7 May 2007, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero050707> [accessed 4 August 2016].

⁵¹ Kerem Öktem, “Harbingers of Turkey’s Second Republic,” *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 1 August 2007, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero080107> [accessed 6 August 2016].

⁵² *Human Rights Watch*, “Turkey: Academics Jailed For Signing Petition,” 16 March 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/16/turkey-academics-jailed-signing-petition> [accessed 5 August 2016].

⁵³ Sezgin, “How Erdogan’s anti-democratic government made Turkey ripe for unrest.”

⁵⁴ *NBC News*, “Turkey Seizes Opposition Newspaper in Growing Crackdown,” 4 March 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/turkey-seizes-opposition-newspaper-growing-crackdown-n532241> [accessed 9 August 2016].

⁵⁵ Sezgin, “How Erdogan’s anti-democratic government made Turkey ripe for unrest.”

⁵⁶ To be sure, one strong reason we should not be optimistic is because these opposition parties—when it seemed the coup was doomed to failure—likely had no choice but to show support for the regime, lest they face negative repercussions for standing with conspirators.

partisan (in favor of the CHP)—at the same time there exists serious concern about Erdogan’s attempts to garner power. The latter are dominating the discussion, not democratic triumphalism. There is good reason to be concerned about human rights and democracy in Turkey following the *coup d’état*.

Here is what we know about Erdogan’s maneuvers since the failed takeover. The President immediately issued a three-month state of emergency⁵⁷—despite the utter and complete failure of the coup. He then began purging. By the Sunday following the coup, more than 6,000 people had been rounded up. The purge happened so quickly that some in the European Union suggested the lists were pre-prepared.⁵⁸ The purges were wider than merely military personnel (10,012 soldiers were detained). An additional 9,000 police officers were purged; 21,000 private school teachers were “suspended”; 2,745 from the judiciary were “suspended”; 21,700 were fired from the Ministry of Education; 1,500 university deans were removed under the regime’s duress; and over 1,500 officials from the Ministry of Finance were purged.⁵⁹ President Erdogan also purged educational institutions, the media, and police. This should alarm anyone concerned with the prospects for free and fair elections in Turkey. The educational purge resulted in the dismissal of the dean of every university in the country.⁶⁰ With such a move, Erdogan further extended his reach into the university system.

Civilian actors can be as ruthless as military actors in employing violence following attempted coups. Reports are already coming back about post-coup human rights abuses in Turkey, such as beatings and rapes of participating soldiers. Six days after the attempted takeover, the Turkish Deputy Prime Minister, Numan Kurtulmus, announced Turkey would temporarily suspend its obligations to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)⁶¹—rights which are easy to suspend, and harder to get back, especially if leaders stoke an atmosphere of fear.⁶² *Hurriyet Daily News* reported on Deputy PM Kurtulmus’ nonchalant dismissal of the decision as an autocratic step. The Deputy PM compared the choice to the French declaration of a state of emergency following the Nice incident—also as stipulated in Article 15 of ECHR.⁶³

The state of emergency as well allows the government to issue legislative decrees⁶⁴—which could enhance the power of Erdogan’s presidential institution. The atmosphere of intense security also allows Erdogan’s regime to intensify its already stifling assault on media freedom and civil

⁵⁷ Krishnadev Calamur et al., “What’s Going On In Turkey?” *The Atlantic*, 21 July 2016, http://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2016/07/turkey-government/491579/?utm_source=fbia [accessed 7 August 2016].

⁵⁸ Calamur et al., “What’s Going On In Turkey?.” That is, the lists were prepared before the coup. If this is true, it is not evidence for a conspiracy theory that Erdogan planned the coup. One explanation is that Erdogan had an idea of who was not loyal to his rule, and kept lists for the day a crisis warranted purges.

⁵⁹ For a breakdown of the purges by sector, see Josh Keller, Iaryna Mykhyalshyn, and Safak Timur, “The Scale of Turkey’s Purge Is Nearly Unprecedented,” *The New York Times*, 2 August 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/02/world/europe/turkey-purge-erdogan-scale.html?_r=0 [accessed 12 September 2016].

⁶⁰ Calamur et al., “What’s Going On In Turkey?.”

⁶¹ Jason Brownlee, “Why Turkey’s authoritarian descent shakes up democratic theory,” *The Washington Post*, 23 March 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/23/why-turkeys-authoritarian-descent-shakes-up-democratic-theory/> [accessed 19 July 2016].

⁶² On the politics of fear, see Bethany Albertson and Shana Gadarian, “How anxiety about terrorist attacks could change our politics,” *The Washington Post*, 20 November 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/11/20/how-anxiety-about-terrorist-attacks-could-change-our-politics/> [accessed 23 August 2016].

⁶³ Serkan Demirtas, “Turkey to temporarily suspend European Convention on Human Rights after coup attempt,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 21 July 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-temporarily-suspend-european-convention-on-human-rights-after-coup-attempt.aspx?PageID=238&NID=101910&NewsCatID=338> [accessed 16 August 2016].

⁶⁴ Demirtas, “Turkey to temporarily suspend European Convention on Human Rights after coup attempt.”

society. *Amnesty International* has reported that, “Arrest warrants have been issued for 89 journalists, more than 40 have already been detained and others are in hiding. A second emergency decree passed on 27 July has resulted in the shutdown of 131 media outlets.”⁶⁵ American rights groups have called Turkish governmental response to the coup attempt a “scorched-earth” policy.⁶⁶

For what scholars have called a competitive authoritarian or “hybrid” regime—which received a “partly free” Internet rating and “not free” press rating by *Freedom House* prior to the coup⁶⁷—before the July coup attempt, further suppression and fear-mongering will only enhance Erdogan’s incumbent advantage.

If it is true, as some have reported, that the coup attempt actually exposed weaknesses in Erdogan’s rule,⁶⁸ particularly his control over the armed forces, those weaknesses died at the end of the dramatic event. With the coup, Erdogan not only received a mandate to purge the military, making it even more loyal than observers thought prior to the coup (the fact the military was not united in the operation tells us Erdogan had plenty of support in the armed forces and police force) but has also exploited the event for his own political gain. In short, we should not be focusing on Erdogan’s pre-July weaknesses, but rather his post-July strengths. President Erdogan is the big winner here. As Yuksel Sezgin writes,

[...] Erdogan is now more popular than ever. Rising polarization, violence and instability boost Erdogan’s favorability and support among his constituents. It is most likely that the government will want to capitalize on its rising popularity and call for early elections in few months. It will not be a surprise if his party wins a supermajority in an early election that would allow Erdogan to move from amending the constitution to rewriting it — leverage this failed coup as a way to turn Turkey into a full-blown civil dictatorship.⁶⁹

Depending on a civilian actor’s power position at the time of the coup; the type of political institutions of the regime in which s/he operates when the takeover is attempted; and whether or not the coup is successful, civilians have a wide variety of courses of action following a coup. That is what makes Erdogan’s story different from Hosni Mubarak and Mohammad Morsi’s in Egypt. In Turkey, the coup failed—with dire consequences for Turkey’s democratic political life.

Conclusion

Civilians are neglected actors when thinking about military coups. Civilians, before, during, and after coups, are an equal part of the political relationship between civilians and military actors. This article documents the role of civilian politicians in one coup attempt, and calls for more research on civilian

⁶⁵ *Amnesty International*, “Turkey: Intensified crackdown on media increases atmosphere of fear,” 28 July 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/07/turkey-intensified-crackdown-on-media-increases-atmosphere-of-fear/> [accessed 4 August 2016].

⁶⁶ Melissa Hooper, “Six Ways Human Rights are at Risk in Turkey after the coup Attempt,” *Human Rights First*, 25 July 2016, <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/six-ways-human-rights-are-risk-turkey-after-coup-attempt> [accessed 4 August 2016].

⁶⁷ *Freedom House*, “Turkey,” <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey> [accessed 5 August 2016].

⁶⁸ Joe Parkinson, “Attempted Coup Exposes Weaknesses in Turkish President’s Control of Military,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 July 2016, http://www.wsj.com/articles/attempted-coup-exposes-weaknesses-in-turkish-presidents-control-of-military-1468637589?cx_navSource=cx_picks&cx_tag=contextual&cx_artPos=8#cxrecs_s [accessed 18 July 2016].

⁶⁹ Sezgin, “How Erdogan’s anti-democratic government made Turkey ripe for unrest.”

roles in *coups d'état*. First, civilian political leaders may or may not be involved in the coup attempt. That is important to know because it teaches us the conditions under which politicians may seek to use political violence. It is still not clear what, if any, involvement Fethullah Gülen had in the July attempt. Second, civilians, elite and masses, may or may not resist the armed forces during the coup. The success of civil resistance against military takeovers is understudied and should receive more attention in particular. In Turkey, civil resistance seems to have turned the tide against the coup conspirators. Lastly, depending on a number of factors at the time of the coup like the country's political institutions and whether or not the coup is successful, civilians will pursue a wide variety of actions after coup events. Some may support the coup while others may go into exile and rail against the perpetrators. All of these reactions to military takeovers offer meaningful political behavior to study.