

A VIEW FROM AZERBAIJAN TO THE JULY 15 COUP ATTEMPT

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On the 15th and 16th July of 2016, the Republic of Turkey experienced one of the most important events in the history of the Republican era. The coup attempt, initiated in July 15 by a group in Turkish Armed Forces, failed as a result of the joint resistance, including all segments of society. Many Turkish people lost their lives to thwart the coup attempt, as a result of which democracy was saved. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, head of the Republican People Party (CHP), and Devlet Bahçeli, the head of the National Movement Party (MHP) took an opposing stance towards the coup attempt. This unified stance against the coup attempt was not limited to a single day; it was carried out to Yenikapı Meeting area on 7th August, which was a massive joint democracy rally in the name of Turkish Republic, Turkish nation, and in the name of the countries and nations which were associates of Turkey.

The pre and post-coup attempt period occupied among the most important issues in the world mass media platforms. This is not without reason. Turkey has an important place in Turkish and Islamic world; furthermore with its history, qualifications, capacity, and with its “the world is greater than 5” slogan, Turkey plays a significant role in the world. However, on the 15th July, there are some other countries that shared similar feelings and emotions along

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with Turkey as if they were Turkish citizens; they were deeply concerned about the coup attempt, they grieved, became anxious and were pleased similarly in regard to the failure of the July 15 coup attempt and the victory of democracy in Turkish political history. Among all these countries, Azerbaijan was one of them, probably the first since Turkey has a special place for Azerbaijan.

Both countries are sharing historical ties and often described as “one nation, two states”, so, Turkey and Azerbaijan are literally strategic partners. Bilateral relations between the two countries set a good example to the whole world. Both countries have stood together through thick and thin (though great risks and problems) and displayed a common attitude. The President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s trips to Azerbaijan, dated in February 18th and March 15th, had to be cancelled over the terrorist attacks, dated in February 17th and March 13th. Due the cancel of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s March 15th trip to Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev declared to his counterpart that he wanted to come to Ankara on the 14th March 2016 to hold Turkey-Azerbaijan High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council meeting there instead of Baku.

During the meeting, the two leaders embraced each other, which was a positive scene and manifestation of sincerity and brotherhood to the whole world. In short, Azerbaijan has a special interest in any developments in Turkey. However, the July 15th coup attempt was observed much more attentively in Azerbaijan.

In my opinion, it will be useful to present two priori issues before dealing with the repercussions of the July 15th coup attempt in Azerbaijan: the “history of coup attempt” in Azerbaijan and “FETÖ organization” in Azerbaijan.

1. In the history of Azerbaijan, coups, coup attempts, and their consequences are very substantial. For example; the first democratic republic in the Muslim world

(Azerbaijan Democratic Republic) was established in Azerbaijan in 1918. However, on the 27th April 1920, Azerbaijan lost its national strength and then its independence due to an outside interference, which can somehow be called a coup attempt. After proclaiming its independence on the 30th August 1991, Azerbaijan also experienced numerous coup attempts. Particularly, due to the coup attempt in 1993, Azerbaijan lost its first elected government. During this period, Azerbaijan was exposed to a serious risk of Civil War and some parts of its territory was invaded since the attacks of Armenia continued; the country also experienced the danger of division of its territory into several parts. Later, Azerbaijan was exposed to some coup attempts in 1994 and 1995 which targeted either the country's petrol strategy or its independence, or its governmental power. In short, Azerbaijan is the country which discerns best the problems of coup and coup attempts.

2. As for the issue of "FETÖ organization" in Azerbaijan, it was said that the organization was structured in educational system. It was declared that "FETÖ organization" opened the First International School and one of its first universities in Azerbaijan. The first training centres abroad were also opened in Azerbaijan. All of these schools, belonging to "FETÖ organization" became a brand name.

Upon December 17th-25th incidents, the schools and training centers were closed and the university was also closed following the July 15th coup attempt. This organization was associated with the dismissal of some senior people from their positions in Azerbaijan after December 17th-25th incidents. However, some government officials avoided affirming statements upon the issue.

Speaking of the recent coup attempt in Turkey, it will be useful to deal with the issue from academic, official, and public perspectives and its repercussions at media separately.

- a) When the academic circles in Azerbaijan assess the July 15th coup attempt in Turkey, they emphasize that coups constantly take the country back and suspend democracy and criticize that at the coup attempt, the law goes under the influence of certain circles and the military power of the state is directed against the national will of the Turkish nation.
- b) Azerbaijan condemned the 15th July terrorist coup attempt officially. On July 16th, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev posted a letter of support to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and then called him in order to reiterate his support. Azerbaijan's first and popular TV channel was closed on account of the fact that it interviewed with Fethullah Gülen. Moreover, Caucasian University was closed. During the following period, some people were arrested on the grounds of connection with "FETÖ organization". After that, the judges and prosecutors launched an investigation on a number of people for being accomplice to the coup attempt and some technical, methodological and intelligence support were requested from Turkey in order to conduct the investigations. Turkish authorities stated that Azerbaijan's attentive behaviours towards the coup attempt was of significant and expressed their gratitude.
- c) When it comes to public opinion in Azerbaijan, all people declared solidarity with their fraternal Turkish people. In Azerbaijani media, the coup attempt was

discussed as if it took place in Azerbaijan. It was possible to see similar sensitivity in social media and streets. Of course all people in Azerbaijan did not agree or share similar feelings and ideas on every subject, just like in Turkey. It is quite natural for people to consider the matters from different perspectives, to develop new ideas, and display different approaches; it is somehow the requirement of democracy.

Some circles both in Turkey and Azerbaijan criticized that the post-coup attempt period occupied too large a place in Azerbaijan public opinion. However, the Turkish citizens, who know Azerbaijan closely, are sure that Azerbaijani people have sincere feelings and emotions towards Turkish people. Azerbaijani people adopted the famous statement of “one nation, two states” wholly. They are happy with every success and upset for every failure. Within the recent events, Azerbaijani people also reflected similar sensitivity.

In general, the common point in regard to the coup attempt, it was a strong reaction in Azerbaijan. This is primarily a requirement of faith in democracy. Because the coup attempts were not directed against the power but it was generally directed against the nation, reason, and logic. Coup is an attempt of a dictator against all people since only he has the power. The main factor which is the source of power is disregarded. Like in Turkey, there have been people who confused dissidents with putschists. But the general approach was as follows; a man never dominates (controls) the others just he has a weapon (power). It is crucial that power should come on the stage by elections and be lost with elections. Craving for coup means the refusal of democracy. Craving for coup is a kind of waiting for a military commander to decide who will administrate us.

As I mentioned above, one of the reasons of the reaction of the Azerbaijani coup opponents was the fact that the country lost a lot of things and some of its lands due to the

coup attempts in recent history. Many people in Azerbaijan emphasized this while expressing their anti-coup views.

Certainly, Turkey has been through a turbulent period. The country is faced with serious threads. It is necessary that the country should take serious precautions in order to preserve democracy, security and most importantly territorial integrity. Our hope is that during the perplexing period, Turkey will keep its national unity, continue its democracy despite the crisis, remain its potential to be a model of state of law for the countries in the region, and stay strong for brother countries that are in the need of Turkey's aid. Absolutely, during this challenging process, brotherly countries should provide the necessary support to Turkey. In this regard, we believe that all of the friendly and brotherly countries, primarily Azerbaijan will do their best.