

The only game in town

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It is becoming clear that a military coup is almost impossible in Turkey. If one reason is the lack of international approval of such a dreadful betrayal of democracy, the other reason is Turkish society's current level of democratic maturity, which includes a high level of urbanization, modernization and economic development and which benefits from the information age.

All military coups in the country have always sought popular approval and some sort of legitimacy. In today's Turkey it is impossible to get any legitimacy or popular approval. Old tactics no longer work, but there are still some who dream that democracy is not the only game in town. They are wrong.

If you follow the declarations of the National Security Council (MGK), you will see that its members are more concerned about the real dangers, challenges and opportunities that the nation faces. There is a considerable gap between the main messages of these declarations and the rhetoric of the militarist ultranationalists who have some connections in the armed forces. Yet, their connections and affiliates in the armed forces do not have the upper hand, and they are not in a position to influence the mainstream strategies of both the army and the MGK. For instance, they have not been able to stop the MGK from declaring that all groups in Iraq — read the untouchable Kurds of northern Iraq — are approachable and can be entered into diplomatic relations with. This is what democratic common sense has been dictating for years, but which the hard-liners and hawks have resisted. Ultranationalists must see that they are now obviously in a cul de sac and that even in military terms there is no exit.

There have, of course, been other signs that support this argument. Even the simple fact that generals can no longer openly meddle in daily politics either by e-memos or messages given at balls shows that they are aware of the people's objection to their undemocratic behavior. In the past they clumsily justified their interference into everyday politics by placing everything under the sky within the ambit of national security. But they abused this method so many times that they have lost their credibility and gave up resorting to these tactics. Moreover, people have started saying that if national security is so central to our lives, why don't we as voters and taxpayers also talk about it every day and discuss, say, the military budget and expenditures?

Another sign showing that there isn't a military option for ultranationalists is their almost lunatic and still unbelievable resort to a judicial coup against the democratically elected government. The mere fact that they could consider a coup following the 367 (vote) fiasco is more than telling. Generals have lost their credibility in influencing the democratic daily running of the country. All the old guard can now do is resort to suicidal judicial attacks and threaten the government with a coup, although even they know very well that they cannot stage a bloodless coup without seriously risking the unity of the army and the nation. As everything is transparent, the government can see this as well, and they are not giving in. Being aware of this, militarist ultranationalists are now saying that it would be desirable if the Constitutional Court does not shut down the party but still penalizes it. Even this change of rhetoric shows that they are also aware that democracy is the only game in town and that there is no turning back from democracy. All they want is to continue to have their undemocratic share of power in the government by keeping the general constitutional structure of the state untouched.

Yet, they seem to be forgetting one crucial fact. The Justice and Development Party (AK Party) has not created or socially engineered this democratic society. They are not the cause, but the result of the democratic maturity and agility of the society, triggered by the Turgut Özal era. That is why you either love or hate Özal. If the AK Party leadership — betraying the nation's trust — decides to negotiate with the undemocratic dark forces, the nation will still march on despite them and they will be thrown into the

dustbin of history.

Sources

Source : TDZ, 27.04.2008