

Red Alert: Get Ready to Crash! A Social Media Analysis on Predicting the State Failure in Turkey

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ABSTRACT : *After the military coup attempt in Turkey on July 15th, 2016, the government shut down 180 media outlets, purged hundreds of journalists and 120 of them have been jailed. Twitter became the only platform for the Turkish people to express their ideas. The tweets, posted from Turkey in Turkish language with the hashtag coup (#darbe), retrieved between August 16 and 31, 2016 to pursue content and sentiment analysis. The re-tweets as an indicator of agreement of idea and that of referring to the future circumstances have been derived from the dataset for further analysis. We studied how the selected re-tweets cover the failed military coup attempt and address the key issues. Research results show that Turkish twitter users are mostly pessimistic about the developments in economic, security and education areas, but they are only optimistic in political developments regarding to Turkey's future.*

KEYWORDS: *Content Analysis, Coup, Prediction, Sentiment Analysis, Social Media, Twitter, Turkey*

I. INTRODUCTION

On July 15th, 2016, a military coup was attempted in Turkey against the government. The coup attempt was carried out by a group of Turkish Military officials that defined themselves as Peace at Home Council. Peace at Home Council's press release was announced on government-owned TV channel which addressed an alleged erosion of secularism in the country the corruption of Turkish politicians, and the elimination of democratic rules as the reasons for the attempt.

The attempt was unusually started at 9pm when most people were enjoying the warm weather at the public places on a Friday night. Coup plotters attempted to block and control several places in Ankara and Istanbul including European side of Bosphorus bridge connecting the Europe and Asia continents in Istanbul, and headquarter of military administration in Ankara. Just a couple hours later starting the military coup, President RecepTayyip Erdogan appeared on the live broadcasting program of CNN Turk Television and urged people go into the city centers to resist to the military coup. Shortly after his invitation, nearly 3000 people gathered in Istanbul's Taksim Square and Ankara's Kizilay Boulevard. The military coup attempt was failed nearly six hours after it starts. Military officers who has participated into the attempt was arrested by police. During the coup, many government buildings and Turkish parliamentary building were damaged, nearly 250 people were killed and more than 2000 were injured.

The military coup attempt was condemned both nationally and internationally. In Turkey, a large number of people participated in the rallies protesting the military coup attempt. All major opponent political leaders also supported the democratically elected government. Several international political leaders of the countries, including United States, neighboring countries, international organizations such as NATO and European Union, condemned the coup attempt and respected to the elected political officials.

Turkish President RecepTayyip Erdogan accused one of the top US general, Central Command Chief General Joseph Vote, for orchestrating the Junta in Turkish Military Forces [1]. He also blamed low ranked military officials stating that of the action was outside the chain of the command. Then, he accused the coup plotters of being linked to the FetullahGulen who is a 75 year-old Muslim scholar who has lived in United States for more than 14 years in self-exile [2]. Erdogan claimed that Gulen was behind the coup and suspected the United States protecting him. Turkish Prime Minister BinaliYildirim claimed that whoever involved in the attempt would pay the highest price [3].FethullahGulen denied Erdogan's claims and called for an international investigation of the military coup in Turkey stating also that if he was found guilty he would be agreeing to any penalties. Gulen claimed that he was one of the leading supporter of democracy and could not rule out involvement by his followers and is even not sure who are his followers in Turkey. He also criticized Erdogan's administration by comparing it to the Hitler's Germany and he claimed that the military coup was staged by Erdogan in order to purge thousands of people permanently from their jobs and to put thousands into the jails [4].President Erdogan condemned the US officials in order not to extrude of FethullahGulen and led to raise in tension between the US and Turkey. Washington invited Turkey to show evidence that the coup was plotted or

influenced by Gulen[5]. US authorities replied that extradition was only depending on the court decision and there is no evidence provided by Turkish officials supporting that Gulen was involved in the coup attempt [6].

1.1. Declaration of “State of Emergency” and Purge in Turkey

Although only 1,5% of army including 35 jets, 37 helicopters, 246 armed vehicles, 3 ships, 3,992 weapons were involved in the coup, a mass arrest and purge was started right after the coup [7]. One day after the failed military coup, nearly 3000 judges and prosecutors were purged from their jobs and detained by the Turkish government [8]. Two days after from the coup attempt, President Erdogan declared a “State of Emergency” for three-months-time throughout the country in response to the military coup attempt [9]. The next day of declaration of state of emergency, government decided to shut down 180 media outlets, including 45 newspapers and 16 TV stations [10]. Even though there is not a single piece of evidence linking them to the military coup, more than 100.000 people were permanently fired from their jobs while more than 80.000 civil servants suspended; more than 40.029 people have been detained and 20.355 arrested [11]. Government took a series of actions proclaiming that all purged people have some ties with the FethullahGulen movement. As of September 2016, just because of over alleged Gulen movement claims, a total of 104, 676 people have been fired including physicians, teachers, and civil servants, 3,465 judges and prosecutors dismissed, 8,777 police officers dismissed, 5,322 faculty members fired from Turkish Universities, 44,700 detained, 24,239 arrested, a total of 2,099 schools, dormitories and universities have been shut down, 1,254 associations, foundations closed down, and 120 journalists arrested [12]. After a month later, Turkey also invaded northern Syria on August 26, 2016. Turkish troops and tanks entered in the Jarablus area and Turkish media reported that 70 targets had been destroyed by artillery and rocket strikes and 12 air strikes [13].

According to the State of Emergency, detention time was raised up to 30 days. Amnesty International reported that detainees were denied food and water for days as well as denied from medical treatment[14]. Furthermore, detainees were beaten at the police headquarters and subject to the tortured during their detention with injuries, cuts and broken bones. Additionally, detainees were not allowed to contact with lawyers and family members through out their detention time. In order to eliminate the overcrowded condition in Turkish prisons, Turkish government published a decree on August 16th, stating that a total of 38,000 inmates with two years or less to serve are eligible for parole [15]. The government’s decision on parole for existing inmates was widely accepted by public as an action of the government to make room for detainees related to military coup.

Mass arrest and purge in Turkey was criticized by several international organizations. Amnesty International condemned shutting down of the media outlets in Turkey and jailing journalists for not supporting the military coup but just for being opponents of the government. The Media Watchdog Reporters Without Borders criticized the Turkish government and claimed that the government did not have enough evidence and proof of involvement to tie the media outlets to the Gulen movement [16]. Amnesty International also invited the Turkish government to show restraint and respect for rule of law and to carry out investigations fairly to all of those detained after the failed coup attempt.

The excessive authoritarian pressure on mass communication media ended with mass devastation of mass media. A total of 180 media outlets, including 45 newspapers and 16 TV stations have been shut down forcibly by Turkish government. Hundreds of journalists have been fired from their jobs and 120 journalists jailed after the coup attempt [17]. Turkish government had a great impact on the ability of mass media to control whichever news article would be published or not. The closures of mass media outlets have led to social media as the becoming the only platform for amplifying the voice for Turkish people. Social Media has become the mainstream in how the public gains information. Additionally, twitter users discuss what was going on in the country and possible developments in the future which nobody could argue about with mass media.

1.2. Twitter as the Only Communication Platform for Turkish People

The total numbers of internet users hit 2 billion throughout the world in 2013 [18] and increased to 3.47 billion as of September, 2016 [19]. Mobile internet usage has also increased dramatically in the last decade. According to global mobile phone internet user penetration statistics [20], more than half of the mobile phone users (52,6%) used their devices to access the internet in 2015. Mobile devices create opportunities for people to carry out all the advantages of staying online.

Social media plays critical role in communication by informing and spreading the ideas of people, particularly in situations of social unrest [21]. The Internet has a vital effect in two respects. First, the internet is a low cost tool and provides fast communication and leads in the context of social change [22]. Second, it shapes political dialogue and decision making processes by spreading the ideas of individuals timely [23]. Twitter allows users to post comments limited to 140 characters which enables individuals to obtain a conceptual understanding of the content. Twitter users often include a hyperlink to direct people to a web site, a blog, an Instagram photo, a YouTube video, Google map or any other source of information [21], so that people can share larger contents to express their political views or to influence the political views of other users.

The use of Twitter to voice about the unjust actions, massive purge and mass arrests triggered government authorities to censor some Twitter accounts. Twitter accounts mainly run by opponents, including

some journalists, have been ordered to be blocked for investigating terrorism by Turkish courts [24]. Although the government does censor Twitter somewhat, many Twitter users have continued to post messages. Additionally, it is a fact that there is an army of more than 6000 trolls who supports President Erdogan's opinion and political future [25].

In this research, we aim to analyze the Twitter micro blog posts as the only platform to voice ideas in Turkey because of the censorship in mass media, Furthermore, Tweets that share assumptions, predictions and expectations addressing to the future circumstances will be analyzed to understand what people expects for the future of the Turkey after the failed military coup attempt.

II. METHOD

We used Twitter API on a Linux Based application to retrieve tweets with #coup (#darbe in the Turkish). We retrieved a total of 168, 659 Tweets from 16,248 unique Twitter users across a time period of 15 days between 16 and 31 August 2016 from Twitter servers. The dataset consists of tweets, retweets, country, language, and user IDs.

First, we filtered these massive data files by only retaining Tweets that were posted in Turkey and written in Turkish language which we were ended up with a total of 102,832 tweets. Then, we further filtered these massive tweets by only re-tweets as an indicator of agreement which resulted in 28, 607 tweets. Furthermore, a total of 3,000 tweets were selected randomly in MS Excel using =RAND () formula to analyze. It represents more than 10% of the selected Tweets. Then, we categorized these tweets into two groups. Tweets that are referring to the past or present consequences and the tweets that are expressing ideas regarding to the future expectations or arguments. The categorization process was challenging and an imperfect task therefore, we adopted the most conservative strategy. That is, only the Tweets in Turkish language were that posted a form of the past and present tense "i.e. done, occurred, happened, achieved, failed, happens, do, now" marked as past and present tense which resulted a total of 1,883 tweets. Remaining tweets reviewed and a total of 466 tweets found not relative to the topic directly but just hastaged with word of the #coup. Tweets with remaining categorization also reviewed and marked for future circumstances which likelihood that most of the users were indeed expressing prospect expectations, ideas, presumption, and speculations. Then we categorized manually remaining 751 tweets into three sets of category;

1. Tweets containing positive emotions such as delight, hope, pleasure, happiness, etc
2. Tweets containing negative emotions, such as sorrow, anger, displeasure, etc
3. Neutral tweets that only state a fact or do not express any emotions

Table 1 presents a sample tweets for each category. Furthermore, since the tweets translated from Turkish language, they might exceed 140 characters. The research question is indicated as how the selected (only referring to the developments in the future) retweets cover the failed military coup attempt and the key issues addressed. The research question was meant to measure one of five frames related to expectations and predictions about the future: education, politic, security, economic consequences and other issues. Additionally, frequency of words has been counted to help to identify the most repeated words for each category. The results were described and analyzed below.

III. ANALYSIS

The analysis of the tweet was challenging since there is no available dictionary to obtain sentiment analysis written in Turkish Language. We analyzed the tweets manually by marking whether the meaning of the tweets address the any frame disclosed in the research question and the key issues addressed. The analysis process took 20 days between September 2 and 22, 2016.

IV. RESULTS

A total of 751 tweets that address prediction, expectation or ideas about the future regarding to the failed military coup in July 15th have been divided into categories including education, political, security, economic consequences and others.

Table 1 Sample tweets for each category

education	positive	All of the Gulen's schools will be serving to Turkish people who are the real owners. Thanks to #coup plotters for giving us this opportunity.
	negative	Education system will be totally failed after the #coup in upcoming academic year. Turning science schools into religious ones is a foolish idea.
	neutral	Schools are going to be open very soon but I have no idea which school to pick for my children. Oh God damn #coup.
political	positive	Erdogan will destroy all of the plans of foreigners and extensions inside stages in our country as he did to the #coup plotters.
	negative	No more freedom of speech and fair justice after the God given #coup. Welcome to Erdogan's regime!
	neutral	There won't be any alternative for another 5 years. AKP killed all opponents after the #coup.
security	positive	The war started at the day of the #coup. Turkey is going to win the war against US, NATO, Gulenists, ISIS and PKK.
	negative	State of emergency which declared after the false flagged #coup will be continue until Erdogan cause to a civil war.
	neutral	Who is blowing up the bombs and killing people in south east Turkey? Are those internal jobs? Looking reasons for second #coup attempt?
economy	positive	The #coup is not able to stop us. Turkey is still continuing to grow and Turkish economy will still be in first 20 in the world.
	negative	One dollar will be 4 Liras and you'll start for begging for a piece of bread. It is not just because of the #coup. That is the war economy you'll meet soon.
	neutral	So much debate after the #coup. I only care whatever economy analysts says and am not going to give credits to government officials and naysayers.
others	positive	A second #coup attempt will end up with another 70K people jailed. We're ready to make your second #coup attempt get failed.
	negative	The #coup ruined our lives. I'll be moving to Italy if they grant me a working permit.
	neutral	The #coup is over. I hate still watching the same news blaming FETO everyday. I'll focus on my job and my family.

The re-tweets which only address to the future expectations and concerns have been analyzed. The results are categorized by topics. Mainly the most tweeted about subject was economy (n= 230 tweets) followed by security (n=169), political (n=126), education (n=124) and non-categorized others (n=102). The results were also categorized into three sections as positive, negative and neutral for all frames (see Table 2).

Table 2 Sentiment for Future Talking

	education	political	security	economic	others
positive	27	86	19	29	28
negative	74	26	102	184	66
neutral	23	14	48	17	8

The users were retweeted negative tweets six more times than positive on economic discussions (negative 184, positive 29 and neutral 17). On the security subject, tweeter users heavily retweeted negative ones more than others (negative 102, positive 19 and neutral 48). When talking about the political subjects, users were retweeted 3 more times positive than negative (positive 86, negative 26 and natural 14). Education was the subject where users mostly retweeted negative ones rather than positives (negative 74, positive 27 and neutral 23). There were retweets which doesn't fit to any category and labeled as others. The users were retweeted mostly negative than positive and neutral in others category (negative 66, positive 28 and neutral 8).

Fig.1 shows that political topic is the only category that twitter users retweeted in a positive manner related to future predictions within five categories where most negative retweeted category was regarding economic consequences.

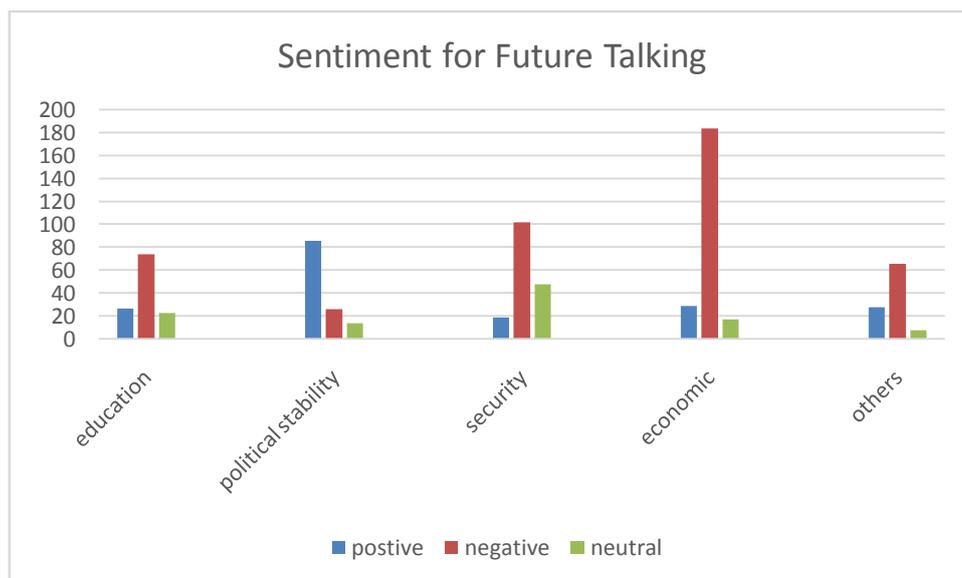


Figure 1 Sentiment for re-tweets when people talking about future (n=751 tweets)

We also examined the frequency of word to understand the most repeated words for each category. To be more detailed, we combined some words together if they refer to the same person or event. For example, word of Erdogan consists of president, leader, RTE, RecepTayyip Erdogan which users meant to refer Erdogan. The word of Gulen consists of Gulen supporters, Gulen movement, hodja, imam, Gulenists, Fethullah, and FETO which users meant to FetullahGulen.

Table 3 Frequency of word (n=751 tweets)

	education (n=124 Tweets)		political stability (n=126 Tweets)		security (n=169 Tweets)		economic (n=230 Tweets)		others (n=102 Tweets)	
positive	Erdogan	15	Second	27	Will Happen	11	Dollar	5	God	13
	National	11	Erdogan	21	Turkey	9	Erdogan	5	Ottoman	8
	15	10	Gulen	16	Erdogan	8	Happens	5	Health	7
negative	Erdogan	18	Erdogan	16	Erdogan	41	Dollar	48	Don't Know	19
	Teacher	11	Gulen	12	Conflict	23	Erdogan	39	July	16
	Close	8	hopefully	7	Explosion	13	Economy	20	How	9
neutral	School	11	AKP	10	Turkey	9	News	9	Coming	5
	course	6	Syria	9	East	5	We	9	Ready	5
	July	4	Erdogan	9	They	5	Banking	8	Turkey	4

V. DISCUSSION

This research aims to analyze re-tweets which refers to future prediction of twitter users. The re-tweets have been selected as an indicator of agreement of the idea by others. The results show that Turkish tweeter users discuss topics which basically fit into categories as education, political, security, economic and other topics.

Political re-tweets are the only category that people mostly shared positive ones. (86 out of 126). The economy is the most re-tweeted category among others and is the leading category which represents pessimistic discussions about the future developments (184 out of 230). People are also pessimistic about the security issues regarding to the future which users retweeted mostly negative (102 out of 169). Education is another topic which (74 out of 124) re-tweets negative meaning.

The frequency of words for each category revealed that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is the most referred figure both for positive and negative tweets. For instance, Erdogan was referred 21 times positively and 16 times negatively when people discussing politics. He was mentioned 15 times positively and 18 times negatively in education. When Twitter users discuss the economy, Erdogan's name was heavily referred negatively (39 times negative and 5 times positive). Similar to the economy, in security discussions people referred Erdogan's name more negative than positive (41 times negative, and 8 times positive). Gulen's name was mentioned 12 times negatively and 10 times positively in political discussions. Interestingly, the word dollar was mentioned 48 times in negative tweets in economic discussions where it is also mentioned for only 5 times in positive re-tweets. It seems that people assume the Turkish Lira's value over US Dollar is an indicator for economy. "A second coup attempt" is another discussion topic for tweeter users during the period of time that we collect re-tweets. The word "second" is the leading word (21 times) when people used positively in political discussions where twitter users declare that they could also block the second coup attempt if it occurs.

When Twitter users talking on politics, many people influenced by Erdogan which most tweets carried out possible success of Erdogan's political approaches in the future. Most twitter users re-tweeted positively talking about the Turkey's future political conditions. As Erdogan claims Fethullah Gulen for masterminding the coup, most users also blamed Gulen. There is also some hate speech against Gulen and followers of Gulen movement. Many people call for the USA to extradite Gulen in the near future. Few Twitter users proposed some illegal actions such as assassination of Gulen in the US or killing his supporters in Turkey.

According to the content analysis of re-tweets, most people's major concern is about the economic developments in the future. Many re-tweets criticize the economic politics of the government and they expect increase in US dollars over Turkish Liras. Many concerned tweets also mentioned the recent invasion of Syria which might lead some economic instability for the future. Therefore, it could be said that the war in Syria has also created some hesitance for some Twitter users concerning Turkey's economic developments in the future.

The second leading pessimist discussion run on the security area. Since the Turkey invaded Syria during the retrieval of tweets for this research, many Twitter users have talked about the ongoing war in Syria and most users were re-tweeted negative ones predicting the consequences regarding to the future expectations. Actually, the unpredictable situation of the war in Syria have made many twitter users hesitant about the possible negative impacts of the war. Furthermore, some users mentioned that the war would increase the numbers of terrorist attacks (by PKK and ISIS) within Turkish territories which threatens everyone who live in Turkey.

Education is another topic that most users tweeted more negatively than positive. Purged teachers and converting Gulen-tied science schools into religious schools are some of the topics that twitter users discussed. The majority of re-tweets indicate much worse education conditions for the future of Turkey and carry out some concerns about their own children's personal academic achievement just because of the recent developments in education after the failed coup.

VI. CONCLUSION

After the military coup attempt in Turkey on July 15th, 2016, the government shut down 180 media outlets, purged hundreds of journalists and 120 of them have been jailed. Twitter became the only platform that Turkish people express their ideas. The tweets posted from Turkey in Turkish language with the hashtag coup (#darbe) retrieved between August 16 and 31, 2016 to pursue content and sentiment analyze. The re-tweets as an indicator of agreement of idea and that of referring to the future circumstances have been derived from the dataset for further analysis. The research question was how the selected re-tweets cover the failed military coup attempt and the key issues addressed.

Based on the research question, a total of five categories identified including education, politics, security, economy and others. Furthermore, word frequency was counted to identify the most repeated words in each category. The research results revealed that Turkish tweeter users heavily pessimistic about the economic developments in the future. Mostly the word "dollar" was mentioned on negative tweets which most users' ideas on increase in dollar compared to Turkish liras in the future. Additionally, President Erdogan is one of the main figures in the discussions in both positive and negative tweets. It is a well known fact among Turkish social media users that there are users (trolls) paid by their services in favor of President Erdogan. Although paid supporters dominate Twitter, President Erdogan influenced people in discussions where his name mostly mentioned when talking politics and negatively in economics and security. Syria, terrorist attacks and Erdogan's politics was criticized negatively in future predictions and expectations by Turkish twitter users. Among all, politics was the only category that users discuss more positively than negative. People talk on more negative and pessimist in all other four categories (education, security, economy and others).

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