



AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY

Turkey and the World at the Dawn of 2017  
Report of a OPUS Listening Post®  
held in Istanbul on 11th January 2017

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## **PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS & EXPERIENCES**

*In this part, the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experiences in their various social roles, be they: in work, unemployed or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood, voluntary or leisure organisations; or as members of families and communities. This part was largely concerned with what might be called, 'the stuff of people's everyday lives': the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.*

## **PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

*In Part 2, the aim collectively was to identify the major themes emerging from Part 1.*

**Theme 1: Loss of critical thinking capacity, sensory deprivation, blurring of thoughts, sadness; collective shock and collective memory erasing, reconstruction of new(?) individual who is foreign to their own skin; society's chemistry is broken**

2016 was a real year of chaos for Turkish society. Many bloody cases that were far away from Turkish context and were 'there' not 'here'; that were in 'Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and exc.' and now are in 'Ankara, Istanbul, Kayseri and exc.' and here. Turkish society begin to started to shake at periodic intervals. Systemic pressure on the media, human rights violations, state of emergency applications, increasing levels of women's murders and child abuses and harrarsments for last 10 years, coup attempt, threat of ecological destruction all over the country, mining accidents begins to be 'usual' agenda of the country. For many people, everyday life rutin took a havy blow. Society's chemistry is broken. It is not a usual situation to witness traumatic events, over and over again. We are in a place where the theoretical tools that were available to us before, are inadequate to understand the meaning of those unusual things that we live in. The geography that we live in, as if there is a conscious process who goes with memory erasing and loss of identi, which will continue with construction and building of new identity; new identity that will be more acceptable for global actors. Deconstruction systematically everything that is meaningfull for citizens- economically, culturally, politically, sociologically; deconstruction and death are pre-conditions for economic and societal revival. 2016 was experienced as a year of deconstruction and death, and 2017 will continue with construction and building of this new identity in a way that global and geographical

actors want.

The main purpose of this systemic shocks are to loss the ability of critical thinking and to broke the society's chemistry. Previous prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu said ' We will built Sur-city in eastern part of Turkey where terror is common threat-like a Toledo.'

**Theme 2: Coup Attempt and betrayal; transformation of state's security apparatus and state's ideological apparatus; new 'formatting' of society, fear of loosing the collective identity; difficulty of mourning**

'Turkish history never witness such a big betrayal during his own history. Coup attempt was unbelievable. As a citizens we want to know what the reality is. Coup attempt was like a theatre. Theatre, that we dont know who is directing it. But the players are real citizens.And bloody theatre. We want to know what are the dynamics that open door to this attempt. We have questions but we are not able to find an answer to them. After coup attempt, all the state insitutions are changing. Goverment's explanations are that this is cleaning process from members who are part of Gulenist movement or the FETO-Fethullah Gulen Terror Organisation- . There is huge mistrust to the goverment relating cleansing process. Many people loss their jobs and they are threatining as a terrorists and traitor. There is huge anger against the goverments policies. Citizens experienced this as cleansing not just FETO members but all the opposition, people who are against the goverment's policies and AKP. Many academicians, journalist, lowyers, soldiers, teachers, directors, burocrats, doplomats, political party members are prisoned. All the educated people are prisoned.'

'As a citizen it is easy to understand Kurdish terrorists, PKK or ISIS; but it is very heavy to accept, the group which is inside of the army, it is very difficult to understand own state's soldiers betrayal to his own country. Bombing Turkish Parliament, who is the symbol of democracy, and symbol of Turkish Republic and all other things. I dont know who I need to trust. I loss my believe to everything.'

'Last 2 years, chaos that we are experiencing as a society, shock and systematic traumas, seems to me that we are infront of a big change process. Process that is not easy to understand while you are experiencing it. WE feel that our values are deconstructed. Everything changes so fast. I dont remember how many terror attacks and traumatic events are happening during 2016. Dead is normalising every day. As if 2016 is cleansing process and pre-preration process after the death and deconstructed parts. First, the state's security-army and police- apparatus was transformed, and now it is time to transform the state's ideological apparatus like education, media, political and legal structure. This process reminds me Iranian Islamic Revolution. As if we are experiencing same processes like Iranian Islamic Revolituon.'

'Transformation that is experienced in education system, which I can name as getting more religious education system, and by looking to the numbers of prissoned journalist makes me to get anxious about all what is happening.'

'I begin to question my working roles. I am working as a teacher. And I am working more than 25 years. For the first time I experience myself so worthless. I am teaching my students how they can be more ethical and good person into the society. How education and justice is important, how republican values are important. But all the values that we are teaching are undervalued now. Republican history are questioning, Ataturk who is the symbol of the Turkish state and nation is under attack every day, history books contents are changing. I really dont know what I need to do or also I am not sure what I want to do in this context.'

'I think that also Erdogan's call for '3 children' is another kind of interfere where he also wants to transform family institution, this is another way of intervening to private life; also controls that are experincing on the sinema, theatre and media life, means that we are faced with more comprehensive operation.'

### **Theme 3: Fear of break from the Republican regime, anxiety and fear from 2017's 'transition process', being in pulgatory, mistrust to political leadership, self-organised leadership like a cell formation**

Especially all what happened after the June 2015 elections shows that, this time, the authoritarian regime wants to be re-established with a political Islamist ideology. On the other hand, interventions towards the private sphere, family life, cultural production, religion, belief and freedom of conscience, point to the tendencies of totalitarianization of this new authoritarian regime. Turkey is being a pulgatory, inbetween past's chaos and future's uncertainty.

'Security issues of our country is relating what will happen in the Syria. We will wait Donald Trupm's Middle East politcs. Our soldiers are dying in Syria's land, while Syrian refugees are living free in our lands. Before the April's referandum, all refugees will be accepted as a Turkish citizens. Erdogan will use their votes for his own use. Everywhere you can see people who are talking Arabic and wearing just black dresses. And each Syrian woman have more then 3-4 children who are born last 3-4 years. As if these people dont do anything then making a sex. And as I know there are 350 000 children that was born in refugees camps last years. Unbelievable. Turkish families have 2 children maximum, while Arabic and Kurdish families have minimum 4-5. Demographics will change after 10 years and we will be minority in our country.'

'I dont trust to the politicians and political leaders. This referandum is not political issue, it is more then that. It is a country issue and it needs to be out of political interest. This referandum open place and space to dictatorship where Turkey are goint to be one man state. If political leaders are not able to practise leadership, as a citizens we need to organize and to fight for our Republican country. What I am doing is to talk and to explain to my close context, how will be new constitution and how will effect us as a citizens. It is time again to self organize as a cells. And to rremember our Republican history.'

'Many times I am thinking to immigrate to another countries. Like England , Canada. It is very difficult for me to see the future in my beloved country. I am suspicious about that. I want my children to grow in good environment. Also when I am talking about that with my friends, it is very common to hear that, they also have same

ideas. One day, I am in business meeting and there was an Irakian guy. He shared that, the same process and dynamics were experienced during Saddam Hussein's regime. 'Many educated and talanted Irakian people immigrated to another countries and people who stayed in Irak were uneducated ones. And this people now are leading and controlling country. And many other people who stayed there are people who lost their fathers, sons, mothers and they feel as a victims and are waiting to fight for their lives in the name of lost fathers, mothers, or...' If I leave my country, I feel that I will betraye and it seems to me that it is an easy way of not taking responsibility as citizen. I've never experienced such a difficult time before.'

### **PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION**

*In Part 3, the participants were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 2, with a view to collectively identifying the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at the time; and developing hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at that moment. Here, participants were working more with what might be called their 'psycho' or 'internal' world: their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them.*

#### **Analysis & Hypothesis 1: Loss of society's ability to perform its containing function**

Turbulent changes, systematic chaos and trauma, unstable policy adaptations are experienced as destroying society's ability to perform its containing function. Connectedness between members of the society that is experienced mostly through policies, are destroyed. For citizens, society loss his role of a holding environment. Society is living in polarized and split state of mind, not capable of working through internal differences. Individuals feel that their identities are under threat. They don't have enough trust to their institutions, society and its institutions are not able to provide them psychological comfort free of major anxieties. Instead of that, they are producing major anxieties. Nostalgia, family and being in like minded people's context, are surviving strategies in a society that is not 'good enough' and is experiencing as "False Self".

#### **Analysis & Hypothesis 2: Discontinuity between past, present and future threatens large group identity**

Loss of identity is intolerable, and large group identity is threatened. Disappearance of basic trust between members of the society; blurring of boundaries between fantasy and reality; excessive dependency on a leader; magical thinking; regressed morality,splitting, polarisation and denial are observed in the society.

**Convenor: Muzaffer Mustafa**