

(Mis) Communication across the Borders: Politics, Media, and Public Opinion in Turkey

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Abstract : To date, academic attention in social sciences remains inadequate with regard to research and analysis of public opinion in Turkey. Most of the existing research has assessed the public opinion during political election periods. Therefore, it is of great interest to find out what the public thinks about current issues in Turkey, and how to interpret the results to be able to reveal whether they may have any reflections on social, political, and cultural structure of the country. Accordingly, the current study seeks to fill the gap in the social sciences literature in English regarding Turkey's social and political stand which may be perceived to be very different by other nations. Without timely feedback from public surveys, various programs for improving different services and institutions functioning in the country might not achieve their expected goal, nor can decisions about which programs to implement be made rationally. Additionally, the information gathered may not only yield important insights into public's opinion regarding current agenda in Turkey, but also into the correlates shaping public policies. Agenda-setting studies including agenda-building, agenda melding, reversed agenda-setting and information diffusion studies will be used to explain the roles of factors and actors in the formation of public opinion in Turkey. Knowing the importance of public agenda in the agenda setting and building process, this paper aims to reveal the social and political tendencies of the Turkish public. For that purpose, a survey will be carried out in December of 2014 to determine the social and political trends in Turkey for that same year. The subjects for the study, which utilize a questionnaire in one-on-one interviews, will include 1,000 individuals aged 18 years and older from 26 cities representing general population. A stratified random sampling frame will be used. The topics covered by the survey include: The most important current problem in Turkey; the Economy; Terror; Approaches to the Kurdish Issue; Evaluations of the Government and Opposition Parties; Evaluations of Institutional Efficiency; Foreign Policy; the Judicial System/Constitution; Democracy and the Media; and, Social Relations/Life in Turkey. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Turkey has been undergoing a rapid transformation. The reflections of the changes can be seen in all areas from economics to politics. It is my hope that findings of this study may shed light on the important aspects of institutions, variables setting the agenda, and formation process of public opinion in Turkey.

Keywords : public opinion, media, agenda setting, information diffusion, government, freedom, Turkey

Conference Title : ICSS 2015 : International Conference on Social Sciences

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : January 23-24, 2015