

**10th International Symposium
Communication in the Millennium**

In Cooperation with
University of Texas at Austin (U.S.A.)
Anadolu University (Turkey), and
Istanbul University (Turkey)

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(Turkey)

The Association of Turkish and American Scholars (ATACS)

The international symposium Communication in the Millennium has been organized since 2003 by scholars in Turkey and the United States, and each year the symposium organizers have noticed increasing interest in this academic event. Because of this interest, the co-founders and the organization committee of this symposium decided to form an association where both countries' scholars are represented.

The mission of the ATACS is to advance the communication profession in both countries through well-grounded academic research and to foster communication academics' cooperation. The Communication in the Millennium is the established ATACS project, but the association will be working on different projects to serve its mission in the near future.

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Cynicism in Reader's Comments: Fault-Line in Van Earthquake/Associate Prof. Dr. Seçil Deren Van Het Hof, Akdeniz University, Turkey & Tezcan Durna, Ph.D. Ankara University, Turkey

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Abstract

Although accepted as an important political sentiment, there is little research on the measurement and affects of political cynicism. According to a modern definition, political cynicism is the mistrust generalized from particular leaders or political groups to the political process as a whole. Peter Sloterdijk defined cynicism as "enlightened false consciousness" and diagnosed cynicism as the dominant form of contemporary consciousness. Sharon Stanley moves on from Sloterdijk, Jameson, and Žižek, and claims that contemporary political cynicism is an outcome of postmodernism. In their classic article, Agger, Goldstein and Pearl (1961) probed the concept of political potency alongside political cynicism and argued that the most politically cynical tend to be high on political potency. This paper accepts readers' comments as a symptom of self-conceived political potency and investigates whether political cynicism goes along with it. In this perspective, the recent earthquake in Van, Turkey, came up also as a striking example of postmodern politics. Reader's comments in six mainstream newspapers are analysed to disclose political cynicism.

Keywords: *political communication, political cynicism, readers' comments*

CYNICISM IN READERS' COMMENTS: FAULT-LINE IN VAN EARTHQUAKE

Introduction

Political cynicism, as analysed in the field of communication in the last decade years, is seen as an outcome of mediated messages. The mediated messages carried by mass communication carries along a sense of powerlessness and a distrust in the government. Kaid et. al. (2000) described political cynicism as the belief that government and political leaders do not care about the public's opinions and are not acting in the best interest of the people. Some scholars argue that this cynicism and alienation from civil society may correspond with the emergence of television as a leisure activity, replacing the experience of social life; while others contend that the process of cynicism results from specific attention to news genres (Wilkins, 2000).

Although associated with the modern media by the communication scholars, cynicism is not a modern concept. The origins of cynicism lie in ancient Greek thought, where the earliest references are to Diogenes of Sinope (Long, 1996: 32; Desmond, 2008, p.19). Cynic thought is based on defacing the coinage of social custom and alienation from society because of an adherence to virtuous ideals. The

classical cynic tradition can today be traced in social cynicism, which questions the motives of almost all human behaviour and all social institutions (Li, Zhou, Leung, 2011, p.340). Cynicism assumed a different meaning in modern political science. The concept of political cynicism was introduced and operationalized in the political science literature by Agger, Goldstein and Pearl (1961, p.477). They defined it as 'the extent to which people hold politicians and politics in disrepute, the extent to which these words symbolise something negative rather than something positive'. Political cynics can be identified with their belief that politicians are working in their own self interest and/or engaged in dishonest behavior. Similar beliefs permeates in their understanding of political/public institutions and political system as a whole.

Political cynicism is an important component of political trust, which can simply be described as a general evaluation of the entire government. Citizens' trust in politics is a core issue to democracy. As democratic governments derive their authority from their public support, sustained high levels of political cynicism threaten the credibility and legitimacy of any government. Since the 1960s, political scientists point to a gradual rise in political cynicism in Western societies (Miller, 1974; Muller & Jukam 1977; Hetherington, 1998; Chanley, Rudolph, & Rahn, 2000; van der Brug & Van Praag, 2007). The indications of this trend can be found in the media, in the politicians' complaints about the disengagement of citizens, and also in the manner citizens communicate and comment on the political events and news.

In recent years, there is a renewed attention for political cynicism from sociologists and political scientists, focusing on its societal, demographic and political causes and consequences (Pattyn et al., 2011). Political cynicism is often considered as potentially dangerous to democracy because cynics demand radical changes in the system and also because trust in government is bound up closely with feelings about the legitimacy of the system of government (Muller and Jukam, 1977, p.1568). Even when the legitimacy of the government is not at risk, political cynicism can exert influence by making it harder for political leaders to gather resources to solve societal problems (Chanley et al., 2000). Moreover, cynicism obstructs basic democratic processes by lowering electoral and political participation (Patterson, 2002) and by increasing support for extreme protest parties (Bélanger & Aarts, 2006). Putnam mentions that in the last two or three decades voting, which is a least demanding form of political participation, was down by about a quarter in United States (2000,p.37).

Cynicism does not only negatively affect political participation but also disrupts social capital. Social capital refers to the features of social organization such as networks, civic engagement, community norms, and social trust that make coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit possible. The political, institutional, social and interpersonal trust is intimidated by cynicism. This implies decrease of political potential of civil organizations and thus poses a threat to liberal democracy.

In their classic article, Agger, Goldstein and Pearl discussed the concept of political potency alongside political cynicism. They described political potency as a "self-conceived potency", "a feeling that one does exercise some power in the complicated, mass democracy of the mid-- twentieth century" (1961, p.493). This self-conception may or may not be grounded in fact and the feeling of impotency may or may not be justified. The central argument in Agger, Goldstein and Pearl was that "the most politically cynical tend to be high on political potency while the politically trusting tend to feel politically impotent" (1961, p.493). This implies that people who feel political potency tend to trust themselves; whereas those who don't, place their trust in politicians and the political process.

The recent interest in political cynicism has been carried to media and communication studies as well by inquiring about the media's role in the rise of political cynicism. It has been the media to be blamed for stimulating cynicism by focusing on negative news, for applying aggressive interviewing techniques, for focusing on political actors and scandals instead of content, for paying exuberant

attention to crime and for portraying politics as some sort of game (Cappella&Jamieson, 1997; Erber & Lau, 1990). In Anglo-American literature, political cynicism has been studied primarily as an outcome of either exposure to political advertising or consumption of high quantities of news, or a combination of both (Lariscy, Tinkham, Sweetser, 2011, p. 751-753). Cynicism is explained in relation to high amounts of television viewing (Putnam, 1995; Norris, 1995). The *video malaise* hypothesis was coined by political scientist Michael Robinson in 1975. The hypothesis argued that viewership of televised public affairs programming results in an increased sense of cynicism or detachment, regarding political institutions, processes, and actors. (O’Keefe, 2008). Questioning the relationship between televised news and political participation was based on the apparent decrease in the 1960s and 1970s in political trust, confidence, and efficacy among US citizens, coupled with the rise of television news with their unique presentation format as the main source of political information.

The notion of *video malaise*, or more generally *media malaise*, gained intellectual popularity in discussions over the role of mass media in western democracies and the presumed influence of television on political and social culture. In a relatively recent work, the *Spiral of Cynicism* (1997), Cappella and Jamieson put forth that news genres and news strategies is the determining factor in the overall presentation of politics and in the formation of citizens political attitudes. Nicholas Garnham (2000) indicated that political campaigning in contemporary liberal democratic systems has been so interwoven with PR, image manipulation and political marketing that the resulting form of political communication and the transformation of voters into consumers inevitably led to cynicism and apathy.

On the other hand, Pippa Norris, in *A Virtuous Circle* (2000), suggested that citizens’ relation with the news media’s in political socialization is positive and it enhances political engagement. In his research conducted outside the United States context, Dutch political scientist de Vreese (2005) indicated that the relationship between news media and political cynicism is contingent on many factors and that cynicism has a negligible impact on citizen participation. de Vreese’s study also revealed that individuals who are higher in efficacy were less cynical than those low in efficacy and that high political sophistication contributes to heightened cynicism. This suggests that cynicism is not always a “bad” thing, that it may in fact be an indication of “an interested and critical citizenry” (de Vreese, 2005, p.294).

Despite the recent interest in the relationship between the media and political cynicism among Western scholars, there is no academic research probing the relationship between political communication and cynicism in Turkey. Any mentioning of cynicism is related to analysis of Turkish left or to organizational cynicism, which refers to the distrust of management in the work context. Tanıl Bora in his book *Left, Cynicism and Pragmatism* (2010) adopts Peter Sloterdijk’s perspective and argues that cynicism is an alleged radical objectivism. Bora adds that at the root of cynicism, there is a very strong sense of incapacity which intimidates opposition and causes a loss of individual agent’s political potential. According to Bora, cynic individual who loses its subjective potential and will, falls into conformism, pragmatism and opportunism.

Although voter turnouts in Turkey is never analysed in relation to changing political communication processes, Turkish political context clearly requires some questioning on political cynicism. Decline in the participation percentages since 1980 in Turkey are rather revealing -especially, the 67 % of participation in 2007 referendum. As can be seen in table 1, voter turnouts tend to go below 85 % despite the fact that voting is compulsory in Turkey and that there are legal sanctions against not voting. Moreover, practices such as professional election campaigning, political advertising, negative political ads, which are closely associated with the rise of political cynicism, has been introduced to Turkish political stage for the last thirty years. These facts combined should bring up the question whether political cynicism is settling in Turkish political culture. At the very least, they should call for

an investigation if Turkish citizens are going back to an ancient local tradition of having a cynic personality.

Voter's turnout in elections and referandums in post-1980 Turkey	
Year of election / referendum	Percentage of participation
2011	% 83,16
2010 referendum	% 73,71
2007 referendum	% 67,51
2007	% 84,25
2002	% 79,10
1999	% 87,09
1995	% 85,20
1991	% 83,92
1988 referendum	% 88,82
1987 referendum	% 95,03
1987	% 93,28
1983	% 92,30
1982 referendum	% 90,32

Table1 : Voter's turnout in elections and referandums in post-1980 Turkey.

<http://www.ysk.gov.tr/ysk/index.html> (accessed 15.03.2012);

http://www.belgenet.net/ayrinti.php?yil_id=14(accessed 15.03.2012);

<http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=236449> (17.03.2012).

From a more psychological perspective, political and social cynic is described as “suspicious of human nature and society according to which hypocrisy and corruption are inevitable” (Govier, 1997, p.238.). Cynicism is quite different from distrust, despair and scepticism: cynics reflect feelings of disdain and bitterness, not sadness and grief. This bitterness is the basis of their political potency. Although they see no room for change, their mocking criticism that put them above current state of events actually create a political impact. Although cynicism is often juxtaposed with alienation, these terms must be clearly differentiated from each other as well. Alienation is the outcome of a feeling by the individual that he has no political capacity, no chance of participating effectively, and no hope of expressing his individuality in social life. Alienation is thus associated with “political futility”, and the relevant attitudes are describes as guidelessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness” (Olsen, 1969, p.291). However, within its bitternes, cynicism expresses that there are expectations and that they are unfulfilled, and there are norms and that they are not complied with. Consequently, cynicism still puts demands on the political system.

Chen, Guan and Hui (2012) in a very recent article“Responding the News about a Natural Disaster” deal with the surfacing of cynicism in a critical social context. They argue that under precarious conditions, social cynicism is particularly relevant to inter-group contexts. Cynicism understood as a negative view of human nature can emerge as the lack of trust in general(ized) others, social institutions and authority figures. The significance of Chen, Guan and Hui’s article lies in the argument that individuals project their world views more clearly while defining and perceiving evets that petain to their cultural groups. This aspect of cynicism can also be observed in the ethnic associations that surfaced after the Van earthquake.

Van Earthquake 2011: can an earthquake be deserved?

This paper probes Van earthquake that has the potential to stimulate political cynicism as a case study. We attempt to read this cynicism in the readers comments to Van earthquake news. In selecting examples, we were inspired by the cynicism scale of Agger, Goldstein and Pearl (1961). However, the main frame of analysis is based on distrust to political leaders, distrust to government and associated bodies, and distrust to neighbouring social/ethnic groups.

Before turning to the cynical comments we came up, we want to have a look at what readers' comments mean both in terms of communication and of political participation. Readers' comments is a relatively novel aspect of journalism that is introduced with the new media technologies, namely online journalism. The distinctive feature of online journalism is that together with the enrichment of content, it enables interaction between news/journalists and the readers (Özgüven et al., 2009: 89). In traditional newspapers, readers' letters to the editor or readers' comments, complaints, demands of corrections and clarifications go through a review by the gate keepers. On the other hand, on online journalism, all readers' contributions, even personal and group protests can find their way to public access without much control. Consequently, online journalism allow for a more participatory audience or readership into processes of news making, while in traditional journalism, readers are ascribed a more passive role (Schultz, 2006).

Undoubtedly, online journalism allows for interaction. It is not just a formal characteristic of online news, but is also of dialogue and is a variant of interpersonal and social communication. The interactive potential of online journalism is most significant with reference to the readers' comments. Readers' comments directly represent the perception and reaction of the readership to the news, and thus conducts an immediate public opinion research. Although most newspapers explain the function of readers' comments as a platform where readers can express their like or dislike for the news, it becomes a field where readers can involve in the news, where they try to share the news discourse, where they negotiate and challenge the message of the news. Reader can thus problematize both the news format and the news content. It is an important arena of opinions on the agenda expressed in a concise but pungent language (Arslan et al. 2012: 46). These characteristics make readers's comments an important indicator of political participation.

Van earthquake was chosen as the case since it brought up the responsibilities of the state and local authorities as well as inter-group relations among Turkish citizens. In this perspective, we collected news and readers' comments from six Turkish dailies, namely *Radikal*, *Vatan*, *Akşam*, *Sabah*, *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet*. We scanned the news and readers' comments for a fortnight following the earthquake to see if we will come across examples of political cynicism in Turkish climate of political communication.

On October, 23, 2011, Van, an eastern province of Turkey was hit by an earthquake with a destructive magnitude of 7.1. It caused heavy shaking across eastern Turkey. According to the official numbers released by Disasters and Emergency Situations Directorate of Turkey on 30 October, the earthquake killed 604 and injured 4,152 people. 11,232 buildings were damaged, 6,017 of which were found uninhabitable. Almost 60,000 people were left homeless, with many public buildings also damaged.

The first cynical frame of the analysis was the distrust to political leaders. Right after the earthquake, prime minister R.T. Erdoğan is announced to visit the disaster area. This news prepared a fertile ground for cynical comments of the political leader. A specific comment in *Akşam* reads as such: "Where is he going? To watch the dead?" ("Başbakan Erdoğan Van'a Gidiyor! [Prime Minister Erdoğan Goes to Van!]" *Akşam* 23.10.2011). In similar vein, comment to the news on the collapse of government buildings reflect cynicism: "The condition of hospitals, government offices and dormitories are pathetic. One wonders who constructed them." ("Neresi Doğru? [Which Part is Correct?]" *Vatan* 25.10.2011). Another example that questions the political authorities appears in *Hürriyet*: "It is never the earthquake that kills people, but those who build and allowed to be built dilapidated buildings with greed for money" ("Van 7.2'lik depremle yıkıldı [Van Destroyed with the Earthquake of 7.2]" *Hürriyet* 23.10.2011). In comment in *Radikal* we see a total disbelief that the governing agencies value human life at all.

Earthquake never kills. What kills is rotten and feeble buildings. Van is on a first degree fault-line. I was doing my military service at the region during Van Muradiye earthquake. The ruins were hardly the ruins of a house. Now I look at the ruins of a seven storeyed building, there has been no change than the increase in the number of storeys. Nothing [in terms of measures against earthquakes] has improved because human life is very cheap in this country and the state is oblivious. ... And then there is the scandalous rescue attempts. Deplorable! (Radikal "Van'da deprem [Earthquake in Van]" 23.10.2011).

The cheapness or worthlessness of human life in Turkey is mentioned in many comments. The value is surely ascribed by political leaders and decision makers. Thus, we see such comments as expressions of distrust to political leaders.

Another aspect of political cynicism is distrust to government and associated bodies. First controversial news on the earthquake was "ABD neden 7.6 ölçtü? [Why did USA scaled it 7.6?]" (*Vatan* 23.10.2011. The news is about the incongruence between the scale announced by Turkish Kandilli Observatory and American statements. The readers' comments to this incongruence on such a vital information brought up the cynic comments. We see that readers question whether the compulsory earthquake insurance will be of any help for the recovery, whether the mismeasurement was to prevent it to be declared a national disaster, whether Turkish authorities are so incapable of making a correct measurement. The deficiency in the measurements brought up the comment that the "alleged-experts" at Kandilli observatory were there just because they have connections with the ruling party. There was even a sinister and sarcastic question whether the earthquake was a government design to change the political agenda. Another reader commented in a mocking manner that the job should be delegated to Turkish Statistical Institute so that they decrease the strength of the earthquake "below zero" just as they did with the inflation rates. Same news about the measurement was also in *Akşam* with the title "Kandilli'den açıklama (Annoncement by Kandilli)". In a similar comment in *Radikal* the reader wrote: "Americans measure our earthquake better than Kandilli [observatory], this means they are [civil servants of Kandilli Observatory] are coach potatoes!" ("Van'da deprem [Earthquake in Van]" 23.10.2011). A series of comments in *Vatan* keep up the cynic mood:

Strangely enough this government belittles everything in our disadvantage and magnifies everything to our advantage. Inflation is 6%, costs of living raises 20%. Look, even the earthquake which is measured 7.6 is declared to be 6.6.

Friends, could it be the Justice and Development Party [the governing political party] members who conspired the earthquake to change the agenda [a laughing smiley]. I don't want to meddle with the business of God but I don't trust all that. How can an earthquake be measured 7.6. and 6.6 at the same time? These are all bullshit.

My brother, never mind the measurement! The dead are dead in this country. Who cares about the regulations. Architectural projects are drawn and approved in a two storeyed office in Kartal İstanbul, you just talk in the language of money!

Who are we [the citizens] to understand anyway! Strangers measure it beyond the horizons.

I don't believe that there is an intentional error in the measurement, but there is a great deal of talentlessness and lack of expertise. The scientific capacities of those in Kandilli must be seriously questioned but alas there is no hope, since they are backed by powerful big brothers. *Vatan* "ABD neden 7.6 ölçtü?" 23.10.2011

However, it was not only Kandilli Observatory's erroneous measurement of the scale of the earthquake, but also other more vital public bodies were criticized for ineffectiveness. In a comment in *Akşam* to the news "22 öğretmen 8 öğrenci hayatını kaybetti [22 teachers and 8 students died]" on the

24.10.2011, the author damns the construction contractors and the municipalities which issued license to the demolished buildings. Another comment in the same newspaper questions how clumsy can a government be in organizing the tents, blankets and stoves and says: "same as the way they govern the whole country: inelegantly" ("Çadır izdihamı yaşandı[Tent Congestion]" *Akşam* 24.10.2011). Since numerous public buildings also collapsed due to the earthquake, public services were not available as well. Not only prisoners walked away, but also the hospitals were demolished. "Public hospital is evacuated instead of serving 7/24, this is a country of weirdness! All public buildings should stand to make citizens feel the state is standing. ... May the God be with us!" ("Van'da 7.2 büyüklüğünde deprem [7.2 Scale Earthquake in Van]" *Milliyet* 23.10.2011). Another reader wrote: "Pardon me but I am curious, please someone answer my question: since the first moment of the disaster, Turkish Red Crescent is broadcasting lists of needs. How come no one asks why they are not prepared and why a country of 70 million people we are in need of foreign help? Shame on us!" (*Milliyet* "Kızılay: 'İçme suyu ve iş makinalarına ihtiyaç var[Red Crescent:There is need for water and heavy equipment'" 23.10.2011).

Finally, we see social cynicism as distrust to others. Here, others emerge either as foreign countries or as Kurds. Right after the earthquake, news announced many countries offered help. Most comments mention the delayed condolences from Arab countries. "Where are our Muslim brothers? Ah, sorry, they are enjoying the Arab spring" (*Milliyet* "İsrail, Türkiye'ye yardım elini uzattı [Israel offered a helping hand to Turkey]" 23.10.2011). When *Radikal* announced the disaster with the headline "Van'da deprem [Earthquake in Van]" on 23.10.2011, one particular comment brought up Turkey's recent international policies:

To begin with, I wish condolences for all those who lost their relatives and to the Turkish nation. The grief of national disasters' is deep. The friendliness of the friends is tested on such painful days. ... Our honorable prime minister embarked upon the leadership of the Arab world during the Arab spring. ... Did not the Arabs stab Turks in the back in times of crisis instead of offering help. In such a critical case like the Cyprus issue, when did Arabs backed us up by recognizing Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus? Here is the earthquake of Van. At the forefront we found Israel and Greece, which are deemed as enemies, by our side. Then Azerbaijan, USA, UK, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Switzerland, Pakistan and Russia sent their condolences and declared that they are ready to help. Except for Iran, where are the other Arab countries. Arab don't help Arab, leave aside the Turk. Dear Prime Minister, the morals of the story is, let's know our place!

This and many other similar examples maintain that authors of these comments perceive "Turks" as a social group and express distrust specifically to Arabs.

Last but not least, we will touch upon the ethnic arguments that surfaced with the earthquake. We see the generalized other as the expression of social cynicism: "Turks" do not and should not trust "Kurds" even under conditions of a natural disaster. Such distrust sometimes becomes a curse. "My God, my God who created the earth and the skies, so great you are, destroy all this eastern region so that those dog-descendants die like dogs. To those even a glass of water is impermissible in this world. Death to PKK-collaborates. Which civilians?" (*Akşam* "Kandilli'den Açıklama [Announcement from Kandilli]" 23.10.2011). Sometimes the distrust to Kurds implies a lesser grief. "I felt sorry when I heard of the earthquake. But I could not stop myself from asking how many of those who dies at the earthquake were PKK supporters" (*Sabah* "Şu ana kadar kaç kişi çıkarıldı? [How many people are rescued till now] 23.10.2011). And sometimes no grief at all. "PKK never wanted our teachers. They must be celebrating. Republic Day is soon, despite the USA and its collaborates we will celebrate as well" (*Akşam* "22 öğretmen 8 öğrenci hayatını kaybetti [22 teachers and 8 students died]" 24.10.2011). On the other hand, such ethnic hostility produced another type of cynicism: "What a pity! While

people are struggling for their lives in Van, such racist discourses can exist. Those people have lost their humanity. It's horrific!" (Radikal "Van'da deprem [Earthquake in Van]" 23.10.2011).

In the face of the hostile ethnic aspect surfacing, Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasized the brotherhood inherent in the nature of the people of Turkey by saying that he wished the continuity of this warm solidarity rising in times of disasters although the year as an expression of living together in peace and unison (*Milliyet* "Bu millet imtihanı bir kez daha geçti [This nation passes the test once again]" 31.10.2011). Although Prime Minister was apparently trying to sooth the ethnic tension, his words only adds to the sarcasm of the general mood.

Conclusion: Attention to Cynicism

When we look at the newspapers in general we came across some noteworthy features. First of all, *Sabah* turned out to be different than other dailies in the sense that its news were more based on official declarations and its headlines presented an approval of official measures taken against the effects of the disaster. Parallel to this, readers' comments in *Sabah* were mostly expressions of faithful approval to the government policies. Thus, we hardly ever see any sarcastic or cynic comments. *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet* seems to focus on the individual cases and miracle stories instead of directly dealing with structural problems. So they don't seem arouse structural criticisms. Among all the dailies, Radikal was most productive to provide us with cynic comments.

As a side-finding to our research, we noticed that the readers's comments withered away in such a short period as five days. This points to the fact that agendas in Turkish press and politics die off quite soon however critical or significant the event may be. In the case of Van earthquake, the disaster set on the public agenda as the common headlines of the day and it affected almost 70 thousand people. A topic with such widespread affects attracted readers' comments only for almost five days. This fleeting nature of agendas is also expresse by the readers themselves in a quite sarcastic manner:

It has been a week and we are still taking about the earthquake. It's out of the question. Let's drop the subject. Or the PR team of the government attemp to change the agenda soon. Most probably, they announce someting about the constitution to the shock of everyone and all the columnists begin sharing their valuable ideas with us. And we the commentators begin commenting madly. End of story. The accident in the coal mine, the flood, the martyrs, ÖSYM scandals were all overcome by this method. Don't worry, we will overcome the earthquake the same way. Of course until the next disaster. In any case, there is a significant increase in the disasters per capita. (*Radikal* Özgür Mumcu "Deprem soruları" 31.10.2011)

Finally, we construe that, although cynicism has not attracted the attention of Turkish academics or politicians as yet, it is an intrinsic part of the citizens' discourse. In a society where civil society is neither organized nor strong enough, where social trust is severely damaged due to various interventions in the democratic life, social capital is already difficult to build. Thus, we believe, political cynicism calls for more research in Turkish context.

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