

Dear friends, colleagues,

The following is a personal evaluation of the happenings in Istanbul as per June 2nd Sunday PM, as far as I could obtain material from last week's observations at field and from social media. Due to overwhelming amount of input inaccuracies may be unavoidable. Hence the organisation as single notes.

any feedback welcome  
best in solidarity, Orhan Esen

**Situation in Istanbul changed and changes every minute very fastly.**

Yesterday, June 1st Sat, possibly over a million people marched to Taksim Square from all over the metropolis (and the country), and police forces withdrew from the Taksim area. It was one of the most extraordinary days Istanbul ever witnessed in its 2700 years history, everyone will admit. Call it whatever you may wish.

important remark first:

the police terror shifted to nearby Besiktas neighbourhood surpassing any level of cruelty so far known. Most horrendous reports hint to the usage of a new chemical matter. Human rights violation of a next level occurred at Besiktas / Dolmabahce area last evening. Situation must have been very serious, social media is full with worst stories. People suffered in a way that no one was even able to capture images or like. The kind of gas used (definitely not the common teargas) in Besiktas in the evening hours must be interrogated. (I have no further details as per this moment)

Note: in Besiktas there is another very important right to the city issue (privatization of their cost in front of the Prime Ministers office / exclusion from space) and particularly the Besiktas FC fans were very actively and radically supporting the Taksim issue from the second day of the occupy action on and are very much pissed with Premier Erdogan as they justly feel that the Prime has literally 'stolen their waterfront'. A very personal issue+ there.

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and some notes on a political analysis of the situation here:  
that mass situation as per yesterday, will be analyzed by many from different angles. I'll try to capture a few main features.

- the character of the big mass that entered the square has changed. The original occupy movement with the aim to save the park absolutely lost control over the situation. I don't say this to blame: it would have been technically absolutely impossible.

- but also: if anyone or any "body" says, it has control over the political situation: question it. The situation is developing in a very spontaneous way, for sure many different actors applying their own agendas. Technically a coordination of leftwing political groups is organizing the event on the Taksim square and Gezi park today, June 2nd.

- that new movement spread out to entire country. Hard clashes took place all over. It's not any more a Taksim Gezi park movement alone. Taksim has turned a symbol or code. Not exclusive content any more.

- it has become a very general, very wide spectrum mass movement with a strong secularist undertone. A movement of all secularists, who are opposing to and discontent with either the very nature or simply with the current governing style of an authoritarian conservative government.

- this means at the same time: the 'right to the city' character of the original movement has strongly undergone. It is not a genuine "occupy" or "right to the city" movement any more. If the term is appropriate: "occupy is politically

occupied or overshadowed".

- example: groups like anti-capitalist muslims, who were integral part of the original right to the city / occupy movement / resistance officially disappeared (at least became invisible concerning their banners). i did not hear any more paroles spent on the taksim project, as was dominating the original movement. this was the case, even on friday when nearly 50 000 people passed over the park and still were trying to collect their own garbage, still when being treated with teargas.

- from personal and mass experience point of view, the situation has an immense emancipating impact. There is a very undeniable "revolutionary" moment to all. After the "liberation of Taksim" hundreds of thousands of young people, many with their families enjoy this once in a life feeling. Its a big festival of freedom simultaneously.

- with the new situation at Taksim, as per 1st june, the demolition of the police campus at the entry of taksim gezi park, as well as the headquarters of the construction company (both in neighbouring prefabricated containers, both rudely occupying the park entry since months) seem to reflect wide spread consensus of the gathered mass. all close nearby public utilities such as bus terminals etc were uneffected. a selective deconstruction took place.

at night further demolitions of construction machines -for the tunnel under construction, the startup phase of the taksim project since november 5th 2012, took place. taksim tunnel project under construction stopped. (an extensive comment on the tunnel project is in my article)

as there is no authority anymore, particularly at nite, further demolishings by unidentified persons -as habitual in such cases- at any further target obviously occurred. it is expected that mainstream media will make extensive coverage with that.

- the new tone of the demonstrations is the request for the government to withdraw. (not for "early elections", lets say or for "the change of the unfair electoral system" that does not allow a good representation but only strong parliamentary majority)

- Republican leader Kilicdaroglu's words a week ago in front of the socialist international to compare Erdogan with Assad as a dictator, which resulted in a very cold reaction of / mental exclusion from the assembly (pointing to the elected character of Erdogan compared to Assad) reflects this mood very well. The republican inacceptance of electoral results since 3 periods must be noted at this point. Republicans canceled a planned demonstration on asian side and have asked for mass mobilization to Taksim on May 31st instead.

- phantasms about post-conquest Taksim are shifting dramatically apart, and getting respectively maximalistic on the other side as well: the very same day (june 1st) , the prime minister Erdogan openly talked about a new police blockade and the total cleansing of the square, cutting down all trees, developing that building on the gezi park, as projected, and even going further: demolishing the opera house@taksim (which is currently being restored with government money !) The new police barricade did not occur.

another very frank but very problematic statement followed: an elected government is only to be controlled by voters every 4 years, in between any intirvention should be allowed without questioning. he only admitted that police may have gone a bit too far in usage of teargas. (possibly the reason for the experiment with a new gas in besiktas ! )

- also to note: the republican movement clearly present at Taksim did not do business as usual, (so far) they did not demand 'the army to duty' as in former republican mass rallies like a few years ago. If this position continues, this might help them witnessing their own power as such, gaining self confidence.

Taksim events may become a major milestone for the republicans to become a part of the democratic system. ("we are powerful enough, we do not need a bug brother to watch upon us, our presence is well justified, we are part of this country, no one can touch us, our identity, dignity and way of life.")

- however, very obscure and in my view threatening annonces made appearance in social media (such as "armed muslims attacking/slaughtering demonstrators") . obviously to provoke the republican sentiments, to foster escalation.

- as per 1st june, the very official words of Erdogan 2 weeks ago, to ban any political activity from taksim square eternally, has become de facto redundant and history. the left wing groups revolutionary instinct or reflex widely recognized the potential of the taksim conflict. june 1st, was widely conceived as a delayed may 1st, 2013 celebration which was first of technical reasons forbidden at Taksim this year, and soon officially banned forever. Taksim square was flagged with banners of all left movements, simulating the mayday.

- the "conquest" of the square, triggerede revolutionary mood: is about to officially demanding the withdrawal of the government. (just like once the tzar. analogies to octoberrevolution are not seldom articulated in these circles) nothing else is good enough. a simple and logical demand "the taksim project should be renegotiated" (=hmm: childish) is simply overheard, as we are in revolutionary state now. (=the revolution will possibly solve the park issue in future as a minor technical detail; "our technicians" know it much better than theirs).

- a very personal remark (for future) here: I am (potentially) concerned about a possible escalation, vis a vis of the peace process underway in kurdistan. circles openly opposing the peace process, like ultra republican "workers party" and likes openly showed flags yesterday on the square. right wing nationalist mhp members/symphatisants have been often reported having taking part in the clashes with the police forces. left wing circles distanced to / sceptical about peace process simply since it is inaugurated by the AKP, are very present at taksim. circles planning torpedoing the peace process cannot possibly find better pre conditions.

- the government should not / cannot be as stupid as not seeing that finishing a war in the east of the country cannot be accompanied by the inauguration of another war in the west. The secularized west, (be it right or not) definetely perceives many very recent intirventions and policies of the government as declaration of war to their lifespheres. Public drinking becoming a major component of the protest acts is significant hereby.

- BDP/HDK, representative of the kurdish movement and its allies, has been strongly present at the initial ('occupy') phase through the very person of Sirri Sureyya Onder, deputy at the parliament, who played a key role in stopping the bulldozers. He got injured with a gas bullet and shortly disappeared. A stronger statement / involvement of the BDP and its allies in HDK will surely help to normalize the situation as well to secure and reestablish democratic standards.

- the original, founding Taksim Platform's appeal "Taksim hepimizin ! / Taksim belongs to everybody (or all of us) !" a clear appeal to pluralist use and participatory planning of the Taksim square has been undermined. The widely accepted secularist slogan, widely accepted by most secularist circles " Taksim Bizim ! / Taksim belongs to Us", as a claim to exclusive usage of urban space is in my view not unproblematic.