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Targeted City Istanbul

~Deteriorating Security Erodes Confidence of Turkish People~

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At the dawn of January 1, 2017, a gunman fired at a night club Reina in Istanbul, killing and injuring more than 100 people in what is believed to be a terrorist attack. Judging from the claim of responsibility issued later, the attack seems to have been conducted by Islamic extremist organization Islamic State (IS hereafter).

Turkey had dozens of terrorist attacks in 2016, with its largest city Istanbul and capital Ankara often targeted. The government has been tightening security while maintaining the state of emergency it declared after the unsuccessful coup of July 2016. On the New Year's morning, too, many policemen were patrolling the city of Istanbul staying on high alert. Terrorist attacks have been taking place despite the vigilance of the government, highlighting the difficulty of containing these attacks. On January 5, there was another bomb attack in Ismir in the western part of Turkey, which was claimed by the Kurdish Labor Party (PKK), an illegal organization of ethnic minority Kurdish people.

Islamic State which is supposed to be behind the terrorist attack of New Year Day had avoided to directly conflict with Turkey until it got involved in a large-scale terrorism in Suruc in southern Turkey, but it declared retaliation when the Turkish army deployed in the Northern Syria intensified their attacks on IS.

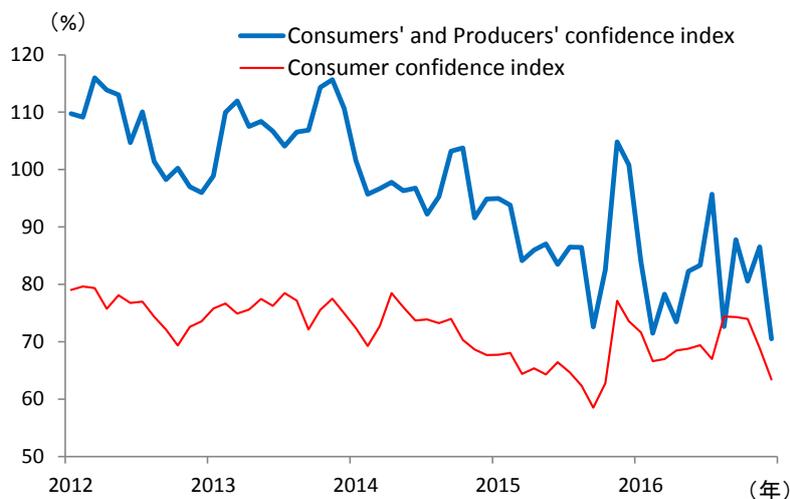
The attack at the night club that terrorized the people who gathered to celebrate New Year's day and have a happy time attracted global attention and became a new symbol that the relationship between IS and Turkey entered a new stage. In Turkey, under the Erdogan administration that is reinforcing Islamic identities there is a conflict arising between the people who emphasize the importance of Islamic values and the people who try to maintain secularism. The target of the recent terrorist attack went to the people of secularism who responded against the government despite the fact that the terrorist attack was seen as a retaliation to the Turkish government for its military actions the Turkish army has been taking in neighbor country Syria.

At a first glance it seems to be an action that lacks direction, but the incident has an effect of escalating conflicts among the Turkish groups and thus undermining the mutual trust among the people. The attempt to fuel the conflict among the citizens to lead to a collapse of a region from within is a common maneuver of terrorists and invaders.

Since there is no sign of the terrorist attacks coming to an end, nationalism is mounting within Turkey against the background of deteriorating security and rising sense of anxiety. As a result, the movement is accelerating toward revision of the constitution that aims at centralization of authority to the president, and this is one of the disturbing trends that the countries concerned have seen.

On the other hand, the Turkish economy has been markedly deteriorating with its real growth rate falling into negative territory and confidence of consumers and producers for the future declining (See Chart below). In addition to the declining sense of mutual trust among such groups as the Islamists, the secularists, and the Kurds, people's confidence in the economy also seems to be getting lost. It will be important for us to carefully find out what will trigger the recovery of these confidences.

Chart : Consumers' and Producers' confidence



(Source) Turkish Statistical Institute

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