COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY IN TURKEY: THE RISE OF A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE

Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's ascent to the leadership of the Republican People's Party (CHP) in May 2010 represents the rise of a social democratic challenge to the current securitized policy discourse and practice in Turkey. CHP's recent attempts to balance state and human security have the potential to institutionalize a comprehensive security approach that is in line with worldwide developments. CHP's comprehensive security framework, based on an unequivocal commitment to fundamental rights and freedoms as well as progressive social policies, has the potential to offer sustainable solutions to Turkey's existential security dilemmas. In turn; this could play a decisive role in shaping not only Turkey's national policy, but also its regional and global orientation.

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S ince the founding of the Republic in 1923, and through the uncertainties of the Second World War, the Cold War, and its aftermath, Turkey has perceived and reacted to significant regional and global security challenges on different fronts and levels. Survival in a volatile environment, expressed through the idioms of "national unity and cohesion", "territorial integrity", and "deterrence" has been at the center of securitized Turkish policy discourse and practice.[1] To a great extent, Turkish domestic and foreign policy reflected this security-centered framing and securitized discourse, whether in the form of *coup d'états*, state of emergency measures, constitutional amendments, or Ankara's expectations from UN, CENTO, NATO, and OSCE membership. The degree of public consensus on Turkey's perceived security threats was mirrored in the noteworthy convergence of policy alternatives, or lack thereof, across the political spectrum. As an expected outcome of securitization, the perception of existential threats and crises requiring extraordinary measures beyond the comprehension of the average citizen, came to restrict available courses of action, while also stifling critical debate in Turkey.

It was the failures of this securitized policy environment, and the subsequent discontent that presented opportune conditions for the rapid ascent of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), following its establishment in August 2001. With his bold claims of challenging and revising Turkey's securitized paradigm, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan succeeded in appealing to large segments of the electorate, far beyond his initial base in Islamist circles. To a great extent, Erdoğan's popularity in the international political scene also grew from his revisionist challenges to the securitized *status quo* in Turkey. However, after a decade-long single party rule by the AKP, Erdoğan has not only failed to fulfill his promise of de-securitization, but instead further strengthened the securitization trend in Turkey. The ongoing rise of authoritarianism reflected in restrictions on political liberties, freedom of expression, and the media, as well as in Erdoğan's style of rule and rhetoric has begun to alarm many, including those who initially admired AKP's policies due to Erdoğan's promises of de-securitization.

Erdoğan's fall from grace as an agent of de-securitization coincided with the rise of an alternative represented by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who became leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP) in May 2010. CHP has often been a target of ungracious criticism from Turkish liberals for its security-centered thinking, particularly during the first decade of the 2000s. Thus, the party ran a bold electoral campaign for the June 2011

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1 According to Barry Buzan, issues "become securitized when leaders (whether political, societal, or intellectual) begin to talk about them –and to gain the ear of the public and the state– in terms of existential threats against some valued referent object." Barry Buzan, "Rethinking Security after the Cold War," *Cooperation and Conflict,* Vol.32, No.1 (1997), p. 14. The term "securitization", coined by Ole Wæver of the Copenhagen School and further popularized by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde (1997), point out five sectors where securitization can take place: military, politics, economy, society, and environment. Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997).

general elections, based on unequivocal calls for democracy, fundamental rights and freedoms, and de-securitized thinking both in domestic and foreign policy. With CHP poised once again to challenge the *status quo* in Turkey, as it did both in the 1920s and 1970s, the question lies about the extent to which the party's promises can be fulfilled.

This article explores the rise of CHP's social democratic challenge to AKP's "resecuritized" *status quo*, in a period of great uncertainty over Turkey's future national, regional, and global orientation. A num-

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ber of questions are taken up, such as: What is the evidence for the emergence of de-securitized thinking in CHP? What are the ways in which CHP manages to raise issues of human security as an indispensable accompaniment to issues of state security? Can CHP produce a viable comprehensive security alternative in Turkey that has an appeal for and beyond the party's secular electoral base? How would a social democratic framework for comprehensive security, shape Turkey's national policy as well as its regional and global orientation?

From State Security to Comprehensive Security

As Michael Dillon points out, the concept of security has "a story of [its] own coming to presence."[2] For many years, discussions over security revolved around issues of state security. As Ken Booth argues, although the "concept of 'security', and how it should be operationalized, remained narrow, fixed, and uncontested until relatively recently,"[3] this notion has been challenged since the 1980s. Following the development of critical security studies, questions of "who is to be secured," "how security is to be achieved," and "from whom security is needed" began to be raised.[4]

With the publishing of the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) 1994 Human Development Report, issues of human security and quality of life became increasingly central to discussions over security.[5] Ensuring "freedom from want" and

2 Michael Dillon, "Security, Philosophy, and Politics," in M. Featherstone et al. (eds.), *Global Modernities* (London: Sage Publishers, 1995), p. 158.
3 Ken Booth, "Realities of Security: Editor's Introduction," *International Relations*, Vol.18, No.1 (2004), p. 5.
4 T. Dunne and N. J. Wheeler (2004), "'We the Peoples': Contending Discourses of Security in Human Rights Theory and Practice," *International Relations*, Vol.18, No.1 (2004), p. 11.
5 "UN Development Report 1994," *United Nations Development Program* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

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"freedom from fear" was perceived to be the best way to confront the wide range of insecurities that people face. As a result, non-traditional security challenges such as global warming, HIV, swine flu, cyber-threats, financial crises, refugees, and internal conflict began to receive more attention. In this process, de-securitization went hand in hand with stronger emphasis on human security. It was within this framework that Rittersberger-Tılıç and Erdemir argue for a "sustainable de-securitization", possible through "commitment to long-term policies of a global nature aiming to attain freedom from wants and fears, through an emphasis on rights to live, food, shelter, work, and healthcare among others."[6]

The balancing of state and human security allowed the development of a more comprehensive approach, namely "comprehensive security". The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)'s publishing of the concept "comprehensive and co-operative security" in 2009 and provision of an intellectual lineage to the concept further codified the framework.[7] NATO's Lisbon Summit in November 2010 also highlighted a "comprehensive approach" to crisis management involving political, civilian, and military dimensions. As P. H. Liotta argues: "We may be witnessing a 'boomerang effect' in which we must focus on both national and human security, and yet realize that excessive focus on one aspect of security at the expense or detriment of the other may well cause us to be 'boomeranged' by a poor balancing of ends and means in a changing security environment."[8]

In the case of Turkey, lessons learned in part from such a "boomerang effect" encouraged CHP to question its approach to security issues in 2010. The recognition that state and human security are not mutually exclusive but complementary, allowed the formulization of a new discourse and practice embedded in the comprehensive security paradigm.

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6 Helga Rittersberger-Tılıç and Aykan Erdemir, "Migration Policies and Integration in the European Union: Impacts on Society and Politics," in Ayşe Güneş-Ayata (ed.), *Challenges of Global Migration: EU and its Neighborhood* (Ankara: KORA, 2008), p. 47.
7 "The OSCE Concept of Comprehensive and Co-operative Security: An Overview of Major Milestones," *OSCE Secretariat Conflict Prevention Centre* (Vienna: OSCE, 2009).
8 P. H. Liotta, "Boomerang Effect: The Convergence of National and Human Security," *Security Dialogue*, Vol.33, No.4 (2002), p. 473.

CHP: Ideas, Carriers, and the Institutional Framework

Like Bülent Ecevit in the 1970s, the rise of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu to the leadership of CHP was a turning point for the party, marking its departure from state-centric understanding of security, to a human security perspective. This new orientation, reflecting a strong commitment to social democracy and human security, became increasingly evident in the party's discourse as well as its policy priorities. The Turkish public welcomed this reorientation as a crucial –albeit belated– move that could finally turn CHP policies into a viable alternative to AKP's increasingly securitized approach.

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The best epitome of the transformation of CHP's security thinking is the restructuring of the party's Research and Development (R&D) unit, namely the Science, Governance, and Culture Platform (The Science Platform hereafter). This platform embodies the ideas, carriers, and institutional framework of the comprehensive security thinking within CHP. In order to understand the Science Platform's central role in the strengthening of a comprehensive security perspective, it is necessary to examine the role of a key figure – namely Sencer Ayata.

One of the strategic steps of Kılıçdaroğlu's social democratic reform initiative was the appointment of Sencer Ayata as director of the Science Platform in May 2010. A sociology professor at the prestigious Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ), Ayata is one of the leading scholars on social democratic theory and practice in Turkey. As an academic who held visiting professorships at the universities of Harvard, Oxford, Manchester, and *Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung,* Ayata closely followed the cutting edge developments in the social democratic scene around the world. Combining local formulizations, inspired and guided by the latest global trends in social democratic thinking, his "glocal" intellectual vision has been critical in further strengthening the human security thinking in CHP under the leadership of Kılıçdaroğlu.

The main strategy that Ayata developed for the CHP Science Platform, was to transform the party's R&D unit from a static institution, run by a permanent team of experts working on fixed topics, into a dynamic node of ad-hoc networks of experts tackling a

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wide range of issues, in response to developments in Turkish and world politics. Ayata's institutional reform was accompanied by a "youth revolution", as he recruited –on a volunteer basis– large numbers of scholars, intellectuals, and experts in their 20s and 30s for the Science Platform. In this endeavor, he was aided by two promising scholars working at the platform: Deputy Director Dr. Fethi Açıkel, educated in the University of Essex and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and Coordinator Dr. İdil Aybars, a social policy expert educated at LSE, University of Ulster, and the European University Institute. While former CHP leader Bülent Ecevit was commended in the 1970s for recruiting young scholars to the party mainly from Ankara University (and thus the *Mülkiye* [Faculty of Political Science] tradition), Sencer Ayata was recognized in the run up to the June 2011 elections for mobilizing young scholars mainly from the Middle East Technical University (and thus the ODTÜ tradition). The Turkish media praised ODTÜ's contribution to CHP, comparing it to LSE's contribution to Tony Blair's success with the Labour Party.[9]

The most significant outcome of Ayata's "youth revolution" in CHP has been the systematic production of intellectual material that has laid the ideological basis for the development of a comprehensive security perspective. In less than two years under Ayata's guidance, the Science Platform has produced a series of reports and policy briefs addressing key issues such as family insurance, civil society, youth, regional development, children, education, women, information society, democracy, global warming, academic freedom, and hate crimes. This was accompanied by the translation and publication of ten social democratic reference books, in a country where the social democratic *corpus* is very thin. Ayata's vision and leadership has resulted in the most intense production of social democratic policy material in the party's 89-year-long history.

The common denominator of the Science Platform's reports and policy briefs, best laid out in detail in the Civil Society Report, is an emphasis on *"özgür insan"* (free human being).[10] Freedom, as a condition of existence, is defined as being protected from three

9 Fikret Bila, "Kılıçdaroğlu'nun ODTÜ Modeli," [Kılıçdaroğlu's ODTÜ Model], *Milliyet*, 1 April 2011.
10 "Sivil Toplum: Özgür İnsan, Kardeşçe Yaşam," [Civil Society: Free Human Beings, a Life of Fraternity], *CHP Bilim, Yönetim ve Kültür Platformu, [CHP Science, Governance. and Culture Platform]* (Ankara: CHP BYKP, 2011).

basic threats: i) freedom from the unchecked powers of the state through participatory and pluralistic democracy, and fundamental rights and freedoms; ii) freedom from threats posed by unregulated and predatory markets through the welfare state and its regulatory policies; and iii) freedom from pressures originating in family, kin, neighborhood, and other illiberal social networks through effective social policies and promotion of a vibrant civil society. These three guarantees of people's freedom are further strengthened through the principles of *"eşit yurttaş"* (equal citizens) and *"kardeşçe yaşam"*

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(a life of fraternity). The emphasis on comprehensive human security is apparent, both in the overall framework presented by the reports and policy briefs, as well as in the details of each piece of work.

CHP's comprehensive security framework also offers solutions to Turkey's existential state security dilemmas. The party's commitment to strengthening fundamental rights and freedoms as well as social policies and the welfare state has a lot to offer towards alleviating challenges of terrorism and other criminal activities faced by the country. The emphasis on social democratic solidarity, represented by CHP's renewed interest in Socialist International, Party of European Socialists, and bilateral relations with sister parties, runs parallel to the party's strengthened commitment to the European Union, Council of Europe, and OSCE processes.

Furthermore, CHP's perspective of comprehensive security has the potential to remedy the decline of Turkey's soft power, a result of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's loss of credibility during the AKP's third term. As AKP gradually lost its influence and trustworthiness in the greater neighborhood, CHP has begun to emerge as a potential mediator and arbitrator in Southeastern Europe, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. The success of CHP policies remains yet to be seen. The extent to which CHP's reinvigorated social democratic framework of comprehensive security can shape Turkey's national policy, as well as its regional and global orientation, depends on whether Ayata's "youth revolution" in the Science Platform can be followed up with a similar addition of young voices into the party organization. This could become a key determinant of the party's prospective success in the run up to the 2014 local elections.

The Future of Comprehensive Security in Turkey

The formulization of "comprehensive security", which highlights the intertwined nature of human and state security issues, is a relatively recent development in the long history of politics. It will, therefore, require time and effort for policymakers, opinion leaders, and public opinion to alter their conventional perceptions of, and reactions to the complex security challenges posed by the world in flux. As numerous states and international organizations strive to develop their comprehensive security frameworks, Turkey cannot stand idle.

Although comprehensive security often appears in national debates in a universal language, it is important to remember that its constitutive ideas have long been expressed across the world in their respective vernaculars. The celebrated statement "Let the people live so that the state lives *(insanı yaşat ki devlet yaşasın)*" by Sheik Edebali, father-in-law of Osman I, the eponymous founder of the Ottomans, is a concise conceptualization of the basic tenets of the proper balancing of state security with that of human security.

Seven centuries after Sheik Edebali, CHP's restatement of the comprehensive security alternative, in the language of the universal tenets of social democracy, has the potential to provide Turkish politics with novel, yet familiar solutions to old problems. How CHP translates and adapts universal principles of social democracy and comprehensive security to local conditions and sensitivities of Turkish politics, will to a great extent, determine the outcome of Turkey's struggle with the wide range of security challenges it continues to face. The success of the social democratic alternative will be decisive in determining Turkey's future domestic policy as well as its regional and global orientation.