CHAPTER 3

Human Security Versus National Security: Kurds, Turkey and Syrian Rojava

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The security dimension of nationalism has been mostly understudied as many studies on nationalism have focused on the political and social dimensions. However, both for state nationalisms and minority nationalisms, security aspect remains an important dimension in the emergence and path dependency of nationalist discourses. Yet, what these nationalisms understand from security may differ to a great extent. While state nationalism prioritizes the security of the state in the sense of its territorial integrity and the interests of "national security" defined by state actors, minority nationalisms tend to define security in broader terms which is beyond the state-centric approach. The security understanding of minority nationalisms tends to be closer to what the United Nations Development Programme broadly framed as "human security," particularly freedom from fear in the sense of cultural, psychological and linguistic security. This chapter attempts to examine the function of nationalism as an instrument of security which is understood differently by state and minority group actors through an analysis of complexity among Kurds, Turkey, and Syrian Rojava (Western Kurdistan). The breakdown of the Kurdish peace

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process (2013–2015) with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Turkey's national security concern with regards to the Kurds and YPG in Rojava is discussed within the theoretical framework of competing security understandings of state and nonstate actors.

Introduction

The security dimension of nationalism has been mostly understudied as many studies on nationalism have observed and analyzed the political and cultural aspects of the field. However, both for state nationalisms and minority nationalisms, security aspect remains an important dimension in the emergence and path dependency of nationalist discourses. Yet, what these nationalist ideas understand from security differ to a great extent. For instance, while state nationalism prioritizes the security of the state in the sense of its territorial integrity and the interests of "national security" defined by state actors, minority nationalisms tend to define security in broader terms which is beyond the state-centric approach. The security understanding of minority nationalisms tends to be closer to what the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Human Development Report of 1994 framed as "human security" which is more people-centered rather than state-centered.[1] This chapter attempts to examine the function of nationalism as an instrument of security which is understood differently by state and minority nationalisms through an analysis of the Kurds in the Middle East. In the post-Ottoman era, while the Kurds in Iraq and Syria have historically been subject to "Arabization" policies at the hands of the state actors, the Kurdish identity in Turkey was denied and subject to assimilation up until the end of the twentieth century.[2] Thus, historically security for the Kurds, as a stateless ethnic group, mostly meant cultural, linguistic, and physical security against the repressive and assimilationist policies of the state actors.

In 1994, the UNDP report introduced the concept of "human security" and declared that the traditional understanding of security had been state-centric for too long that ignored chronic threats such as hunger, disease, repression, and environmental degradation that many people feel insecure from around the world.[3] While the nature of such chronic threats have become transnational beyond the control of a particular state, the traditional state-centric understandings of security in terms of "territorial integrity" and "national unity" have been dissolved as many nonstate actors have challenged the forms and contents of "national

security" as defined by states. For instance, in many contexts of intrastate ethnic conflicts, state actors have framed the political and cultural claim-makings of rival ethnic groups as threats to their territorial integrity and national unity, leading to the securitization of such rival identities. On the other hand, rival ethnic groups have claimed that the state-centric security frames have not been able to protect their vital freedoms surrounding their distinct identity.

In this chapter, I argue that, in such competing approaches to the understanding of security, nationalism plays an important role as an instrument of "security-provider" both for the state actors and the rival ethnic groups. While the official nationalism discourses of the state prioritizes the security of the state and "securitizes" any alternative approaches to "national security", minority nationalisms tend to prioritize "the human security" of their own communities and their nationalist discourse establishes a comfort zone against the state's repression on their identity. Taking the case of the Kurdish question in the Middle East with a focus on Turkey, this chapter seeks to demonstrate the dialectical relationship between security and nationalism.

In the first section, I will provide a discussion on the conceptual value of "human security" with particular emphasis on cultural security. Then, I will conceptually examine the relationship between nationalism and human security. In the second section, the historical background of Kurds and their political and cultural struggles in Turkey will be discussed within the framework of human security and nationalism. In the final section, I will present my main argument with regards to "nationalism as a threat" and "nationalism as a comfort zone" for the Kurdish cultural security.

An Alternative Security Understanding: The Human Security Approach

Theoretical debates on security among the scholars and policymakers of international relations have been built on the questions of what security is, what should be or is being secured, what leads to insecurity, and how insecurity should be best resolved.[4] While realists and neorealists prioritize the state as the main referent of security in the sense of protecting territorial integrity from external aggression and address such insecurities mostly in the self-help system and through the degree of military strength,[5] liberals recognize the role of the state and nonstate actors such as international institutions in building interdependent relations to maintain and seek for

security.[6] Constructivist scholars have challenged the fixed and essentialist understandings of security especially in realist and neorealist frameworks and introduced the malleability of taken-for-granted concepts and behaviors within the social processes and interactions between state and nonstate actors.[7] The post-Cold War era increased the pace of critiques on state-centric understandings of security since many challenges such as "transborder threats such as poverty, globalization and environmental disasters, internal armed conflicts and international terrorism—have failed to be resolved by traditional realist responses."[8]

A security perspective as the mere military concern of the state has been mostly taken for granted without much questioning of the possible breadth and depth of the concept. For instance, the state definition of "national security" mostly homogenizes the nation and takes it as a monolithic body neglecting the interests of different cultural or ethnic groups that constitute the nation. Thus, the interchangeable disposal of the state and the nation together implicitly leads to the assumption that the security of the state directly creates a secure environment for the nation in general and certain ethnic groups in particular. This interchangeable rationale between the concepts of state and nation has been the departure point of alternative discourses under the critical security studies.[9] Sam C. Nolutshungu argues that "states, presiding over diverse and unequal societies, simply are not always representative of, or responsive to, all sections of their populations; nor are state interests always coterminous or congruent with popular interests."[10] The conceptual dissociation of the state from the nation, by all means, entails a reconfiguration of the boundaries of security as the state-centric conception. Barry Buzan and Ole Waever succinctly express how the conventional understanding of security is changing in our contemporary world:

> … the story of global security becomes more diversified. A relatively uniform picture of military-political security dynamics dominated by state actors gives way to multisectoral conceptions of security, a wider variety of actors, and sets of conditions and dynamics differ sharply from one region to another.[11]

The need for a broader understanding of security which would go beyond the "national" interests of the state was taken into consideration in the 1994 UNDP report which introduced the concept of human security. The human security approach opens up the narrow framework of military-oriented security approaches. Since then, most of the literature on human

security has been originated from the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report in 1994 which extensively raised concerns over the security of human beings rather than of states:

> Human security is *people-centered*. It is concerned with how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities-and whether they live in conflict or in peace.[12]

The report also states that the concept of security should be altered in two ways: (1) "From an exclusive stress on territorial security to a much greater stress on people's security" and (2) "From security through armaments to security through sustainable human development."[13] Thus, the content of human security includes categories of economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community (cultural) security, and political security. In such widening of the security concept, the referent object shifts from the state to the people as groups on the one hand and individuals on the other. In other words, the human security approach is mostly concerned with non-state human collectivities. The 2003 report by the UN Commission on Human Security concluded that:

> Human security means protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity, and livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedoms—freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's own behalf. To achieve human security, it offers two general strategies: protection and empowerment.[14]

As Walid Salem argues, "the main objective of human security is to guarantee the freedom of every individual for the promotion and preservation of his/her well-being and dignity."[15] This also reflects the emancipatory notion of human security approach where the eradication of structural and contingent oppressions by the state institutions is particularly emphasized.[16] Human security emphasizes the absence of threat to the core values of individuals including physical survival, welfare, and identity.[17] Overall, the human security approach has been one of the central theoretical and practical frameworks of the critical security studies which have developed a vast body of literature against the traditional/mainstream security studies, largely criticized as being

heavily state-centric. Nevertheless, ambiguity over the limits of the concept of human security in terms of its precise definition and extensive inclusiveness has raised critical voices whether the concept has any theoretical value.[18]

The concerns over the definitional ambiguity of human security revolve around the questions that where human security begins and where it ends. This, in turn, questions the idea whether human security approach can be considered as a paradigm shift in the security studies. In other words, some scholars state that if human security means everything, then it has no conceptual value.[19] Besides, it is hard to say that scholars reach an agreement what really human security is. Therefore, one might argue that human security is conceptually contested. It is contested in the sense that narrow or wide, theoretical or policy-oriented definitions, to some extent, hinder a scholarly agreement on a precise and single definition of human security. However, in any case, the theoretical value of human security as a conceptual tool lies in its flexibility which can be applied to myriad cases where collectivities of human beings encounter various categories of insecurity in which the security of the state is not sufficient to establish security to those insecure communities. On the other hand, the emphasis should be given not to what human security is, but rather to what *human security is not*. In that sense, "both in theory and practice, the concept of human security indicates a shift in the main referent object of security" which explains that "it is no longer the state we are concerned about (*national* or state security), nor traditional warfare (military security)".[20] In fact, this is where the critical security scholars have consensus. Aylin Ozet states that "all the critical security scholars tend to agree that state-centric and military-focused security policies can be detrimental to the lives of human beings".[21] Therefore, human security is "not about designating individuals as referent objects, but about countering dominant state-centric thinking".[22] For the sake of this chapter's scope, I take the human security concept in its flexibility and its dissociation from the state-centric security conceptions with particular emphasis on the issues of cultural security which is one of the important dimensions of human security.

Cultural Security

Cultural security is one of the components of the human security perspective. Identity boundaries such as ethnicity, religion, and gender are the concerns over the ontological insecurity of certain communities

if they are likely to be marginalized due to their willingness to express their identities vis-à-vis the dominant identity that they live within. Assimilation-based nation-building processes have been one of the most important threats to the diversity of various linguistic and cultural communities around the world within which their existential security has been challenged. Therefore, "the quest for existential security can be linked with and expressed through issues of national, ethnic, gender and religious identity as ways in which people create collective meanings".[23] Since the cultural and linguistic identity of ethnic communities is the means for establishing collective meanings for the external world and for sustaining their existential heritage, the question of how they are free from fear to express their identity is very crucial within the human security dimension. Marginal populations are more likely to be the subject of cultural insecurity. Sam C. Nolutshungu defines marginal populations as "distinguishable minorities within states whose integration to the society and state is markedly incomplete so that their participation in either is partial, intermittent, or subject to qualifications or restrictions"[24] and he argues that "'national minorities' claiming a right to self-determination are usually of this type".[25] The Kurdish question in the Middle East is an important case in unpacking what cultural security is and why it is important. Since culture and language tend to be intrinsic parts of the same whole, the issue of language for ethnic communities such as Kurds is vital for the pursuit of well-being and the development of self-esteem and their cognitive development.

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas states that "ethnic groups are often defined as belonging to a linguistic minority on the basis of their mother tongue, in particular groups not distinguishable from the majority by anything much more than by their language".[26] The question of why a minority language would be critical for the psychological entirety of the community needs attention in terms of analyzing the cultural (in)security of marginal populations.[27] With psychological entirety, I seek to point out that language is not simply a tool for mutual communication. In essence, "language is a system of symbols by means of which the individual is able to describe the external world, the reality which surrounds her, and her own internal world, her inner reality, as well as the relationship between these two".[28] Under conditions of linguistic assimilation, individuals are less likely to describe their external and internal world from their own linguistic heritage, but from another language's meaning-making framework. Under such break off between self and the external world, an individual's

cognitive development is more likely to be psychologically distorted than a person who enjoys cultural and linguistic safety. As Li Wei states, "through language choice, we maintain and change ethnic group boundaries and personal relationships, and construct and define 'self' and 'other' within a broader political economy and historical context".[29] This is where I shall turn to the relationship between cultural (in)security and nationalism and how they would reinforce or mitigate each other.

Nationalism and Human Security

If human security is a shift from state-centric notions of security to people-centered security concerns, and if this entails an interaction between the formation of the state and the marginal communities, nationalism is likely to be one of the puzzles, especially regarding to the politics of cultural identity drawing the lines of "self" and "other". In other words, the dispute between "self" and "other" may lead to a security dilemma, not among states, but among cultural communities within a specific state. My argument is that state nationalism can be perceived as a threat to certain ethnic minority communities who claim to have distinct identity than the national identity claims of the state. For instance, in the Kurdish case, state nationalisms in Iraq and Syria with strict emphasis on Arab identity and the state nationalism in Turkey with emphasis on monolithic Turkishness have led to a deep cultural and linguistic insecurity for the Kurds. However, Kurdish nationalism and armed Kurdish rebellions have been historically perceived as a threat to the territorial integrity of the states in the region. The question is how this kind of security dilemmatic interaction affects the human security of Kurds since they are historically disadvantaged population and how this zero-sum game of security concerns can be turned into a win-win game. By a win-win game, I mean that while the pursuit of national security by the central state actors can build a collective secure environment for the Kurds, pro-Kurdish claims for cultural recognition and political representation would not risk the security of the states in terms of state collapse or state death.[30] As Turkish, Iraqi, and Syrian states historically justified their repression of Kurdish cultural and linguistic rights based on their concern for "the survival of the state" (*devletin bekası* in Turkish), it is important to overcome the zero-sum game mentality when it comes to the political and cultural development of the Kurds in the Middle East.

For instance, Kurdish peace process (2013–2015) between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish state was a significant attempt to overcome the zero-sum game between the Turkish and Kurdish nationalist discourses. While Ankara framed its national security without criminalizing and securitizing pro-Kurdish actors, many Kurds psychologically, emotionally, and culturally felt secure and safe within the Turkish national unity discourse. For instance, the pro-Kurdish legal party, Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP), framed its June 2015 general election campaign as "*Türkiyelileşme*" (being a party of Turkey, not just Kurds). In other words, national security and human security approaches and ideas did not clash with each other during this peace process until the PKK and Turkish military began an all-out-war after the June 7th, 2015 elections. One of the key reasons for the breakdown of this peace process in Turkey was the Syrian civil war where the PKK-affiliated Peoples' Protection Units (known as YPG) began to expand its territorial influence and control in northern Syria during its fight against the jihadist the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), almost becoming the new neighbor of Turkey. The idea of the PKK becoming almost a de facto state in northern Syria as a legitimate actor in the international coalition against the ISIS triggered Ankara's traditional *raison d'état*: fears with regards to the survival of the state. Moreover, the July 2016 failed military coup attempt against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) led to a nation-wide state of emergency within which many pro-Kurdish political actors and cultural institutions have been purged. The process from the peace process to an infectious Syrian civil war and the Kurdish political development in northern Syria once again triggered the zero-sum game between Turkish national security ideas and Kurdish human security concerns.

For the sake of this chapter, I intend to explore nationalism from a security perspective. Traditionally, nationalism represents the idea of bringing a nation and the state together under a political roof of nation-state within its own territory.[31] The question of why a specific nation would seek its own state is an issue of debate as well. According to Jack Snyder; "nationalism reflects a need to establish an effective state to achieve a group's economic and security goals".[32] Moreover, Douglas Woodwell argues that "nationalism represents, in the broadest sense, a desire to mitigate the degree of foreign influence and control exercised over the members and perceived territory of a nation".[33] Thus, in order to construct or establish boundaries of the "self", there needs to be a degree of interaction with the "other". Foreign is being the "other" and this

reciprocal interaction turns into the politicization of both group identities invigorating with and by nationalism. Within that interaction, nationalism shapes itself as "the rejection of excessive or illegitimate foreign influence and/or control over national populations or territory".[34] Then, nationalism is an instrument of security—political, economic, and/or cultural—used by national groups where the goal is to create their own living space along with their own governing institutions within an idealized territory. However, if this ideal project is realized where the territories of nation-state host the "other" or the "foreign" as well, then nationalism as an instrument of security might have a rival nationalism which can be utilized as an instrument of security by the "other," possibly resulting in a security dilemma between the "self" and the "other" within the state. This brings up the issue of multiculturalism and collective rights within the nation-state since "the single most important project of nation-state was, and continues to be, homogenization".[35] Human security, especially in terms of cultural security, comes into question within this problematic interaction between homogenization and cultural diversity within the territories of nation-state, revealing a power relationship between the majority (homogenizer) and the minority (anti-homogenizer).

Security Dilemma and Nationalism as an Instrument for Security

The homogenizing mentality of the majority nationalism which manifests itself in systematic state policies such as the nonrecognition of minority identities at the public sphere potentially generates a cultural threat for minority identities. Due to the fact that homogenization is "an effort to liquidate the identity of minority groups so that their claim for collective rights can be put in jeopardy and delegitimized",[36] the cultural security of minority groups is directly under risk if they cannot resist to assimilation imposed by the dominant social, cultural, and political institutions. Again, as Jack Snyder argues, if "people look to states to provide security and promote economic prosperity",[37] then minority groups might potentially look for agents of security other than the state, if not their own state. Such ambition of self-determination for the sake of cultural or political security can potentially turn into an ethnic conflict in which one side of the conflict is driven by a state-sponsored nationalism while the other side is galvanized by a state-seeking nationalism. While the majority nationalism, which is state-sponsored, seeks to protect the territorial integrity of the state and the unity of the nation, minority nationalism

with state-seeking inspirations or ambitions of autonomy seeks to challenge the projects of homogenization in order to form a living space for their own cultural and linguistic survival. This story also reveals the relationship of the internal colonizer and the internally colonized. The quest for security for the colonized mobilizes them toward two possible alternatives; secession or federal autonomy.[38] Therefore, while the nationalism of the state poses a threat to human security of the minority, the minority nationalism is also perceived as a threat to the state's "national security" interests. This creates a Janus-faced nationalism as an instrument of security provider for the state actors on the one hand and the minority ethnic groups on the other: (1) Nationalism as a threat and (2) Nationalism as a comfort zone.

For instance, Kurdish aspirations in Iraq are more toward an independent state which Baghdad would not strictly oppose unless the deal is negotiated between Baghdad and Erbil. Moreover, since Iraqi Kurdistan is already an official federal entity secured in the post-Saddam 2005 constitution, the Iraqi sovereignty has been now shared. Kurdish claim-makings in Turkey and Syria are leaning toward cultural and administrative autonomy from the central state and any aspirations for independence seem to be a direct challenge to the sovereignty of the central states. The civil war in Syria in the post-2011 uprisings has already led to a de facto autonomous region for the Kurds, often called Rojava (Western Kurdistan) and Syrian Kurds have already emphasized their policy of protecting the territorial integrity of the Syrian state. In Turkey, the 2-years long peace process between the insurgent Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish state ended in July 2015 which led to a new wave of urban and rural violence in Turkey. Moreover, although the main pro-Kurdish legal political party, the Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP in Turkish acronym) has been able to win most of the municipalities in the majority Kurdish cities in eastern Turkey in the 2014 local elections, the state of emergency rules after the failed military coup attempt in July 2016 have purged many members of the Kurdish political representatives both in municipalities and in the Turkish national parliament. In addition, the furious terrorist attacks of the jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) against the Kurds in Iraq, Syria and Turkey since 2014 have created an added existential threat to the human security of the Kurds in the Middle East. Under these conditions, Kurdish nationalism has become an important instrument of security in order to prevent any threats to their cultural, linguistic, and physical existence.[39]

In the next section, I demonstrate the security dynamics of nationalism by focusing on the case of Kurds in Turkey in the light of collapsed "peace process" (2013–2015) and the Syrian civil war.

Turkey, Kurds, and Rojava in Syria

As I have argued elsewhere, the boundary-building in modern Turkish nationhood on the basis of Muslimhood and Turkish language led to a strictly singular and monolithic national identity rather than a plural and hyphenated identity where ethnic pluralism was never promoted or allowed by the Turkish state elites.[40]

With an estimated population of 14.7 million which amounts to 18% of Turkey's total population,[41] Kurds have historically been securitized by the state. Publicly claiming to be a Kurd, speaking Kurdish in public space, and publishing in Kurdish meant to be charged with "treason" to the state and this caused many legal and paramilitary punishments by the judicial and military institutions of the state.

Since the project of Turkish nationalism has not fully achieved to assimilate the Kurds' distinct cultural heritage into the dominant Turkish culture and language, the question of national identity still continues today. Many Kurds are more likely to demand official recognition of their identity and language at the public sphere and state institutions, as the Turkish state continues to manage the cultural grievances of Kurds without risking the "Turkishness" as the primary state identity.

The exclusionary nationalist policies of modern Turkey and its assimilative social engineering policies triggered reflexive reactions from the Kurdish periphery starting from the religious-nationalist based Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925 to the rise of the insurgent PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) as a Marxist–Leninist militant movement in the beginning of the 1980s. While the rise of Kurdish nationalism has been perceived as a threat to the territorial integrity of Turkey, Kurdish nationalism has provided a cultural space for Kurds where they have found a comfort zone to protect their identity and language from external pressures.

Kurdish Cultural (In)security in Turkey

Although the armed conflict between the Turkish military and the PKK insurgents has created an environment of physical insecurity in the Kurdish regions of Turkey as well as in other parts of Turkey, my main

approach to human security of Kurds is focused on the environment of cultural (in)security.

Since the key entity that distinguishes Turkey's Kurds from the majority Turkish identity is the Kurdish language, Kurdish cultural demands have been mostly surrounded within linguistic concerns. Modern Turkey with its emphasis on Turkishness has had fears about granting cultural and linguistic rights to minority groups, especially to Kurds. Concerning Turkey's fear, Kerim Yildiz and Mark Muller argue that:

> One of the greatest challenges to cultural rights, though, is that for some governments, the haunting spectre of group identities distinct from the official national identity provokes acute fears that the territorial integrity of the state will be undermined. Accordingly, it is perceived that conferring cultural rights will lead to a greater cultural awareness among minorities, inspire radicalization of minority claims and ultimately fuel demands for autonomy.[42]

This manifests the fact that the Kurdish demands based on their cultural identity and language have been mostly perceived as a security issue by the Turkish state. Hamit Bozarslan also argues that the regional dimension of the Kurdish question poses a security problem as much for the states as for the Kurds themselves in which particularly Turkey's Kurds suffer from internal colonization where there is no internal autonomy and no external protection.[43] For instance, Ibrahim Sirkeci mentions the effects of Turkish Anti-Terror Law on the free exercise of Kurdish cultural and linguistic capital where this law:

> '…is often used to punish free expression dealing with the Kurdish question along with other laws preventing broadcasting in Kurdish, teaching Kurdish in schools, and using Kurdish in political campaigns… These laws have been the basis for arresting journalists and politicians, confiscating books and publications, censoring and shutting down newspapers and other media throughout the 1990s in Turkey.[44]

In terms of the legal system, Derya Bayir provides an excellent analysis of the discursive history of the Turkish judiciary toward the Kurdish identity. Identifying the Turkish judiciary's discursive attitudes toward the Kurds as "legal forms of Orientalism," her legal-historical analysis shows that Turkish courts' representation of Kurds since the 1970s is based on three overlapping discourses:

> 1. denying the Kurds' separate existence and claiming their Turkishness; 2. acknowledging the Kurds while denying Kurdism; and 3. portraying the Kurds' traditional law, culture and social structure as deficient.[45]

According to Bayir, the main concern of the judiciary has been the right to self-determination by Kurds. Thus, it has been always emphasized that Turks and Kurds belong to the same culture, values, laws, and history. Kurds have been placed in the organic definition of Turkish nationhood. She argues that the post-1990 discourse of the Turkish Constitutional Court resembles pre-1990 discourse of Martial Courts that strictly emphasized the Turkishness of Kurds. The Turkish Constitutional court has seen the Turkish language not only as an official language but as the common language as well which is used in every aspect of social life. It is argued that few people do not speak Turkish in eastern Anatolia. It also rejects the claims of Kurds as territorially concentrated people in the Eastern and Southeastern provinces. Kurds have not been seen as natives of Anatolia. Under these state-led nationalist legal and cultural policies, the Kurdish population of Turkey has encountered the perils of cultural insecurity where their Kurdishness, both culturally and linguistically, has been securitized by the Turkish state.

A research report based on in-depth interviews among Kurds published by Diyarbakir Institute for Political and Social Research (DISA) gives an insightful analysis of how Kurdish language is an issue of cultural (in) security.[46] This research specifically relates the right to education in mother tongue to the cultural security of minority communities. According to the study:

> When the use of the mother tongue in education is in question, political, military and civil bureaucracy, as well as judicial authorities, all show extreme sensitivity and resistance to this demand. This stance against the mother tongue prevents the possibility of different cultures within the community from developing and places in a disadvantaged position those with a mother tongue different from the majority language. The multifaceted issues that Kurdish students experience during their education generally arise from two fronts: the first of these is the high rate of poverty in Kurdish-majority regions and the insufficiency of state investment in education combined with improper educational policies.[47]

Overall, the lack of right to education in mother tongue in Turkey is seen as the underlying cause of social conflict and the lack of societal peace in this research published by DISA. This language-based point is very crucial for the development and survival of the Kurdish culture.

Kerim Yildiz and Mark Muller succinctly summarize the relationship between culture and the psychological entirety of an individual:

> Cultural background is one of the primary sources of identity, and the basis for key elements of self-definition, expression, and a sense of group belonging. Thus, cultural rights are not a 'luxury' to be realized at a later stage of development. Culture is inseparable from the quality of being human being, and from the human sense of self-respect, its denial is the inverse: it diminishes the group or individual and undermines their sense of worth.[48]

Therefore, if Kurds are deprived of their culture and language which consist the existential capital of their sense of worth, their psychological entirety will likely to be distorted in the sense that their Kurdishness might turn into a source of inferiority complex vis-à-vis the dominant Turkish identity.

Above all, if Kurdishness is perceived as a sense of weak self-esteem by Kurds vis-à-vis their fellow Turkish nationals, then this poses a serious cultural insecurity for the Kurdish population in Turkey. The security dilemma here is how to restore the security of Kurdish culture and language in Turkey without it being perceived as a threat to the existence of Turkish territorial integrity and national unity. This has been achieved for the first time in the modern history of Turkey when the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) initiated the so-called Kurdish opening (or known as Democratic Initiative) in 2009 and later started the peace process with the PKK in 2013.[49] Yet, the hopes for peace short lived due to the unexpected political developments in northern Syria or Western Kurdistan (Rojava).

From Kurdish Peace Process to Rojava: Missed Opportunity and the Clash of Human versus National Security

In 2002, Turkey's single party period with the Justice and Development Party (AKP) began. In 2003, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the leading founder of the party, became the prime minister of Turkey and in 2014 he became the first-elected president of Turkey. The main ideological stance of AKP was conservative democracy with emphasis on the lifestyles of pious Muslims. In their initial years of government, AKP acted as a pro-European Union and reformist actor in order to consolidate the Turkish democracy. This attitude reflected on the state policies toward

historically disadvantaged groups such as the Kurds in parallel with Turkey's official candidacy to the European Union of 1999. Certain harmonization packages were put under way. On April 9, 2002, the notion of "banned language" was lifted from Law on the Press and also the learning of different languages used by Turkish citizens was permitted in private instruction institutions; on August 3, 2002, the freedom to broadcast in different languages was put in effect and in June 2004, the state-sponsored Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) began broadcasting radio and television programs in various languages such as Bosnian, Kurmanci, and Zazaki. And finally, on January 1, 2009, the first Kurdish television channel by the state-sponsored Turkish Radio and Television initiated broadcasting 24/7.[50] These steps later led to the Kurdish Opening in 2009 which sought to establish greater cultural and linguistic rights for the Kurds of Turkey and then transformed into a peace process (2013–2015) with the aim of convincing the PKK to lay its arms.

These times for high hopes for sustainable peace were, in fact, a result of historical moderation between the Kurdish and Turkish nationalist discourses. As I have argued elsewhere, while the pro-Kurdish nationalist discourse, particularly the PKK's rhetoric in the late 1990s, shifted from secessionism to greater cultural rights for the Kurds, the Turkish state distanced itself from the denial of Kurdish identity and forced assimilation after the 2000s.[51] HDP entered the June 2015 general elections with the framework of "Türkiyelileşme" (being part of Turkey) and received around 13% of the total votes winning 80 seats from the 550-seat parliament.[52]

These developments in Turkey's Kurdish identity and language policies represented significant initial steps in transforming the historical dilemma between the human security of the Kurds and Turkish nationalism. In other words, these policies were perhaps the first attempts of seeing the human security of Kurds as the "national" security of the Turkish state. In other words, the cultural security of Kurds and the national security of the Turkish state was not extensively viewed as mutually exclusive dimensions but rather seen as mutually constitutive policies that would secure the territorial integrity and national unity of Turkey without neglecting the cultural needs of the Kurds. These reforms and peace efforts were the first comprehensive attempts to turn the zero-sum game between Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms into a "win-win" situation for both political camps. The idea of "win-win" situation ended with the Syrian civil war and the rise of the PKK-affiliated YPG ruling in northern Syria.

The Syrian civil war started after the 2011 protests following the wave of the Arab Spring across the Middle East. The harsh suppression of these protests by President Bashar Al-Assad gradually turned into a war between various rebel groups and the Syrian government.[53] While the jihadist ISIS expanded its territories and turned the city of Raqqa as its de facto capital, Kurds in northern Syria within the leadership of YPG first protected Kurdish territories and then expanded its influence in three cantons: Jazeera, Kobani, and Afrin in northern Syria.[54] Particularly, in October 2014, when the Islamic State attacked the obscure Kurdish town called Kobani, YPG along with the US air missile support showed a great resistance. This moment was the first time that the expansion of ISIS was stopped on the ground. YPG fighters became international celebrity figures as heroes against the radical Islamist terrorists.

YPG is also a follower of PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan's ideas with regards to democratic Kurdish autonomy and thus, the Turkish state refused to differentiate YPG from the PKK, which is a US-designated terrorist group. In other words, for Turkey, the idea of PKK and PKK-affiliated groups in northern Syria becoming an international legitimate actor in the fight against the ISIS was frightening and it triggered Turkey's traditional "survival of the state" understanding of its national security. On the other hand, the PKK saw Rojava as an opportunity to experiment and practice its "ideal society." Thus, the cost of abandoning the Kurdish peace process was not high for the PKK since the organization was able to establish a new living space in Rojava.

In fact, the leader of the political wing of YPG, known as PYD (Democratic Union Party), Saleh Muslim was in direct communication with Ankara in order to talk the ways in which the group and Turkey would establish a strategic alliance in Syria against the atrocities of the Bashar Al-Assad government. In February 2015, the Turkish military and YPG even cooperated as the Turkish armed forces entered northern Syria in order to remove the tomb of Suleyman Shah—the grandfather of the founder of the Ottoman empire, Osman I.[55] In order to protect the tomb from the potential Islamic State attack, the Turkish military moved the tomb near the northern Syrian village of Esme (Ashma). During the Newroz celebrations of March 2015 in Diyarbakir, a letter from the imprisoned Abdullah Ocalan was read that emphasized and appreciated the cooperation of YPG and the Turkish military which he framed as "the Spirit of Esme:"

> I call on nation states to engage in a new type of democratic process, and I call on them to build for themselves a new democratic collective abode in the Middle East. In addition, today I call on the women and youths who beat the wings for freedom, and who form the overwhelming majority, to strive for success in economic, social and political fields and in the realm of security. Furthermore, I salute the resistance and victory of Kobane which has great significance for our region and for the whole world. In this manner, I greet the "Spirit of Esme" which has been embellished as a symbol of a new era. These declarations which I have stated above comprise in one sentence a vital call for the rebuilding of society and for revision and restoration, both for our past and for our present.[56]

By "the Spirit of Esme," Ocalan was referring to a political, cultural, and military Kurdish–Turkish alliance and cooperation in the Middle East. In other words, he was referring to a win-win condition beyond the security dilemma between Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms. If this Kurdish–Turkish alliance would become real against the jihadist threat of ISIS, the human and cultural (in) security of the Kurds and pro-Kurdish groups in Turkey and Syria would be soothed as well as the national insecurities of the Turkish state with regards to the regional threats in the Middle East.

However, on the contrary, while Ankara perceived YPG and PKK as a more significant threat than ISIS, PKK did not hesitate to involve in a massive wave of urban violence with Turkish security forces in south-eastern Turkey.[57] According to the July 2016 International Crisis Group report, the new wave of violence between the PKK and Turkish security forces since July 2015 led to the death of 885 state security force members, 1063 PKK militants, 385 civilians, and 219 youths of unknown affiliation.[58] In addition, the AKP government has become more authoritarian and repressive on the legal pro-Kurdish actors and institutions in the post-July 15th military coup attempt by turning the declaration of the nation-wide state of emergency into its own tool of exclusion and repression. The most significant reflection of this policy has been the arrest of popular charismatic co-leader of HDP, Selahattin Demirtas on November 4, 2016.[59] Today, reconciliation between Kurdish human and cultural insecurities and the national security fears of the Turkish state seems elusive. For stateless nations, establishing their own human security and achieving psychological entirety is a hard task since these groups are mostly the national security issue for the host states. For this reason, unless host states can make the Kurds feel culturally, linguistically, and

psychologically secure and safe, an independent Kurdish state may perhaps be the only way to achieve Kurdish human security in the Middle East.

Conclusion

The security dimension of nationalism has been mostly understudied, particularly nationalism as an instrument of security provider for both state nationalisms and minority nationalisms. This chapter discussed the relationship between nationalism and human security with an emphasis on cultural security by examining the Kurdish case in Turkey. While I articulated state-led nationalism as a threat to the cultural security of minority groups (i.e., Turkish nationalism and Kurds), I argued that ethnic minority nationalism establishes a comfort zone for the survival and sustainability of their culture and language (i.e., Kurdish nationalism and Kurds).

On the other hand, as the rise of pro-Kurdish claim making in the political context of Turkey has had posed threats to the territorial integrity and national unity of Turkey, these competing discourses of two nationalisms have become both sources of threat and sources of comfort zones. While the cultural (in) security of Kurds led to a Kurdish nationalism as a comfort zone and as a threat to the foundation of Turkish state, the legal and cultural practices of Turkish nationalism posed a threat to the cultural security of Kurds and provided a comfort zone from the costs of changing the well-established social and political institutions of the Turkish republic. Under this contradictory relationship between human security and nationalism, Turkey and the pro-Kurdish movement had an opportunity to move from security dilemmatic relationship toward a win-win situation during the reformist years of the AKP, the so-called Kurdish opening and the Kurdish peace process (2013–2015). Yet, the Rojava factor played a significant factor in the breakdown of such win-win condition (i.e., the Spirit of Esme as Ocalan framed) for the pro-Kurdish groups and the Turkish state as the PKK-affiliated YPG expanded its sphere of influence in northern Syria and became a legitimate international and regional actor in the fight against ISIS. If Kurds in the region cannot socioculturally and linguistically feel secure within the perspective of human security, an independent Kurdish state can be the only sustainable solution.

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