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Security in Turkish Politics: An Analysis of the Political Discourse of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Abstract

The goal of this paper is to investigate two presidential terms in Türkiye in order to compare the place of security in the political discourse of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in particular, and in Turkish politics at this time in general. The mixed methodological approach has been taken in the article. The MAXQDA software program has been used to collect and analyse data from more than 850 of President Erdoğan's speeches. The key research questions are as follows: how important are the security issues in the political rhetoric of the President? Are there any differences in this regard between Erdoğan's first and second presidency? Did the state of emergency and introduction of the presidential system make any difference in this regard? What are the reasons for the place of security, as identified in the analysis, in Turkish political discourse and politics?

Keywords: Political Discourse, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Securitisation, Turkish Politics, Türkiye, Turkey

Introduction

Security issues – not only with reference to “hard security”, but also to other dimensions of the phenomenon – have always been an important part of Turkish politics as the army is a key element of the political system of the state. As Mustafa Aydın put it, Türkiye “is a securitised country where ‘security’, in its wider definition, reigns supreme in societal and political development, and overrides most other considerations” (Aydın, 2003, p. 163).

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It has a lot to do with the process of the securitisation of politics – both domestic and international – which, in general terms, means transforming a political issue into a matter of security within a particular process, one that starts from presenting the issue as a threat that usually requires taking emergency measures, resulting in substantial political and social effects (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998, pp. 23–25). A political issue can be securitised objectively (when a real security threat exists and is directly related to a political issue) but the core of securitisation is its subjective dimension – in the case of a successful presentation of an issue as a substantial security threat, even if the latter is not directly connected with a political issue (Arcudi, 2006).

The securitisation of politics has different agents, defined threats (securitised subjects), objects which must be protected, and an audience to be persuaded that something is a threat. This is also the case of securitisation of Turkish politics. The agents of securitisation in Türkiye are, first of all, incumbents, but are also the opposition; non-governing elites representing, e.g., the army, judiciary or education sectors (Polat, 2009) as well as society (Erdoğan, 2020). The existing literature on the contemporary political history of the country focuses on various Turkish actors and issues that are securitised and associated with security threats – both domestic, e.g., minorities – the Kurds, the Alevis, etc. (Polat, 2008; Geri, 2016; Yılmaz and Barry, 2020), refugees (Erdoğan, 2020), parties (Yılmaz, Shipoli, Demir, 2021), opposition (Yılmaz, Shipoli, 2021), elections (Kurgan, 2018) or identity (Aydındağ, Işıksal, 2021) and those of an international nature, e.g., relations with international partners (Balçı, Kardeş, 2011) or conflicts (Aghaie Joobani, Can Adısönmez, 2018). The protected groups and audience to be convinced about the security threat is, on the macroscale, the entirety of the Turkish society/nation/electorate and, on the microscale, merely a part of society.

An important characteristic of securitisation is its dynamics and lack of linearity. In Türkiye's case, it means that the process of securitisation is changing all the time; going into different directions in different periods. We have observed periods of a clear, intense securitisation of politics in contemporary Turkish political history – particularly at the time of coups, emergency rule as well as domestic and international conflicts (as, for example, at the beginning of the 1980s and in the 1990s) but also periods of de-securitisation – when favourable determinants emerged, such as the EU pre-accession process and the related democratisation of the political regime and the Europeanisation of foreign policy. The latter case refers to nearly the entirety of the first decade of the 21st century, including the period of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) ruling, which began at the end of 2002 (Aras, Polat, 2008; Açıkmeşe, 2013).

The goal of this article is to investigate a more current period, i.e., two presidential terms in Türkiye, focusing on the years 2015–2021 (only full years can be covered due to the comparability of data), in order to compare the place of security in Turkish politics during the period of 2015 until mid-2018 and mid-2018 until 2021 as well as to identify the securitisation process and its change (or continuity) at this time. This period of AKP rule, within which the leader of the party, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, held the presidential office, has not been studied sufficiently in terms of security nor the discourse related to it. It must be also underlined that the author of the article does not have any ambition to compare the period of Erdoğan's presidencies with previous periods of the AKP's rule. It would require a much more extensive and complex analysis, particularly if we consider the choice of its type.

The main research method is namely the content analysis of official speeches made by the President. The MAXQDA software has been used to collect and analyse data from more than 850 of President Erdoğan's speeches. According to the main representatives of the Copenhagen School of security studies (to which most scholars working on the securitisation of politics in Türkiye refer) (Bilgin, 2011), an investigation of the securitisation of politics does not require indicators. It is possible to study it directly through the investigation of the political discourse and narrative reflected in the discourse because securitisation takes place through the discourse, being "a speech act" (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998, p. 26). Although the discourse does not create securitisation itself, it plays an important role in its development. It can lead to the securitisation of a particular subject if a presented security threat is argued successfully, i.e., is accepted by the audience and gives legitimacy for incumbents to take extraordinary measures (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998, p. 25). Besides, political discourse usually reflects the most important issues which are subjects of politics.

The key research questions posed in the article are as follows: how important are the security issues in the political rhetoric of the current Turkish President? Are there any differences in this regard between Erdoğan's first and second presidency? Did such factors as the state of emergency in 2016-2018 and the introduction of the presidential system, implemented during the second presidency of Erdoğan, make any difference in this regard? And what are the reasons for the place of security, identified in the analysis, in the political discourse and politics in Türkiye?

These research questions will help to verify the main hypothesis that security has constantly been the most important issue in Turkish politics during both of Erdoğan's Presidencies – as a result of the presence of

a combination of long-term objective (historical and geopolitical) and short-term subjective, tactical (electoral) factors – the latter being at the core of the securitisation of politics.

This article consists of two main parts and a conclusion. The presentation of the main assumptions of the content analysis and its results is followed by a discussion part in which the author explains the results of the analysis, while at the same time giving the reasons for the identified place of security in Turkish political discourse and politics generally.

Content Analysis

The author conducted a two-stage content analysis of the speeches given by President Erdoğan in the years 2015–2021. As mentioned above, it was aimed at identifying the place of security in Turkish political discourse and politics as well as the process of securitisation. The author analysed a total of 857 verbatim texts (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, n.d.). The dataset includes Erdoğan's speeches from the presidential website. The author of the paper has only excluded those foreign speeches whose target was not the domestic audience and the narrative was, in those cases, completely different from the one presented in the national discourse. Even though the selected speeches come from different events – e.g., meetings with AKP officials, local authorities or particular social and economic groups, they are comparable because the President treats them all as good opportunities to present a relevant political narrative.

At the first stage, the author ran a frequency analysis. 27 keywords related to security (both in a general and a Turkish context) were selected together with other 27 keywords related to political and social life (concerning *inter alia* the political and economic system, opposition, parties etc.) as well as political ideologies and religion (e.g., conservative values, nationalism, Islam etc.). It is, obviously, not an exhaustive list of the keywords. The author of the article made his selection based on his assessment of the place of the issues in the political agenda in Türkiye in the analysed period. On the one hand, we have such words and abbreviations as: “atak” (attack), “beka” (survival), “darbe” (coup), “dış güçler/odaklar” (external powers), “düşman” (enemy), “Esed” (Asad), “FETÖ” (Fethullah Terrorist Organization), “güvenlik” (security), “istikrar” (stability), “istila” (invasion), “katil” (killer), “lobi” (lobby), “mücadele” (struggle), “mülteci” (refugee), “operasyon” (operation), “PKK” (Kurdistan Workers' Party), “S-400”, “saldırı” (attack), “savaş” (war), “şiddet” (violence), “Suriye” (Syria), “terör” (terrorism), “terörist” (terrorist), “tezkere” (permission to use military forces),

“yaptırım” (sanction), “yardakçı” (stooge) and “YPG” (People’s Defense Units). On the other hand, the following keywords have been selected: “aile” (family), “baş örtüsü” (headscarf), “CHP” (Republican People’s Party – main opposition party), “cumhur ittifakı” (People’s Alliance), “demokrasi” (democracy), “enflasyon” (inflation), “Eski Türkiye” (Old Türkiye), “faiz” (interest (rate)), “Gezi” (Gezi - Protests), “HDP” (People’s Democratic Party), “inançlı” (believer), “islam”, “İslamofobi” (Islamophobia), “kalkınma” (development), “Kılıçdaroğlu” (leader of CHP), “kriz” (crisis), “millet ittifakı” (Nation’s Alliance), “milli çıkar” (national interest), “milli irade” (national will), “milli menfaat” (national interest), “milliyet” (nation), “muhafazakar” (conservative), “muhalfe” (opposition), “Müslüman” (Muslim), “mütedeyyin” (religious), “tek parti” (one-party), and “Yeni Türkiye” (New Türkiye).

They were compared with MAXQDA software (the MaxDictio tool specifically) in terms of the question of how often they are used by Erdoğan in his speeches. In the tables below there are results of the frequency analysis. The most frequent 20 keywords used in the presidential speeches are presented in the subsequent years of Erdoğan’s two presidencies.

The results clearly show that security played a constant, and irrespective of the circumstances, key if not dominant role in Turkish political discourse and politics during Erdoğan’s two presidencies. Firstly, in the years analysed, the majority of the top 20 keywords refer to security (from 11 to 13 words). A particularly interesting observation is that although we can see a tiny difference between the first and second presidency in this regard (13 security words in the years 2015–2017, 11 or 12 security words in the 2018–2021 period), there is no regularity when it comes to the order among the top ten keywords. Surprisingly, in 2015, when clashes with PKK intensified on Turkish territory, there are three non-security issues after the four top security words in the group of ten most frequently used words. It differs from the 2016–2018 period when we see the domination of security issues for obvious reasons (a failed coup attempt in July 2016 and emergency rule until 2018). However, although emergency rule ended in 2018, during the second presidency, we also notice the years with a wealth of security keywords. First of all, the six most frequently used words in 2020 concern security. Secondly, except for the year 2021, in all the analysed years, the first three keywords are security issues – with “terör” (terrorism) and “mücadele” (struggle) regularly taking the first two places, in most cases with much more frequent use than all other keywords.

Of course, it would be irrational to expect that, in Turkish political discourse after 2019, the President would not refer to the critical economic

Table 1. Frequency Analysis – The 20 Most Frequent Keywords in Speeches Given by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2015–2021

No.	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	725	725	1219	1219	275	275	617	617	999	999	868	868	702	702
1	terör	725	terör	1219	terör	275	terör	617	terör	999	mücadele	868	mücadele	702
2	mücadele	531	mücadele	574	mücadele	186	mücadele	359	mücadele	678	terör	495	terör	447
3	savaş	357	Suriye	388	saldırı	89	Suriye	358	Suriye	565	Suriye	390	kalkınma	210
4	Suriye	315	darbe	352	darbe	86	terörist	200	CHP	321	saldırı	308	demokrasi	209
5	demokrasi	269	terörist	239	demokrasi	79	darbe	178	demokrasi	306	darbe	302	darbe	195
6	Müslüman	213	saldırı	216	Suriye	79	savaş	161	terörist	293	FETÖ	203	aile	189
7	Yeni Türkiye	207	güvenlik	184	FETÖ	65	Müslüman	155	saldırı	281	demokrasi	199	güvenlik	163
8	darbe	175	savaş	182	kriz	61	operasyon	146	aile	210	güvenlik	192	kriz	157
9	aile	153	demokrasi	171	savaş	60	FETÖ	142	darbe	202	CHP	182	saldırı	145
10	güvenlik	149	PKK	165	güvenlik	59	demokrasi	135	güvenlik	201	aile	163	istikrar	142
11	saldırı	149	operasyon	158	terörist	55	CHP	118	Müslüman	149	düşman	158	faiz	135
12	istikrar	131	Müslüman	134	istikrar	48	saldırı	117	savaş	147	kriz	153	enflasyon	123
13	muhalefet	131	FETÖ	128	Müslüman	45	güvenlik	108	PKK	143	Müslüman	149	düşman	119
14	kriz	129	kriz	113	operasyon	37	düşman	92	faiz	130	atak	136	Suriye	114
15	terörist	121	düşman	96	kalkınma	35	muhalefet	84	FETÖ	130	kalkınma	135	savaş	108
16	düşman	116	mülteci	94	PKK	33	PKK	72	düşman	109	savaş	124	Müslüman	83
17	şiddet	106	aile	91	muhalefet	30	kriz	67	milli irade	106	terörist	106	terörist	77
18	faiz	101	YPG	88	düşman	28	aile	66	enflasyon	94	muhalefet	104	atak	74
19	operasyon	98	muhalefet	52	aile	19	kalkınma	58	kalkınma	89	faiz	97	muhalefet	70
20	kalkınma	86	faiz	51	CHP	15	istikrar	49	YPG	89	istikrar	69	CHP	68

Grey keywords – related to security

Black keywords – related to other areas

2015 – Erdoğan's 1st presidency

2019 – Erdoğan's 2nd presidency

Source: *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, n.d.

situation – that is why such keywords as “kriz” (crisis), “kalkınma” (development), “faiz” [interest (rate)] or “enflasyon” (inflation) are quite frequently used. However, even in such a difficult economic situation, the security issues still dominate.

Moreover, even issues which are not directly related to security are often securitised in Turkish political discourse, confirming the dominant position of security in the politics of the country. The further stage of the content analysis proves it, helping to identify the securitisation of politics, i.e., the transformation of political topics into a matter of security, putting aside the question of how successful this process finally is in particular cases (it is not particularly relevant for the main research goal of this article).

Within the second stage, the author ran a ‘keyword in context’ analysis. In general terms, it helps to go beyond identifying the frequency of using particular keywords and to check in which context (and how often) they were used. He chose the words concerning the opposition (first of all, “CHP” and “muhalafet”), present in the discourse and among the top 20 keywords as the first case to study. Then he checked the context in which they are used (15 words before and after the terms related to the opposition), taking into consideration the security keywords. The goal was to find out whether important political issues were combined (and if so, how often) with security topics, identifying, at the same time, any attempts at the securitisation of political subjects. The results are below in Tables 2 and 3.

Tables 2 and 3 clearly show that political issues were securitised in Turkish politics in the analysed period. The keywords related to the opposition were often mentioned in a less or more noticeable security context – more during the second than the first presidency. The author found that “CHP” was mostly associated with “terör” (terrorism), “mücadele” (struggle), “darbe” (coup), “FETÖ” and “saldırı” (attack) – first of all during the second presidency. The exception is the year 2021, in which “CHP” appeared much less frequently in Erdoğan’s speeches – probably due to the emergence of two new oppositional parties in the forms of the Future Party and Democracy and Progress Party and only the term “terör” (terrorism) was mentioned relatively frequently together with CHP at that time. However, “CHP” was also mentioned sometimes in connection with other security terms such as “güvenlik” (security) in both Presidencies as well as PKK, and “savaş” (war) in the second presidency.

As for the word “muhalafet” (opposition), Erdoğan would associate it with “terör” (terrorism) in the whole analysed period. It is also combined to some extent with “mücadele” (struggle) and “PKK” as well as “saldırı”

Table 2. Keyword in Context for “CHP”

KEYWORD/ YEAR	2015 (CHPx19)	2016 (x7)	2017 (x15)	2018 (x118)	2019 (x321)	2020 (x182)	2021 (x68)
terör (terörist incl.)	3	0	0	13	14	17	6
mücadele	1	0	0	2	11	25	0
darbe	1	2	1	8	14	18	1
saldırı	0	1	0	2	4	8	0
güvenlik	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
savaş	0	0	0	1	1	4	0
FETÖ	0	0	0	2	11	42	0
PKK	0	0	0	1	4	3	2

Source: *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, n.d.

Table 3. Keyword in Context for “muhalafet”

KEYWORD/ YEAR	2015 (muhalafet x131)	2016 (x52)	2017 (x30)	2018 (x84)	2019 (x67)	2020 (x104)	2021 (x70)
terör (terörist incl.)	5	12	1	12	2	3	4
mücadele	2	2	1	5	7	16	5
darbe	1	1	1	0	1	6	0
saldırı	3	0	0	0	0	1	0
güvenlik	2	1	0	0	2	1	0
savaş	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
FETÖ	0	1	0	1	7	3	1
PKK	1	3	0	1	1	0	2

■ – most frequent security words as a context (5 or more times)

■ – security words as a context

Source: *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, n.d.

(attack), “darbe” (coup) and “güvenlik” (security) in the early stages of the time span this analysis covers (the first presidency), whereas the trend slowly moved towards “FETÖ” and yet again, “mücadele” (struggle) and “darbe” (coup), during the second presidency.

A content analysis (the keyword in context option) of Erdoğan’s speeches shows that even the frequently used term “demokrasi” (democracy) is very often used in a security context, proving again its securitisation. Table 4 below indicates that “demokrasi” is, first of all, combined in the speeches with such words as “terör” (terrorism), “mücadele” (struggle), “darbe” (coup), “saldırı” (attack) and “güvenlik” (security), irrespective of the presidency. The term in question is mentioned then both in

Table 4. Keywords in Context for “demokrasi”

KEYWORD/ YEAR	2015 (demokrasi x269)	2016 (x171)	2017 (x79)	2018 (x135)	2019 (x306)	2020 (x199)	2021 (x209)
terör (terörist incl.)	28	30	5	15	37	9	11
mücadele	31	18	9	9	45	38	48
darbe	13	43	3	10	28	26	21
saldırı	0	6	2	5	17	10	9
güvenlik	3	5	1	3	8	6	6
savaş	2	1	0	2	0	2	0
FETÖ	0	2	0	2	13	4	1
PKK	1	1	0	0	5	1	0

11 – most frequent security words as a context (5 or more times)

2 – security words as a context

Source: *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, n.d.

a very general security context but also with reference to the failed coup (sometimes also through the use of the “FETÖ” term).

Discussion

The key question in this regard is why security issues constantly dominated in Turkish political discourse and politics in the analysed period. We can talk both about objective and subjective factors.

Long-term objective factors (being valid irrespective of the period of Turkish contemporary history) are very well presented by Aydın. The Turkish scholar singles out the role of history and related position of the army in the political system of the country as well as geopolitics. All of them contribute to perceiving security in a comprehensive way, and, as a result, it is an intrinsic part of Turkish political discourse and politics, including the analysed period. These factors are related at the same time to a particular Turkish “security culture”, which is based on an “insecurity complex” and a “national security syndrome” (Aydın, 2003, p. 164).

Turkish security is traditionally defined as the “condition of being protected from or being not exposed to danger” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2001). In general terms, it focuses on self-preservation and includes three main components: the survival of the population, the preservation of the territorial integrity, and the identity of the nation (Aydın, 2003, p. 164). A particular perception of threats to which these components are exposed led to a broad, formal definition of security. According

to Art. 2a of the Law 2945 on the National Security Council, “national security means the defence and protection of the state against every kind of external and internal threat to the constitutional order, national existence, unity, and to all its interests and contractual rights in the international arena including in the political, social, cultural, and economic spheres” (Jenkins, 2001, p. 46).

This definition is based on a broad understanding of security threats. It is not surprising, then, that many political issues are securitised in Turkish political discourse and presented as security issues, even though at the first glance they are not directly connected with security.

The broad perception of security threats has its roots in the aforementioned historical and geopolitical factors, creating a ‘culture of insecurity’. As for the history of the Turkish Republic, its establishment was already preceded with a difficult period of the First World War ending with the highly disadvantageous Sevres Treaty and, later, the War of Independence, which are the roots of the so-called ‘Sevres Syndrome’, meaning, in general terms, the feeling of being threatened and encircled by different enemies whose policy is aimed at destroying Türkiye, taking part of its territory, etc. (Gökçek, 2011, pp. 98–184). The Turkish Republic, as a new modern nation state, had to give priority to security in all of its dimensions. It was not only about protecting its sovereignty and integrity against potential external threats, but also to preserve the new national identity that was developing as an important pillar of the Turkish state and as a model of the society. The protection of the new country against external and domestic threats belonged (and still belongs) to the state elites, the first of which being the army, whose position in the political system of Türkiye is still strong (even if weakened slightly since 2008) – both in the formal and informal dimensions (Szymański, 2015, pp. 19–27). That is why the Turkish army traditionally intervened not only in foreign policy but also domestic politics, including the military coups. It had to do so because of the unstable political situation in the country in subsequent decades post WWII and the constant threats to Turkish stability and identity being related, since the 1980s, to the development of the Kurdish issue and the increasingly complex problem of terrorism. All of these elements of Turkish contemporary history have contributed to the development of the culture of insecurity and securitisation not only of the Turkish state, but also society and, as a consequence, politics.

The culture of insecurity as well as securitisation also have their roots in the geopolitical position of Türkiye, obviously related to historical factors. The country is located in an unstable neighbourhood, the said instability connected to a large extent to the Middle East, and is exposed

to different security threats coming from its neighbouring countries, due to those countries' unstable political and economic situations, the presence of numerous conflicts, and the development of the activities of radical groups as well as in bilateral disputes between Türkiye and its neighbours. It is particularly conspicuous in the last decade, covered by this article, in which Türkiye faced different external security threats (often related to similar domestic threats), coming particularly from Syria and Iraq. The unstable political situation and conflict there have created a fertile breeding ground for the development of the nefarious activities of various terrorist organisations (the PKK, YPG) and radical Islamist groups – gathered under the umbrella of the so-called Islamic State as well as for the massive migration to Türkiye (Demir, Yılmaz, 2020). Moreover, various security repercussions have emerged in recent years in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea (particularly related to the war in Ukraine) (Hess, 2022). When we take all these issues into consideration and add FETÖ's activities, including the failed coup attempt as well as a change of global world order resulting in an increasing role of power politics in the Turkish foreign policy (Szymański, 2019), it is not surprising that the culture of insecurity is consolidated in the Turkish state and society, leading to the securitisation of the Turkish political discourse and politics in the analysed period.

Apart from the key objective factors having an impact on the dominating position of security in Turkish political discourse and politics, there are also subjective, short to medium-term factors, having a similar effect. They are usually not directly related to security threats but are rather an effect of presenting some political issues as security matters. This is the mechanism which is at the core of the securitisation process taking place through the discourse and presentation of particular political narratives. However, in Türkiye's case, even the presentation of some issues as security questions refers to the objective premises and presence of real security threats. The subjective factors then have a secondary position vis-à-vis the aforementioned objective reasons.

It is in the case of subjective factors, first of all, to use a particular tactic as a tool in the almost constant political struggle and electoral competition to enhance one's own support and weaken the position of political adversaries. For instance, the Turkish President was talking about the opposition in a security context, first of all securitising CHP and presenting the party as the source of a security threat, even if only in an indirect way. The opposition, particularly CHP, was portrayed by Erdoğan as being in the same camp as the terrorists, primarily PKK (sometimes also the HDP, presented as the political wing of PKK). According to one of

the President's speeches, CHP was acting together with PKK by not accepting the suggested state budget, "carrying them" into the parliament, opening fire on the police, bombing various places, entering a mosque with beer bottles and so on (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2018). The goal of the securitisation of the main opposition party was to discredit it in the eyes of the electorate. There was no coincidence in the intensification of referring to CHP and simultaneously building connections with security issues, particularly concerning terrorism, in the 2018–2019 period. It was election time; the parliamentary and presidential elections were held in June 2018, and the local elections in March 2019.

Another short-term goal of the securitisation of political topics may refer to drawing the attention of the electorate and getting its support for a particular political position or project. This aspect was observable in the speeches in which the Turkish President was talking (quite often) about democracy in a security context. Securitising democracy was aimed at convincing the people that the incumbents are the protectors of democracy against the many threats it faces, and security measures serve the purpose of defending democracy. In the case of this political narrative, general security terminology was used to emphasise the role of the incumbents as the defenders of democracy. Because of this, words such as "mücadele" (struggle) or "güvenlik" (security) were so very frequently used by the Turkish President.

Two examples of Erdoğan's speeches clearly reflect all these aspects. In one of them he said with reference to an idea to change the law on social media as follows: "social media, which, when first appeared, had been regarded as the symbol of freedom, has turned nowadays into one of the main sources of threat for contemporary democracy. At this stage, disinformation has become a global problem of security, let alone a national security issue." (T. C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı. İletişim Başkanlığı, 2021). This is a clear example of how the President attempts to convince the people that security is needed for the proper working of democracy. In another speech, already in 2022, he emphasised the role of the defence industry in protecting democracy, saying that "We have paid a special attention to our defence industry in our act for democracy and development. We have taken action in order to create a powerful defence ecosystem which would equip our Turkish Armed Forces in line with the needs of today." (T. C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 2022)

Just as often, Erdoğan made reference to more concrete security issues, firstly to the coup attempt in July 2016, frequently using the words "darbe" (coup) and "terör"/"terörist" (terrorism/terrorist). He combined them with the term "democracy" in order to underline all the efforts

made so as to defend democracy against the plotters, including the heroic acts of citizens who came to the streets to stop the tanks. An increasingly stronger connection between democracy and security terminology was meant to make the people accept the project of *Yeni Türkiye* as promoted by Erdoğan as the Turkish President, particularly after the failed military coup as well as the new government system, which was not accepted by a substantial part of the electorate (Çandar, 2016).

Conclusions

Taking into consideration solely the observation of the domestic and international political events in Türkiye during the two presidencies of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the initial assumption could be that security issues should have dominated more in the period of 2015-mid-2018 (the first presidency) then afterwards (the second presidency). The second half of 2015 was marked by an escalation of the conflict with PKK and a coup attempt which took place in July 2016, resulting in the introduction of emergency rule which remained in force until 2018. At the same time, Türkiye faced many security threats in its neighbourhood during the first presidency.

However, the findings of the content analysis have allowed the author of this article to prove that security was consistently the most important issue in Turkish politics in the analysed period. The Turkish political discourse which reflects political life in Türkiye was dominated by security topics and revealed the securitisation of political issues. The period of the presidency is, then, not so relevant. Moreover, contrary to the most probable assumption, the securitisation of politics was in some cases even more noticeable during the second, slightly more 'stable' presidency.

As the Discussion part of the article shows, the reasons for the dominant position of security in Turkish political discourse and politics in the analysed period are the combination of long-term objective (historical and geopolitical) factors, and short-term subjective (tactical) measures – being in the latter case at the core of the securitisation of politics. In this way, the main hypothesis formulated in this article has been positively verified.

On the one hand, we can observe the continuous presence of a 'culture of insecurity' in Türkiye. It is shaped, firstly, by difficult historical events and processes (making, for example, the military an important part of the political system), which raise doubts about the reliability of and trust in different political actors (external and domestic) and, secondly, by the country's unstable neighbourhood. These factors determine the broad

understanding of security (in both the formal and informal dimensions). It is a consequence of the recognition of many threats for the Turkish state and Turks (including their identity). The presence of the culture of insecurity therefore explains the dominating position of security in the Turkish political discourse and politics of the analysed period.

On the other hand, some subjective factors determine this dominating position of security, leading in the analysed period to a further securitisation of political issues (re-securitisation if we compare it with the earlier period of the AKP's rule in the first decade of the 21st century characterised by de-securitisation). The second part of the content analysis (the investigation of political keywords in the context of security) shows this perfectly. The Turkish President talks about political issues in a security context in order to reach some short term goals, first of all to keep the support of the electorate – either through reference to political adversaries or through attempts to find the acceptance of his position and political narrative in the audience. This can also explain why the securitisation of some political issues is sometimes even more noticeable during the second presidency. It is a time when Erdoğan must further consolidate the presidential system and his electorate – in increasingly difficult times, also in terms of the economic situation.

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