

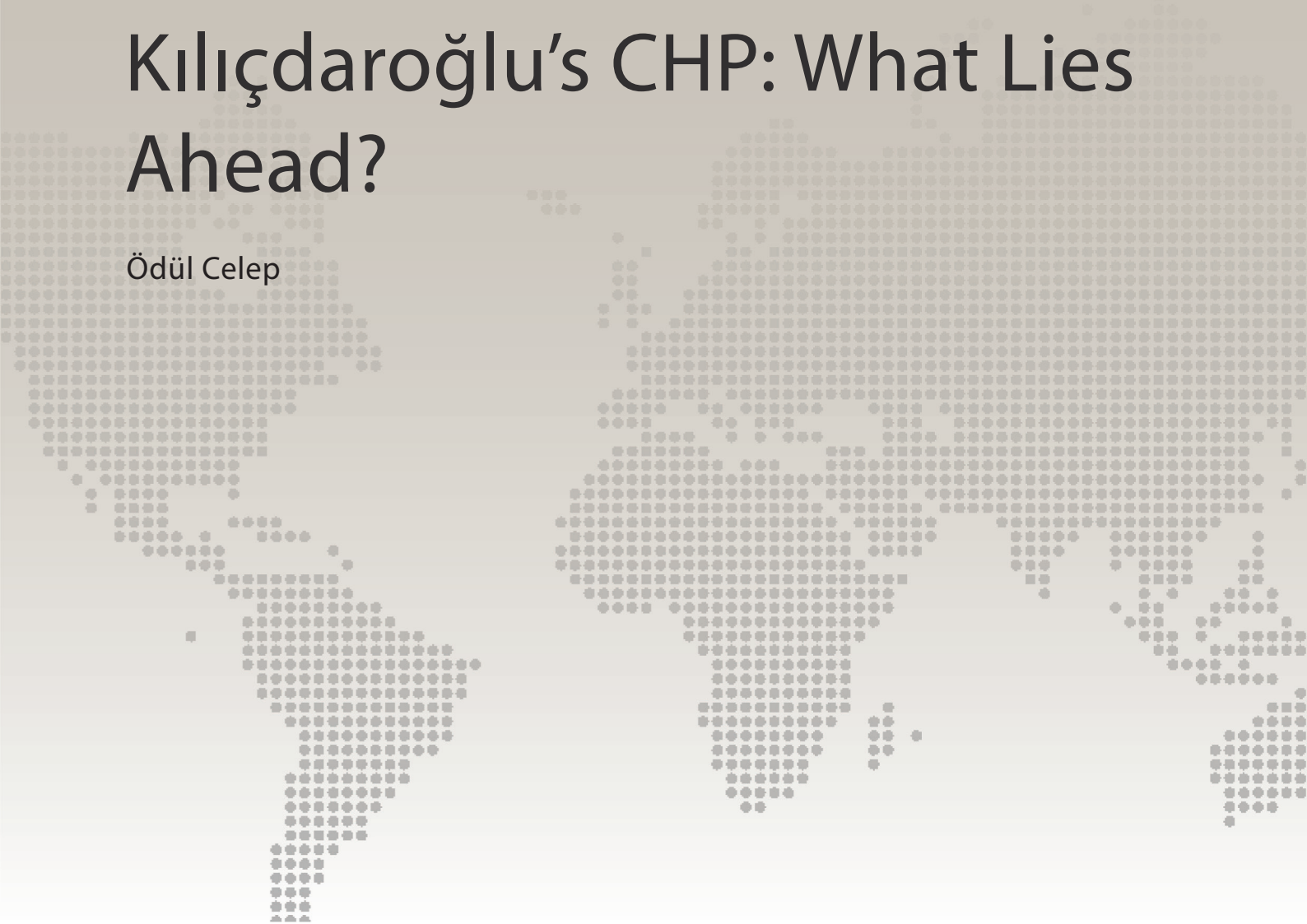
SETA Policy Brief



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Kılıçdarođlu's CHP: What Lies Ahead?

Ödül Celep



ABSTRACT

The unexpected switch of the CHP's leadership from Deniz Baykal to Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu led to a series of debates about the party's political future and its new place in the party system of Turkey. Most of the debates have focused on what exactly changed and what remained the same as a result of this switch. Kılıçdaroğlu's speeches revealed signs for new directions in CHP's discourse indeed, as they included novel issues such as intra-party democracy and empowering the party's women and youth branches. The purpose of this policy brief is to propose ideas to the CHP as a social democratic party, so it can be a serious political alternative to the conservative AK Party. The CHP's major target should be democratization to be achieved at two different levels: (a) institutional and (b) ideological. Institutional democratization requires establishing intra-party democracy, decentralization of power, as well as bringing ideological heterogeneity and political debates back to the party. Ideological democratization is about bringing 'the left' back to Turkish politics by embracing a progressive and social democratic discourse. This entails moving leftwards, a de-emphasis of nationalism and the adoption of a more egalitarian, less elitist, more libertarian, and more multiculturalist world vision.



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KILIÇDAROĞLU'S CHP: WHAT LIES AHEAD?

Ödül Celep*

Introduction

The unexpected switch of CHP's leadership from Deniz Baykal to Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu in late May 2010 led to a series of debates about the party's political future and its new place in the Turkish party system. Most of the debates have focused on what exactly changed and what remained the same as a result of this switch. The most apparent source of information and evidence about change was Kılıçdaroğlu's speech at the party congress (on May 22, 2010) where he was elected the chairperson with 1189 out of the 1197 delegates' votes.¹ His speech revealed signs for new directions in CHP's discourse. In contrast to Baykal, Kılıçdaroğlu did not overemphasize 'secularism' and did not attempt to depict the AK Party as a threat to the existing regime. His speech included novel issues such as bringing intra-party democracy, empowering CHP's women and youth branches, and abandoning the ten percent national threshold in parliamentary elections.²

Kılıçdaroğlu's speech triggered different opinions. Some sources found the changes expressed in Kılıçdaroğlu's speech reasonable while others argued that these changes were insufficient to transform the CHP into a new party. Some scholars went as far as denouncing Kılıçdaroğlu's speech for reflecting almost the same, old Baykal mentality.³ It is yet too early to know whether CHP is undergoing real changes and to what extent these changes have altered the party's platform. It is true, however, that CHP should develop a deliberate strategy of change if its new leadership wants to be

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1. Eight votes were counted as invalid votes.

2. *Radikal* (May 22, 2010).

3. To give an example, two different left-liberal daily newspapers gave two distinct reactions to Kılıçdaroğlu's speech at CHP's party meeting. *Radikal* generally pointed out the new and positive remarks of his speech while *Taraf*'s headline was a degrading 'Bu mudur?' [Is that it?] See: *Radikal* (May 23, 2010) and *Taraf* (May 23, 2010).



If Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP is able to democratize and at the same time increase its vote share, it could become a driving force of democratization in Turkey.

a viable alternative to the ruling AK Party. Therefore, the message that the CHP is a changed party is critical because it could directly translate into an increase of votes in future elections. If the CHP were to become a viable political alternative to the AK Party, it could bring the contemporary Turkish party system closer to a more balanced two-party model. This political dynamic is healthier for Turkey as a democracy than a predominant party system led by one party, the AK Party.

The purpose of this policy brief is to propose ideas to the CHP as a social democratic party, so it can be a serious political alternative to the conservative AK Party. CHP's major target should be 'democratization,' which can be achieved at two different levels: (a) institutional and (b) ideological. The democratization of CHP as a political party is likely to contribute to the democratization of Turkish politics as a whole. Since 2002, Turkey has been ruled by a single party with no electorally challenging opposition. Baykal's CHP has been the major opposition party. However, it has substantially lagged behind the AK Party in electoral terms. If Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP is able to democratize and at the same time increase its vote share, it could become a driving force of democratization in Turkey. Therefore, its objectives should be two-fold. First, it must appeal to the electorate and find a platform that challenges the AK Party's chances of maintaining its single-party government status. Second, it should develop a social democratic agenda that goes beyond what the AK Party has achieved thus far. A democratic CHP would have credibility to critique the AK Party 'from the left.'

From Baykal's CHP to Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP

Criticism against Baykal's CHP targeted several areas: political elitism, electoral and organizational inefficiency, as well as not establishing strong ties with the Turkish people and the civil society. One argument substantiating these critiques was that Baykal's CHP was unable to adapt to changing social and political conditions in Turkey. Its political discourse stagnated. It was kept at an intellectually shallow level, characterized by Baykal's never-changing language and attitudes on almost any issue. Also, stemming from its roots as a center-left party and as a member of the Socialist International, Baykal's CHP was an ideologically confused party. Its policies were either extremely conservative blocking almost any idea of change or 'progress,' or showing signs of being a right-wing party (rather than a center-left party) with authoritarian and nationalistic tendencies (rather than socially democratic and libertarian). For instance, the term 'the left' (*sol*) was not even mentioned in CHP's 2007 election manifesto.⁴

As of the 1990s until the day of Baykal's resignation, CHP suffered from several chronic problems originating mostly from the personality and behavior of its very leader and his team. Baykal failed to mobilize CHP's electorate before elections and refrained from establishing close connections with people on the street. Baykal centralized his leadership position in the party using his power as chair. Some prominent names

4. CHP's 2007 election manifesto shows no reference to 'left' politics as the word 'left' (*sol*) has never been used in the manifesto text.

against Baykal were expelled from the party during his term.⁵ Baykal's CHP took on the persona of a conservative and nationalist political actor. This was a far cry from generating constructive and intelligent criticism against the AK Party. In Oral Çalışlar's words, "Turkey suffered from the CHP's strategy of tension escalation." Baykal did not take a clear stance against the idea of military engagement in civilian politics and gridlocked Turkish politics by bringing new legislations to the attention of the Constitutional Court (*Anayasa Mahkemesi*) quite frequently.⁶

Baykal's CHP's discourse was overly nationalistic for a left-wing party, to the extent of ignoring progressive values such as multiculturalism and social plurality. It is ironic that the CHP also claimed to be a counterpart of European socialists and social democrats. In the last decades, social democratic and socialist parties of Europe have embraced identity politics and defended the rights and liberties of the historically and socially disadvantaged groups in their societies. CHP has failed to follow along these political lines. This, in turn, led to the alienation of minority groups in Turkey, which had historically supported the party earlier, such as the Kurds. CHP lost its connections with Turkey's Kurds in the east and southeast as the party's vote share among the Kurds declined sharply during the Baykal years. This was largely due to Baykal's uncompromising insistence on fighting terrorism with no constructive solution on the Kurdish issue. Tables 1 and 2 below show the distribution of CHP's votes in the 2007 parliamentary elections according to two different geographical classifications of Turkey.⁷ As Table 1 demonstrates, CHP's votes in the Kurdish-populated areas, Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, are the two bottom regions with 5 and 3 percent of votes, respectively. Table 2 also shows a similar pattern, where CHP's vote declines to 7 and 6.5 percent in Central-east Anatolia and South-east Anatolia, respectively.

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Table 1. CHP's Vote in Turkey's Regions I (2007 Elections)

Region	Vote %
Three major cities	39
Marmara	16
Mediterranean	12
Black Sea	12
Aegean	7
Central Anatolia	7
Eastern Anatolia	5
Southeastern Anatolia	3

5. As the consequence of Baykal's initiatives, the CHP administration alienated several prominent party members, who used to hold effective positions in the predecessor parties of the CHP party tradition. These names include Ercan Karakaş, Hikmet Çetin, Erol Tuncer, Fikri Sağlar and Kemal Derviş. Their departure from the CHP led to criticisms about 'leadership autocracy' in the party.

6. Oral Çalışlar, "Kılıçdaroğlu'yla Yeni CHP," [A New CHP with Kılıçdaroğlu] *Radikal* (May 19, 2010).

7. Data source of Table 1: Bekir Ağır. 2007. What Determined What's Inside the Election Box? July 22, 2007 Election Analysis [Sandığın İçindeki Ne Belirledi? 22 Temmuz 2007 Seçim Analizi]. Data Source of Table 2: Hatem Ete. June 2010. "Change in CHP: A Change of Leader, or a Change of Politics?" [CHP'deki Değişim: Lider Değişimi mi, Siyaset Değişimi mi?], SETA Analysis.

Baykal's CHP consistently failed to embrace the majority of people in Turkey. It turned into a regional party, winning plurality of votes in only a few provinces in the west such as İzmir, Tekirdağ and Muğla.

Table 2. CHP's Vote in Turkey's Regions II (2007 Elections)

Region	Vote %
Istanbul	20.9
Western Marmara	26.2
Aegean	22.8
Eastern Marmara	15.5
West Anatolia	18.7
Mediterranean	18.6
Central Anatolia	10.7
Western Black Sea	16.1
Eastern Black Sea	12.0
Northeast Anatolia	7.6
Central-east Anatolia	7.0
South-east Anatolia	6.5

CHP not only failed to defend Kurdish rights, but also other minorities such as non-Muslims. For instance, as the EU put pressure on Turkey, the AK Party government passed a law in 2006, which enabled Christian and other non-Muslim groups to set up foundations permitting them to own land. Baykal denounced this legislation as he expressed concerns about Turkey's turning into a 'postmodern colony' and a 'heaven for foreign religious foundations.'⁸ Most importantly, however, Baykal's CHP consistently failed to embrace the majority of people in Turkey. As several critiques pointed out, it turned into a regional party, winning plurality of votes in only a few provinces in the west such as İzmir, Tekirdağ and Muğla. CHP did not show any real electoral success recently as its vote share grew only modestly, from 19.4 percent in 2002 to 20.8 percent in 2007 because not much had changed in CHP's leadership and the institutional structure.

Today, Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP faces several challenges that are particular to the political context of eight years of the AK Party government's policies. As the AK Party maintained its single-party government since 2002, it has shaped most of Turkey's political agenda. The AK Party government introduced the EU reform package reforms in its early years and more recently the 'democratic opening.' The democratic opening was primarily about bringing a solution to the long-standing Kurdish issue in Turkey, together with improvements for other disadvantaged groups such as the Romanis and non-Muslims.

Although still limited, the "opening" policy of the AK Party has nevertheless led to the incorporation of identity politics in Turkey. The Turkish state, for the first time, now recognizes Kurdish identity and language. For instance, the AK Party government initiated a Kurdish-language state television channel for the first time in Turkey's

8. *Radikal* (May 19, 2007).

modern history. Some novel issues were brought to the political agenda such as the opening of Kurdish language and literature departments in particular universities and permitting the use of formerly Kurdish titles for districts and sub-districts.⁹ Baykal's CHP pursued an altogether reactive attitude to all such developments. His discourse was highly conservative and far from adapting to the 'identity' component of the Kurdish issue. Baykal remained quite silent on 'Kurdish identity' even though he was very vocal on the idea of fighting terrorism.

Historically speaking, this was a sharp turn to a nationalistic stance for CHP as it previously advocated for Kurdish people's rights. In July 1990, CHP's predecessor, the Social Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*, SHP) had taken a big risk by preparing a document entitled the 'SHP's Look at East and Southeast Problems and Its Proposals for Solution' (*SHP'nin Doğu ve Güneydoğu Sorunlarına Bakışı ve Çözüm Önerileri*). This document was indeed risky because almost no right-wingers ever mentioned the word 'Kurdish' in their discourse then and any affiliation with this word carried the danger of being blamed for 'sleeping with terrorism.' This document denounced the prohibition on the use of Kurdish as the mother tongue of the Kurdish people, and regarded the prohibition as an embarrassment for Turkey's legal system. Furthermore, it referred to the Kurdish question as a component of Turkey's democratization and democratic rights issues.¹⁰ Similar points were mentioned in Baykal's CHP's 1996 Tunceli Report, which advocated the recognition of the Kurdish identity and language as a solution to the Kurdish question. Baykal showed no willingness to express ownership of these previous reports during the 2000s.¹¹

The AK Party government attempted to decriminalize the use of headscarves for students at university campuses, but was unsuccessful. CHP played a major role in blocking the passage of legislation on this issue. In doing so, again, Baykal used a reactive rather than constructive language in his critique of the government's actions. AK Party pushed its agenda on the basis of individual freedom¹², but Baykal's CHP did not develop a comprehensive and intellectually profound counter-argument. Sticking to the old-fashioned, secularist school of thought, CHP could not go beyond the argument that wearing the headscarf is a political symbol, therefore, should be prohibited in public space. For instance, CHP did not express an opinion on the ideals of 'individual liberty' or 'equal opportunity,' which are integral parts of the headscarf issue.

Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP, therefore, has to break its long-standing silence on a variety of issues like these and speak out on civil-military relations, legal reforms and democratization.

9. Several districts and subdistricts with Kurdish and other non-Turkish names were renamed in Turkish in Turkey's recent history.

10. 'SHP's Look at East and Southeast Problems and Its Proposals for Solution' [SHP'nin Doğu ve Güneydoğu Sorunlarına Bakışı ve Çözüm Önerileri], July 1990, Ankara.

11. *Milliyet* (December 16, 2009).

12. It should also be noted here that Prime Minister Erdoğan openly advocated the use of headscarf as a political symbol as well, and was frequently criticized for this attitude. In fact, the AK Party government was criticized for not contextualizing the headscarf issue in a more comprehensive context of human rights and individual liberty.

AK Party pushed its agenda on the basis of individual freedom, but Baykal's CHP did not develop a comprehensive and intellectually profound counter-argument.

Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should take a new turn in its political discourse, which requires a jump from the old-school, Jacobin Kemalism and 1970s-style leftism to a contemporary, progressive, and left-libertarian ideology.

Furthermore, intra-party democratization should start immediately. Baykal's CHP was highly centralized, almost a one-man party. Baykal used his own power as chair to further consolidate his position in the party. For instance, some amendments in the party charter during Baykal's period made it quite difficult for potential challengers to stand against him in party meetings. The ratio of signatures for a nomination for the leader position was increased from 5 to 20 percent, which is approximately 250 signatures (out of 1250 delegates). This requirement represented a barrier for would-be challengers to Baykal. Furthermore, the election of Party Assembly (PA) members switched from the sheet list system to the block list system. The former provided more freedom for selecting various combinations of candidates while the latter eventually resulted in the election of the candidate block most preferred by the party administration.

Developments like these made Baykal's CHP a party with no intra-party democracy. In fact, 'lack of intra-party democracy' is not particular to CHP but a common problem in Turkish politics. Neither Erdoğan's AK Party nor Bahçeli's MHP (Nationalist Action Party) has a satisfactory level of intra-party democracy in their internal affairs. Similarly, CHP, AK Party and MHP have all been charismatic leader-driven parties. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should, therefore, take intra-party democratization seriously and promptly, and become an example to Turkey's main political parties. One of its priorities should be establishing horizontal relations and bottom-to-top decision-making procedures in the party. CHP should be a more decentralized party, and its provincial and local branches should be empowered. This would bring it closer to the people on the street in the long run.

At this early stage of Kılıçdaroğlu's political life, CHP needs to seriously integrate democratization into its party structure at the outset. The early years with new political leaders are generally described as the 'honeymoon period' where the general public and even the media express optimism. So, CHP should capitalize on this good faith and quickly bring about real change. Positive initiatives in this direction will foster hope and can turn party campaigns into successful electoral mobilization. Some of those changes were apparent in Kılıçdaroğlu's speech at the party meeting, and they were promising for those who wish to see CHP as a social democratic party. Kılıçdaroğlu's direct reference to intra-party democracy and closer connections with working and poor people was a smart start.

Nevertheless, as Tanju Tosun points in an interview, CHP cannot win elections by only winning the hearts of low-income people. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should do more than appealing to the poor. It should take a new turn in its political discourse, which requires a jump from the old-school, Jacobin Kemalism and 1970s-style leftism to a contemporary, progressive, and left-libertarian ideology. Tosun refers to this jump as

the 'liberal left opening' (*liberal sol açılım*) for CHP, but he sees no evidence of such opening in Kılıçdaroğlu's speech.¹³ A liberal left opening entails CHP's coming to terms with identity politics, constitutional reforms, democratization, the headscarf issue, and civil-military relations. CHP must not only come to terms with these issues, but has to develop a clear and intellectually profound set of arguments about all these issues. This brief mainly argues that a genuine left-liberal opening requires both an institutional and ideological democratization process for CHP. In sum, institutional democratization is about intra-party democratization while ideological democratization is about shifting towards the left of the political spectrum. These two concepts will be analyzed in detail.

Institutional Democratization

Institutional democratization requires launching 'intra-party democracy' in CHP, which has been absent during the Baykal years. Real and profound democratization would be a revolutionary step for the new CHP as well as Turkish democracy generally. A real change would contribute to the democratization of the party system and political culture in Turkey. Democratization should, therefore, first start at home before it serves as an example for the other political parties. Social democratic parties of Europe have established relatively more democratic internal workings while Baykal's CHP has failed to do so. In fact, it had become quite difficult to challenge the former party administration from within the party by democratic means and it was 'suicidal' for any member of CHP to challenge Baykal's leadership. For instance, a few people could dare challenge his leadership at the 32nd general meeting in April 2008, and these challengers' political route was prematurely cut short because none could receive enough signatures from the delegates to run in the first place.

At its earlier stages, the CHP was more internally democratic, so Baykal's CHP's orientation towards a leader-driven party was a deviation from the party's history. Both Bülent Ecevit's CHP of the 1970s and Erdal İnönü's SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party) of the 1980s worked relatively more democratically with their provincial and local branches, as they were more autonomous. If Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP fails to break the tradition of domination by its leader left over from the Baykal years, the change of leadership will only be a symbolic one, contributing to preserving the status quo rather than breathing new life into the CHP. Therefore, as an initial step, the minimum number of signatures for the nomination for the chair position should be reduced back to 5 percent. This would create a new group of challengers at CHP party meetings, forcing Kılıçdaroğlu to face the current needs and trends of the Turkish electorate. This simple change will not actually challenge Kılıçdaroğlu's leadership, as he is quite popular and does not recently have a real challenger. But it would represent, at the same time, a real and a symbolic step towards ending the autocratic orientation of the party's leadership.

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13. *Taraf*, Pazartesi Konuşmaları [*Monday Talks*], (May 24, 2010).



A left-wing party cannot and should not be alarmed when ideological or policy disagreements arise, because intellectual debates are the driving forces of social democrats, socialists and other left-wingers. Intra-party opposition is not an anomaly but a necessity for a party like CHP.

One of the questions before the recent CHP meeting concerned the election system by which Party Assembly (PA) members are determined. Contrary to expectations, there was no switch to the sheet list system, and the block list system was maintained. As mentioned earlier, this block list system allows CHP's party chair to prepare his own list of names with whom he feels comfortable working with, but it does not allow 'outsiders' to penetrate the list in any way. The block list therefore only contributes to preserving the autocratic nature of the party's leadership. CHP's intra-party democratization also requires an electoral reform within the party, which requires the use of an election system that allows flexibility in the delegates' choices and curbs the 'iron fist' of the party chair. Therefore, a return to the sheet system in PA elections would be an appropriate move for CHP's internal democratization.

Intra-party democratization also requires bringing ideological heterogeneity and political debates back to the party. CHP with Deniz Baykal was a leader-driven party with almost no room for political dissent. As a result, CHP was mostly associated with Baykal, as if CHP and Baykal are synonymous. Baykal was almost CHP's only voice in party group meetings in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM). Not many representatives within the party had the opportunity to openly disagree with Baykal even if they thought differently. In a party with this level of leader autocracy and this low level of internal democracy, there can be no room for a productive debate which sometimes even requires a clash of different opinions. A left-wing party cannot and should not be alarmed when ideological or policy disagreements arise, because intellectual debates are the driving forces of social democrats, socialists and other left-wingers. Intra-party opposition is not an anomaly but a necessity for a party like CHP. Without a productive debate and a clash of opinions, the decisions of CHP cannot be attributed to the party as a whole.

Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should, therefore, be able to reflect a rich spectrum of ideas and debates on salient issues rather than a homogeneous expression of one-voice. Generally, Europe's established parties have different ideological factions, some with more moderate and centrist views, and some with radical ideologies. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should take measures to open the intellectual debate within the party's platform. This will also contribute to the 'intellectualization' of CHP's language, which may appeal to more voters in the future. Kılıçdaroğlu should encourage other party representatives to speak up and express their opinions and dissents at party meetings. As long as party members agree on the fundamental principles (e.g., social justice, welfare state, pro-labor politics), they should feel free and comfortable enough to disagree with one another even if their opinions clash publicly. If peaceful mechanisms are adopted in resolving conflicts among members during party debates, CHP will be stronger electorally because it will be more heterogeneous. An internally democratic CHP would be more likely to form horizontal and responsible relations with a variety of classes and groups, including civil society and labor unions such as DİSK (Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions).

Another anti-democratic vestige of Baykal's heritage is a CHP whose electoral base has almost no say in determining the people (representatives) who are supposed to represent them in the national legislature. Baykal and his CHP's central administration had almost full control of the list of representatives and their rank-orders in the closed lists of candidates on election ballots.¹⁴ Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should encourage the party's grassroots and provincial electoral bases to have a say in choosing their own candidates for legislative seats. This would be a giant step towards the decentralization of power within CHP. For this purpose, primary elections should be compulsory for determining the representative candidates of CHP. Primary elections would allow provincial party branches to make their own decisions based on free will, without the imposition by the party center. This would also facilitate the CHP center's relations with its periphery, that is, provincial and sub-district organizations.

Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP needs to create a momentum to capture of the electoral and social mobilization if it wants to make a radical change in the outcome of the 2011 elections. For this purpose, CHP needs strong, collaborative and active grassroots organizations. The best candidates for such organizations are CHP's youth and women's branches, which remained quite inefficient and almost dormant during the Baykal years. Those branches should be empowered with new recruits and the existing gender quota for women should be increased. Currently, CHP's internal charter requires a 25 percent quota for women in the party administration but this quota does not apply to CHP's representatives at the national legislature. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should increase this gender quota to a more reasonable 50 percent for both the party administration and its national representatives. As of today, conservative AK Party has more women representatives than CHP does at the TBMM. CHP should be the leader party on gender equality. The addition of more women in CHP's administrative and legislative seats would be a smart electoral strategy as it is likely to attract the votes of women.

Ideological Democratization

CHP's political ideology can be best described by the term Kemalism, the principles of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkish state. CHP's ideological roots go back to the Jacobin Kemalism of the 1920s and 1930s. During these early Republican years, progressive reforms were made by top-to-bottom methods. Most of the modernization reforms were, therefore, imposed from the country's capital center, Ankara, on the entire social masses or the periphery. The major purpose of these reforms was to bring Turkey to the level of Western European civilization. Adopting the principle of secularism (separation of religion and politics) was viewed as the major vehicle of political and social transformation. At that period of time, Kemalism would have been

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14. Elections in Turkey are held on closed-list systems. This means that each party presents a list of candidate names to voters. The winning order of the candidates is determined by parties' central administrations. Voters can express their party preference, but they cannot express their candidate preference.

CHP's ideological democratization demands a historical mission of creating a new, libertarian, and progressive version of Kemalism for the party's future generations.

regarded as a 'left' leaning ideology due to its secular progressivism, but definitely not its partial authoritarianism. CHP's leftism, therefore, originates from its ideological connections with the French Revolution (secularism and nationalism). Otherwise, CHP would have no ties with the labor, working class, or socialist movements. In terms of its historical origins, CHP is not a counterpart of the European socialist parties.

CHP's ideological democratization demands a historical mission of creating a new, libertarian, and progressive version of Kemalism for the party's future generations. Kemalism's component of Jacobinism was justifiable in the early Republican period as there was little room for a democratic transformation at that time. Nevertheless, all ideologies and worldviews change and evolve with time, and the same principle is applicable to Kemalism as well. In fact, many people have perceived Kemalism as a left-wing ideology in the context of Turkey's social and political conditions. İsmet İnönü, the early CHP leader, adapted the term 'left-of-center' (*ortanın solu*) as a short-cut to define his party's ideology during the 1960s. In an interview, İnönü expressed this term for the first time on the grounds that CHP was a secular and statist party.¹⁵ CHP's next leader, Bülent Ecevit, also embraced this term and even further adopted the expression 'democratic left' to describe CHP. Taking on an anti-military, pro-civilian, pro-change, and pro-labor discourse, Ecevit moved CHP's ideology leftwards during the early 1970s.

The September 12, 1980 coup had disastrous consequences on Turkish politics in general and the left in particular. The military government (1980-83) shut down all the existing parties, including CHP, and imposed political bans on the existing political leaders, party members and politicians. Consequently, this military interruption to civilian politics affected the course of Turkey's center left in the coming years. After the transition to a relatively civilian rule with the disputed 1983 elections¹⁶, the CHP party tradition fragmented into two major successor parties: Erdal İnönü's (İsmet İnönü's son) Social Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*, SHP) and Bülent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*, DSP). They were in fact brother parties representing a combination of Kemalism and social democracy, but DSP was relatively more nationalistic and more lenient on religious freedom. During the 1980s and the early 1990s, not many people questioned the connection between Kemalism and the left ideology because Kemalism was still perceived as a component of the CHP party tradition.

When a group of pro-Baykal members of SHP left their party to reestablish CHP, the Baykal years began. SHP then merged with Baykal's CHP under the latter's name and Erdal İnönü left politics. With the exception of two interim leaderships of Hikmet Çetin

15. Both secularism (*laiklik*) and statism (*devletçilik*) are components of Atatürk's six principles, as represented by the CHP's 'six arrows': Republicanism, Nationalism, Populism, Statism, Secularism and Revolutionism.

16. After three years of military government (1980-83), the September 12 military junta allowed transition to democratic elections in 1983. Nevertheless, the National Security Council had the authority to veto any party and any candidate on its will, and eventually allowed only three parties to compete in the 1983 elections. Therefore, the fairness of the 1983 elections is highly questionable.

and Altan Öymen, Baykal mostly held his chair since 1992. It was Baykal's CHP that led people to question whether Kemalism really fit with the ideology of the left. It was mainly because Baykal's CHP failed to fill an essential ideological (policy) vacuum in Turkish politics: progressive, social democratic politics. Baykal frequently spoke in the name of his party and took reactive, nationalist and conservative stances on a number of issues (e.g. Kurdish issue, democratization, legal reforms). He de-emphasized the social democratic and the left identity component of CHP's ideology and pulled it towards the right - to the extent of being blamed by the radical and alternative left-wing groups for coming quite close to, almost becoming identical with the radical right-wing Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP).

Today, it is crucial that Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should find a way to merge Kemalism with progressive values of European social democracy such as freedom of speech, identity issues, individual rights and liberties, social justice, equality of outcome, gender equality, labor rights and ecology politics. In other words, this new CHP should create a new version of Kemalism with incorporating all of these progressive issues. It is too much to expect Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP to be socialist, but it is fair to expect it to become more of a social democratic party with its new leadership. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should therefore be able to offer a novel social democratic mobilization project as a viable alternative to AK Party's conservative and neo-liberal agenda. Although AK Party was held accountable for inconsiderately implementing neo-liberal policies by several other left-wing groups, it is unfortunate that Baykal's CHP did not articulate a strong critique of such economic policies from a social democratic, pro-labor perspective. It lacked a discourse of constructive criticism, that is, explaining not only why a criticized policy is 'wrong' or 'bad' but also how to make that policy 'better' as part of an intellectual approach.

Ideological democratization is, therefore, about bringing 'the left' back to Turkish politics by embracing a social democratic discourse in accordance with the universal norms of CHP's European counterparts of the Socialist International. CHP should create a new ideological niche and take on distinctively more socially and politically libertarian positions in comparison to all other major parties in Turkey, especially AK Party. For CHP, this means not only moving leftwards but also de-emphasizing nationalism and adopting more egalitarian, less elitist, more libertarian, and more multiculturalist world vision. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should develop a 'leftist' and 'libertarian' discourse on a variety of topics, which would require a radical break from Baykal's positions. This means supporting not only the working classes and the poor but all the disadvantaged groups in society, including Kurds, Alevis, Romanis, and non-Muslims. CHP should not be afraid to address these identity issues and defend their rights, as this should be a basic ideological position for a party that claims to have a center-left ideology.

In fact, Kılıçdaroğlu's background as an Alevi-Kurd from Tunceli is quite meaningful for CHP, and it shows the lack of prejudice about his 'minority within minority' identity

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CHP's incorporation of the Kurdish identity should be constructed on the bases of two major themes: democracy and national unity. Kurdish rights and other disadvantaged groups' rights should be based on the ideals of democracy, equality, and social justice, with a stress on their need for Turkey's national unity.

within the party. Nevertheless, Kılıçdaroğlu did not mention the Kurdish issue directly. His speech was reflective of an old fashioned mentality that relegates the Kurdish problem to economic hardships and 'backwardness' and, therefore, should be solved in economic terms. CHP's insistent silence on this issue has to be broken for CHP to connect to Kurdish voters in the east and southeastern regions. Acceptance of the Kurdish identity in Turkey does not need to imply the alienation of CHP's (Turkish) nationalist voters, if carefully integrated into the party's discourse.

About two decades ago, there was a center-left party in Turkey with the name called the Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP), which not only cooperated with the Kurdish left before the 1991 elections but also had a more democratic and libertarian stance on the Kurdish issue. However, because the SHP established a pre-election coalition with the Kurdish left-wing People's Democracy Party (HEP), a high price was paid by SHP after the elections due to the oath crisis.¹⁷ That was the beginning of the end of the story for the Turkish center-left's 'Kurdish issue.' Baykal later adopted a nationalist rather than a libertarian discourse on the Kurdish issue, as if supporting the Kurdish cause would automatically be associated with 'supporting terrorism' or 'siding with the separatists.' He denounced movements against Turkey's territorial integrity and defended military ways to combat terrorism, but he never mentioned the Kurdish identity as an issue. Baykal's CHP, therefore, remained silent on the progressive aspects of this issue, such as identity politics and human rights. However, he was quite vocal on the conservative aspects of fighting terrorism and protecting national integrity when it came to the Kurdish issue.

Turkey's social conditions have evolved over the past twenty years. Public opinion is now more familiar with the Kurdish issue. CHP's electoral base is mostly committed to Atatürk's understanding of nationalism, which requires commitment to the Turkish nation regardless of people's origins. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should incorporate the Kurdish identity into its language without hurting its nationalist supporters, and to do that, CHP needs new themes for justification. CHP's incorporation of the Kurdish identity should be constructed on the bases of two major themes: democracy and national unity. Kurdish rights and other disadvantaged groups' rights should be based on the ideals of democracy, equality, and social justice, with a stress on their need for Turkey's national unity. As long as CHP refrains from speaking on the Kurdish issue openly, there is no way it can accomplish ideological democratization.

CHP should, therefore, develop a new, unique, original language of its own on the Kurdish issue, and this new language does not need to sound like any other party's discourse. CHP must make a clear distinction between the 'Kurdish identity' and the 'terror' components of the Kurdish issue, and it should develop two different sets of

17. Kurdish deputies elected under the SHP ticket before the 1991 elections later caused hardships for SHP as two Kurdish delegates switched to Kurdish language during their oath-taking. These two deputies were heavily protested by all other parties and the mainstream media during the early 1990s. SHP was later blamed by conservatives and nationalists for 'cooperating with the terrorists.'

arguments on both of these aspects. While denouncing terrorism, as it has usually done, CHP must also advocate for the rights of the Kurdish people and argue for their freedom openly. It is true that a direct reference to Kurdish identity carries the risk of angering nationalist CHP voters to some extent, but this could be a giant step forward, even if risks are involved. An appropriate initial attempt could be to make a clear-cut distinction between the security issues (military measures against acts of violence) and individual rights/liberties issues (such as the right to education in one's mother tongue). This would also contribute to the desecuritization of the Kurdish question in Turkey. Kılıçdaroğlu's mission should, therefore, be to adapt the CHP's electoral base to the Kurdish reality in Turkey. If MHP's leader Bahçeli can acknowledge the Kurdish identity and refer to Turkey as "a big flower garden composed of different colors, tones, and scents,"¹⁸ Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should be expected to do better than just remain silent.

Baykal's CHP's ambiguous reaction to the headscarf issue reflected the Jacobin secularist mentality of the 1920s and 1930s, and was heavily criticized by some left-wing intellectuals. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should be able to develop a new, democratic and libertarian vision of secularism. Progressive secularism still requires sensitivity towards the principle of separation of state (i.e., politics) and religion as well as opposing the misuse of religious symbols for political purposes. Baykal's CHP's vision on the use of headscarf was generally ambiguous. On the one hand, Baykal objected to allowing students wearing headscarves in university campuses. On the other hand, he gave membership badges to Islamic-dressed women to show that CHP had no problem with how people dressed. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should be more consistent and curb its overemphasis of secularism on the headscarf issue in particular. Wearing the headscarf is not only an issue of secularism. The same issue can be contextualized within the progressive norms of tolerance and individual liberties, especially equal opportunity to education. From a hardliner secularist perspective, the headscarf may simply be an issue of political symbolism; but for a social democratic party, it should be more than simply about secularism, it should also be about education rights.

CHP should set out to do what AK Party, MHP and DTP could not accomplish. It should contextualize the headscarf issue within a broader framework of individual liberties, demanding more freedoms for a larger social strata, not only female students wearing headscarves but also people who demand an education in Kurdish, and those who demand the equal treatment of the Alevi faith. CHP should be able to emphasize issues that pertain to the religious freedom of people that are not strictly within the borders of the Turkish-Sunni social strata (i.e., non-Muslims). If the CHP could balance these positions while fighting to protect the separation of politics and religion, it could find a way to successfully merge secularism with democracy.

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18. Bahçeli used these words at MHP's press conference held on May 4, 2005. See: Taha Akyol, "MHP ve Kürtler" [MHP and the Kurds], *Milliyet* (December 17, 2009).

Kılıçdaroğlu's leadership provides an excellent opportunity to begin the process of change in CHP, but a new leader is not by itself enough. A turning point is needed and the new administration must initiate the required steps to lead the party in the right direction.

In addition to changing its stances on the Kurdish and headscarf issues, CHP should also tone down its nationalistic language. Baykal's CHP's support for the controversial Article 301 revealed the nationalist and even authoritarian face of the party. Article 301 is a controversial article of the penal code in Turkey. Before the amendments passed in the TBMM in April 2008, it stated that a person who publicly insults 'Turkishness' (*Türklük*), the Republic or TBMM shall be punishable by imprisonment of six months to three years. A number of left, libertarian intellectuals (academics, journalists, writers) were tried in courts for violating Article 301, they included Baskın Oran, Hrant Dink, and Orhan Pamuk, the Nobel winner author. In response to those voices that demanded a revision or an elimination of the article, Baykal's CHP defended the preservation of the article in its entirety. By doing this, CHP not only took an almost identical stance to that of the ultranationalist MHP but also failed to defend freedom of expression in unconditional and universal terms, something unexpected from a party member of Socialist International. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP should defend freedom of speech universally and unconditionally, and, therefore, should not repeat such mistakes of Baykal's CHP.

Conclusion and Discussion

It is true that Kılıçdaroğlu brought optimism to CHP and its voters. He was already a well-known and respected figure, as he ran for the position of mayor of Istanbul for the 2009 municipal elections. He lost to AK Party's candidate Kadir Topbaş but still managed to increase his party's vote share in Istanbul by more than 25 percent compared to 2004.¹⁹ Kılıçdaroğlu is known as an honest politician, having no involvement with unethical behavior, such as bribery, favoritism, power abuse, and corruption. On the contrary, he is known as a man who brought accusations of corruption against prominent AK Party politicians and participated in televised discussions with them. After his accusations were made public, two prominent AK Party members, Şaban Dişli and Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat, resigned from their party positions. Unlike Baykal who generally heated up the debates with his aggressive behavior and bitter language, Kılıçdaroğlu gave the image of an even-tempered discussant with his calm speaking style and his ability to listen to his opponents quietly and answer them wisely.

A comparison of Baykal and Kılıçdaroğlu shows that the two leaders have very different personalities and different speaking styles. They also use different language and give priority to different issues. Kılıçdaroğlu's leadership provides an excellent opportunity to begin the process of change in CHP, but a new leader is not by itself enough. A turning point is needed and the new administration must initiate the required steps to lead the party in the right direction. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP needs to bring intra-party democracy and move its ideology and politics leftwards, both of which require a strong will. Nevertheless, there are restrictions on both CHP as an institution and

19. The CHP candidate's vote ratio in Istanbul was 28.9 percent in 2004. Kılıçdaroğlu received 36.8 percent in 2009.

Kılıçdaroğlu as the leader. As Erol Tuncer, a former CHP politician and the head of the Social Democracy Association, points out in an interview, it is too much to expect CHP to accomplish all these necessary changes overnight. It is true that CHP's PA (Party Assembly) changed with a ratio of 65 percent, which is a high enough number. However, CHP's organizational staff at provincial levels did not change. Most people from the Baykal years still retain their seats.

Ideological democratization and intra-party democracy are likely to strengthen CHP electorally in the long run, but two restrictions may arise in the short-run. Potential resistance to such changes may come from the CHP's top (administration) and its bottom (electoral base) separately. A first fundamental question must be asked: will the party's top administration and its elite cadre be willing to pursue and implement such changes for democratization? A second question is: will the CHP's electorate (supporters and voters) be happy to see these changes in their party? Both questions are important for Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP's future as change requires the support of CHP's administration and voters together. It is possible that people who hold important administrative positions in the party may resist institutional changes required for intra-party democratization. CHP is known to have groups of members controlled by certain people holding key positions in the party. For instance, it was largely mentioned in the media that CHP was under the control of two people before Kılıçdaroğlu: Deniz Baykal and Önder Sav, the party secretary general. Sav currently maintains his position in Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP, which disappointed some people who hoped to see new faces in the party's administration. Intra-party democratization means establishing horizontal and democratic relations within the party, which requires the breakdown of the excessively powerful personal positions and hierarchies in it. Therefore, the prospects of intra-party democratization mostly rely on the will of Kılıçdaroğlu himself and the new CHP's administration.

Ideological democratization and embracing a social democratic language are likely to make Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP a progressive driving force in Turkish politics and enlarge its electoral base eastwards in the long run. However, this also necessitates embracing identity politics and changing CHP's discourse radically on key issues such as the Kurdish issue, the headscarf issue, freedom of speech, and democratization. 'Going social democratic' has a potential risk of losing CHP's electoral base in the west as it can alienate CHP's traditional voters, who are generally urban, white-collar, educated, relatively wealthy and older people. These people are generally sensitive to both the Turkish identity and secularism issues. They may find a Kurdish opening or a headscarf opening in the party unnecessary or even dangerous. If Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP adopts a libertarian stance on the Kurdish and headscarf issues, some of its traditional voters may perceive these developments as 'treason' to the party's cause and core ideology. A Kurdish opening can be criticized for accommodating terrorism and cooperation with the separatists while a headscarf opening can be denounced on the grounds of undermining secularism and siding with the pro-Islamists.

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it is fair to argue that Kılıçdaroğlu satisfied the expectations of several of CHP's supporters who have been waiting for a change in their party for so long. By changing the CHP's PA membership structure and adopting a new political language, Kılıçdaroğlu has given hope to a large number of people so far.

Even though both institutional and ideological democratization are necessary and urgent during the early Kılıçdaroğlu years, these processes may take a longer time than expected. The feasibility of some required changes depend on Kılıçdaroğlu's will and power within his party, and some depend on the initiatives of the new CHP's administrative staff. Baykal's legacy is still part of CHP's heritage, even without his leadership. Baykal's type of politics and discourse were embraced by most of CHP's voters, therefore, changing them will be a risky, difficult, and prolonged task for Kılıçdaroğlu. In this regard, Hatem Ete puts forth three potential scenarios for the new CHP's ideological directions in the coming years: Kemalism, leftism and populism. Ecevit moved the CHP of the early 1970s to the left, Baykal preferred to embrace an old, Jacobin version of Kemalism, while Kılıçdaroğlu has given the signs of populism in his speeches so far.²⁰ A populist language may increase CHP's appeal to new social groups (i.e., the poor, the unemployed), but populism by itself cannot make CHP a winning party. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP's electoral future will also depend on the extent to which he can balance and combine populism and leftism. So far, populism seems very apparent but the signs of 'going left' remain weak in Kılıçdaroğlu's speeches.

On the one hand, it is fair to argue that Kılıçdaroğlu satisfied the expectations of several of CHP's supporters who have been waiting for a change in their party for so long. By changing the CHP's PA membership structure and adopting a new political language, Kılıçdaroğlu has given hope to a large number of people so far. On the other hand, Kılıçdaroğlu did not satisfy those who expected him to talk about genuine political subjects such as the Kurdish issue, the headscarf issue, democratization, and civil-military relations. At this point, however, it is fair to argue that it is still too early to be overly optimistic or pessimistic about CHP's change in the coming years under Kılıçdaroğlu's leadership. Change does not always come all in one shot because transforming institutions is always a difficult task, and it takes time. CHP's change is not an all-or-nothing game, as change may come partially in small, consecutive steps as well. Party leaders are not the sole decision-makers of their parties regardless of how powerful they are. This applies to Kılıçdaroğlu as well. He too is restricted by the party's existing administration, electorates and their potential reactions to changes in CHP.

CHP's future dilemma is about the extent (rather than existence) of change in the coming years. It is unfair to argue that nothing has changed with Kılıçdaroğlu. On the contrary, signs of change are obvious but still not sufficient for a genuine turn to the left. The question is whether CHP's new administration will be satisfied with the changes made so far or not. Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP's future strategies can be collapsed into two major options, a moderate change and a radical change. A moderate change means that although there is a new leader, the existing intra-party affairs continue as usual. It also means that although there is a new discourse, it is still a populist discourse

running the risk that Baykal's heritage on the party will be maintained. However, a radical change implies taking serious measures for intra-party democratization, a conscious devotion to a politically correct, left political language, and breaking the ties with the Baykal past. So far, Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP has shown more of an inclination towards moderate change, and it seems that radical change is not soon to come all at once. At this point, those who favor a radical change can only hope for baby steps rather than an altogether revolution in the short run.

The coming elections in 2011 will clarify the new direction of Kılıçdaroğlu's CHP, as the campaign process is likely to drive all parties, including CHP, into constructing their political discourses and election promises as well as determining their election strategies. This election will also be a critical test for the new CHP. If it increases its vote share largely to the extent of coming close to AK Party's, the new CHP may garner support to engender a new political momentum in Turkish politics. If it receives a similar vote share as before, which was at around 20 percent, the hope for a new CHP may be dashed.

The unexpected switch of the CHP's leadership from Deniz Baykal to Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu led to a series of debates about the party's political future and its new place in the party system of Turkey. Most of the debates have focused on what exactly changed and what remained the same as a result of this switch. Kılıçdaroğlu's speeches revealed signs for new directions in CHP's discourse indeed, as they included novel issues such as intra-party democracy and empowering the party's women and youth branches. The purpose of this policy brief is to propose ideas to the CHP as a social democratic party, so it can be a serious political alternative to the conservative AK Party. The CHP's major target should be democratization to be achieved at two different levels: (a) institutional and (b) ideological. Institutional democratization requires establishing intra-party democracy, decentralization of power, as well as bringing ideological heterogeneity and political debates back to the party. Ideological democratization is about bringing 'the left' back to Turkish politics by embracing a progressive and social democratic discourse. This entails moving leftwards, a de-emphasis of nationalism and the adoption of a more egalitarian, less elitist, more libertarian, and more multiculturalist world vision.

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