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TÜRKİYE’S PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2023

Abstract

On May 14, 2023, Türkiye had presidential and parliamentary elections, followed by a second round of voting for president on May 28, 2023. In the parliamentary elections, the governing (AKP) and its allies secured a majority, in spite of surveys pointing to a potential opposition victory. The second round of the Presidential election was held on May 28, which was the first ever in the history of the Republic of Türkiye. In the run-off, Erdoğan defeated Kiliçdaroğlu by 52%-48%, securing a next five-year term. Erdoğan's election campaign focused on large-scale national projects, while opposition candidates highlighted everyday issues and economic challenges, particularly with high inflation and prices impacting all aspects of life. Despite the critical approach to governments' foreign policy, opposition on a wider scale agrees with the country's overall direction. Both sides believe that equality and mutual respect must be maintained to restore. Türkiye should work to reduce regional isolation and improve ties with Middle Eastern Allies, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Critics have highlighted the opposition coalition's failure to persuade voters that it could rule with coherence and unity despite its membership consisting of disparate parties. At the same time, Erdoğan was seen as providing stability, especially for those with fear of the PKK threats.

Keywords: *Justice and Development Party, Erdoğan, Presidential and parliamentary elections, constitutional amendments, oppositional parties.*

On May 14, Erdoğan found himself only 4% ahead of Kiliçdaroğlu, missing the 50% threshold he needed to overcome to declare absolute victory in the first round of the elections. Thus, the second round of the Presidential election was held on May 28, which was the first ever in the history of the Republic of Türkiye. It is also noteworthy, that current election was the first one, when threshold was lowered to 7% instead of 10% from 1980s. Turnout for the second round was 84%, relatively less, then 87% for the May 14. Erdoğan prevailed in the run-off against Kiliçdaroğlu by a margin of 52%-48%, winning a new five-year term.¹ The re-election of Erdoğan implies that Turkey would intensify its endeavors to establish an autonomous course in global affairs while diminishing its connections with Western nations and enhancing its relationships with other influential actors. Collaboration with Western entities will continue, but mostly in economical format. The likelihood of encountering more volatility, especially in the realm of foreign policy, remains significant

¹ Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, "Turkey (Türkiye): Major Issues and U.S. Relations", Congressional Research Service, R44000 (2023), 10

due to a variety of concerns that are expected to generate conflicts between Ankara and both the European Union and the United States.²

The 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections in Türkiye marked a pivotal moment not only in the country's domestic politics but also in its foreign policy orientation. With a new cabinet of ministers and a new old era under Erdoğan, Türkiye will continue to pursue its regional and global objectives while adjusting and recalibrating its foreign policy to the reality of a multipolar world order. However, it will also continue to uphold its historic position in NATO by continuing to contribute to the Alliance and willingly taking on new duties in areas that align with its goals.³ Economically, the elections carry weight as Türkiye grapples with issues such as inflation, unemployment, and economic restructuring. The dire economic situation played a significant role in the persuasion of the voters. At the same time, both Türkiye's government and opposition share the understanding that the country should be adjusting its policies according to the realities of the multipolar world order. It is less likely that there will be significant changes in domestic politics, but at the same time, Erdoğan will be forced to make some changes to his foreign policy to shift the country from the somewhat isolated it is right now.

On May 14, 2023, Türkiye had presidential and parliamentary elections, followed by a second round of voting for president on May 28, 2023. In the parliamentary elections, the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its allies secured a majority, in spite of surveys pointing to a potential opposition victory. The People's Alliance, led by Erdoğan, gained 323 seats out of 600 in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, thus maintaining the majority. At the same time, it should be noted, that they lost 21 seats from 344 they won in the 2018 elections.⁴ In the first round, President Erdoğan just missed an absolute majority and went on to win reelection in the runoff round.⁵ Prior to May 14, public opinion surveys generated anticipation that the opposition coalition, the so-called "table of six" led by the Republican Peoples Party (CHP), the first ruling party of the Republic of Türkiye, together with the Good (İYİ) Party, may pose a threat to Erdoğan and his allies. Despite the attempted collaboration between opposition parties, many still argued the future prospect of this coalitions, especially in case of their victory. This scenario presumed coalition government, but in this case, "any new government would have so many internal problems to deal with that its primary focus would be domestic."⁶ They highlighted the division between the opposition, Erdoğan's political tenacity, and the government's capacity to

² Luigi Scazzieri, "Erdogan's Victory and the West", Center for European Reform (June 10, 2023), <https://www.cer.eu/insights/erdogans-victory-and-west>

³ Alper Coşkun, "Continuity and change in Turkish foreign Policy", Defense Journal by Atlantic Council in Turkey, (June 22, 2023), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/ac-turkey-defense-journal/continuity-and-change-in-turkish-foreign-policy/>

⁴ Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, "Turkey (Türkiye): Major Issues and U.S. Relations", Congressional Research Service, R44000 (2023), 10

⁵ Stefano Fella, Nigel Walker, "Turkey under Erdoğan: recent developments and the 2023 elections", House of Common Library, 9806, (2023) 5

⁶ Nektaria Stamouli, "2023's most important election: Turkey", Politico, (April 17, 2023), <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-2023-election-erdogan-kilicdaroglu/>

influence court decisions, provide financial assistance, and the ability to control and manipulate over 90% of the media.⁷

The 2017 constitutional amendment in Türkiye mandated that every five years, the country's legislative and presidential elections will take place on the same day. The elections for 2023 were originally set for June 18, but President Erdoğan announced on January 21, 2023, that they would instead take place on May 14.⁸ Following the severe earthquake that struck southern Türkiye in February, there were anticipations that the elections would be postponed. On March 10, however, President Erdoğan reaffirmed that the elections will indeed take place in May. He said that this was done to ensure a high turnout and prevent conflicts with summer vacation plans, university examinations, and the Hajj pilgrimage in June.⁹

According to the constitution, "The President of the Republic shall be elected directly by the public from among Turkish citizens who are eligible to be deputies, who are over forty years of age and who have completed higher education. The President of the Republic's term of office shall be five years. A person may be elected as President of the Republic for two terms at most."¹⁰ As 2018 election was already second term for Erdoğan as a president many implied, that unless parliament disbanded early in 2023, he would not be eligible to run for president a third time. AKP and President Erdoğan disputed that the two-term restriction did not apply to his first term, which was before the 2017 constitutional amendment. Following opposition parties' challenges to his candidacy, Erdoğan was granted permission to run again under the new system on March 30, 2023, by Türkiye's Supreme Election Council (YSK).¹¹ Erdoğan may be eligible to run for one more term under the Turkish constitution if three-fifths of the parliament call early elections. He also could try to rewrite the constitution to change or eliminate the term restrictions for presidents.¹²

The transition to the presidential system forced a realignment of the political coalitions. Two significant political coalitions have been formed as a result of the structural effects of this shift. Leading the Cumhur, or People's Alliance, is the AK Party, with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and a few minor marginal parties, such as the Great

⁷ Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, "Turkey (Türkiye): Major Issues and U.S. Relations", Congressional Research Service, R44000 (2023), 8

⁸ "Erdoğan says Turkish elections to be held on May 14", Al Jazeera, 22 January 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/22/turkish-elections-to-be-held-on-may-14-says-erdogan#:~:text=Turkey's%20president%20has%20announced%20May,the%20event%20was%20released%20Sunday>.

⁹ "Erdoğan calls Turkish elections for May 14, three months after quake disaster", Reuters, 10 March 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/erdogan-officially-calls-turkish-elections-may-14-2023-03-10/#:~:text=%22Our%20nation%20will%20go%20to,almost%2050%2C000%20people%20in%20Turkey>.

¹⁰ "Turkey's Constitution of 1982 with Amendments through 2017", Constituent Project, 27 April 2022, Article 101 of the constitution, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Turkey_2017.pdf?lang=en

¹¹ Stefano Fella, Nigel Walker, "Turkey under Erdoğan: recent developments and the 2023 elections", House of Commons Library, 9806, (2023) 38

¹² Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, "Turkey (Türkiye): Major Issues and U.S. Relations", Congressional Research Service, R44000 (2023), 10

Union Party (BBP) and the New Welfare Party (YRP), as a member. The Millet, or Nation Alliance is headed by the major opposition, the center-left Republican People's Party (CHP); it also includes the center-right/nationalist İYİ Party, as well as the Saadet and Demokrat parties, who appeal to a smaller electoral base;¹³ Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA), with the leader of Ali Babacan, former economic minister and Future Party (GP) with the leader of Ahmet Davutoğlu, former foreign affairs minister as well as prime minister.

In the 2023 elections, the People's Democratic Party (HDP) ran for office on the lists of the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (HEDEP, formerly known as the Party of Greens and Left Future), which was approved by the Supreme Election Council (YSK) for the elections. This was due to the case brought to the constitutional court for shutting HDP party down. "The HDP, the third largest party in parliament, is prevented from participating in the elections by Erdoğan's regime's politically motivated closure case. In order to escape this politically motivated legal labyrinth and the risk of being closed down, the HDP decided to contest the elections on 14 May under the Green Left Party,"¹⁴ was stated on official website of People's Democratic Party.

In August 2022, the HDP joined forces with other left-wing parties to establish the Labor and Freedom coalition. It emphasized equality, environmental concerns, the need to address the high cost of living and economic imbalances, and a peaceful and democratic solution to the Kurdish problem.

In his election campaign, Erdoğan relied on large national and strategic projects, especially infrastructural ones.¹⁵ He promised a reconstruction program after destructions of earthquakes in February. On February 6, 2023, two significant earthquakes with magnitudes of 7.8 and 7.5 struck southern Türkiye and Syria. Approximately 50,000 people were said to have died only in Türkiye as a result of earthquake damage and its aftereffects. Over 100,000 were injured and millions had their everyday lives and living conditions adversely impacted. The disaster has affected Türkiye's politics, society, and economy. The 10 southern Turkish provinces most directly affected account for about 10% of Türkiye's GDP and 15% of its population, and host thousands of refugees from Syria's ongoing civil war.¹⁶

In an announcement of a government-led rehabilitation program, Erdoğan promised to construct 650,000 new houses overall, 319,000 of them within the first year. Concerns have been raised by a few local authorities, engineers, and foreign funders over the

¹³ Alper Coşkun and Sinan Ülgen, "Political Change and Turkey's Foreign Policy", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, working paper (November, 2022) 1

¹⁴ "HDP closure case file handed over to rapporteur", HDP Europe, 11 April 2023, <https://hdpeurope.eu/2023/04/hdp-closure-case-file-handed-over-to-rapporteur/>

¹⁵ "Most Important Elections on the 100th anniversary of establishment of the Republic of Türkiye – country at a turning point", The International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES), (2023), <https://www.ifimes.org/en/researches/2023-turkiye-most-important-elections-on-the-100th-anniversary-of-establishment-of-the-republic-of-turkiye-country-at-a-turning-point/5163?#>

¹⁶ Raja Abdulrahim and Emily Garthwaite, "For Syrian Refugees in Turkey, Quake Is a Disaster Within a Disaster," New York Times, February 13, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/12/world/middleeast/syria-turkey-earthquake-refugees.html#:~:text=For%20Syrians%2C%20both%20refugees%20like,displacement%20and%20death%20it%20brought.>

possibility that hasty reconstruction without thorough planning or more transparent accountability procedures might result the rebuilt structures open and not safe to future seismic activities.¹⁷ The AKP, backed by Erdoğan, unveiled a draft bill in July 2023 that would use higher corporation taxes to pay for some of the restoration.¹⁸

The Nation Alliance outlined its election platform in April 2023, combining the previously stated views on constitutional change. It said that the president's power to veto laws and orders would be eliminated. The president would have a single seven-year term limit and be impartial. Reforms to guarantee the judiciary's independence would also be implemented, along with measures to guarantee judges follow decisions made by the European Court of Human Rights and the Constitutional Court. Along with reducing pre-trial detentions, measures to support the freedom of speech and the right to protest would also be adopted. While Erdoğan's election campaign is primarily focused on large-scale national projects, the opposition candidates emphasize everyday issues and the challenging economic conditions that the citizens face, especially in relation to the unprecedented levels of inflation and high prices that have affected every aspect of their lives.¹⁹

The electoral platform of the Labor and Freedom Alliance promised Türkiye's return to a parliamentary system of government. It also included proposals to provide free and superior healthcare, transportation, and educational services. The program also paid a lot of attention to equity and cost of living concerns. It promised to take down every obstacle standing in the way of women's and LGBTQ rights.

Large cities, coastal regions in the west and south, and the Kurdish southeast, where HDP supporters backed Kılıçdaroğlu in the presidential election, were among the strongholds for the opposition. But in the Black Sea regions and rural areas, Erdoğan was leading. Additionally, he triumphed in the Kahramanmaraş province, severely affected by the earthquake in February, with a significant edge.

With 52.2% of the votes in the second round of the presidential election on May 28, 2023, President Erdoğan won and was re-elected to a third term in office (his second under the new presidential system implemented in 2017). Kılıçdaroğlu got 47.8% of the votes in the second round. In comparison to the first round, Kılıçdaroğlu received almost a million more votes, mostly due to votes of HDP supporters. Whereas Erdoğan received slightly more than 700,000 more votes in comparison to the first round. Still, it should be

¹⁷ Jared Malsin, "Concerns Mount as Erdogan Rebuilds," Wall Street Journal, March 7, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/after-turkeys-earthquakes-erdogan-starts-rebuilding-over-objections-bb5f6473>

¹⁸ "Turkey to raise corporate tax to fund earthquake rebuilding-draft law," Reuters, July 5, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-issue-additional-motor-vehicle-tax-corporate-tax-earthquake-finance-needs-2023-07-05/#:~:text=The%20government%20promised%20to%20rebuild,30%25%20from%2025%25%20currentl>

¹⁹ "Most Important Elections on the 100th anniversary of establishment of the Republic of Türkiye – country as a turning point", The International Institute for Middle East and Balkan Studies (IFIMES), (2023), <https://www.ifimes.org/en/researches/2023-turkiye-most-important-elections-on-the-100th-anniversary-of-establishment-of-the-republic-of-turkiye-country-at-a-turning-point/5163?#>

considered, that there was a drop in voter turnout of more than 1.5 million between the first and second rounds.²⁰

Over the last two years, Türkiye's ongoing financial issues have significantly become worse, with substantial increases in inflation happening concurrently with an abrupt decline of the Lira. In October 2022, official annual inflation peaked at 86%, a 24-year high. By July 2023, it had dropped to little over 47.8%. Early in 2023, several unofficial estimates claimed that inflation had exceeded 100%. The Turkish Central Bank repeatedly lowered its benchmark interest rate from 19% to 8.5% between September 2021 and March 2023, which may have contributed to the inflation increase. External developments like Russia's conflict on Ukraine and interest rate increases in the US and other major countries probably added to the rising inflation. For almost ten years, the Turkish lira has been declining, and it is likely that some of this drop is due to general worries about the country's economy and legal system. Since 2018, it has dropped more than 80% in value relative to the dollar, with the most of the decline occurring when the significant rate cuts started in 2021.²¹

The mainstream economic theory that holds that higher interest rates reduce inflation, draw in foreign investment, and preserve the value of the currency has been forcefully questioned by President Erdoğan. Replacing Türkiye's central bank governor and finance minister in 2021, Erdoğan established greater control over Turkish fiscal and monetary policies. In public statements, Erdoğan argued that "lower interest rates boost production, employment, and exports."²² In addition, Erdoğan attacked high-interest rates, claiming that they go against Islamic principles and widen the social imbalance. He multiple times has accentuated that he is opposing Türkiye seeking support from global financial organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) again.²³

Some of the cabinet changes after the election point out that Erdoğan is willing to change the course of economic policy. Reappointment of the Mehmet Şimşek as the minister of treasury and finance can be implied as one of the indication of upcoming changes. Raising interest rates from 8.5% to 15% in June and then to 17.5% in July suggests that expectations of Türkiye's gradual returning to orthodox practice on interest rates might be legitimate. The central bank also appears to have stopped selling reserves to backstop the lira's value; the exchange rate of the currency fell from around 20 to 27 per dollar after May 2023. Also, Erdoğan may try to steer clear of budget cuts that might worsen the unemployment rate and cause financial difficulties for companies ahead of the March 2024 municipal elections in Türkiye.²⁴

At the same time, it should be emphasized that the country's police and economy are unlikely to see any dramatic changes as a result of the cabinet restructure, despite its importance. The majority of Ankara's current issues, both domestically and internationally, are structural in character. To solve these issues, a reshuffle by itself—without a meaningful reassessment of Erdoğan's stance – will be insignificant, particularly

²⁰ Stefano Fella, Nigel Walker, "Turkey under Erdoğan: recent developments and the 2023 elections", House of Common Library, 9806, (2023) 51

²¹ Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, "Turkey (Türkiye): Major Issues and U.S. Relations", Congressional Research Service, R44000 (2023), 5

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid, 7

considering how easily the president can change the heads of the most crucial ministries.²⁵ It is also important to say that despite righteous criticism from the opposition of Türkiye's current economic policy, no alternative policy or vision was provided, increasing the frustration among the voters.

Foreign policy is rarely as significant during elections as domestic one, but Turkish-US relations become quite a sensitive subject in recent years. This has become more intense as a result of the recent deterioration in Turkish-US ties and the Turkish public's perception that the US is neutral or even hostile to Türkiye's fundamental security interests. According to a 2022 survey, 43% of the population considers the US as a threat to Türkiye.²⁶

The United States has valued Türkiye's geopolitical importance and military strength within the NATO alliance while viewing Türkiye's NATO membership as helping anchor Türkiye to the West. Türkiye plays a crucial role in regional security due to its sizeable military, which is the second biggest in NATO, and its strategic position on the alliance's southeast border. Türkiye's territory is still significant to the US and NATO for the deploying and transportation of soldiers, weapons, and supplies because of its close proximity to multiple combat zones in the Middle East and beyond. Other important U.S./NATO locations include an early warning missile defense radar in eastern Türkiye and a NATO ground forces headquarters in Izmir, in addition to Incirlik Air Base. Türkiye also controls access to and from the Black Sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits.²⁷

It should be noted that on a wider scale, Türkiye's government and the opposition's vision of the country's foreign policy is often aligned. Political opposition emphasized (apart from the HDP), that the US's policy of backing the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a PKK affiliate, and its armed component, the People's Protection Units (YPG), in Syria is unacceptable. They see this as a factor that would destabilize bilateral ties and as being incompatible with Türkiye's national security objectives. For the opposition as well as the present administration, the U.S. assertion that it's cooperation with the PYD and YPG—including the guns and supplies it provided—was restricted to the war against the self-declared Islamic State was unpersuasive.²⁸

Over the course of its almost two-decade term in Türkiye, the AK Party government's handling of the Syrian situation stands out as its most significant and far-reaching foreign policy decision. Significant portions of northern Syria are currently under Turkish control. These include portions of the Aleppo Governorate, which were acquired via the 2016 and 2018 Operations Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch, as well as portions of the Ar-Raqqa and Al-Hassakah Governorates, which were won through the 2019 Operation Peace Spring. One of the biggest opposition coalitions, the Syrian National Army, is still financed, supported, and governed by Türkiye. Significantly, Türkiye's primary foreign policy

²⁵ Zuzanna Krzyzanowska, Adam Michalski, "Turkey: new government, old challenges", Centre for Eastern Studies, (Jun 6, 2023), <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2023-06-06/turkey-new-government-old-challenges>

²⁶ Alper Coşkun and Sinan Ülgen, "Political Change and Turkey's Foreign Policy", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, working paper (November, 2022) 10

²⁷ Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, "Turkey (Türkiye): Major Issues and U.S. Relations", Congressional Research Service, R44000 (2023), 13

²⁸ Alper Coşkun and Sinan Ülgen, "Political Change and Turkey's Foreign Policy", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, working paper (November, 2022) 11

objective is to oppose the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which are implied to be PKK's Syrian allies. On the domestic front, Türkiye is troubled with the roughly 3.7 million Syrian refugees and wants to see a long-term solution to the problem.²⁹

The HDP distinguishes itself as the only political party that clearly opposes this matter. According to some opposition groups, it is said that Türkiye's existing economic capacity does not permit the withdrawal of its armed soldiers from Syria. Both representatives from the CHP and the Gelecek Party emphasized that Türkiye would only consider withdrawing from Syria on the condition that the circumstances are normalized and Türkiye's concerns over threats are adequately handled.³⁰

Presently, Türkiye is grappling with the escalating financial implications associated with accommodating a population exceeding 3.5 million Syrian individuals, so propelling it to the forefront of discussions within the country's internal political arena. There has been an increasing surge in resentment against Syrians and other migrants, accompanied with heightened public criticism of Türkiye's Syria policy under the AK Party's governance. In the meanwhile, Turkish authorities, notably President Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, are displaying preliminary indications of a potential shift in policy. This shift involves seeking to establish communication with the Syrian government, with the objective of easing Türkiye's security apprehensions and aiding the repatriation of Syrian individuals to their country of origin.³¹

The emergence of the Eastern Mediterranean as a prospective energy hub has given rise to conflicting assertions of maritime jurisdiction. These claims have been intertwined with the unsolved Cyprus Issue and a multitude of disputes between Türkiye and Greece in the Aegean Sea. The political opposition asserts that Türkiye's self-imposed isolation in the area has resulted in a vacuum, which has enabled Greece and Cyprus to cultivate regional alliances and platforms, such as the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, to the detriment of Türkiye. The argument put out by the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Good Party (İYİ Party) suggests that Türkiye's ability to effectively address current unfavorable developments and pursue its interests in the Eastern Mediterranean is compromised due to strained ties with influential regional actors such as Egypt and Israel. Both factions share the belief that it is imperative to reestablish these interactions by upholding the principles of sovereign equality and mutual respect. The aforementioned claim may be supported by the ongoing endeavors of the AK Party administration in Türkiye to alleviate the country's regional seclusion and reconcile relationships with nations such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.³²

Since taking office as prime minister in 2003, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has ruled Türkiye, gradually gaining more and more authority over the people and institutions of the nation. Erdoğan is seen as polarizing by many observers, and the results of elections show

²⁹ "After the Turkish Elections, Now What for Syria?", Cartercenter.org, https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/syria-conflict/2023/after-the-turkish-elections-now-what-for-syria.pdf

³⁰ Alper Coşkun and Sinan Ülgen, "Political Change and Turkey's Foreign Policy", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, working paper (November, 2022)25

³¹ Ibid, 17

³² Ibid, 22

that nearly equal numbers of people in the nation favor and oppose his administration.³³ Erdoğan asserted a mandate for expanding his authority and pursuing a presidential form of government after winning Türkiye's first-ever popular presidential election in August 2014. He solidified this position with wins in the 2017 constitutional referendum and the 2018 and 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections.³⁴ Tense will be the next local election, which will take place in March 2024. Erdoğan and the ruling party will try to gain back the control over major cities, they lost in 2019 election. In 2019 Mansur Yavaş's victory in Ankara (CHP) and Ekrem İmamoğlu's victory in İstanbul (CHP) was the significant lose for AKP and Erdoğan himself.

Critics have highlighted the opposition coalition's failure to persuade voters that it could rule with coherence and unity despite its membership consisting of disparate parties. At the same time, Erdoğan was seen as providing stability, especially for those with fear of the PKK threats. PKK officially made a statement, holding up with all hostilities, to give the opposition a chance to win the 2023 election, but this move proved to be futile for the opposition. Many voters perceived Erdoğan as the most qualified candidate to address a number of issues, such as Türkiye's financial difficulties, lax building regulations that made the effects of the February earthquake worse, and the large number of refugees in Türkiye.³⁵

It's doubtful that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will hold the office of president beyond 2028. The topic of his succession will become more significant during his last term. But, instead of searching for the "next Erdoğan," it is critical to recognize that the successor will acquire an entirely different state structure, then it was in 2002, when Erdoğan came to power.³⁶

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³³ Kemal Kirisci and Berk Esen, "Might the Turkish Electorate Be Ready to Say Goodbye to Erdoğan After Two Decades in Power?" *Just Security*, November 22, 2021, <https://www.justsecurity.org/79306/might-the-turkish-electorate-be-ready-to-say-goodbye-to-erdogan-after-two-decades-in-power/>

³⁴ Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, "Turkey (Türkiye): Major Issues and U.S. Relations", *Congressional Research Service*, R44000 (2023), 3

³⁵ Stefano Fella, Nigel Walker, "Turkey under Erdoğan: recent developments and the 2023 elections", *House of Common Library*, 9806, (2023) 54

³⁶ James Ryan, "Erdoğan's Victory and Turkey's Future", *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, (June 5, 2023), <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/06/erdogans-victory-and-turkeys-future/>

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