



Runoff In Turkey Looks Certain As Erdogan & Kilicdaroglu Fall Short

Description

Update(2010ET): Kemal Kilicdaroglu has pulled off a bit of an upset, in a **potential political earthquake which could rock Turkey, given now there's a real shot at unseating President Erdogan** as the incumbent has stayed below the 50% mark, with 97% of the vote counted by 3am local time. That means **a likely May 28 second round between the two candidates**. [Live tracker is here](#) as votes continue coming in. The latest per an AI Monitor correspondent:

- Erdogan does NOT claim victory
- Runoff seems likely
- Counting ongoing, waiting absentee
- Official results wait to Monday
- Opposition questioning integrity of ballot counting

As for the vote for parliament, Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and allied Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) **are set to retain their majority**. Erdogan sounded upbeat in late night speech...

Erdogan made an appearance at the AKP headquarters, singing a song. He is happy.

He says he is leading with a clear margin in unofficial results.

"The vote count for domestic and abroad votes continue. We wait for the final results"

pic.twitter.com/mL4wADCLz

— Rag?p Soy?lu (@ragipsoylu) [May 14, 2023](#)

"Throughout our political life, without exception, we have always respected the decision of the national will. We respect it in this election as well, and we will respect it in the next elections," Erdogan said. But he added: "We believe we will win in first round" – while also saying he's ready to go to a second round

if that's the outcome.

Kilicdaroglu meanwhile charged Erdogan with “**blocking the will of Turkey**” – which is perhaps a preview of the political fighting and chaos to come of the next [two weeks](#):

Kemal Kilicdaroglu has said that the Erdogan camp keeps objecting to the results from certain ballot boxes to block the system.

“There are ballot boxes that have been objected to six times, 11 times,” he said, adding: “You are blocking the will of Turkey.”

Kilicdaroglu said: “You cannot prevent what will happen through objections. **We will not allow a fait accompli.**”

The real surprise tonight – and disruptor for both sides – was a third candidate, Sinan Ogan of the ultra-nationalist Ancestor Alliance. **He took around five percent of the vote and and prevented an outright win** (surpassing 50% of the vote is required for victory) for either of the two leading candidates.

Will Ogan endorse Erdogan or Kilicdaroglu in the runoff? This will likely determine the outcome in two weeks.

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Update(1630ET): Erdogan has slipped below the 50% mark with about 90% of the votes counted.

If no one crosses the 50-percent mark, the top two candidates will enter a second round run-off, which would be set for May 28.



And here's Anka news agency at 94.45 percent of ballot boxes opened:

- Erdogan: 49.02 percent
- Kilicdaroglu: 45.2 percent
- Ogan: 5.3 percent

Anadolu says 89.2 percent of ballot boxes have been counted:

- Erdogan: 49.94 percent
- Kilicdaroglu: 44.3 percent
- Ogan: 5.3 percent

There's been controversy over just how Erdogan's early surge was being reported, per Middle EastEye:

Anadolu Agency has released a statement saying it is publishing results data based on signed and stamped ballot box records and it doesn't make any preference. The state news agency releases the results as they come out, it insists.

Earlier, Istanbul Mayor Ekram Imamoglu, an opposition vice presidential candidate, accused Anadolu of misrepresenting the results by indicating a very large early lead for Erdogan (which has now shrunk).

*The agency says its 2,500 employees, along with a polling companies, have been working hard to get the data. It says it **will take legal action against the parties "inaccurately" blaming the agency for the election results.***

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Update(1435ET): TRT World is reporting over 70% of votes counted, Erdogan still holds a firm lead according to multiple outlets and their data:

UPDATE on [#Turkey](#) election vote count

****Erdogan is leading in both counts****

—— Anka: 62% of the ballot boxes counted

- Erdogan: 48%
- Kilicdaroglu: 46.22%
- Ogan: 5.32%

—— Anadolu: 65 percent counted

- Erdogan; 51.33%
- Kilicdaroglu; 42.85%
- Ogan; 5.31% pic.twitter.com/PjpMYtAPpy

— Rag?p Soylu (@ragipsoylu) [May 14, 2023](#)

Update(1355ET): This is still a very early picture, given also the opposition is complaining that state media is utilizing selective electoral data in its early reporting, with **many analysts predicting the gap will close as counting continues...**

[#Turkey](#) elections update;

— Anadolu: 51% counted

- Erdogan; 52.03
- Kilicdaroglu; 42.11
- Ogan; 5.33

— Anka: 41.48% counted

- Erdogan: 47.25
- Kilicdaroglu: 46.98
- Ogan; 5.31 pic.twitter.com/uVSK2pwzDr

— Rag?p Soylu (@ragipsoylu) [May 14, 2023](#)

However, Kilicdaroglu's CHP is providing very different figures of the results trickling in...

According to CHP results, Kilicdaroglu is close to %50

Kilicdaroglu: %49/24

Erdogan: %44.8

Total ballot boxes: 192K

Counted: 56K

This could still end at the first round for KK if we trust CHP HQ results. Though early to tell
<https://t.co/4cZqUIhVNG>

— ilhan tanir (@WashingtonPoint) [May 14, 2023](#)

Per Middle East Eye:

A well-placed source within the Turkish government told MEE's Ragip Soylu that the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) projection, based on current data, suggests there is a 50 percent chance that Erdogan will win the first round with 50.2 or 50.4 percent.

There is also a 50 percent chance that there will be a runoff.

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(Update 11:53ET): Polls are closed and vote counting is underway across Turkey as President Erdogan's political future hangs in the balance after two decades in power. *Al Jazeera* has compiled the following notes of what to expect in the hours and [days ahead](#):

- Polls closed at 5pm (14:00 GMT) and counting is under way.
- Preliminary results are expected later on Sunday, but the official results may take up to three days to be confirmed. There are no exit polls.
- A candidate needs more than 50 percent of votes in the first round to win outright. If no one

crosses the 50-percent mark, the top two candidates will go head to head in a run-off two weeks later, with this year's vote set for May 28.

- Pre-election polls gave a slight lead to Kilicdaroglu, 74, the joint candidate of a six-party opposition alliance who leads the centre-left, pro-secular Republican People's Party, or CHP.
- Some have expressed concerns over whether Erdogan would cede power, if he lost. Erdogan, however, said in an interview with more than a dozen Turkish broadcasters on Friday that he came to power through democracy and would act in line with the democratic process.

So far no major security incidents or irregularities have been reported by either side.

So far, it seems the main complaint of Turkish opposition parties on the election is on the reporting of state funded public news agency, AA, that they say is trying to make Erdogan look ahead with selective initial entry of electoral data to mislead public

— Ziya Meral (@Ziya_Meral) [May 14, 2023](#)

Interactive coverage is here as [results come in](#). With about 10% of the votes counted, here's where things stand at this early stage...

Initial results, 9.1% of the votes counted;

- Erdogan; 59.5%
- Kilicdaroglu; 34.8%
- Ogan; 5.1%

Ogan is making a surprise, per Anadolu Agency data pic.twitter.com/lkUXx7TMOm

— Ragıp Soylu (@ragipsoylu) [May 14, 2023](#)

Analysts believe Erdogan's numbers will likely to drop as more ballots are counted.

Erdogan is leading pic.twitter.com/NPVyyLv4ba

— Russian Market (@runews) [May 14, 2023](#)

Emerging numbers out of Istanbul:

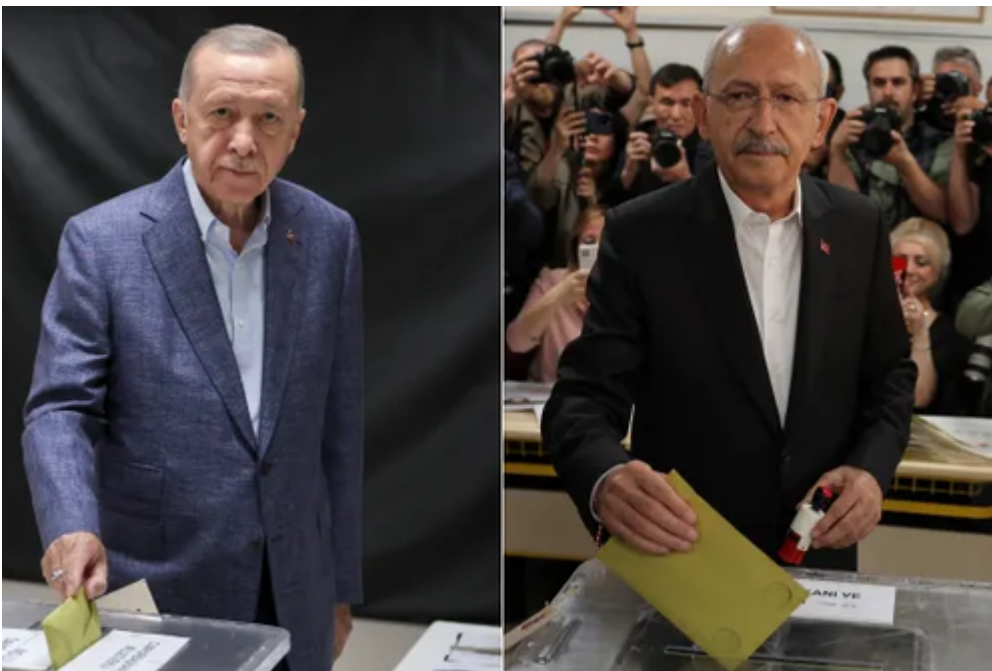
Istanbul'da saat: 19.17 itibariyle sandıkların %15 sisteme girdi ve %15 veriye göre:
Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu: % 51.33
R. Tayyip Erdoğan : % 43.94
Sinan Oğan : % 4.45
Muharrem İnce : % 0.28 [#SanaSöz](#) ?

— Canan Kaftancıoğlu (@Canan_Kaftanci) [May 14, 2023](#)

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Polls are nearing closure in Turkey on Sunday late afternoon (local) in what is shaping up to be **the biggest challenge to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's two-decade grip over the country**, by his main rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu of the Kemalist and secular Republican People's Party (CHP).

Over 64 million people are eligible to vote in this election, which also will decide the next parliament for a five-year term. By all accounts voter turnout has been high even into the final two hours before polling stations close at 5pm local time (14:00 GMT). No results are expected to trickle in for many hours, as Turkish law prevents releasing any results until 9pm (18:00 GMT, or 2pm Eastern US).



Middle East Eye observes that “Schools, where voters have been casting their ballots, were noticeably more crowded by midday in Turkey than in previous elections, MEE correspondent Yusuf Selman Inanc reported.”

“Experts predict that this election **will see one of the highest voter turnouts in Turkey's history**,” the report continues. In this first round if no candidate secures over 50%, the vote heads to a run-off two weeks later. Any potential runoff would be held on May 28. The CHP's Kilicdaroglu is representing six different parties as a unity candidate who are desperate to see Erdogan booted from power.

Among the issues driving public anger, which could result in an upset ousting the incumbent, includes worsening economic conditions and especially the **devastating Feb. 6 earthquake** and its aftermath – and the subsequent scandals which have since been exposed related to Erdogan's AK Party officials overseeing years of shoddy construction of buildings across central and southern Turkey and cutting corners. It's widely perceived that this greatly exacerbated the death and destruction, in a natural disaster which took over 50,000 lives across southern Turkey.

Yesterday, as a final campaign message, **Erdogan lashed at Washington while hoping to whip up anti-US fervor and passion among his conservative Islamist supporters**

Today on a campaign trail by [#Turkey](#)'s Erdogan:

- * I get my orders from Allah
- * US President Biden ordered to topple me
- * Opposition will sanction Russia on US orders
- * Russian meddling into Turkish elections is a lie
- * West gone crazy when Hagia Sophia turned to a mosque pic.twitter.com/1EwMvFLGxb

— Abdullah Bozkurt (@abdbozkurt) [May 13, 2023](#)

Speaking Saturday in Istanbul's Umraniye district, Erdogan referenced comments made by President Joe Biden in 2020 when he was on the campaign trail which said the US should encourage Erdogan's opponents to defeat him at the polls.

"Biden gave the order to topple Erdogan, I know this. All my people know this," said Erdogan "If that is the case, then **the ballots tomorrow will give a response to Biden too.**"

Polls on the eve of Sunday's vote revealed a tight race: "Polls show **Erdogan trailing the main opposition candidate Kemal Kilicdaroglu a day ahead** of one of the most consequential elections in Turkey's modern history." According to regional analyst Hakan Akbas, managing director of consulting firm Strategic Advisory Services:

*"There is so much at stake for President Erdogan and his AKP (Justice and Development Party) for the first time, as his **20-year rule over Türkiye may come to an end given the unified opposition has managed to maintain a strong alliance** and stay on a hope-building positive campaign."*

Akbas told CNBC: "The next president of Türkiye will face the challenge of restoring economic stability and state institutions such as the central bank, treasury, and wealth fund and rebuild investor confidence." He described further, "The country suffers from **historically low FX reserves, widening current account deficit, artificially overvalued local currency, undisciplined fiscal balance and persistent, high inflation.**

Insane lines at the polling stations in [#Turkey](#)'s large cities like Istanbul.

I think folding the large ballot paper to stick it in a narrow envelope takes longer than usual time. And the turnout rate is very high.

Hard to see how this would end in four hours pic.twitter.com/6asejFM7Xk

— Rag?p Soylu (@ragipsoylu) [May 14, 2023](#)

Turkey has been notorious for blocking US-based social media, particularly at sensitive moments impacting the country and domestic politics. That's certainly the case when it comes to national

elections like this.

This gave way to some weekend controversy centered on Elon Musk regarding Turkish censorship of Twitter and the company's reaction...

Did your brain fall out of your head, Yglesias? The choice is have Twitter throttled in its entirety or limit access to some tweets. Which one do you want?

— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) [May 13, 2023](#)

We could post what the government in Turkey sent us. Will do.

— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) [May 13, 2023](#)

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Below is a note from BofA Global Research: [Who is exposed to Türkiye?](#)

Companies exposed to Türkiye In the light of the upcoming Turkish general elections, in our Screen of the Week we focus on those companies with exposure to the country (Exhibit 1). Our Turkish economist highlights that, regardless of the election outcome, she expects a weaker TRY and tightening economic conditions to address imbalances in the economy (see: Türkiye Viewpoint: Elections in May: is Türkiye heading towards orthodoxy? 30 March 2023). The Turkish exposure of European companies is limited, only 0.14% directly reported revenue exposure in 2021 and they show 284 links from Türkiye in the supply chain, of which 40% are suppliers.

8th consecutive weekly outflow from Europe

Europe-focused equity funds recorded the eighth consecutive weekly outflow of \$2.34bn last week, with a net -17.8% of funds seeing net inflows. Active funds saw outflows of \$1.36bn and passive funds of \$0.98bn. Europe-focused funds have seen \$8.3bn of outflows YTD: \$21.7bn of outflows from active funds and \$13.4bn of inflows into passive funds. Growth stocks (\$0.2bn) and Spain (\$0.03bn) recorded the largest inflows last week, while Switzerland (\$0.8bn), Financials (\$0.4bn) and Size stocks (\$0.3bn) posted the largest outflows. No sector recorded inflows last week.

BofA ERR: Europe improves after upgrades in Healthcare

The Global BofA four-week EPS Revision Ratio (ERR) increased to 0.93, led by improvements in Europe and North America. The European BofA four-week ERR rose the most across regions over the week to 1.18, the highest level in the past 4 weeks. This uplift was driven mainly by Healthcare, Italy and Low Risk, whose ratios improved the most last week, while Utilities, Switzerland and Rising Momentum ratios dropped the most.

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Below is a snapshot summary of the [two main candidates we previously featured in this analysis](#)...

Two ways of ending a campaign for [#Turkey](#)'s elections:

- Kilicdaroglu, on the left, visited Ataturk's mausoleum in Ankara left flowers
- Erdogan, on the right, attended the evening prayers at Hagia Sophia
pic.twitter.com/BwxGX5TqqK

— Rag?p Soylu (@ragipsoylu) [May 13, 2023](#)

Erdogan: The Islamic Populist

Recep Erdogan, 69, has led Turkey since 2003, first as Prime Minister, then as a ceremonial President, and then as a powerful President. Erdogan grew up in a working class family in the rough Kasimpasa neighborhood in the European part of Istanbul, though he spent some of his childhood in his family's ancestral hometown of Rize, on the east coast of the Black Sea. Erdogan's father was a Coast Guard officer. As a young man he played semi-professional football; he remains an avid fan of Istanbul's Fenerbahce football club and is regularly seen wearing a football scarf with his fashionable suits. In 1994 Erdogan became the Mayor of Istanbul running with the pro-Islamic Welfare party. In 1999, Erdogan was sentenced to four months in prison for reading a poem in 1997 that was said to violate Turkiye's secularism laws. A man of many talents, Erdogan released an album of lyric poetry before going to prison; it became a best-seller in Turkey. As part of his sentence, Erdogan was banned from running for Parliament, but it was annulled after the AKP, which he founded despite not being allowed to run for office, won the 2002 elections. After the rules were changed to allow him to run for office, Erdogan ran in a special election in 2003 and became Prime Minister days after winning.



When Erdogan first took power, he was seen as someone that the West could “work with.” In an article for Politico Christian Oliver writes,

*It's now easy to forget that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan **was once hailed as the paragon of a 'Muslim democrat,'** who could serve as a model to the entire Islamic world...Finally, there was a master-juggler, who could balance Islamism, parliamentary democracy, progressive welfare, NATO membership and EU-oriented reforms.*

I certainly had forgotten that, if I ever knew it in the first place. I did remember that it was Turkey's priority to join the European Union, something which faded over the years until the process was suspended over Turkey's record on human rights, media freedoms, and other such matters. After taking power Erdogan quickly got a reputation in the West for being difficult to work with when he would not allow US troops to be stationed in Turkish or Iraqi Kurdistan during the Iraq War. Over the years Erdogan consolidated power, first through a 2010 referendum which made the President directly elected instead of selected by Parliament. Erdogan became the first directly elected President of Türkiye in 2014. Then there was the 2017 referendum making the Presidency a position with many legal powers. In 2016 there was a coup attempt, allegedly by supporters of US-based exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen. Many have been highly skeptical of the Erdogan regime's story about the coup, with

some suggesting it was entirely staged. What is undeniable is that Erdogan used the coup attempt to remove an enormous number of political opponents; the 2017 referendum took place under a state of emergency.

Over the past several years, especially since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Erdogan has been taking Turkey on an increasingly independent course. Tensions had already been high due to the war in Syria, where Turkiye had been fighting a sort of proxy war against its own NATO allies. Currently, the West opposes reconciliation with Syria, something both Turkish candidates want to pursue. The continued presence of Syrian refugees has become deeply unpopular in Turkey, and both candidates are looking to send them home. However, Assad has been hesitant to work with Erdogan, both because Turkey continues to occupy much of northern Syria and further Assad has expressed concern about giving Erdogan a “win” in the lead-up to the elections.

Last May, I wrote about the many moves which Erdogan had been making, all of which indicated a newly empowered Turkey. However, in the last year Turkey has worked to improve relations not only with Syria but also with Greece, particularly following the earthquake. Further, Turkey accepted Finland’s NATO membership, though continues to hold out on Sweden; Kilicdaroglu intends to immediately approve Sweden’s membership if elected. Erdogan has also continued to employ diplomacy regarding the Russia-Ukraine War, though maintaining the Turkey-brokered grain deal has proven tenuous. All of these things have infuriated the United States and Europe and their scribbling class, who continue to view NATO as a sort of “Gentleman’s Club of liberal democracies” and ignore Turkey’s incredible geopolitical importance and enormous military. The clumsy foreign policy of the Western liberal internationalists plays into Erdogan’s hands, who has claimed his opponents are, “in hock to terrorists, the imperialist West, murky international high-finance and LGBTQ+ organizations.” One is left wondering if a publication such as The Economist publishing that they “warmly endorse” Kilicdaroglu does more to help Erdogan than it does Kilicdaroglu; besides the terrorist part, it appears to be factually accurate that the latter three prefer the opposition.

For all he has done to consolidate power and restore the nation’s pride, Erdogan remains at serious risk due to economic issues. Though many support his modernizing the military, you cannot eat fighter jets. The President using a religious justification to ignore “mainstream” economic advice during an ongoing inflation crisis must be maddening to educated, secular Turks. However, what matters more to the public than economic ideas are what we call “bread and butter” issues in the United States [though perhaps “onion and potato” issues is more appropriate for this election.] It is very bad for an incumbent when the price of staple vegetables becomes a major campaign issue. One Erdogan supporter went so far as to write a song saying, “We will eat dry bread and onions but we will not abandon Erdogan.” That is perhaps true of his devotees, but many will abandon a political leader if he must eat his bread without oil. For his part, Erdogan has vacillated between denying the problem and downplaying it’s significance, saying “you wouldn’t sacrifice your leader for onion and potato.” In Erdogan’s defense, exports have gone up a substantial amount, which is a goal of his economic policies, and average wages and the legal minimum wage have gone up a healthy amount. Unfortunately, none of this is enough to balance out the severe inflation. Still, there is a plausible argument to be made that this is just a sort of economic growing pains. However, being as it is considered that the earthquake response was badly mismanaged, it is difficult to sell the narrative that Erdogan has things under control.

Kilicdaroglu: the Secular Liberal



The opposition candidate Kemal Kilicdaroglu, 74, is everything that Erdogan is not: conventional, polite, professional, and secular. He has a sort of humble professorial demeanor in contrast to Erdogan's bombastic flair. He has been described as "soft-spoken" and "low key." One international diplomat with experience in Turkey, speaking to Time on the condition of anonymity, called Kilicdaroglu the "anti-Erdogan," and further said, "There are points... when a grayer personality is exactly what people want." This certainly can be true of politics, especially if the public has grown tired of a large personality like Erdogan who has held power for many years. Kemal Kilicdaroglu is appropriately named: he is a staunch Kemalist, who wants to return Turkey to the secular parliamentary democracy envisioned by its founder Ataturk. He is pledging to be a less powerful President than Erdogan- somewhat unusual for a politician- and has said he will only serve one term and then retire to spend time with his grandchildren. An accountant by trade, he intends to follow the economic advice of experts, and certainly would not set financial policies based on his religious views. He is on message, talking about inflation and returning to a more pluralistic political system. Further, Kilicdaroglu wants to have much more NATO-friendly policies, but Western analysts are warning that he won't make the West's "dreams come true." The reality is that though he will be more measured in his speech and behavior, Kilicdaroglu will most likely continue to pursue a largely independent foreign policy which includes resisting the Western sanctions regime against Russia, immediate normalization with Syria, and working to deport Syrian refugees from the country. It is not clear how possible it is to implement Kilicdaroglu's Syria policies.

Few articles mention Kilicdaroglu's personal background and upbringing, in large part because he is almost intentionally uninteresting and does not talk about his personal life. His wife once said he is so soft spoken "You can't even have a decent argument with him." [I personally find that untrustworthy, as some of the most sociopathic people can always maintain pleasant demeanor.] According to a profile

in Time magazine [the only of several I consulted for this article to contain the story of his childhood] Kilicdaroglu was “born into a family of 9” [so the 8th child?] in a the remote mountain village of Ballica in eastern Anatolia. His family raised goats and he walked to school without shoes. Later, his father got low-level civil service postings which caused them to move to different towns. He was a studious child who played an instrument called the saz and dreamed of becoming a teacher. In college, he got involved in left wing protests and graduated to become a tax inspector. He married a cousin from his hometown, an ancient tradition in that region. While raising his family he worked his way up to the director of the national social security institution [he was, after all, one of the nation’s top rated bureaucrats.] Kilicdaroglu is from a family which follows a minority sect of Islam known as Alevi, which is considered to be a non-mainstream branch of Shia Islam with similarities to Syria’s Alawites. Alevis have been historically oppressed in the Anatolia; it was considered to be breaking a major taboo for him to publicly discuss this religious background.

Kilicdaroglu entered politics in 2002 at age 53, in what has been referred to as a “retirement hobby.” He began to rise up the ranks of the CHP by using his tax inspection skills to expose corruption in the AKP. In 2010 he became the leader of the party after the head of the party had a sex tape scandal- this was probably an example of the party wanting a “grayer personality.” Though Kilicdaroglu has been unsuccessful at increasing CHP’s parliamentary seats, he has raised his personal profile through a series of non-violent protests, such as a “March for Justice” from Ankara to Istanbul in 2017. Kilicdaroglu models himself after Gandhi, and is sometimes called “Turkiye’s Gandhi.” Further, he has been successful in making in-roads into the nation’s large Kurdish community, who one politician said used to consider the CHP “non-votable,” due to Ataturk’s Turkish nationalism.

Kilicdaroglu finds himself in a difficult position. He is backed by a disparate coalition while trying to increase parliamentary power. Further, though Kilicdaroglu has been polling ahead in the first round polls, the AKP alliance is ahead in parliamentary polling. The opposition wants to revert back to the old system of governance, or at least make wide-ranging reforms empowering the parliament, but there is no real way to do that without an strong parliamentary majority. Even if the coalition can hold together in the legislature, there is no expectation they will have a large majority. As an anonymous opposition official told journalist Ragip Soylu, the opposition may end up in an ironic position where the only way they can rule and try to reduce the unitary Presidential power is by Presidential decree.

Kilicdaroglu may not be the most dynamic man, but he can win if enough of the public wants less “exciting” government than they have had from Erdogan. Further, while this sort of constitutional reform may not seem like a campaign issue that will connect with the public, Erdogan’s consolidation of power is unprecedented in modern Turkey and the public has noticed. Since Erdogan has taken so much power it makes it easy to blame all of the country’s problems on him. ?Ike Toygür of the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid said, “Parliament has a very strong symbolic value in Turkey...One of the biggest complaints now is that people lost their links to decision-making candidates.” In this election, it is in some ways true that “democracy is on the ballot.”

by Tyler Durden

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1. Main
2. Politics-Geopolitics-Gov.-Events

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