

Turkey's Pivotal 2023 Elections: Issues, Potential Outcomes, and What Comes After

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Opinion polls offer hope for the challengers, but Erdogan's media control and other factors could foil their efforts to finally topple the president and his ruling bloc.

On May 14, Turkey's citizens will cast their ballots for president and parliament, and polls suggest the longtime incumbent could actually lose this time. President Erdogan's challenger, Republican People's Party head Kemal Kilicdaroglu, has assembled an ideologically diverse coalition united in its determination to oust the ruling bloc. Guiding the opposition, known popularly as the "Table of Six," is a message focused on restoring competence amid sky-high inflation and a faltering response to the devastating February earthquakes. But Erdogan's challengers still face headwinds created in part by his near-complete control of the media.

In this Policy Note compilation, Turkey expert Soner Cagaptay and his fellow contributors concur that Erdogan will use polarizing tactics to keep power, whatever the results of the May 14 balloting or a possible May 28 presidential runoff. They also assess how various wild card developments—including the entry of spoiler candidate Muharrem Ince and meddling from Russia—could aid the Turkish leader in unforeseen ways. ❖

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