

How Europe Lost Turkey

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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The Turkish people are responsible for the health of their own democracy, but it's high time the EU accepted its share of political and economic blame for encouraging Erdogan's most illiberal instincts.

A clumsy European Union has repeatedly gotten its policy toward Turkey wrong, often inadvertently helping President Erdogan at key points during his rise. Mr. Erdogan may now be eyeing snap elections, putting Europe in a bind. Brussels would be forced to look the other way as the new sultan bulldozes his way to victory in the polls. When Mr. Erdogan's Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002, the EU failed to grasp the nature of the party's limited mandate. Turkey's high election threshold bars parties earning less than 10% of the national vote from Parliament and distributes their seats to larger parties. By winning a little more than a third of the popular vote, the AKP received two-thirds of the seats. In subsequent elections, even with strong economic growth, the AKP has never received more than 50% of the vote. But the EU has consistently failed to engage and empower Mr. Erdogan's opposition, which comprises roughly half the population and includes liberal, leftist and secular Turks...

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