

Turkey's 2014 Political Transition: From Erdogan to Erdogan?

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Turkey will hold local and presidential elections in 2014, both of significant import. The AKP, in power since 2002, has lasted longer than any other government since the country became a multiparty democracy in 1950. Likewise, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has ruled Turkey longer than any other democratically elected leader. These two elections thus offer an opportunity for the AKP to strengthen its hand before the 2015 parliamentary elections.

In this new paper, Soner Cagaptay and James F. Jeffrey examine possible outcomes for these elections, and their ramifications, touching on Turkey's economy, key infrastructure projects, the Syria conflict, and other factors likely to shape the outcome. How Turkey sorts through this upcoming trial by politics will affect not only Turkey's domestic scene but the region and the United States as well because, with the exception of Israel, Turkey is the most stable and strongest U.S. partner in the region. A domestically stable and economically healthy Turkey can be a kind of regional anchor, with which the United States shares enough interests to undertake common initiatives; however, a Turkey consumed by political conflict or maximizing its authoritarian and "majoritist" tendencies will weaken this bond. And any real backsliding from a liberal, democratic trajectory by a country so significant in global politics would do immense harm to the century-long American effort to promote liberal universal values.

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