

Erdoan's day: On Turkey polls

Recep Tayyip Erdoan's re-election as President of Turkey comes as no surprise. With this, his authoritarian grip will be further consolidated; in the new term, [he will acquire the sweeping executive powers](#) given to the presidency through last year's referendum. With Mr. Erdoan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its allies also winning the parliamentary election, his control over the government is untrammelled. The elections were held in a state of emergency, imposed in July 2016 following a coup attempt. One presidential candidate, Selahattin Demirta of the pro-Kurdish Peoples Democratic Party (HDP), contested from prison. The outcome, which was expected, is a big setback to the secularist Republican People's Party, the main Opposition. Its candidate, Muharrem nce, who ended up with 30.7% of the vote compared to Mr. Erdoan's 52.6%, had promised to bring back a system of checks and balances over presidential power by strengthening civil liberties and restoring a constitutional democratic order. Mr. nce had attempted a new compact between Turkey's secular vote bank and religious conservatives, in an attempt to overcome the distrust between the statist-secularists and Islamic parties that has polarised Turkish politics since the days of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The rise of the neo-Islamist AKP and the consolidation of Mr. Erdoan's power drew from the backlash against the statist-secularists and the economic growth in the first decade of AKP rule.

A faltering economy, characterised by plunging foreign direct investment, high inflation and a depreciating lira, had given the Opposition some hope of taking the fight to Mr. Erdoan. But the President's polarising personality and his party's wide organisational reach, coupled with the perception that he was the right person to revive economic growth, helped him retain power. His electoral victory will embolden his regime to continue its authoritarian policies against critics, a greater worry now in the face of his newly acquired powers. His victory is likely to see Turkey continuing with its belligerent role in the West Asian neighbourhood. For minorities such as the Kurds, the silver lining is the fact that Mr. Demirta's liberal-democratic HDP managed to win more than 10% of the vote to secure entry into Parliament. In contrast to Mr. Erdoan's triumphalism as the results trickled in, Mr. nce was graceful in defeat and promised to work as an Opposition force for a more democratic Turkey. A stable, democratic and pluralist Turkey is essential in a neighbourhood that continues to be blighted by ethnically driven civil wars. As things stand, Mr. Erdoan's victory signals another hyper-nationalist, authoritarian turn.

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