

Erdogan's win is not good news

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is set to further consolidate his hold over the country after this week's national elections. Mr Erdogan's rightwing coalition won another parliamentary majority, renewing his presidential mandate. But the results, combined with a referendum he won last year, will lead to a new governmental structure in which the prime ministership will be abolished, the president will have power over judicial appointments and extraordinary powers to rule by decree. If this is indeed a time when strongmen have become popular with voters around the world, Mr Erdogan's victory would seem to be confirmation.

However, the Turkish leader's victory is not good news either for his country or for the world at large. When Mr Erdogan first came to power, he was acclaimed for synthesising a new political narrative merging conservative Islamism with a secular constitution. His foreign policy sought a "zero problems" relationship with his neighbours. Turkey's was seen as among the brightest stars of the emerging economies.

Today, Mr Erdogan's vision is a dark and dangerous mirror image of this earlier promise. When the Arab Spring toppled regimes around the Levant, Mr Erdogan formed an alliance with many of the rebel groups, whether in Egypt or Syria. He deliberately picked a fight with Israel to enhance his standing with the Arab street. At one point, his "neo-Ottoman" alliance included Egypt, Gaza and, it seemed, Syria. These dreams of empire eventually foundered in Syria where Turkey's plans failed to materialise. Mr Erdogan was forced to reduce his ambitions to attacking a more traditional Turkish enemy, the Kurdish enclaves in Syria and northern Iraq. In the run up to the elections, Mr Erdogan portrayed himself as defending Turkey from numerous external enemies. His zero-problem neighbourhood was now a zero-friend neighbourhood — and largely because of his own machinations. Turkey's economy is now heading off a cliff with the currency depreciating and a balance of payments crisis looming. It is a testament to his political skills that the Turkish president has converted his failures into a tale of a nation under siege whose only saviour is himself.

Fortunately, Turkey is now far less able to cause mischief in its region than before. However, much damage has already been done. Turkey has been reduced to a subsidiary of the Russia-Iran axis that currently dominates the Levant and Mesopotamia. Erdogan has centralised so much power inside Turkey that he may rule the country for another decade. In his victory speech, he spoke of Turkey being an example to the rest of the world. That was true over a decade ago. Today his country is a warning of the perils of personal hubris and overweening national ambition.

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com