

DRK Case Study - Turkey's Early Election Decision on 24 June 2018

Key takeaway

The election will presumably lead Turkish regime to a more powerful and effective executive Presidential System from the current Parliamentary one. Apparently, in the face of the alleged economic dilemma, Syrian War, worsening international relations and FETO case, election results are expected to provide a basis for “political and economic stability” as the current President has long been voicing during his campaigns. On the other side, the implementation of elections in a fair, transparent and democratic fashion has been being reflected as the main point of concern by the opposition front.

The Corner Stones of the Early Election Decision

The main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and the newly-formed right-wing nationalist, IYI (Good) Party, a newly-formed derivation from Nationalist MHP, were already calling the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) for an early election during the last months. These calls were repeatedly rejected by the President with the rationale of sensitive international political environment due to the worsening security circumstances in the region especially in Syria. However the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), who has recently become a strong Erdogan supporter, unexpectedly invigorated the debates with a proposal of an early election, which was accepted by the President Erdogan imminently.



This development was highly criticized by the opposition with the allegations of a “choreographed scenario”, as to take Erdogan opponents by surprise. However early election decision was generally welcomed by the opposition parties with the reservations related to the fairness of the electoral process.

The strong doubts on opposition side about the participation of IYI party to the early election led CHP to urge its 15 parliamentarians to resign and to join newly-formed IYI Party in order to enable it to build a parliamentary group and to take part in the elections.

There will be 2 elections simultaneously on 24 June. One is the presidential and the other one is the Parliamentary elections. Therefore, beyond the name of the “New” President elect, who will be equipped quite substantial governmental power, the harmony and consistency between the President and the Parliament remains as a potential source of concern for a further internal political crisis.

During the campaigning process, two alliances were formed by the parties. First one is the “Public Alliance”, which consists of ruling AK Party, MHP and BBP – a minor party which is partially effective in inner Anatolian regions only. The second block is the “Nation Alliance”, which includes CHP, IYI Party, Saadet Party (alternative Islamic –based party for AKP) and Democrat Party, a party in marginal efficiency. Kurds, who are expected to play a key role with their approximate 10% potential, have not participated in any of these alliances.



Public Alliance



Devlet Bahçeli

Recep Tayyip
Erdoğan

Mustafa
Destici

Nation Alliance



Kemal
Kılıçdaroğlu

Meral
Akşener

Temel
Karamollaoğlu

Gültekin
Uysal

Consequently there are six presidential candidates namely being; Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Public Alliance), Meral Aksener (IYI Party), Muharrem Ince (CHP), Temel Karamollaoğlu (Saadet Party), Selahattin Demirtaş (Kurdish-biased HDP) and Dogu Perincek (Vatan Party) for June 24. Voters will vote separately for their party and president preferences. There will be a second tour among the top two candidates if none of the Presidential candidates receives at least 50 % of the votes in the first one. Therefore, the opposition front (Nation Alliance + possibly Kurds) may be expected to rally around the second top candidate else than President Erdogan.

Possible motives behind the Early Election decision;

There are three aspects namely political, tactical and economical, which makes the declaration of such an Early Election reasonable at least for the supporters of the ruling AKP and its ally MHP.

First aspect is rooted from internal political system stated by President Erdogan "as the necessity of a more powerful system". As such, he justifies the timing of the early election by stressing the importance of a more stable and powerful central governmental authority amid hard issues that Turkey is facing.

The second aspect is "the surprise effect". President Erdogan used this tactic very successfully in politics before and caught the opposition parties off guard and unprepared.

The last aspect could be the alleged negative curb of the economy that has been especially stressed for a while both by opposition parties and external financial institutions in contrast with the positive economic growth statements of the government. According to the financial analysts, there is an economic growth in the country. However, inflation, interest rates and foreign currencies exchange rate remain still high.

As, the financial concerns remain to be of importance, the decision of the **Public Alliance** to shift the elections to an earlier date seems to be the main motivation for winning both elections before a possible further deterioration in the economic conditions hits the country.



Main concerns over the electoral process

From the beginning of the process, the most important question was whether the Turkey's newest opposition party (İYİ Party) would be able to participate in the elections or not.

After the statement of Abdullah Gul, the eleventh President, not to take part to the elections as the "Umbrella Candidate" of the opposition parties, the most important question was whether the opposition would be able to promote strong candidates as to prevent the leaks of votes from their supporters to Erdogan.



There have also been strong concerns on the fairness of the electoral process under the current state of emergency conditions. As such, several international organizations have also made statements in the same venue.

Another ongoing debate has been over the election security due to accepted legislation by AKP and MHP on March 13, which allows the validation of the unstamped ballot papers.

Possible results of the election and their effects on Turkey's economic and political stability;

There are three possible scenarios regarding the results of the upcoming early elections.

The first scenario is the victory of the current president Recep Tayyip Erdogan as the joint candidate of the Public Alliance and at the same time winning the majority of the parliament along with MHP. In this case, President Erdogan, being the head, both of the government and of the state, will have the full power to strengthen his position and to rule the country for a five-year period almost without an opposition. This may expect to yield more regular political and economic environment at least in the short term.

The second possibility would be the re-election of president Recep Tayyip Erdogan but without the majority support within the parliament. In this case the stability of the country may be negatively effected by the disputes of powerful president and tough opposition majority.



In such a case, a renewed election wouldn't be a surprise due to the amendment of the Article 116 of Law 2709 which gives to the parliament (with the 3/5 majority of the votes) and also to the president himself a right, to renew the presidential and parliamentary elections. This may potentially deepen the political crisis and may lead to economical instability in the mid and long term.

Third possibility may be that the **Nation Alliance** wins both elections. This may be a scenario full of more question marks in the short term at least. This is valid not necessarily due to a potential insufficiency of the new cadre but mainly due to the volume and depth of the problems they would face.