



### [Runoff Election in Turkey](#)

On May 14, Turkey held its presidential and parliamentary elections. This election was seen as the greatest challenge to current Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan. After all the votes were tabulated, it was revealed that neither Erdogan nor his challenge, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, forcing a runoff election that will take place this weekend on May 28<sup>th</sup>. Erdogan won 49.39% of the vote and Kilicdaroglu won 44.92% of the vote. A third nationalist candidate, Sinan Ogan, won 5.3% of the vote.

Erdogan has faced much scrutiny in recent years both at home and abroad. At home, his country continues to face a turbulent economy that shows no signs of improving. The botched response to the recent earthquake that devastated parts of Turkey has also negatively affected Erdogan's popularity. When he was first elected, he was seen as a reformer and welcomed with great enthusiasm by the international community. This changed however after a failed coup attempt in 2012. After the coup, Erdogan rolled back many of the reforms he had passed and began restricting freedom of speech and press. This has caused much concern among traditional NATO allies. Erdogan did however have some advantages against Kilicdaroglu. First, he is still wildly popular among certain people. His incumbent status and successes as a president also gave him an edge. After all, He was responsible for turning Turkey into a global player, modernizing swathes of the country through megaprojects, and building a highly sought-after arms industry.

A major development took place when Ogan endorsed Erdogan in the run-off. Erdogan is now almost certain to win. Erdogan only needs to get a fraction of a percent more votes to reach the 50% threshold while Kilicdaroglu needs over 5%. Even if the endorsement does not sway all of those who voted for Ogan, it does not need to. This endorsement essentially seals Kilicdaroglu's fate, as he needs all of the people who voted for Ogan to vote for him in the run-off.

Throughout the race, the United States and its allies have openly supported Kilicdaroglu. Now that his defeat seems imminent it is likely that the already troubled relations between the U.S. and Turkey will worsen, driving them closer to Russia. Biden outwardly supporting Erdogan's was an unwise political decision as it leave little room for any diplomatic efforts to try and bring Turkey back into the fold. Turkey is already currently very important to Russia, as Turkey continues to be a lifeline to Russia. Sanctions implemented in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine have caused Russia to become an economic and political pariah on the global stage. This is a major reason why the United States and its allies have become increasingly frustrated with Erdogan. Erdogan's continued relationship with Putin has significantly blunted the effects of many of the sanctions passed.

As Erdogan continues toward his likely victory, a coalition of parties allied with him did better than expected and is headed for a majority. This coalition consists of the People's Alliance of Erdogan's Islamist-rooted AKP, the nationalist MHP, and other smaller parties. This majority will further lock down Erdogan's grip on power. Many fear that he will use this next term to further slide towards autocracy and continue restricting peoples' freedoms.