

## Turkey Presidential Elections: May 14

May 14, 2023

May 14, 2023: **Istanbul**: The elections of this Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> May in Turkey had **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**, 69, President of Turkey as one of the candidates. If elected, this would be his third 5-year-term, as President of Turkey. Erdogan has ruled over Turkey since 2003, when he was elected as the Prime Minister, for the first time, as a candidate of Justice and Development Party (AK Parti), a party, which wanted to make Turkey more Islamic and less secular. In 2014, he was elected as the President, after change in the constitution, established a powerful Presidency.

On 29<sup>th</sup> October 1923, when Kemal Ataturk established the secular Republic of Turkey, he said that signs or symbols of any religion would not be shown in any public function. He also gave to the Turkish Army seats in the Parliament, with the objective of ensuring that the secular values of the Republic are not watered down.

When Erdogan took over as the Prime Minister, he was determined that the world should see Turkey as a Sunni Muslim country. Slowly he chipped away at the secular values, he removed the role of army in the politics of the Republic completely and he started the process of establishing Turkey as a Leader of the Muslim world. In the highly conservative society of Turkish villages and small towns, Erdogan's popularity continued to increase and he became a democratically elected all-powerful leader of Turkey. He has modernized Turkey and built an arms-industry during his 2-decade long rule.



In 2023, he is a candidate for a third term as the President of Turkey. However the falling value of Lira, Covid 19, 80% inflation in 2022 and a less than satisfactory

management of the severe **earthquake in Southeast Turkey** of February 2023 have created some dissatisfaction. Turkey's relations with USA and other European members of NATO have frayed on the issue of Kurdish militants taking refuge in many countries. Another issue is Turkey's veto on admission of Sweden into NATO since Erdogan is unhappy with non-existing blasphemy law in Sweden. Turkey's purchase of S-400 Anti-Missile system from Russia against US wishes and Turkey's informal alliance with Russia in the Ukraine-Russia war have cooled its relationship with European countries.

Six opposition parties have come together to support the candidature of **Kemal Kilicdaroglu**, 74, of Republican People's Party. There are some other candidates like that of a Kurdish party, who is fighting the Presidential election even while he is being incarcerated in a jail as a terrorist.



Pre-election opinion polls had given an edge to **Kilicdaroglu**, who plans to roll back a great deal of legacy of Erdogan.

After the voting has concluded on Sunday, **preliminary results** show that Turkey is heading towards a run-off, which will be held on May 28, since none of the candidates is able to secure a majority of votes.

Kilicdaroglu has accused Erdogan's party of interfering with the counting and reporting of results. In a combative address to his party workers, Erdogan said that he was already ahead of his rival by 2.6 million votes and his vote count may cross the majority mark.

Erdogan's People's Alliance has secured a majority in the parliament.