

Erdođan, K?l?çdarolu advance to run-off in Turkish presidential election

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The results of yesterday’s presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey became clear only this morning. According to the Supreme Election Board (YSK), incumbent President Recep Tayyip Erdođan won 49.5 percent of the vote, ahead of his rival Kemal K?l?çdarolu’s 44.8 percent. Turnout reached 88.8 percent, the highest in decades.

Held amid NATO’s escalating war against Russia in Ukraine, a few hundred kilometers north of Turkey, the elections were closely watched in NATO capitals, in Moscow and in Beijing. Expecting a K?l?çdarolu victory in the first round, finance capital reacted negatively to the outcome, which most polls had forecast incorrectly. Borsa Istanbul’s BIST 100 index opened nearly 7 percent down. The banking index also fell by 9.5 percent.

Erdoğan’s Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) came in first in the parliamentary elections with 35 percent of the vote, despite a serious setback of 7 percent. The AKP-led People Alliance retained its majority in parliament. In addition to the AKP, the People Alliance includes the fascist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP, 10 percent), the Islamist-nationalist New Welfare Party (YRP, 2.8 percent) and the Islamist-fascist Great Unity Party (BBP, 1 percent), with outside support from H?da Par, a Kurdish Islamist organization.

Erdođan remained in first place despite the growing impoverishment of the working class amid a massive cost-of-living crisis, his deadly response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the February 6 earthquake disaster that caused tens of thousands of preventable deaths.

This exposes the bankruptcy of the Nation Alliance, led by K?l?çdarolu’s Republican People’s Party (CHP) and its far-right ally Good Party, supported by the Kurdish nationalist People’s Democratic Party (HDP) and the pseudo-left parties. The CHP and the Nation Alliance were fully complicit in all of Erdođan’s political crimes.

They adopted the same essential policies in the face of mounting anger and opposition in the working class.

The CHP, together with the Islamist Felicity Party and the right-wing Future and DEVA parties, which are led by former AKP ministers but ran in the parliamentary elections on CHP lists, received 25 percent. The Good Party received 9.7 percent.

The HDP ran in the elections under the name of the Green Left Party due to the Erdođan government’s reactionary threat to shut down the HDP. It fell 3 percent, to 8.8 percent.

In Turkey, where there was widespread opposition to the war in Ukraine and to NATO, Erdođan was able to exploit these sentiments against imperialism with false “anti-imperialist” rhetoric, even though he himself is a NATO ally. The day before the election, Erdođan said, “Biden ordered that ‘We should bring down Erdođan.’ Tomorrow, the polls will give an answer to Biden.”

The Nation Alliance, and K?l?çdarolu in particular, declared its open orientation towards Washington and NATO. It was not an “alternative” to Erdođan, but a right-wing rival to the AKP regime.

By opposing Erdođan from the right and running an anti-refugee campaign, K?l?çdarolu also helped strengthen the third presidential candidate, Sinan Ođan, and his Victory Party, which received 2.25 percent in the parliamentary elections.

The HDP and its pseudo-left allies like the Stalinist Workers’ Party of Turkey (T?P) were complicit in K?l?çdarolu’s xenophobic campaign, on which they remained silent. Nonetheless, in its first parliamentary elections as a party, the T?P won 1.73 percent of the vote (around 930,000 votes). It entered parliament with four deputies.

Ođan, a far-right, anti-refugee extremist who appears to have received votes in reaction against both Erdođan and K?l?çdarolu, exceeded forecasts with 5.2 percent of the

vote and gained a key position in the run-off. Muharrem ʒnce, who withdrew as a candidate a few days before the election following an alleged sex scandal, received 0.44 percent.

In the evening, after the ballot boxes started to open, the Nation Alliance claimed that the vote rates had been manipulated to show Erdoʒan ahead and that Kʒlʒdarolu was leading according to the CHP's own data. They also said that Erdoʒan's campaign has repeatedly objected to ballot boxes where Kʒlʒdarolu was clearly ahead.

"They are blocking the system with objection after objection. There are 783 ballot boxes with persistent objections. There are ballot boxes objected to six times, 11 times," Kʒlʒdarolu said, before adding: "What you are blocking is the will of Turkey. You cannot stop it with objections. We will never allow this to become a fait accompli."

After midnight, Erdoʒan addressed his supporters in front of AKP headquarters in Ankara. "Although the final results are not in yet, we are in a clear lead... We have already made a difference of around 2.6 million to our closest rival in the elections," he said, adding, "If our nation has made its choice in favor of a second round of the elections, we will accept this."

At CHP headquarters, Kʒlʒdarolu said, "Erdoʒan did not get the result he expected despite all his slander and insults. No one should aspire for a fait accompli... If our nation says a second round, we accept it. We will definitely win this election in the second round."

Early in the morning, Oʒan made a statement on whom he might support in the second round of the elections. He said that one of the conditions he would demand of any candidate he supported in the second round was that "He should distance himself from political parties that do not distance themselves from terrorist groups. From the beginning, I was against the HDP and Huda Par playing a key role in politics."

Oʒan has previously declared that he could demand having ministries in the new government. He said, "We will discuss our demands with the parties. Of course, we will not be partner for free. We will have demands like ministries."

The outcome of the Turkish presidential election is critical for NATO's war against Russia. The *New York Times* reported that US officials closely followed the vote: "US officials and analysts believe that a change in Turkey's leadership could present a chance for the two countries—which share important strategic interests—to

reset their relationship and potentially draw Turkey back toward the West."

The *Times* outlined the main reasons why Washington and European capitals preferred Kʒlʒdarolu over Erdoʒan, writing: "Mr. Erdogan has straddled a line between the West and Moscow and has sought to maintain a working relationship with Mr. Putin despite his invasion of Ukraine. Turkey has not participated in the economic sanctions imposed on Russia by the United States and Europe over the war."

The NATO-Russia war played a central role in the Turkish elections. In interviews with the international press, Kʒlʒdarolu pledged to be a more reliable NATO ally than Erdoʒan. A few days before the election, he claimed, without providing any evidence, that Russia had interfered in the Turkish elections to force ʒnce to withdraw as a candidate.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov categorically denied the allegation. Kʒlʒdarolu told Reuters that "we have evidence," but refused to release it.

Refuting Kʒlʒdarolu's unsubstantiated allegations, Peskov said Kʒlʒdarolu could not release his evidence because he had none, adding: "It is obvious that Kʒlʒdarolu's statement contradicts [founder of the Turkish Republic Kemal] Atatürk's vision" of friendship and close relations with Russia.

Kʒlʒdarolu's pro-NATO statements against Russia did not strengthen him against Erdoʒan, who has pursued a foreign policy based on maneuvering between NATO and Russia. Last year, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, polls showed that almost 80 percent of the Turkish people oppose the Ukraine war. There is deep-rooted opposition in Turkey to Washington, which has been behind many military coups in Turkey and has waged three decades of imperialist wars in the Middle East since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The campaign for the May 14 election and its outcome have vindicated the Sosyalist Eʒitlik Grubu's perspective of opposing both pro-imperialist factions of the ruling class and fighting for the political independence of the working class. The crucial task is to build a socialist and internationalist revolutionary party within the working class to fight against war and for socialism internationally.



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