

ERDOĞAN'S TURKEY: BETWEEN THE DREAM OF DEMOCRACY AND THE AUTHORITARIAN TEMPTATION

A. NISTOR, F.-A. POPESCU

Anastasia Nistor¹, Felix-Angel Popescu²

¹ Faculty of History, International Relations, Political Sciences and Communication Sciences, University of Oradea, Romania. E-mail: nastea.nistor30@gmail.com

² Faculty of Economic Sciences, Agora University of Oradea, Romania. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3020-2098>, E-mail: felixangelpopescu@gmail.com

Abstract: *Over the past two decades, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has profoundly reshaped Turkey's political and social landscape, influencing the country more than any leader since Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the modern republic. Becoming prime minister in 2003 and president in 2014, Erdoğan was initially praised for his economic reforms and negotiations with the European Union, positioning Turkey as a model of democracy in the Islamic world. However, his path has been marked by an authoritarian drift, characterized by control over the press, undermining the independence of the judiciary, and suppressing the opposition. The 2016 coup attempt accelerated the consolidation of power, transforming the presidency into a dominant executive role. A recent example is the 2025 arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, on terrorism and corruption charges, which triggered massive protests and criticism from the European Union and Western allies. This paper analyzes how Turkey under Erdoğan evolved from a promising democracy to an authoritarian regime, examining the role of the instrumentalization of Islam and political repression. By exploring the historical context, the stages of the regime's evolution, and the impact on democracy, the paper investigates the tension between the democratic aspirations of Turkish society and the authoritarian temptation that defines the country's present.*

Keywords: *Turkey, democracy, authoritarianism.*

Introduction

The modern history of Turkey is marked by tension between secularism, an ideology that promotes the separation of religion from the state and Western-style modernization, and Islamism, a movement that advocates the role of Islam in politics and society. The Tanzimat reforms of 1839 initiated the modernization of the Ottoman Empire, introducing Western institutions and practices to strengthen the state. Under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, secularism became the central ideology, inspired by the French Jacobin model. His policies, such as the banning of religious symbols and the replacement of Islamic traditions with positivist science, marginalized religious communities, especially in rural areas of Anatolia, where Islam was deeply rooted, transforming it into a symbol of resistance (Yavuz et al., 2019:1-9). During the multi-party period (1950–1980), Islam was co-opted to mobilize political forces, and under Turgut Özal (1983–1993), it was used to legitimize neoliberal economic reforms. Military coups, especially the one in 1980, exacerbated political

instability but created opportunities for Islamist movements, which provided social services and solidarity, gaining influence (BBC News, 2012). The rise of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was possible in this context of polarization. Born in 1954, Erdoğan became involved in Islamist circles in the 1970s, joining Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party. In 1994, he was elected mayor of Istanbul, but in 1998, he was sentenced to four months in prison for reading a nationalist poem that the authorities considered to be incitement to religious hatred. In 2001, together with Abdullah Gül, he founded the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which won a parliamentary majority in 2002. Becoming prime minister in 2003, Erdoğan promoted economic reforms, reducing poverty and expanding the middle class through infrastructure projects, attracting international praise and support from liberals and groups marginalized by the Kemalist order. However, signs of authoritarianism gradually emerged, amplified by the Gezi Park protests (2013) and the attempted coup in 2016, which provided the pretext for consolidating power and suppressing dissent (BBC News, 2023). This historical context set the stage for Turkey's transformation under Erdoğan, from democratic aspirations to an authoritarian regime.

Erdoğanism and the drift towards authoritarianism

The concept of "Erdoğanism", proposed by Tanıl Bora, describes a political regime centered on the personality cult of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, combining nationalism, political Islamism and populism into a flexible ideology, whose main goal is to perpetuate power by undermining democratic mechanisms (Bora, 2025). Unlike classical authoritarianism, Erdoğanism operates by maintaining a democratic facade—elections, formal institutions, an apparently free press—while emptying these structures of substance, transforming Turkey into a hegemonic authoritarian regime. The arrest on March 23, 2025, of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu on trumped-up charges of corruption and links to terrorism, illustrates this transition, eliminating Erdoğan's main rival for the 2028 presidential election and signaling the end of any real electoral competition (BY, 2025). A central pillar of Erdoğanism is the use of the judicial system to neutralize the opposition. The cases of Osman Kavala and Selahattin Demirtaş illustrate this strategy. Kavala, a philanthropist and human rights activist, was arrested in 2017 and sentenced to life in prison in 2022 for allegedly attempting to overthrow the government, without substantial evidence, on charges of links to "terrorist organizations." Similarly, Demirtaş, the former leader of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), has been imprisoned since 2016 for speeches deemed subversive, although the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) called for his release in 2018 and 2020, decisions that Ankara ignored. These cases demonstrate how the judiciary is used to eliminate political opponents, consolidating Erdoğan's power through intimidation.

The crackdown extends beyond prominent figures. According to a report by the Republican People's Party (CHP), in just one month, 288 people were arrested during 45 protests, and numerous public events were banned. The media is facing similar pressure: journalists from the newspaper Cumhuriyet have been convicted on terrorism charges, although the evidence is often inconsistent or absent. For example, Kadri Gürsel and Ahmet Şık were tried for their earlier warnings about the influence of the Gülen movement, charges that are clearly paradoxical (<https://www.veridica.ro>). These tactics create a climate of fear, discouraging civic activism and political opposition.

ERDOĞAN'S TURKEY: BETWEEN THE DREAM OF DEMOCRACY AND THE AUTHORITARIAN TEMPTATION

Erdoğanism is distinguished by its combination of institutional repression and an emotional populism that mobilizes the masses. Erdoğan's discourse appeals to nationalist and religious sentiments, portraying opponents as traitors or agents of foreign powers. In 2014, Erdoğan publicly declared that "foreigners" are enemies who want to destroy Muslims, reinforcing an anti-Western narrative that justifies authoritarian measures. This rhetoric was intensified after the 2016 coup attempt, when Erdoğan used the event to justify massive purges: over 40,000 people were arrested and 130,000 were dismissed from public office (<https://www.indyturk.com>).

Emotional manipulation extends to foreign policy. The blocking of Finland and Sweden from joining NATO in 2022, motivated by their alleged support for "Kurdish terrorism," reflects a strategy to divert domestic attention from economic issues and to reinforce Erdoğan's image as the protector of the nation. This hybrid approach, which combines nationalism with victimization, maintains support from the electoral base, even in the context of a fragile economy, in which "millions of Turks live below the poverty line (BBC News Türkçe, 2025).

Despite the authoritarian drift, polls indicate a significant desire among the population, especially the young, for a democratic and pro-European Turkey. A 2022 German Marshall Fund survey shows that 76% of 18-24 year olds have a positive opinion of Europeans, and 61% would vote for Turkey to join the EU, with the percentage rising to 75% among young people.

However, the Erdoğan regime is countering these aspirations, undermining judicial independence and the rule of law, as defined by the Copenhagen criteria.

Erdoğanism is a hybrid model of authoritarianism that combines a democratic façade with systematic repression, emotional manipulation, and an aggressive foreign policy. As Turkey moves away from democratic and Western values, its political future and relations with international partners remain uncertain, with major implications for global democracy. This section examines the mechanisms of Erdoğanism today, focusing on the repression of the opposition, soft authoritarianism, emotional manipulation, and global implications, thereby highlighting the hybrid nature of the regime and its threats to democracy.

Electoral authoritarianism

A central pillar of Erdoğanism is the neutralization of the opposition through electoral authoritarian tactics that allow elections but lack a competitive character. The arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP) and a symbol of democratic hope after the electoral victories in Istanbul in 2019 and 2024, is a culmination of this strategy. Accused of corruption and alleged links to terrorist organizations, İmamoğlu was disqualified from the 2028 presidential race, where polls had indicated him as the favorite. This action, preceded by the cancellation of his university degree – a legal requirement for presidential candidacy – demonstrates Erdoğan's abusive use of the judiciary to eliminate political opponents (Avrupa, 2025). Barış Özkul compares this tactic to the practices of authoritarian leaders such as Vladimir Putin or Nicolás Maduro, who "do not enter elections that they risk losing", transforming the electoral process into a "ritual spectacle" to legitimize power (BY, 2025).

The crackdown extends beyond İmamoğlu. Leaders of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) such as Selahattin Demirtaş have been imprisoned since 2016 on similar terrorism charges, and the practice of appointing government administrators in place of elected mayors, initially applied to Kurdish municipalities, is now a threat to CHP-controlled cities such as Ankara and Izmir. Control over 90% of the mainstream media, achieved through the takeover of media trusts by AKP-loyal companies, limits the opposition's access to the public. During the 2023 campaign, state broadcaster TRT allocated 32 hours of coverage to Erdoğan, compared to just 32 minutes for opposition candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, illustrating the uneven playing field of the electoral competition (<https://www.populismstudies.org/>). These practices, combined with the manipulation of electoral districts and vote surveillance, ensure electoral victories that give the regime a semblance of legitimacy, without allowing for a change of power.

Soft authoritarianism and emotional manipulation

Dr. Ulrike Flader describes Erdoğan's regime as "soft authoritarian," a hybrid system that avoids totalitarian repression but undermines democracy through subtle mechanisms such as rigged elections, selective censorship, and legal pressure. Unlike classic dictatorships, soft authoritarianism allows opposition to exist but manages it so that it does not become a real threat. A key mechanism is the emotional manipulation of the opposition, trapped in a cycle of hope and apathy. Local electoral victories, such as İmamoğlu's in Istanbul, create the illusion that democratic change is possible, mobilizing opposition supporters. But subsequent repression, such as İmamoğlu's arrest, shatters this hope, inducing apathy and discouraging alternative forms of resistance such as mass protests or civic organizing. İmamoğlu's arrest illustrates this strategy of "opposition management." By eliminating a charismatic leader, Erdoğan aims to weaken the CHP and prevent the formation of a united front against him.

The massive protests in Istanbul, which began in March 2025 after the arrest, were violently suppressed, with hundreds of arrests and the use of tear gas, which amplified the feeling of helplessness among the opponents. Flader emphasizes that this tactic is "brilliant" because it keeps the opposition in an emotional limbo: unable to give up electoral hope, but lacking the means to achieve it (Avrupa, 2025). In addition, the regime exploits the internal divisions of the opposition, amplified by media censorship and disinformation campaigns, which portray CHP or HDP leaders as "traitors" or "foreign agents." This dynamic explains the opposition's persistence in participating in elections, even though its chances of victory are minimal, and underlines the sophisticated nature of Erdoğanism.

Global implications and regional challenges

Turkey's authoritarian drift aligns with a global trend of hybrid authoritarian regimes, such as those in Russia, Hungary or India, that combine populism with institutional control. The lack of consistent international pressure plays a crucial role. Under the Trump administration, the US has adopted a transactional approach towards Turkey, ignoring human rights violations in exchange for cooperation on issues such as migration or regional security. The European Union, while critical at a rhetorical level, is constrained by its dependence on Turkey in managing refugees and its role in NATO, which limits effective sanctions. Russian arms purchases (e.g. S-400 systems) and diplomatic rapprochement with Putin reflect a

ERDOĞAN'S TURKEY: BETWEEN THE DREAM OF DEMOCRACY AND THE AUTHORITARIAN TEMPTATION

strategic distancing from the West, complicating Turkey's position in the global security architecture (BY, 2025).

Erdoğan's pragmatic flexibility is another factor that allows him to navigate these challenges. For example, occasional negotiations with the Kurds, such as those in 2013-2015, have been used to divide the opposition, while an alliance with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has secured the support of ultranationalists, consolidating domestic power. However, the intensification of repression – including the arrest of secular journalists, artists and teachers – and the possible systematic marginalization of the CHP risk eliminating any trace of democratic competition, moving Turkey closer to uncompetitive authoritarianism. This trajectory has significant regional implications. As a key player in the Middle East and the Caucasus, Turkey plays a crucial role in conflicts such as those in Syria and Nagorno-Karabakh. An unstable domestic authoritarian regime can intensify regional tensions, especially in the absence of a transatlantic balance.

The 2025 protests, although repressed, suggest the existence of latent civic resistance. Thousands of citizens, especially young people and urban intellectuals, took to the streets in Istanbul and Ankara, demanding İmamoğlu's release and democratic reforms. These movements, although fragmented, indicate the potential for mobilization that, if supported by international pressure or a more united opposition, could counter the authoritarian drift (Avrupa, 2025). However, the success of such resistance depends on the opposition's ability to overcome the hope-apathy cycle and build a coalition that includes both secularists and ethnic and religious minorities.

Ultimately, Erdoğanism, as an expression of hegemonic authoritarianism, combines the repression of the opposition, soft authoritarianism, emotional manipulation, institutional control to ensure the perpetuation of Erdoğan's power. İmamoğlu's arrest symbolizes the elimination of any electoral threat, transforming Turkish democracy into a facade. In a global context favorable to authoritarian regimes, Turkey faces the risk of becoming a system in which pluralism is completely eradicated. The urgency of coordinated civic resistance, supported by international pressure, becomes crucial to prevent this drift, which threatens not only domestic freedoms, but also regional stability.

Representatives

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan - (b. 1954, coming from a modest family in Rize, with a sailor father, he grew up in the poor neighborhood of Kasımpaşa. A graduate of Marmara University (1981, Economics), he was active in Islamist circles, influenced by Necmettin Erbakan (the father of modern Islamist politics in Turkey). His ideals – conservatism, political Islamism, nationalism – aim for a "New Turkey", with the family as the socio-economic pillar, promoting birthrate and patriarchy (MERIP, 2018). His authoritarian behavior, marked by polarizing rhetoric, reflects a "Black Sea temperament" – direct, stubborn. As a former mayor of Istanbul (1994-1998) and AKP leader, he consolidated power through institutional control, repressing opposition.

The Rise to Power and Transformation of Turkey

After a career in local government, Erdoğan became prime minister in 2003 after his party, the AKP, won the 2002 elections. He immediately began transforming the parliamentary republic into a presidential system. In 2010, he achieved that the president would be directly elected by the people, and in 2014, he himself became president. This change culminated in the 2017 referendum, which abolished the position of prime minister and greatly expanded presidential powers, transforming Erdoğan into a near-autocratic leader. The system of democratic checks and balances has been dismantled, with the president now having authority over the government, the electoral commission, the courts, the police, and the military (<https://bipartisanpolicy.org>). This consolidation of power has distanced Turkey from hopes of peace with the Kurds and Cypriots, as well as from the prospect of joining the European Union (Civicus, 2025).

One of his greatest successes is transforming Turkey into a regional power and a major player on the world stage. Erdoğan has taken advantage of the partial withdrawal of the United States from the Middle East to position Turkey as a key player alongside Iran, Russia, and the Gulf states. Even though it is a member of NATO, he has not hesitated to obstruct the expansion of the alliance. Turkey has become a key partner for Europe, managing the flow of Syrian refugees and brokering the grain deal between Ukraine and Russia. This ability to maintain relations with various powers has helped stabilize the country's economy (Barkey, 2025).

„New Turkey”

It reflects a society with a more pronounced Islamic identity. Under his leadership, bans on wearing the veil and hijab in schools and the workplace have been lifted. A major symbolic act was the conversion of the Hagia Sophia, a former Byzantine cathedral and museum, into a mosque, thus reversing Atatürk's secular decision. Erdoğan has openly criticized feminism, denied gender equality, proposed criminalizing adultery, and urged Muslims to abandon family planning (MERIP, 2018).

This orientation has led to a deep division in society, between supporters of his vision and opponents who fear the establishment of an "Islamic sultanate". Minority groups and followers of the secular state have become "internal enemies", as evidenced by the successive purges carried out in the state apparatus after the attempted coup in 2016.

Economically, the first decade of Erdoğan's rule brought a significant increase in welfare, with annual economic growth of 8% and a tripling of per capita income by 2013. This was due to liberal economic policies, foreign investment and infrastructure projects. However, the second decade was marked by a slowdown in growth, stagnation of GDP per capita and high inflation, as a result of Erdoğan's interventions in monetary policy (BBC News, 2025).

Ekrem İmamoğlu -(b. 1970, comes from a conservative family with a father who is a member of ANAP, studied Business Administration at Istanbul University (1994). Adopting social democratic values in college, he promotes inclusion and dialogue, avoiding polarizing discourse. Managing the family business (construction) and sports clubs, he entered politics via CHP-Republican People's Party (2009), becoming mayor of Beylikdüzü (2014) and Istanbul (2019, 2024). Charismatic, with trans-social appeal, meaning he is supported and appreciated by people from different social classes, he is seen as the hope of democracy (DW, 2025).

ERDOĞAN'S TURKEY: BETWEEN THE DREAM OF DEMOCRACY AND THE AUTHORITARIAN TEMPTATION

His victory in Istanbul in 2019 ended a 25-year right-wing administration in the province (<https://europrospects.eu/>). Although the initial results were controversially contested and annulled, he won the forced re-election in 2019 by an even wider margin, cementing his status as a leading opposition figure (Al Jazeera Staff, 2025).

During his terms as mayor of Istanbul, İmamoğlu focused on revitalizing public facilities and improving infrastructure. He initiated clean-up efforts on the Golden Horn and expanded the public transportation network by building new metro lines, a priority to solve traffic problems. He strongly opposed the government's plan to build Canal Istanbul (<https://www.britannica.com>).

His rise, however, was marked by legal challenges, widely seen as politically motivated, designed to undermine his career and suppress dissent (Çevik et al., 2025). In 2022, he was sentenced to two years and seven months in prison and banned from participating in politics for allegedly insulting members of the Supreme Electoral Council following the annulment of the 2019 elections, although the decision is not final. In March 2025, he was arrested on charges of corruption and supporting a terrorist organization, actions perceived as an attempt to eliminate him as a strong political rival (Yacoubian, 2025).

Despite these obstacles, İmamoğlu continues to be a central figure and symbol of democratic resistance, and his legal battles are seen as a crucial test for social democracy in Turkey. He is considered President Erdoğan's strongest challenger in the upcoming 2028 presidential election, having already been nominated as the CHP candidate (Aydin, 2025).

The rivalry stems from opposing visions: Erdoğan, authoritarian, securitizes the opposition, using justice (e.g. İmamoğlu's arrest in 2025 for corruption, invalidated diploma) to eliminate electoral threats. İmamoğlu, with conciliatory speech, attracts diverse support, including Kurdish, challenging the AKP's hegemony (The Independent, 2025).. The differences – authoritarianism vs. inclusiveness (listening to all voices), conservatism (supporting traditions, religion and old values) vs. secularism (separating religion from the state – meaning the state should not interfere with religion and vice versa) – define the struggle for Turkey's future. Erdoğan proposes a “New Turkey” with conservative Islamic values, while İmamoğlu advocates a more open and secular democratic republic, inspired by Atatürk's principles, adapted to the realities of the 21st century (Michaelson, 2024). Experts analyze this rivalry as a fundamental confrontation between two distinct visions of the country's identity and direction.

Case study - The EU–Turkey Agreement as an instrument of authoritarianism.

The EU–Turkey agreement of March 2016 aimed to manage the Syrian migration crisis, allocating ~€10 billion (2016–2024) to Turkey to host 3.1 million Syrian refugees and ~500,000 migrants, concentrated in southeastern Turkey, Istanbul and Ankara. The agreement reduced irregular arrivals to the EU by 33% in 2024–2025 (Council of the European Union, 2025).

Quantitative analysis: Turkey received €6 billion initially (2016–2018), extended to ~€10 billion by 2024, through the Refugee Facility. In 2015, 856,000 migrants crossed from Turkey to Greece; the agreement reduced crossings to 70/day in April 2016. The “1 for 1”

scheme returned 325 migrants in the first week (2016), but only 3,500 were resettled to the EU (Kaya, 2020). The social costs have strained Istanbul, with 15% of refugees in the city.

Qualitative analysis: Under Erdoğan, the agreement was an authoritarian tool. The 2020 threat to “open the borders” to Greece pressured the EU for concessions (e.g. funds, accession negotiations). The funds, managed non-transparently, strengthened state control, without democratic reforms. The opposition (CHP) accuses the instrumentalization of migration to justify repression (e.g. İmamoğlu’s arrest, 2025). Amnesty International criticizes the “1 for 1” scheme as “dehumanizing”, violating the rights of refugees. The agreement limited migration, but amplified Erdoğan’s authoritarianism, giving him diplomatic and financial leverage. Social tensions and lack of reforms undermine Turkish democracy and relations with the EU.

Furthermore, the agreement has placed the EU in an ethical dilemma, with accusations that it is prioritizing border control over its core values of human rights and democracy. This pragmatic approach by the EU has been perceived by many as weakening its influence on Turkey’s democratic agenda (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2025). Domestically, the challenges of long-term integration of millions of refugees into Turkish society have fueled anti-refugee and xenophobic sentiments, which political leaders, including Erdoğan, have occasionally exploited to bolster their electoral support (<https://syriadirect.org>). Paradoxically, by stabilizing immediate migration flows, the agreement reduced a potential incentive for Turkey to implement democratic reforms requested by the EU, thus contributing to the deepening of Turkey’s drift towards authoritarianism (<https://www.gmfus.org/>). In conclusion, the agreement limited illegal migration to the EU, but amplified Erdoğan’s authoritarianism, giving him substantial diplomatic and financial leverage. Social tensions generated by the presence of refugees and the lack of democratic reforms undermine the stability of Turkish democracy and long-term relations with the EU.

Conclusions

Under Erdoğan, Turkey oscillates between democratic aspirations and authoritarian temptation. The EU–Turkey deal (2016), which managed 3.1 million Syrian refugees with ~10 billion EUR, reduced illegal migration by 33% (2024-2025), but strengthened Erdoğan’s control, with funds being used non-transparently to consolidate power. The arrest of İmamoğlu (2025) and the repression of the opposition (1,500 arrests) illustrate the instrumentalization of crises to eliminate rivals, undermining democracy. However, İmamoğlu’s popularity, with his inclusive vision, offers hope. To counter authoritarianism, I propose: 1) International pressure: the EU should condition funds on democratic reforms, monitoring their use. 2) Civil society engagement: NGOs and platforms like X(twitter) can amplify opposition voices, mobilizing peaceful protests. 3) Digital civic education: Programs to combat polarization, inspired by İmamoğlu’s initiatives in Istanbul. 4) Regional dialogue: EU-Turkey forums to promote social reconciliation, reducing tensions with refugees. Turkey’s future depends on balancing power through free elections and reforms. İmamoğlu can be the catalyst for democracy, if international and civic support becomes firmer.

*ERDOĞAN'S TURKEY: BETWEEN THE DREAM OF DEMOCRACY AND THE
AUTHORITARIAN TEMPTATION*

REFERENCES

1. Aksoy, Salim Çevik; Hürcan Aslı. "The Conviction of Ekrem İmamoğlu and the Prospects for Democracy in Turkey." Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP). Accessed June 25, 2025. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/the-conviction-of-ekrem-i%CC%87mamoglu-and-the-prospects-for-democracy-in-turkey>.
2. Avrupa, Gaste. "Erdoğan'ın Soft Otoriter Rejimi - Ulrike Flader (Röportaj)." *Gaste Avrupa* (blog), April 7, 2025. <https://gasteavrupa.org/2025/04/07/erdoganin-soft-otoriter-rejimi-ulrike-flader-roportaj/>.
3. Balci, Bayram. "İslam and Politics in Turkey: Alliance and Disunion Between the Fethullah Gülen Movement and the Justice and Development Party of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 25, no. 3 (May 4, 2023): 506–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2022.2143859>.
4. Barkey, Henri J. "How Erdogan Muscled Turkey to the Center of the World Stage | Council on Foreign Relations." Accessed June 25, 2025. <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/29178/for-erdogan-turkish-foreign-policy-was-always-meant-to-be-assertive>.
5. *BBC News*. "Erdogan: Turkey's All-Powerful Leader of 20 Years." June 13, 2011, sec. Europe. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-13746679>.
6. *BBC News*. "Turkey Profile - Timeline." May 8, 2012, sec. Europe. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17994865>.
7. *BBC News Türkçe*. "Financial Times: Batı, Erdoğan'ın otoriter yönetimine karşı çok daha önceden harekete geçmeliydi." Accessed June 25, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-43945236>.
8. *BBC News Русская служба*. "Эпоха Эрдогана. Как изменилась Турция за 20 лет его правления." Accessed June 25, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-65521184>.
9. BY. "Turkey's Authoritarian Turn." Accessed May 18, 2025. <https://jacobin.com/2025/03/turkey-erdogan-imamoglu-imprisonment-authoritarianism/>.
10. "Can Ekrem İmamoğlu, Istanbul's Imprisoned Mayor, Become a Turkish Nelson Mandela? - Euro Prospects," April 10, 2025. <https://europrospects.eu/can-ekrem-imamoglu-istanbuls-imprisoned-mayor-become-a-turkish-nelson-mandela/>.
11. CIVICUS. "Turkey's Democratic Uprising." *CIVICUS LENS* (blog), April 4, 2025. <https://lens.civicus.org/turkeys-democratic-uprising/>.
12. Commissioner for Human Rights. "EU-Turkey Deal on Refugees Disregards Human Rights Standards - Commissioner for Human Rights - WwW.Coe.Int." Accessed June 25, 2025. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/eu-turkey-deal-on-refugees-disregards-human-rights-standar-1>.
13. Consilium. "Declarația UE-Turcia, 18 martie 2016." Accessed May 18, 2025. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>.
14. Yaşar Aydın. "Cracks in the Palace," May 27, 2025. <https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/democracy-and-society/cracks-in-the-palace-8309/>.
15. dw.com. "Turkey: Who Is Erdogan's Popular Rival Ekrem Imamoglu? – DW – 03/25/2025." Accessed May 18, 2025. <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-who-is-erdogans-popular-rival-ekrem-imamoglu/a-72010940>.
16. "Ekrem İmamoğlu | Turkey, Arrest, Education, & Diploma | Britannica," May 31, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ekrem-Imamoglu>.
17. "Erdogan's Winning Authoritarian Populist Formula and Turkey's Future - ECPS," May 29, 2023. <https://www.populismstudies.org/erdogans-winning-authoritarian-populist-formula-and-turkeys-future/>.

18. “‘For Being Syrian’: Xenophobia Fuels Refugee Killings in Turkey - Syria Direct.” Accessed June 25, 2025. <https://syriadirect.org/for-being-syrian-xenophobia-fuels-refugee-killings-in-turkey/>.
19. Independent Türkçe. “Financial Times’tan Türkiye analizi: ‘Erdoğan’ın otoriter pazarlığı çöktü,” April 4, 2023. <https://www.indyturk.com/node/621451/d%C3%BCnya/financial-timestan-t%C3%BCrkiye-analizi-erdo%C4%9Fan%C4%B1n-otoriter-pazarl%C4%B1%C4%9F%C4%B1-%C3%A7%C3%B6kt%C3%BC>.
20. Intern, MERIP. “The Politics of Family Values in Erdogan’s New Turkey.” *MERIP* (blog), December 15, 2018. <https://merip.org/2018/12/the-politics-of-family-values-in-erdogans-new-turkey/>.
21. “Just One More Election: Hurdles to Consolidating a Presidential System in Turkey | Bipartisan Policy Center.” Accessed June 25, 2025. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/hurdles-consolidating-presidential-system-turkey/>.
22. Kaya, Hülya. *The EU-Turkey Statement on Refugees: Assessing Its Impact on Fundamental Rights*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020.
23. “Making the Best of the Bad EU-Turkey Deal | German Marshall Fund of the United States.” Accessed June 25, 2025. <https://www.gmfus.org/news/making-best-bad-eu-turkey-deal>.
24. Michaelson, Ruth. “Ekrem İmamoğlu, the Istanbul Mayor Emerging as Likely Challenger to Erdoğan.” *The Guardian*, April 1, 2024, sec. World news. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/01/who-is-ekrem-imamoglu-istanbul-mayor-recep-tayyip-erdogan-reign-president-ak-party>.
25. Staff, Al Jazeera. “Who Is Jailed Turkish Opposition Leader Ekrem Imamoglu?” Al Jazeera. Accessed June 25, 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/24/who-is-jailed-turkish-opposition-leader-ekrem-imamoglu>.
26. “Tanıl Bora: Erdoğanizm yükseliyor.” Accessed May 18, 2025. <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/tanil-bora-erdoganizm-yukseliyor-660310>.
27. The Independent. “Who Is Ekrem Imamoglu, Erdogan’s Main Rival, and Why Was He Arrested?,” March 19, 2025. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/ekrem-imamoglu-recep-tayyip-erdogan-turkey-istanbul-justice-and-development-party-b2717946.html>.
28. “Turkish Elections: Simple Guide to Erdogan’s Fight to Stay in Power.” April 11, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65239092>.
29. Yacoubian, Vera. “The Political and Geopolitical Implications of Ekrem İmamoğlu’s Arrest for Turkey.” *The Armenian Weekly* (blog), April 2, 2025. <https://armenianweekly.com/2025/04/02/the-political-and-geopolitical-implications-of-ekrem-imamoglus-arrest-for-turkey/>.
30. Yavuz, M. Hakan, and Ahmet Erdi and Öztürk. “Turkish Secularism and Islam under the Reign of Erdoğan.” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 19, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2019.1580828>.
31. “Конец пути для «европейской Турции»? Режим Эрдогана скатывается к авторитаризму, турецкий национализм и блокирование вступления Финляндии и Швеции в НАТО,” May 19, 2022. <https://www.veridica.ro/ru/mneniya/konec-puti-dlya-evropeiskoi-turcii-rezim-erdogana-skatyvaetsya-k-avtoritarizmu-tureckii-nacionalizm-i-blokirovaniye-vstupleniya-finlyandii-i-svecii-v-nato>.