

Türkiye at the Crossroads: Constitutional Succession, Institutional Resilience, and the Post-Erdoğan Political Transition

A Strategic Analysis of Regime Dynamics, Succession Pathways, and Party System Realignment

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Executive Summary & Theoretical Framework

Focus Area

As the Republic of Türkiye moves through its second century, it faces a political inflection point that will determine both its domestic stability and foreign policy orientation.¹ The core dynamic defining Ankara's future is the succession trap the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) finds itself in.² The AKP started as a broad right-wing coalition that captured disenchanted voters from conservatives such as DYP and ANAP, as well as Islamists such as Erbakan's Milli Görüş. It has since evolved into a hyper-centralized governance system driven by a cult of personality built around the authority and personal political capital of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.³

This paper assesses how regime dynamics shift when a long-dominant executive considers stepping down versus preserving power through legal adaptation.⁴ To evaluate these structural vulnerabilities, the analysis applies comparative models of dominant-party survival—such as Mexico's historic Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and Singapore's People's Action Party (PAP)—against Türkiye's executive presidency.⁵

Through macro-political stress testing, we evaluate state institutions, media ownership, and judicial oversight to measure the economic and political costs of extended personal rule by Erdoğan beyond 2028 compared to a managed political transition. The principal question for the ruling movement is whether its institutional framework can outlive its founder without suffering severe internal fragmentation.⁶

Primary Research Questions

- How do personalist regimes manage transition risks when attempting to formalize party structures beyond the original founder?⁷

¹The Soufan Center, "As Erdogan Considers a Third Term, Türkiye Approaches an Inflection Point," June 3, 2026.

²Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich (OSW), "In line for the throne: preparing for a transfer of power in Turkey," March 18, 2026.

³Journal of Democracy, "Islamist Parties and Democracy: Turkey's AKP in Power," Accessed 2026.

⁴Foundation for Defense of Democracies, "After Erdogan: Who Will Control Turkey?," February 3, 2026.

⁵Cambridge University Press, "Institutionalized Succession and Hegemonic Party Cohesion in Singapore," in *Party System Institutionalization in Asia*; Al Jazeera, "The fall of Mexico's PRI party, a once-dominant political force," May 31, 2024.

⁶Kuehn, D., "The personalization of political power revisited," Taylor & Francis Online, 2026.

- What are the systemic, market, and geopolitical consequences of extending one-man rule versus implementing a planned succession?
- Which institutional indicators best signal regime resilience or vulnerability during a Turkish executive transition?⁸

Methodology

- **Comparative Political Analysis:** Benchmarking Türkiye's current political structure against historical dominant-party transitions and hyper-presidential regimes.
- **Macro-Political Stress Testing:** Assessing state bureaucracy, central financial policy, media control, and judicial independence to project post-transition risks.

The Core Strategic Dilemma: Erdoğan's Re-election vs. Succession

On June 22, 2026, AKP spokesperson Ömer Çelik announced that President Erdoğan remains the party's official candidate for the upcoming presidential election.⁹ Following a meeting of the party's Central Decision and Executive Board, Çelik emphasized that the party's position was firm, dismissing rumors of an immediate snap vote while acknowledging supportive statements from Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli.

Securing another term in 2028 would effectively mark a fourth term in office. President Erdoğan is already the longest serving leader in Türkiye's history when combining his 23-year tenure as Prime Minister and President.¹⁰ If Erdoğan is to complete another term, he would certainly surpass Atatürk as the longest serving president in Türkiye's history, achieving an unprecedented level of longevity. However, despite Ömer Çelik's announcement of Erdoğan's candidacy, a major legal hurdle remains. Under the terms of the 2017 constitutional referendum, a president is limited to two consecutive terms.¹¹ Because Erdoğan served as president prior to the structural overhaul and won subsequent terms under the new executive system, his current tenure represents his second term under the revised framework and his third presidential term overall.

⁷Harris School of Public Policy, "The Personalist Penalty: New Research Shows Differences Between Dictatorships," December 15, 2025.

⁸Wright, J., "Authoritarian Institutions and Regime Survival: Transitions to Democracy and Subsequent Autocracy," British Journal of Political Science, 2012.

⁹Turkish Minute, "Erdoğan adviser proposes April 2028 vote to allow another presidential run," June 15, 2026.

¹⁰Deutsche Welle, "Justice and Development Party (AKP)," Accessed 2026.

¹¹Wikipedia, "2028 Turkish Presidential Election," Accessed 2026.

This legal dynamic creates a sharp strategic choice for the ruling People's Alliance constituted of the AKP and MHP: build a constitutional path for Erdoğan to remain in office, or implement a structured succession plan.¹² Both options present distinct risks for the AKP and the broader political system.

Path A: Engineering Legal Continuity

To make Erdoğan eligible for another campaign without writing a completely new constitution, the ruling bloc must rely on Article 116 of the Turkish Constitution. Under this article, if parliament votes to call early elections, the sitting president is permitted to run for an additional term.¹³

However, passing an early election motion under Article 116 requires a supermajority of three-fifths of parliament (360 out of 600 seats). The ruling AKP-MHP coalition currently lacks the votes required to reach this threshold independently. As a result, securing an early vote would require the coalition to negotiate with opposition or swing parties, such as the pro-Kurdish DEM Party or right-wing splinter groups, likely forcing policy concessions on governance, regional issues, or judicial files.

Stakeholder Tradeoff Analysis for Path A

For Erdoğan Personally: Staying at the helm minimizes immediate political vulnerability. Running again keeps him directly in control of the state apparatus, ensuring his personal safety and preventing sudden judicial scrutiny of his tenure. However, putting his electoral record on the line during an ongoing economic recovery carries real risk. A loss in a runoff would end his political career on a rare defeat.

For the AKP: Keeping Erdoğan as the sole candidate delays a potential internal succession battle. He remains the primary unifying figure for a diverse voter coalition spanning traditional Islamists, security nationalists, and conservative working-class communities.¹⁴ The risk for the party is long-term institutional atrophy: relying on a single leader prevents the development of a durable second generation of leadership.¹⁵

For Türkiye: Extending the current presidential framework prolongs political polarisation and keeps policy decisions tied to short-term election goals. Foreign investors may remain cautious, viewing

¹²Foundation for Defense of Democracies, "After Erdogan: Who Will Control Turkey?," February 3, 2026.

¹³Foundation for Defense of Democracies, "After Erdogan: Who Will Control Turkey?," February 3, 2026.

¹⁴Deutsche Welle, "Justice and Development Party (AKP)," Accessed 2026.

¹⁵Grundholm, AT., "Taking it personal? Investigating regime personalization as an autocratic survival strategy," Democratization, 2020.

economic stabilisation efforts as vulnerable to political changes, while institutional norms continue to adjust around the demands of the executive branch.

Path B: The Managed Handover Model

If the parliamentary path for an early election proves out of reach, or if the leadership decides that a planned transition is necessary to safeguard its legacy, the AKP must execute a managed succession. Controlled transitions in dominant-party systems are historically difficult, particularly when the party structure has been reshaped around a single personality.¹⁶

Executing a successful handover requires finding a candidate who can satisfy to a reasonable extent the following: the party's conservative base, the security focus demanded by the MHP, and appeal to broader swing voters wary of economic strain.

Stakeholders Tradeoff Analysis for Path B

For Erdoğan Personally: Stepping back allows Erdoğan to transition into an influential advisory role as an elder statesman, similar to historical power-broker models seen in dominant-party transitions globally. This structure helps protect his family's position, preserves his policy legacy, and allows him to step aside without suffering an electoral defeat. The challenge is ensuring his chosen successor remains loyal once in control of executive power.

For the AKP: A managed transition forces the AKP to prove it can function as an institutional party rather than just a campaign vehicle for one individual.¹⁷ If successful, it modernizes the party's image and opens space for tech-focused, security, or economic reformists to anchor the movement. If handled poorly, it risks opening factional disputes among party wings, potentially fracturing the conservative-nationalist coalition.

For the Country: A structured handover provides a clear framework for governance and policy continuity. It offers market institutions an opportunity to anchor long-term economic reforms and could help normalize diplomatic interactions with Western allies by signaling a shift toward more traditional, institutional decision-making.

¹⁶Cambridge University Press, "Render unto Caesar just a little bit longer: The relationship between constitutional reforms and executive survival," Government and Opposition.

¹⁷Britannica, "Justice and Development Party," Accessed 2026.

Transition Framework & The Imminent Vacuum

Choosing between these paths is not merely an electoral decision; it determines the future structure of the Turkish state. Pushing for another Erdoğan campaign relies on short-term political maneuvering to maintain power, while choosing succession tests whether the current governing system can endure over the long term.¹⁸

Should the leadership choose to pursue a managed handover, the primary question shifts immediately to internal personnel. The post-Erdoğan landscape will be defined by how dynastic figures, state-security technocrats, and party traditionalists manage their competing interests.

The AKP Succession Matrix: Contenders and Factional Politics

Focus Area

If the People's Alliance opts for a managed transition or is forced into one by parliamentary arithmetic under Article 116, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) faces an unprecedented internal test.¹⁹

Over two decades, President Erdoğan has functioned as the ultimate arbiter among competing factions within the Turkish right. Without his personal authority at the top of the ticket, these internal networks will compete directly for control of the party machine and the state apparatus.

This section maps the four major power centers within the ruling movement, evaluating candidate viability, institutional backing, and coalition compatibility with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).

Contender Deep Dives

1. Selçuk Bayraktar

Selçuk Bayraktar, Chairman and CTO of defense manufacturer Baykar, represents the most electorally potent successor profile within the ruling family circle.²⁰ Bayraktar is a technocratic figure that personifies Türkiye's growing defense industry independence, bridging the gap between religious-conservative pride and modern technological advancement.²¹

¹⁸Dixon, R., "Making Presidential Term Limits Stick," Oxford University Press, 2020.

¹⁹Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich (OSW), "In line for the throne: preparing for a transfer of power in Turkey," March 18, 2026.

²⁰Foundation for Defense of Democracies, "After Erdogan: Who Will Control Turkey?," February 3, 2026.

²¹Bloomsbury Intelligence and BISI, "Turkey's Drone Industry," January 26, 2026.

Strengths: High favorability across diverse demographic groups, including secular nationalists and tech-focused youth who typically reject traditional AKP rhetoric. His political profile is clean of corruption scandals or economic management failures.

Vulnerabilities: Unproven in retail street politics, electoral campaign management, and the day-to-day administrative machinery of party organization.

Institutional Backing: Defense industrial complex, tech innovation circles, and broad favorable coverage across state-aligned and independent media channels.

2. Hakan Fidan

As Foreign Minister and former head of the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), Hakan Fidan embodies state continuity, national security authority, and geopolitical experience.²²

Strengths: Unrivaled deep-state knowledge, command over foreign policy and intelligence networks, and respect from international counterparts. Fidan appeals directly to the security-minded nationalist base and bureaucratic apparatus.

Vulnerabilities: Historically operates out of the public eye. His transition from shadow operator to retail politician requires developing a populist campaign persona, which does not naturally align with his institutional style.

Institutional Backing: Foreign Ministry, intelligence and security bureaucracy, and state administrative elites.

3. Bilal Erdoğan

Bilal Erdoğan serves as the primary custodian of the party's ideological core and family continuity.²³

While he holds no formal government post, his influence runs deep through youth foundations like TUGVA and TURGEV.

Strengths: Command over party grassroots, provincial branches, and Islamist civil society organizations. He ensures absolute loyalty to the Erdoğan family legacy and maintains traditional Milli Görüş ideological principles.

Vulnerabilities: High negative favorability ratings among opposition and centrist voters. A direct candidacy would fuel dynastic governance criticisms and risk alienating moderate voters.

²²Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "Who's Who - in Turkey's Justice and Development Party," Accessed 2026.

²³Journal of Democracy, "Islamist Parties and Democracy: Turkey's AKP in Power," Accessed 2026.

Institutional Backing: Conservative educational foundations, religious orders (tarikats), and party provincial organization heads.

4. Institutional Technocrats

In a scenario where no single figure commands absolute consensus, a collective leadership model could emerge, anchored by institutional figures such as Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz. This model emphasizes economic normalization, market predictability, and administrative stability over personalist charisma.

The MHP Veto Power: Devlet Bahçeli as Kingmaker

Any candidate emerging from the AKP succession process must pass muster with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). Under the current presidential system, the AKP cannot reach the 50% plus one threshold without nationalist support which itself is fragmented, due to emergence of parties such as the ultranationalist Victory Party (ZP) who are fanatically opposed to the current government. Nevertheless, MHP is still the foremost ultranationalist party occupying the hard right of the Turkish political spectrum. Consequently, MHP leadership holds effective veto power and immense political capital over the choice of successor.

The MHP strongly favors figures aligned with hardline national security, anti-terror operations, and a firm stance on Kurdish political demands. This dynamic favors technocratic candidates like Hakan Fidan or Selçuk Bayraktar over purely ideological or party-first figures.

Deep-Dive Political Party Landscape Analysis

Focus Area

While the ruling alliance wrestles with succession, the opposition and third-pole parties are recalculating their strategies for the post-Erdoğan era.²⁴ The competitive dynamics of the Grand National Assembly (TBMM) and the presidential runoff requirements demand a party-by-party diagnostic.

1. Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Breakaway New Party (Yeni Parti)

As the main opposition force since 2002, solidified by its municipal election gains in 2024,²⁵ the CHP ostensibly held the strongest structural position to challenge the ruling bloc. However, a leadership

²⁴Brookings Institution, "Turkey's search for a Middle East order," June 16, 2026.

²⁵Bloomsbury Intelligence and BISI, "2024 Turkish Local Elections," April 3, 2024.

crisis in 2026 and the subsequent formation of the breakaway Yeni Parti now places the latter as the de facto and de jure main opposition due to its parliamentary and public support.²⁶ Nevertheless, the subsequent discussion will treat these parties as relatively homogenous within the centre-left Kemalist bloc due their fundamental similarities and roots institutionally and ideologically.

This centre-left Kemalist bloc's path to the presidency depends on candidate selection and managing judicial pressures.

Ekrem İmamoğlu: The Mayor of Istanbul remains the opposition's most formidable retail politician, possessing an ability to win over Black Sea conservatives, urban youth, and Kurdish voters alike. His chief vulnerability remains judicial intervention, where ongoing legal cases pose a constant risk of political disqualification.

Mansur Yavaş: The Mayor of Ankara commands unmatched favorability ratings among nationalist and center-right voters nationwide. His service-oriented, low-polarization governance style makes him a powerful candidate against any AKP nominee, though his conservative background creates tension with progressive and pro-Kurdish voter blocs.

Party Leadership & Cohesion: The CHP must maintain internal structural stability under current leadership while navigating legal and administrative challenges aimed at disrupting its municipal funding and organization.

2. The Right-Wing “Third Pole”: Disruption on the Conservative and Nationalist Flank

Zafer Partisi (Victory Party - Ümit Özdağ)

Zafer Partisi has established itself as an influential political force by focusing heavily on irregular migration, national security, and secular nationalist youth frustration. However, lacking institutional and historic support, their polling is relatively low and insufficient to exceed the 7.5% vote share required to yield seats in the Turkish Parliament (TBMM). Furthermore, as things stand, they are most likely to operate as a Kingmaker as they did in the last election in 2023 when their presidential candidate, Sinan Oğan endorsed Erdoğan which effectively handed the latter the presidency.

Electoral Strategy: Siphon disillusioned nationalist voters away from both the MHP and CHP. By taking an uncompromising stance on refugee repatriation and state security, Zafer Partisi acts as a major ideological spoiler.

²⁶The Soufan Center, “As Erdogan Considers a Third Term, Türkiye Approaches an Inflection Point,” June 3, 2026.

Impact on System: Forces mainstream candidates from both alliances to adopt stricter border control and anti-immigration positions, shifting the overall national political debate to the right.

Yeniden Refah Partisi (New Welfare Party - Fatih Erbakan)

Yeniden Refah represents the traditional Milli Görüş Islamist line, positioning itself as the authentic alternative to the AKP for pious, working-class voters hit hardest by economic inflation.

Electoral Strategy: Exploit economic hardship and discontent over commercial policies to peel away core AKP conservative voters without requiring them to vote for the secular CHP.

Impact on System: Deprives the AKP of its traditional parliamentary margins in conservative heartlands across Anatolia, making Erbakan a key player in any second-round presidential endorsement negotiation.

Emerging Splinters and Center-Right Platforms

New political initiatives and breakaway center-right platforms continue to target urban voters exhausted by the traditional government-opposition polarization. These groups seek to attract technocratic, market-oriented voters who want institutional reform without radical political shifts.

3. Key Swing Blocs: DEM Party and İYİ Party Remnants

DEM Party (Pro-Kurdish Vote): Holds the essential vote block needed to cross the 50% threshold in a presidential runoff. Any opposition candidate must secure DEM voter participation without alienating nationalist voters supporting Mansur Yavaş or right-wing allies.

İYİ Party: Though diminished by internal splits and strategic shifts, its remaining voter base represents center-right nationalist swing voters who remain crucial in competitive parliamentary districts.

Strategic Scenarios: Plausible Paths for 2026–2028

Focus Area

Synthesizing the legal constraints, factional AKP dynamics, and opposition challenger strategies outlined in previous sections, this section constructs four plausible operational scenarios for Türkiye's political horizon between 2026 and 2028. Rather than predicting a single outcome, this framework projects how specific political catalysts—such as parliamentary vote thresholds under Article 116,

macroeconomic stability indicators, and judicial rulings—will shape regime stability, institutional continuity, and market confidence.

Scenario A: The Managed Technocratic Succession (AKP Handover)

Trigger: The ruling bloc determines that securing 360 parliamentary votes to re-elect President Erdoğan under Article 116 carries unacceptable political costs, or Erdoğan opts to transition into an elder statesman role. A prominent successor—such as Selçuk Bayraktar or Hakan Fidan—is formally anointed with full state and media backing.

Domestic Realignment: The AKP modernizes its image around “techno-nationalism” or administrative gravitas. The People’s Alliance retains its core conservative-nationalist voter base while soothing urban swing voters who seek stability without radical political disruption.

Macro-Economic & Foreign Policy Impact: Foreign investors view the transition as a return to institutional predictability and monetary orthodoxy.²⁷ Ankara maintains its “strategic autonomy” within NATO while pragmatically repairing institutional ties with Western allies.²⁸

Scenario B: Opposition Breakthrough & Coalition Renewal

Trigger: Ongoing cost-of-living pressures and voter fatigue override traditional identity politics. A unified opposition ticket—led by Ekrem İmamoğlu or Mansur Yavaş—navigates legal hurdles, builds a tactical alliance with Kurdish and right-wing third-pole voters, and wins a presidential runoff.

Domestic Realignment: Triggers an immediate push to dismantle the executive presidency model in favor of a reinforced parliamentary system. However, managing a wide coalition spanning social democrats, nationalists, and pro-Kurdish factions creates significant legislative friction.

Macro-Economic & Foreign Policy Impact: Triggers a short-term rally in Turkish asset classes on expectations of democratic normalization and rule-of-law reforms. Relations with the EU and NATO shift toward deeper institutional engagement, though core national security policies in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean remain structurally unchanged.

²⁷Bloomberg, “Turkey Central Bank Expected to Hold Rates as Energy Costs Impede Disinflation,” July 22, 2026.

²⁸CSIS, “Strategic Ambiguity: Erdoğan’s Turkey in a Multipolar World,” December 2, 2025.

Scenario C: Intra-Alliance Fragmentation (Right-Wing Splinter)

Trigger: Deep disagreement breaks out over AKP candidate selection, or MHP leadership exercises its veto against a chosen successor. Simultaneously, right-wing challengers like Yeniden Refah and Zafer Partisi peel away vital conservative-nationalist votes in the first round.

Domestic Realignment: The conservative bloc splits into competing factions. No single candidate secures a first-round majority, producing a chaotic runoff where smaller third-pole parties act as uncompromising kingmakers.

Macro-Economic & Foreign Policy Impact: Political gridlock delays structural economic reforms, exposing the Turkish Lira to currency volatility and capital flight.²⁹ Foreign policy becomes highly transactional and unpredictable as Ankara turns inward to manage domestic crises.

Scenario D: Judicial Lock-In & Systemic Gridlock

Trigger: The ruling apparatus uses aggressive judicial measures to disqualify top opposition figures, triggering widespread voter disenfranchisement and political polarization.

Domestic Realignment: Institutional legitimacy deteriorates rapidly. The opposition faces severe coordination problems between street-level civil resistance and formal electoral participation, while the state relies increasingly on administrative levers to maintain control.

Macro-Economic & Foreign Policy Impact: Deepens economic insulation, elevates sovereign risk premiums, and severely strains diplomatic relations with the European Parliament and Western capitals over rule-of-law standards.

Macroeconomic Policy, Geopolitical Implications, and Strategic Conclusion

The Economic Pillar: Disinflation vs. Electoral Populism

Any political transition in Türkiye will take place against a delicate economic backdrop. The central economic policy debate pivots on whether Ankara can sustain its disinflation program and orthodox monetary stance amid political pressure for pre-election stimulus.³⁰

Disinflation Trajectory: While the central bank works to manage inflation expectations, cost-of-living pressures remain a key vulnerability for the ruling party.³¹ Any signal that orthodox monetary

²⁹Central Banking, “Turkey raises inflation target to 24%, citing war risks,” May 14, 2026.

³⁰Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT), “Press Release on Interest Rates (2026-28),” July 23, 2026.

³¹ING Economics, “Turkish disinflation dips below central bank’s forecast range,” January 5, 2026.

policy will be sacrificed for short-term electoral gains risks sparking currency depreciation and capital outflows.³²

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) & Reserve Stability: Institutional stability during the political transition is essential to maintaining international capital flows, rebuilding net foreign exchange reserves, and lowering sovereign debt credit default swaps (CDS).

Geopolitical Footprint: Strategic Autonomy Beyond Personal Relations

A key strategic question for international observers is whether Türkiye's foreign policy is structurally locked into "strategic autonomy" or driven primarily by President Erdoğan's personal relationships.³³

NATO & Western Defense Integration: Türkiye's position as a critical southeastern flank NATO power remains structurally intact regardless of who holds the presidency. However, an institutional succession (e.g., under Hakan Fidan or a reformist opposition) would likely substitute transactional diplomacy with predictable defense institutional cooperation.³⁴

Regional Balancing: Ankara's multi-track diplomacy across the Black Sea, Middle East, and South Caucasus reflects permanent geography and defense-industrial capabilities rather than temporary ideology.³⁵ Any successor administration will maintain a strong defense industry and continue prioritizing national security in the regional neighborhood.³⁶

Strategic Conclusion & Analytical Summary

Türkiye stands at a structural crossroads where the mechanics of personalist political management meet the demands of institutional transition. The ruling People's Alliance faces a sharp choice: pursue complex legal pathways to extend President Erdoğan's mandate via Article 116, or manage a deliberate handover to a second-generation leader capable of preserving the movement's core coalition.

For the opposition, success requires looking beyond individual charismatic figures to build a durable, cross-ideological platform capable of overcoming systemic administrative hurdles.³⁷ Ultimately, Türkiye's political resilience will depend on whether its political parties, market institutions, and state

³²Akarsu, O. and Aktuğ, E., "How Do Monetary Policy and Inflation Announcements Affect Firm Expectations in High Inflation?," *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 2026.

³³Middle East Institute, "Turkish Foreign Policy," April 23, 2026.

³⁴Finnish Institute of International Affairs, "NATO and the Middle East," FIIA Brief, May 2025.

³⁵Demiryol, T., "The Geopolitics of Turkey's Rise as a Drone Power," 2024.; Kasapoğlu, D., "Techno-Geopolitics and the Turkish Way of Drone Warfare," *Atlantic Council*, 2022.

³⁶War on the Rocks, "Turkey's Drone Industry at a Strategic Crossroads," January 30, 2026.

³⁷Altunışık, M., "Turkey's Repositioning in a Shifting Regional Landscape: From Reactive Policies to Role-Shaping," *SSRN Working Paper*, 2026.

apparatus can navigate this transition smoothly, preserving economic stability while renewing the nation's democratic balance.

Strategic Scenario Matrix & Decision Framework

Focus Area

This concluding section synthesizes the structural variables, constitutional mechanics, and political dynamics analyzed throughout the white paper into a quantitative and qualitative decision framework. By mapping potential transition vectors against institutional strain and economic vulnerability, it outlines actionable indicators for monitoring Türkiye's direction through the 2026–2028 window.

Key Early Warning Indicators (Signposts to Monitor)

Analysts tracking the transition timeline should monitor three primary clusters of empirical signposts over the next 12 to 24 months:

Legislative Arithmetic & Constitutional Motions: Any formal push in the Grand National Assembly (TBMM) to draft a new constitution or negotiate early election terms under Article 116 serves as an immediate indicator that the ruling alliance favors extending President Erdoğan's mandate over an early succession.

Coalition Rhetoric & MHP Positioning: Public statements from MHP leadership regarding prospective AKP nominees will signal whether the nationalist bloc will back a technocratic successor (like Bayraktar or Fidan) or demand explicit policy concessions before endorsing a candidate.

Opposition Candidate Consolidation: The resolution of legal files and judicial challenges surrounding primary opposition mayors will clarify whether the main opposition enters the election cycle with a unified candidate strategy or forced internal restructuring.

Central Bank Independence & Fiscal Discipline: Shifts in monetary policy ahead of major political milestones will indicate whether the administration is prioritizing long-term disinflation or short-term electoral spending.³⁸

³⁸Daily Sabah, "CBRT says Iran war delayed disinflation, but deterioration limited," July 10, 2026.

Strategic Summary for Decision-Makers

The post-Erdoğan realignment is not merely a question of presidential personnel; it represents a structural shift in how Türkiye governs its domestic economy, manages its state apparatus, and projects influence as a middle power.³⁹ Whether the transition occurs through legal continuity, a managed technocratic handover, or a competitive opposition breakthrough, the underlying drivers of Turkish foreign policy—defense industrial development, NATO southern-flank security, and regional balancing—will maintain structural continuity.⁴⁰

International stakeholders who focus on institutional mechanics, legislative vote thresholds, and macroeconomic stability indicators rather than short-term campaign rhetoric will be best positioned to navigate the complexities of Türkiye’s upcoming political chapter.

³⁹ELIAMEP, “Turkey’s Defence Industry and the EU SAFE Regulation,” Policy Paper 186, October 2025.; ELIAMEP, “Having your cake and eating it too? Turkish Defence Industrial Base and European Strategic Autonomy,” Policy Paper 187, October 2025.

⁴⁰TRT World Research Centre, “Indispensable Yet Unacknowledged: Türkiye and the Future of Europe’s Defence Order,” Policy Outlook, 2026.; Davutoğlu, A., “The strategic depth doctrine of Turkish foreign policy,” Turkish Studies, 2006.

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