

**TURKEY'S ISLAMIST & AUTHORITARIAN POLITICS, AND  
ANTISEMITISM, DEEPEN WITH ERODGAN'S WIN**

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Isranet Daily Briefing, June 28, 2018

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**[Turkey's Election: Stockholm Syndrome at Its Worst](#): Burak Bekdil, *Gatestone Institute*, June 26, 2018— Nothing could have better explained the Turks' joy over their president's election victory on June 24 than a cartoon that depicts a cheering crowd with three lines in speech balloons: "It was a near thing," one says.**

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**TURKEY'S ELECTION: STOCKHOLM SYNDROME AT ITS WORST**

***Burak Bekdil***

**[Gatestone Institute](#), June 26, 2018**

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Nothing could have better explained the Turks' joy over their president's election victory on June 24 than a cartoon that depicts a cheering crowd with three lines in speech balloons: "It was a near thing," one says. "We would almost become free." And the last one says: "Down with freedoms!"

Turkey's Islamist strongman, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, won 52.5% of the national vote in presidential elections on June 24. That marks a slight rise from 51.8% he won in presidential elections of August 2014. More than 25 million Turks voted for Erdoğan's presidency. His closest rival, social democrat Muharrem Ince, an energetic former schoolteacher, won less than 16 million votes, or nearly 31% of the national vote. The opposition candidate admitted that the election was fair. There have been no reports of fraud from international observers, at least so far.

Despite the defeat, Ince was one of the many winners of Election 2018. For the first time since 1977 a social democrat politician won more than 30% of the vote in Turkey. Ince's party, the Republican People's Party (CHP) won only 22.6% of the vote in the parliamentary race.

Despite Erdoğan's clear victory, his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) performed worse than expected: It won 42.4% of the vote in parliamentary elections, down eight percentage points from the 49.5% it won in the previous parliamentary race in November 2015. That decline deprived the AKP of winning parliamentary majority, with 295 seats in Turkey's 300-member house. Instead, AKP's right-wing partners, the National Movement Party (MHP) unexpectedly won 49 seats, bringing the total number of seats controlled by the governing bloc up to 344, a comfortable majority.

The AKP-MHP alliance marks the official birth of Turkey's new ruling ideology: A bloc of Islamists and nationalists that traditionally represent Turkey's lowest educated rural population. Erdoğan may not be too happy having to share power with a party that was last in a coalition alliance in 2002 but with his AKP lacking a parliamentary majority he will have to keep the nationalists in partnership. He may also have to give them high-profile seats like vice-president and/or ministerial positions.

After election results on June 24 Turkey will be further dragged into authoritarian politics with the blend of Islamism and nationalism emerging as the new state ideology. Deep polarization in the Turkish society will probably get deeper. There are already signs. In a victory speech in the evening hours of June 24 Erdoğan's

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foreign minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, said that the losers of the election were the “terrorists”. In this politically-divisive, pathetic logic, 47.5% of Turks are terrorists: that makes about 38.5 million people.

The national joy over the re-election of a man known best to the rest of the world for his authoritarian, sometimes despotic rule, is not surprising in a country where average schooling is a mere 6.5 years. As recently as April 2017, the Turks had already given up the remaining pieces of their democracy when they voted in favor of constitutional amendments that made Erdoğan head of the state, head of government and head of the ruling party all at the same time. The amendments gave the president almost unchecked powers and the authority to rule by decree.

In its “Freedom in the World 2018” report, Freedom House categorizes Turkey as a “not free” country due to “due to a deeply flawed constitutional referendum that centralized power in the presidency, the mass replacement of elected mayors with government appointees, arbitrary prosecutions of rights activists and other perceived enemies of the state, and continued purges of state employees, all of which have left citizens hesitant to express their views on sensitive topics”. Turkey also tops Freedom house’s list of countries where democracy has been on decline for the past decade. Ironically, even civil war-torn Syria is at the bottom of the list (meaning its democracy has declined the least among the countries surveyed).

Erdoğan’s Turkey was galloping toward dictatorship even before the Turks gave him the powers he wanted in the April 2017 referendum. Millions of anti-Erdoğan Turks are now terrified of the prospect of further torment under an Islamist-nationalist coalition show run by a president with effectively no checks and balances. Ince, the opposition candidate against Erdoğan has vowed to fight back. Let us hope he does not have to fight back from where many Erdoğan opponents have been locked up.

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*Sohrab Ahmari*

*Commentary*, June 25, 2018

**Bernard Lewis issued a startling prediction in 2010: Iran—the land of scowling ayatollahs and flag burnings—would abandon Islamism by the end of the decade, while Turkey—Washington’s stalwart Cold War ally—would turn away from the West and burrow deeper into its Muslim identity. Lewis is no longer with us, and there are still a few years left in his wager, but events in both countries are proving him remarkably prescient.**

**On Turkey, Lewis has already been vindicated. Witness the ballot-box triumph of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party, or AKP. In the presidential contest over the weekend, Erdogan thumped his opponent, Muharrem Ince of the Republican People’s Party, 53% to 31%. A smattering of pro-Kurdish and secular candidates divided the remaining ballots. Erdogan’s AKP and its allies also locked a majority of seats in Parliament.**

**The elections were not exactly fair. As the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe observed, the state of emergency imposed following a 2016 coup attempt constricted “freedom of expression and assembly” for the opposition. Erdogan has used the emergency laws to dismiss more than 100,000 soldiers, teachers, police officers, and journalists. And some 50,000 people have been jailed and are awaiting trial, according to rights groups. With numerous opposition reporters languishing in prison, it came as no surprise that the ruling party dominated the media landscape, which led European Union officials to conclude that “conditions for campaigning were not equal.”**

**All this is par for the course with Erdogan, who first launched his power-grab in 2008. The opposition is right to complain of Erdogan’s efforts to hollow out Turkey’s independent institutions and remove checks on the AKP. Yet the fact remains that a substantial majority of Turks continue to elect Erdogan and the AKP in one plebiscite after another. In Erdogan these voters see, not a corrupt would-be dictator, but a visionary who has delivered jobs and growth and reasserted Turkey’s long-suppressed Islamic identity. A majority of Turks prefer a pious Turkey anchored in its Muslim neighborhood rather than in Europe. It is high time to recognize that, for now, Turkey is lost to the West.**

**That doesn’t mean the West should instantly sever all diplomatic, economic, and**

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military ties to Turkey. But the old arrangements lack the sentimental and ideological glue that once held them together. Everything is fragile and tentative and subject to revision by the majoritarian strongman in Ankara—and the voters who form his durable base.

So far, the Bernard Lewis scenario has been borne out by events in Turkey. But what about Iran? There, too, events are tending in the direction foreseen by the great historian...(T)he Islamic Republic faces a profound legitimacy crisis at home, with not a day going by without some explosion of popular discontent. The ideological currents tossing the mullahs this way and that, I argue, are strongly nationalist. The slogans that daily ring out from the streets point to a growing revulsion with the regime's Shiite-expansionist project, which has starved the national fisc, not to mention the population, and left the country sanctioned and isolated.

The latest slogan: "Death to Palestine!" You read that right. In a country that has become synonymous with Holocaust-denial cartoon contests and threats to wipe Israel off the map, people are chanting "Death to Palestine." Iranians don't have a beef with Palestinians, of course. But they have had it with their regime's decades-long underwriting of Hezbollah, Hamas, and other Palestinian terror groups. Why is our national wealth going to Gaza, they ask, rather than to Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz? The regime has no good answer to such questions. It has to resort to the truncheon, and that may work for a time, perhaps for many more years. But not forever. Bernard Lewis is surely smiling somewhere.

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**TRUMP ARMS AN ADVERSARY**

*Bret Stephens*

[New York Times](#), June 22, 2018

The Turkish Air Force took delivery of its first F-35A stealth plane this week at an elaborate rollout ceremony in Texas that featured, according to one report, "traditional music and song together with a dancer who performed ... while wearing a pair of massive leather wings." If the performance was bizarre, the

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underlying politics ranged from the incompetent to the perverse. In a word: Trumpian. In an era of American baby prisons and Melania meta-messaging, it can be difficult to pay attention to the things that used to matter. So here's a quick primer on our former ally Turkey, which on Sunday goes to the polls for presidential and parliamentary elections.

Its economy is in crisis. The leader of a major opposition party is in prison. A state of emergency, in force since a failed 2016 military coup, has resulted in the estimated detention of nearly 140,000 people, the closure of 189 media outlets, and the arrest of more than 300 journalists.

The Turkish military nearly came to blows last year with U.S. forces fighting the Islamic State in Syria. It also intends to purchase advanced Russian anti-aircraft missiles that are incompatible with NATO systems. An American pastor, Andrew Brunson, has been held in a Turkish prison for nearly two years — hostage to the Turkish government efforts to extradite dissident cleric Fethullah Gulen from his home in Pennsylvania.

All this has been the doing of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, an Islamist and vitriolic anti-Semite (he once decried the “Jewish capital” allegedly financing *The Times*), who has steadily consolidated authoritarian power over 15 years in power. Erdogan was once genuinely popular, but his recent electoral victories have been increasingly marred by serious allegations of voter intimidation and electoral fraud.

Good news? Well, yes, there is some. Precisely because Erdogan has driven the economy off a cliff, there's a modest chance he'll have to face a runoff election next month, and a decent chance his A.K.P. party won't get a majority in Parliament. Opposition candidates are more united against Erdogan than they've ever been, and they've drawn huge numbers at their rallies.

What's an American administration to do? Turkey poses honest quandaries for U.S. policymakers. Are we better off, to use Lyndon Johnson's line about J. Edgar Hoover, with Erdogan “inside the tent, pissing out, than outside pissing in”? Turkey dominates NATO's southern flank, and the air base at Incirlik has served a useful role in the fight against the Islamic State. There have been calls to kick Turkey out of the Alliance — exactly how isn't clear — which might be emotionally satisfying and morally justified. But it would do nothing to improve Ankara's domestic or international behavior and would probably worsen it.

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None of that means, however, that the U.S. should lift a finger on Erdogan's behalf. Barack Obama tried to embrace him early on as a model for Muslim democracy, a policy that proved to be nearly as fruitless as the Russia Reset. Trump, who has yet to appoint an ambassador to Turkey, has gone further, fulsomely calling Erdogan "a friend of mine" who gets "very high marks" for his leadership.

That may not be surprising, since Trump seems never to have met a thug he doesn't want to imitate and flatter. What's inexplicable is why the administration, led by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, would go ahead with the F-35 deliveries after Republican and Democratic senators tried to block the delivery until Turkey releases Pastor Brunson, drops its bid to buy Russian missiles, and improves its overall behavior.

The F-35 was leverage. We just squandered it. Worse, we did it just days before the election, handing Erdogan a political prize that he can wield as evidence that the United States doesn't dare to oppose him and that he can continue to behave as he pleases. In the meantime, a country now moving into Russia's orbit will acquire one of the most sophisticated pieces of military hardware ever made.

If and when Erdogan goes fully anti-American — he's already nine-tenths of the way there — what's to keep him from allowing Russian technicians to take a closer look, so they might gain a better idea of how to shoot it down? Or from using it against American allies in the region, including Israel? If Obama were making this delivery today, Republicans would call it treason.

It will be a lucky thing for Turks if Erdogan fails to win another mandate for five more years of political, social and ethnic repression. Turkey is a beautiful country of remarkable people that could yet show that a Muslim state can also be prosperous, tolerant and democratic.

Should that happen, history will record that the United States did nothing to help, and much to hinder, the forces of freedom. As with so much that the Trump administration does, it's not a surprise, but it's still a shock.

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**ANTI-SEMITISM IS ON THE RISE,  
FROM BERLIN'S STREETS TO TURKISH GROCERY STORES**

***Robert Fulford***

***[National Post](#)*, June 15, 2018**

In Germany, of all places, anti-Semitism has recently made a fresh and ominous appearance. It became clear when mobs in Berlin reacted to U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital by waving Palestinian flags while burning Israel's flag beneath the Brandenburg Gate.

This is one of many countries where a revived anti-Semitism is apparent — Canada and the U.S. are others, where anti-Jewish vandalism is increasing. The German government considers it so disturbing that a commission has been created to deal specifically with prejudice against Jews. Polling in recent years indicates that old stereotypes still live on in the German imagination. For instance, about 10 per cent of the population apparently believes that Jews are now too powerful in Germany.

Sawsan Chebli, a deputy minister in the Berlin government, has argued that Germans should know more about the Holocaust, the central crime of their history. She thinks every student in Germany should make at least one visit to a death camp — a fairly sure way of grasping the emotional and moral impact of triumphant anti-Semitism.

Chebli is a 39-year-old German-born daughter of Palestinian asylum seekers. She's said that, "My father is a pious Muslim, hardly speaks German, can neither read nor write, but he is more integrated than many functionaries of the AfD (the powerful, popular Allianz für Deutschland)." By "integrated" she means he grasps the meaning of German history.

The AfD, a right-wing party proud of its patriotism, holds that Germany is self-destructively obsessed with the Nazi past. While not anti-Semitic, it holds that Germany should be seen as a "normal" state, rather than a place known mainly for its shameful behaviour. But is it possible to kill six million people and be judged



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**“normal” seven decades later? The AfD hopes to forget the past, not really a possibility.**

**But if Germany has a troubling amount of anti-Jewish bigotry, Turkey is experiencing a tidal wave. Attacks on synagogues are reported, and programming on the government-owned TV network is clearly anti-Jewish. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other politicians from the ruling AKP use Jews and Israel as scapegoats in campaigning for the general election on June 24. The state-controlled media recently blamed the “Jewish lobby” for the sudden drop of the value in Turkish currency.**

**On social media the treatment of Jews is outrageous. “Hitler and Nazi Germany will be known and remembered with gratitude and respect” is one line that appears. Another is a quote attributed to Hitler: “One day you will curse me for every Jew I did not kill.”**

**In Turkey, Adolf Hitler has become a hero and a best-seller. *Mein Kampf* sells as many as 50,000 copies a year. Publishers feverishly pursue Hitler’s admirers. Thirty-five separate publishing houses have printed translations by at least 21 different translators. Eight new editions came out in 2016, nine in 2017. Hitler’s manic memoirs are now on sale not only in bookstores but also in supermarkets, including the 1,800 stores in the Migros chain.**

**After all these years, what can they find in Hitler, these Turkish readers? Perhaps they are simply looking for confirmation of what they have always believed. Prejudice teaches envy, which leads to malice. Jews are seen as too prosperous and too powerful. Reuven Brenner, a management professor writing last week in the *Wall Street Journal*, sees this as a result of Jewish history.**

**“Self-reliance has been a necessity,” he explains. The Jews were never numerous enough to achieve much in politics or through military power. They focused on scientific, commercial and financial success. “Jews’ success through ages and countries despite severe discrimination” encourages jealousy in those who blame others for their own lack of achievement. Anti-Semitism is in essence a narrative of vain ambitions and failed dreams. It is immune to rational argument but that’s part of its power: it appeals to those who would like to think but cannot.**

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**[After Erdogan's Victory, What Should Israel Do?: Herb Keinon, \*Jerusalem Post\*, June 26, 2018](#)**—Gazans might have shot off fireworks in celebration, and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas may have put in a congratulatory call, but there was obviously no joy in Jerusalem on Tuesday at Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's victory - and that of his party - in Sunday's election.

**[Turkey: Glorification of Murder, Martyrdom and Child Soldiers: Uzay Bulut, \*Gatestone Institute\*, June 19, 2018](#)**—Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz recently announced that the government was shutting down a Turkish nationalist mosque in Vienna and dissolving a group called the Arab Religious Community that runs six mosques, according to the Associated Press. "Parallel societies, political Islam and tendencies toward radicalization have no place in our country," Kurz told reporters.

**[U.S. Islamists Ignore Erdogan's Authoritarianism, Celebrate Win: \*IPT News\*, June 26, 2018](#)**—A number of American-Islamists are hailing Turkish President Tayyip Recep Erdogan's election Monday to a new five-year term as a win for democracy.

**[Turkey Seeks Arrests of 138 for Links to US-Based Cleric: \*National Post\*, June 26, 2018](#)**—Turkey's state-run news agency says authorities have issued initial detention warrants for 138 people, including military personnel, for suspected links to a network led by a U.S.-based cleric who Turkey accuses of orchestrating a 2016 failed coup attempt.