

ERDOGAN IMPEDING PRESIDENTIAL TRIUMPH AND TURKEY'S LOOMING NEW POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

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*"[T]he new Turkey is a grown, developed and strong Turkey. The new Turkey will serve international peace better.... The new Turkey will be grand and pioneering."*¹

On August 10, 2014 people in Turkey will go to polls to elect their president. Three candidates, Erdoğan, İhsanoğlu and Selahattin Demirtaş, will contend with each other for the presidential chair. However, the real challenger is no other than current Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan. The Republican People's Party (CHP) and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) joint candidate İhsanoğlu and

¹ "Erdogan, launching presidential bid, vows 'pioneering new Turkey'",11,July,2011, Reuters, available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/07/11/uk-turkey-election-idUKKBN0FG10E20140711>

pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) candidate Selahattin, a popular political figure among Kurdish people have no chance in derailing Erdoğan's forthcoming Presidential victory.

Since his Party's municipal election victory on March 31, 2014 Premier Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has moved closer into achieving his political goal to become the longer running Turkish leader since Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's death. Nobody doubts his forthcoming Presidential electoral victory on August 10th, 2014 and his real aims into transforming the Turkish Presidency through constitutional changes from a ceremonial one into a Russian style power house.

A political vehicle that will allow him to continue his neo Ottoman geopolitical ambitions in the Balkans, the Levant and the Middle East.²

Step by step he has vanquished all his internal political opponents, curtailed Fethullah Gülen's parallel influence inside the Turkish state apparatus, simultaneously neutralized President Abdullah Gül political personality and lastly

² Premier Erdoğan is looking to be the representative of Sunni Islam on earth, reminiscent of the days of the Caliphate in Constantinople. Turkish media are even preoccupied with the plight of the Uighur Muslims in China, the Muslim Rohingya minority issues in Myanmar and recently they even discovered the Moro Muslim rebels peace settlement difficulties in the Philippines. It could not be better phrased as Murat Yetkin asserts: "[E]rdoğan promised that Turkey would be 'the voice of all the oppressed' from Afghanistan to Syria, from Somalia to Egypt, and those who refuse to be seen as 'others,' meaning the West."Quoted from "Erdoğan promises an aggressive campaign, ambitious presidency", 01, July, 2014, Hurriyet daily news, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-promises-an-aggressive-campaign-ambitious-presidency.aspx?pageID=449&nID=68533&NewsCatID=409>, see also, Philippine Peace Deal in Jeopardy as Muslim Rebels Cry Foul, 07, August, 2014, Daily Sabah, available at: <http://www.dailysabah.com/asia/2014/08/07/philippine-peace-deal-in-jeopardy-as-muslim-rebels-cry-foul>. See, also, "Rohingya children in Myanmar camps going hungry", 08, August, 2014, Zaman, available at: http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_rohingya-children-in-myanmar-camps-going-hungry_354948.html. See, also, Uyghur exile praises Turkey's support for Human Rights, 09, August, 2014, Daily Sabah, available at: <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/08/08/uyghur-exile-praises-turkeys-support-for-human-rights>

froze the Kurdish conflict by allowing his security chief Dr. Hakan Fidan to begin settlement negotiations with outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).³ As far as the military is concerned it is currently subdued under trustful officers like Chief of General Staff Necdet Özel and MIT's all seeing vigilant eye. However, his greatest sociopolitical victory is that he forced the Turkish secular political opposition (CHP) into nominating Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu as his mainly political opponent. Ushering a political Sunnification era into the land of Anatolia given the fact that Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu until 2014 was the head of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). A conservative organization that safeguards and protects the interests of the Muslim world. His nomination would had been inconceivable just a decade ago fostering an antithesis of what the CHP's party philosophy really represents in Turkey with its secular agenda. Even the Great Union Party (Büyük Birlik Partisi - BBP) a far-right Islamist political party in Turkey who controls around one percent of the vote, reiterated their support to İhsanoğlu presidential bid. A party which operates between a synthesis of Turkish Nationalism and Islamism which happens also to be a split from the other main Turkish nationalist

³ Like the days of Stalin's rule in the USSR when Nicolay Bukharin was purged because he was number two in the Party hierarchy, Abdullah Gul's opponents if deemed necessary might have set up a mechanism to deny any possible comeback in politics that could threaten Erdoğan's political stature. See, "President Gül might be prosecuted over 'lost trillion'", 04,July,2014,Zaman, available at: <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-352154-president-gul-might-be-prosecuted-over-lost-trillion.html>. See, also, "President Gül denies report of Bosphorus villa purchase",06,July,2014, Zaman, available at: <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-352268-president-gul-denies-report-of-bosporus-villa-purchase.html>

party called MHP. Ironically it goes without saying that Ihsanoglu's father during the late Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes ruling period in Turkey 1950-1960 was also offered the leadership of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (DİB).⁴ Thus, exposing an Islamic conservative link that goes further back since CHP's leader Ismet Inonu's antagonism with Adnan Menderes Democratic party. Premier Adnan Menderes is the most important culprit for Turkey's secular demise since the death of Kemal Ataturk. His Democratic Party in the 1950's liberated the Turkish Islamic synthesis from Ataturk's secular thirty year parenthesis as it is seen by Turkey's religious Sunni majority. He used Islam as a pure form of energy for his political ambitions. The rise of new mosques and Imam Hatip Occulari pious secondary education schools cemented political Islam. One of the most notable alumni of Imam Hatip Occulari is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

It is no secret that a conceivable amount of Alevi's did not like his nomination by the CHP for the office of the Presidency of the Republic. For them Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu candidacy represents a religious Sunni conservative symbol.

⁵ Dozens of complaints and articles have been written by numerous Turkish Media

4 "After interview, critics satisfied over Erdoğan's presidential rival", 04,July,2014, Zaman, available at: <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-352049-after-interview-critics-satisfied-over-erdogans-presidential-rival.html>

5 Despite CHP's effort to show that the Alevi's as a whole support the İhsanoğlu candidacy for Turkey's Presidency, Fevzi Gümüş, the Chairman of Alevi-Bektaşî Federation declares the opposite. For him not only İhsanoğlu is a conservative choice but also he claimed that the latter has served as Alparslan Türkeş, former MHP leader's advisor and has Islamist tendencies. according with him:"[İ]hsanoğlu does not respond to societal expectations and cannot be a candidate of Alevis" Gümüş noted... Quoted from: "Alevis refuse to support İhsanoğlu as a Presidential candidate", 25,June,2014,Daily sabah, available at: <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/06/25/alevis-refuse-to-support-ihsanoglu-as-a-presidential-candidate>

and CHP representatives concerning his candidacy.⁶ Even Pro Erdoğan's news media didn't miss a chance of promoting them to their domestic and foreign readers.⁷ Bringing a dichotomy into CHP's Alevi support base and fears of what is going to follow into Turkey's future political scene concerning their religious rights and possible further marginalization by the Sunni state apparatus.⁸ Furthermore, if the results of the Turkish presidential elections are poor for CHP's nomination it is obvious that Kemal's political heritage might even split into two factions. One that will represent a Social Democratic and secular agenda composed mainly by Alevi's and liberal voters and one that might join the Nationalistic side of Anatolia's political spectrum.

The greatest short term mystery of all is who is going to take over the AKP leadership and the position of the next Prime-minister that will allow Premier

⁶ "Can CHP rally its troops behind İhsanoğlu for presidency?", 19,June,2014, Hurriyet daily news, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/can-chp-rally-its-troops-behind-ihsanoglu-for-presidency.aspx?pageID=449&nID=67969&NewsCatID=497>"CHP'S Tarhan slams CHP over İhsanoğlu nomination",02,July,2014,DailySabah,available at: <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/07/24/women-protest-over-ihsanoglu-abortion-remark>. See also, "Presidential Candidate of Modern Turkey: Emine Ülker Tarhan", 28,June ,2014, aydinlikdaily, available at: <http://www.aydinlikdaily.com/Detail/Presidential-Candidate-Of-Modern-Turkey-Emine-Ülker-Tarhan/3754#.U7DYrNiKBMs>. See,also, "İhsanoğlu rift in the CHP," June,29,2014,Zaman,available at: http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/gunay-hilal-aygun_351593_ihsanoglu-rift-in-the-chp.html. See,also, "Öymen: They Cannot Sell İhsanoğlu as a Kemalist",23,June,2014, Aydinlik Daily ,available at: <http://www.aydinlikdaily.com/Detail/Öymen-They-Cannot-Sell-İhsanoğlu-As-A-Kemalist/3686#.U6nl09iKBMs>. See,also,"İhsanoğlu nomination leads to cracks in CHP", 18,June,2014, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/ihsanoglu-nomination-leads-to-cracks-in-chp.aspx?pageID=238&nID=67983&NewsCatID=338>

⁷ "Tension within CHP boils over Presidential candidacy of former Islamic head", 19,June,2014, Daily Sabah, available at: <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/06/19/tension-within-chp-boils-over-presidential-candidacy-of-former-islamic-body-head>.See,also, "Joint candidate opposed by 42 Former CHP Congressmen and Ministers," 23,june,2014, Daily Sabah, available at: <http://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/06/23/joint-candidate-opposed-by-42-former-chp-congressmen-and-ministers>

⁸ The fact that ISIL Jihadist members or sympathizers burned down so easily two Shiite Mosque's twice in Istanbul's Esenyurt district brings fears in Alevi's of what might follow in a Sunni polarized Society directly or indirectly by erdogan's foreign and domestic policies. See, "ISIL 'attacks Shiite mosque' in Istanbul,"July,16,2014, hurriyetdailynews, available at: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/isil-attacks-shiite-mosque-in-istanbul.aspx?pageID=238&nID=69200&NewsCatID=341>. See,also, " Turkish Shiites fear growing hate crimes",11,july,2014, Al Monitor, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/tremblay-turkish-shiites-secterian-hate-crime-isis-syria.html>

Erdoğan to complete his goals, and at the same time wont challenge his governing authority? The strongest suitors that fold under this category are two personalities. It can be either Foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu or AKP's vice Chairman and newly joined party member Dr.Numan Kurtulmuş. Ironically some have even mentioned Dr. Hakan Fidan MIT's Turkish Intelligence undersecretary as a possible alternative Prime Minister. However this former young NCO that served under the ranks of the Kemalist General command establishment in Europe and Ankara, one that received President's Ahmet Necdet Sezer personal Presidential degree into becoming Head of Turkish International Development and Cooperation Agency (TICA) and later on under Erdoğan's personal choice as chief of Turkey's intelligence services knows that is too early for him to strike for more power than he can really digest.

Dr. Hakan Fidan above all is a Machiavellian character, a rising star master of politics which knows better that it is too early for him even to contemplate the thought of becoming a Prime minister. After all there are too many party suitors like Binali Yıldırım or Mehmet Ali Şahin and even AKP Islamic intellectuals like Dr. Ibrahim Kalin Deputy Undersecretary of State and Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister of Turkey that could better fill this position than him in the eyes of many in the AKP party apparatus. It goes without saying that in time it is certain that Dr. Hakan Fidan will further elevate his position to that of the future premier of

Turkey. After all the former NCO's ambitions are unbound. His quick rising into positions of power in Turkey speaks by itself.

Now returning on the issue of the two main Prime Minister suitors , according with Demirtas, Davutoğlu is no doubt one of the most hardworking ministers of the Cabinet and one of the most outspoken political personalities after Erdoğan against the Hizmet community.⁹ He speaks fluent English and is well known in the International community. In addition despite his recent foreign policy failures (Mosul, Gaza, Egypt, Libya,) his Strategic depth will remain unchanged even without him. His Neo Ottoman legacy is deeply entrenched in Turkey's foreign guiding principles for years to come. However, on the other case Dr. Numan Kurtulmuş, AKP Party's vice president of Economic Affairs, is politically and internationally untainted from any misgivings stemming from Turkish politics or foreign policy stigmas. He is well versed with international relations he speaks fluent English and above all he taught as an economist at Cornell University in the US which makes him familiar with the western intellectual thought. Furthermore he is a child of Turkish Political Islam and an old cadre of (Virtue Party) Fazilet Partisi, and Saadet Partisi, (Felicity Party) Refah's (welfare) successors parties. Former elected chairman (October 26, 2008) of the Felicity Party (SP) only to be

⁹ "Is Erdoğan framing Davutoğlu as the next prime minister? ",23,July,2014, hurriyetdailynews , available at:<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/is-erdogan-framing-davutoglu-as-the-next-prime-minister.aspx?pageID=449&nID=69472&NewsCatID=429>

forced to resign after a political conflict with his leader Necmettin Erbakan. The main reason was that he excluded the names of Erbakan's relatives and friends within the party leadership's inner circle. Soon after Kurtulmuş founded a new party, the People's Voice Party (Halkın Sesi Partisi), of which he was elected leader on November 28, 2010. Only to be dissolved by him two years later in order to join the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in September 2012. Above all Dr. Numan Kurtulmuş choice as a prime Minister if it will materialize will include a continuation of the Turkish Political Islam into AKP's inner Psych. An important fact that other potential candidates lack from their resumes into becoming the new AKP's party leader and future Prime Minister of Turkey.

However, one thing is for sure that Premier Erdoğan has succeeded in transforming Turkish society into a more conservative and Islamic oriented one. Furthermore he expanded the Turkish economy which was financed by the Gulf's Monarchies, took over the Palestinian cause as a platform that enriched his Sunni hegemonic geopolitical policies, and lastly set the base for a home grown Sunni defense industry. If there is an afterlife it is for sure that his former protector, teacher ,Islamic comrade and Refah's party leader Erbakan will be laughing from his grave at his secular enemies. Knowing that his protégé managed into achieving in the end Refah's policies but with different twist.

Paradoxically, once more the loser in this case is the Alevi minority that saw CHP party becoming more Sunni oriented in its policies. In addition the Alevi's community's demands still haven't been met by the Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (DİB). Just mentioning some are: Official recognition of cemevis; an end to required religion classes; converting the building of the Madımak Hotel in Sivas, in which 30 plus people in 1993 were killed by an arson attack, into a museum; and the return of assets and properties of Alevi-Bektaşî dervish lodges.¹⁰ As far as the Kurdish issue nobody should be surprised if the Kurds might also be trapped between their internal disputes and Ankara's cooperation with Teheran concerning their mutual Kurdish minority interests. It won't be the first time that the Kurdish cause was derailed. During the war of independence in the early 1920s, against the allied forces and the Greek Expeditionary Army all the promises of Isonomy made to them were not honored after the war. Most of their leaders were executed by kemal's security apparatus.

Concluding by saying that Erdoğan's incoming Presidential triumph will usher new imperial ambitions that will require an imperial capital: "*the Golden Apple*." One that reminds nothing of the Kemalist secular past but one that is simultaneously reminiscent of its glorious Ottoman history. After all according

¹⁰ "Polarizing discourse may permanently harm social cohesion", June, 22, 2014 Zaman, available at: <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-350978-polarizing-discourse-may-permanently-harm-social-cohesion.html>

with Tayyip Erdoğan: "*The old Turkey is in the past now. The gates of the old Turkey are closed.*"¹¹

¹¹ Erdoğan, launching presidential bid, vows 'pioneering new Turkey', 11 July 2011, Reuters, available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/07/11/uk-turkey-election-idUKKBN0FG1OE20140711>