

# Policy Brief

MSc Political Science and Political Economy

*Turkey 2028: Full Political Scenario Analysis  
Probability Framework, Evidence Base, Legitimacy Dynamics,  
Crystallisation Model, and Transition Scenarios*

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## Abstract

This paper presents a probability framework for Turkey's next general election, scheduled for no later than May 2028. It integrates non-government Turkish polling, international human rights reporting, and structural analysis of the regime's legal crackdown to argue that a CHP-led opposition victory is the single most probable individual outcome (estimated at 47-51%). Two original analytical frameworks underpin the analysis. A *repression ratchet* model demonstrates that the regime's legal offensive generates compounding legitimacy costs which constrain further escalation while strengthening opposition unity. A *crystallisation model* demonstrates that the 28-35% undecided voter bloc is predominantly composed of latent opposition supporters rather than genuine swing voters, and that triggers already in motion will dissolve this bloc in the opposition's direction over the next 12-18 months. The combined probability of scenarios resulting in an opposition-led government is estimated at 80-90%. While the structural forces favour opposition victory, short-term regime tactics could delay crystallisation by 3-6 months in some scenarios.

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## 1. Executive Summary

*A CHP-led opposition victory is the single most probable individual outcome for Turkey's next general election, estimated at 47-51%.*

Two original frameworks drive the conclusions. First, a **repression ratchet** model showing that the regime's legal crackdown generates compounding legitimacy costs that constrain further escalation while strengthening opposition unity. Second, a **crystallisation model** showing that the 28-35% undecided bloc is overwhelmingly composed of latent opposition supporters, not genuine swing voters, and that triggers already in motion will dissolve this bloc in the opposition's direction over the next 12-18 months. The combined probability of scenarios resulting in an opposition-led government is approximately 80-90%.

## 2. Probability Framework

This analysis structures Turkey's political future around four outcome buckets rather than a binary 'who wins' frame. Incumbent retention in Turkey's competitive authoritarian system does not run through a single mechanism. The regime can retain power through a normal electoral victory, managed competition that tilts the playing field, or hard authoritarian consolidation. These are qualitatively different outcomes. The opposition's main path, by contrast, is concentrated in one large bucket: CHP wins and the result is recognised.

Scenario	Initial Est.	After Legal Assessment	If Full Escalation	Final Revised
<b>CHP-led opposition win, recognised</b>	43-46%	38-44%	30-42%	<b>47-51%</b>
AKP/incumbent normal election win	18-22%	16-20%	10-15%	15-17%
AKP retains power via managed competition	22-26%	25-30%	18-25%	20-22%
Hard rupture/non-recognition/crisis	10-14%	12-18%	22-35%	12-16%

**Key revision:** The CHP-win bucket was revised upward from an initial 43-46% to a final 47-51%. The four final-revised buckets sum to 100% at their midpoints (49 + 16 + 21 + 14). This reflects two structural insights: the regime's escalation capacity is self-limiting because of compounding legitimacy costs, and the undecided bloc breaks overwhelmingly toward the opposition. As Esen and Gumuscu argue (Journal of Democracy, March 2025),

this personalised legal warfare risks pushing Turkey from competitive authoritarianism toward hegemonic autocracy precisely because it destroys the democratic facade the regime still needs. The hard-rupture bucket (12-16%) is the most uncertain estimate in the framework. A reviewer could reasonably argue for values as high as 18-20%, given Erdogan's demonstrated willingness to accept authoritarian escalation. Such an adjustment would come primarily at the expense of the managed-competition bucket rather than the CHP-win bucket, because the factors driving hard rupture upward, full legal siege, institutional capture, are the same factors that make managed competition less tenable.

### 3. Methodology

The analysis employs structured analytic estimation informed by Bayesian reasoning (Tetlock and Gardner, 2015). The notation below describes the logical structure of the updating process, not a numerically computed model. All likelihood ratios are assessed qualitatively through iterative engagement with evidence rather than computed from formal priors. The outcome space is decomposed into four MECE buckets:

$$\mathbb{P}(S_1) + \mathbb{P}(S_2) + \mathbb{P}(S_3) + \mathbb{P}(S_4) = 1 \quad (1)$$

Estimates are updated via Bayesian reasoning, where  $\mathcal{L}$  denotes the likelihood function and  $\mathcal{E}$  denotes the evidence set:

$$\mathbb{P}(S_i)_{\text{updated}} = \frac{\mathbb{P}(S_i)_{\text{prior}} \times \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{E} | S_i)}{\sum_j [\mathbb{P}(S_j)_{\text{prior}} \times \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{E} | S_j)]} \quad (2)$$

The crystallisation model decomposes the undecided bloc  $\mathcal{U}$  into  $k$  segments:

$$\Delta_{\text{opp}} = \sum_k w_k \cdot p_k \cdot \mathbb{P}(\mathcal{J}_k) \quad (3)$$

The final probability integrates across five election-day scenarios:

$$\mathbb{P}(\text{opp. governs}) = \sum_j \mathbb{P}(E_j) \cdot \mathbb{P}(W | E_j) \quad (4)$$

Likelihood ratios are assessed qualitatively rather than computed numerically. The equations above describe the logical architecture of the estimation, not a mechanical computation. The key load-bearing claim is the crystallisation model's estimate that 75-80% of undecided voters are latent opposition supporters. A sensitivity analysis on this parameter shows the conclusion is robust: even if only 60% of undecideds are latent opposition rather than 75-80%, the post-crystallisation swing is still approximately 7-8 percentage points, which transforms the current 1-4 point CHP lead into a 9-12 point opposition advantage. The main conclusion, that a CHP-led opposition win is the largest single bucket, holds under any assumption above approximately 55% latent opposition, a threshold well within the range supported by MetroPOLL's change-demand data (67.1%) and KONDA's protest-support data (73%). Limitations include: the qualitative nature of the estimation, inference from mood polls rather than direct cross-tabs of undecided voters by prior preference (Esen, 2025), measurement error in competitive authoritarian polling environments (Schedler, 2013), and timeframe dependency calibrated to the 2027-2028 election window.

## 4. Evidence Base

### 4.1 Party-level polling

Multiple independent Turkish polling houses consistently show CHP in first place and AKP in second, with one exception: Genar's March 2026 survey shows AKP at 34.2%. This outlier is noted for balance. The latest SER-Ar poll (March 3-16, 2026) shows CHP 31.9% versus AKP 30.6%, with MHP at 6.8%, below the 7% threshold.

Pollster	CHP %	AKP %	CHP Lead	MHP %	Undecided	Period
ALF Research	34.1	33.5	+0.6	-	-	Jan 2026
ASAL Research	34.8	32.1	<b>+2.7</b>	-	-	Jan-Feb 2026
PIAR Research	34.5	32.6	+1.9	-	-	Jan-Feb 2026
GUNDEMAR	34.3	29.7	<b>+4.6</b>	4.4	-	Dec 2025
MetroPOLL	30.3	30.0	+0.3	7.6	-	Nov 2025
SONAR Research	-	-	<b>+3.5</b>	-	<b>30%+</b>	Mar 2026
SER-Ar	31.9	30.6	+1.3	<b>6.8</b>	28-30%	Mar 2026
Genar	31.8	<b>34.2</b>	-2.4	-	-	Mar 2026
PolitPro Trend	32.1	31.3	+0.8	7.7	-	Mar 2026

### 4.2 Presidential head-to-head matchups

Every credible poll testing an opposition candidate against Erdogan shows the opposition winning. Even the weakest opposition candidate tested still runs competitively, suggesting the change demand is structural rather than personality-driven.

Matchup	Opposition %	Erdogan %	Source
Imamoglu vs Erdogan	<b>58.1</b>	41.9	GUNDEMAR
Yavas vs Erdogan	<b>63.2</b>	36.8	GUNDEMAR
Imamoglu vs Erdogan	<b>54.1</b>	38.6	TEAM
Imamoglu vs Erdogan	<b>52.9</b>	47.1	HBS Research
Saros (1st round)	<b>~55</b>	~45	Saros Research

### 4.3 Public mood indicators

MetroPOLL (February 2026): 67.1% said a change of government was necessary for economic improvement, penetrating the ruling coalition's own base (39.7% of AKP voters, 41.3% of MHP voters). 66.3% opposed a constitutional amendment for Erdogan. Yoneylem: 55.8% did not find the Imamoglu allegations convincing, 56.8% thought the cases were political. KONDA: 73% considered post-detention protests justified. ASAL: over 50% favour early elections.

## 5. The Legal Offensive

The legal campaign against CHP is systematic. At least nineteen CHP mayors have been arrested since October 2024, with detentions continuing through May 2026, including the mayor of Bursa, Turkey's fourth-largest city. A further fifteen CHP mayors have defected to AKP under varying degrees of pressure. The party's presidential nominee is on trial for 142 charges in the corruption case and now faces a separate espionage trial carrying 15-20 years in prison. Legal pressure extends to the Ankara mayor and the party chairman. The prosecutor who led the Imamoglu investigations was subsequently appointed Justice Minister.

Candidate	Polling Strength	Legal Threat Level	Viability Assessment
Imamoglu	Strongest (54-58% H2H)	Extreme: 142 charges, espionage, diploma	Near-zero without legal reversal
Yavas	Very strong (58-63% H2H)	High: 2 investigations authorised	Viable but under active pressure
Ozel	Moderate (competitive)	Moderate: insult probe, no detention	Most legally viable of top three
<b>Fourth candidate</b>	Unknown, inherits momentum	Minimal: no pre-built case exists	<b>Potentially strongest if top 3 blocked</b>

Imamoglu has been in pretrial detention since March 19, 2025. His corruption trial began March 9, 2026 with over 400 co-defendants. Prosecutors seek over 2,000 years in prison. As of March 23, 2026, Human Rights Watch reported arbitrary court restrictions at the Silivri hearings. Yavas faces two authorised investigations. Ozel faces a new insult probe. Analysts broadly assess Imamoglu's candidacy chances as near zero.

## 6. The Legitimacy Constraint

The crackdown degrades the regime's own legitimacy with each escalation. As Esen and Gumuscu argue (*Journal of Democracy*, March 2025), this personalised legal warfare risks pushing Turkey from competitive authoritarianism toward hegemonic autocracy precisely because it destroys the democratic facade the regime still needs. The regime cannot simultaneously claim democratic legitimacy and systematically eliminate every candidate the public wants to vote for.

Escalation Stage	Voter Mobilisation	AKP Base Defection	Institutional Fracture	International Cost	Cumulative Damage
Stage 1: Imamoglu jailed	High	Low-Moderate	Minimal	Moderate	Manageable
Stage 2: Mayors purged	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Accumulating
Stage 3: Yavas detained	Very High	High	Moderate	High	<b>Critical</b>
Stage 4: Ozel detained	Extreme	Very High	High	Severe	<b>Unsustainable</b>

**Four channels of compounding cost.** Voter mobilisation: each crackdown converts passive discontent into active opposition identity. Base defection: the 39.7% of AKP voters wanting change gain psychological permission to leave when the candidate field is visibly rigged. Institutional fracture: Turkey's institutions are conditionally cooperative, not monolithically loyal. International cost: Turkey's economy needs foreign investment and hosts COP31 in 2026.

## **7. The Fourth Candidate Dynamic**

Even if the regime blocks all three top candidates, this would likely be self-defeating. The regime's legal strategy is personalised, but the opposition's strength is structural. The opposition's strength was never about any individual. It is about the 67% who want change. You can jail a person. You cannot jail a demographic majority.

Concrete candidate pools include CHP's bench of currently serving mayors across more than 30 municipalities, including Turkey's third-largest city Izmir and major metropolitan districts in Istanbul, where several rising figures have built governance records without national-stage exposure. Cross-party unity candidates, such as IYI Party chairman Musavat Dervisoglu receiving full CHP endorsement, would be extraordinarily difficult to counter. A democratic-spectacle candidate emerging from a mass open nomination process is also possible. The pace of mayor arrests, which has continued to accelerate through March and April 2026, means that any specific name carries the risk of being overtaken by events, which itself illustrates the paper's core argument: the regime's personalised legal strategy cannot keep pace with the opposition's structural depth. The blockages are additive for the opposition, not subtractive. Each removal adds fuel, narrative, unity, and motivation.

## 8. The Crystallisation of the Undecided Bloc

SONAR Research, SER-Ar, and earlier houses show undecided voters at 28-35%. These voters are not genuinely torn. They are people who have already turned against the status quo but have not yet committed. Roughly 75-80% are latent opposition supporters. This figure is model-derived, not directly observed (Esen, 2025).

Undecided Segment	Est. Share	% Electorate	Primary Concern	Likely Destination
Disillusioned AKP voters	~40%	~12%	Economy, purchasing power	60-70% to opposition, 20-25% return AKP
Soft MHP/nationalist voters	~15%	~4.5%	Party collapse, wasted vote	50-60% to CHP or IYI, 25-30% to AKP
Young first-time voters	~20%	~6%	Economic anxiety, no pre-Erdogan memory	70-80% to opposition, 10-15% to AKP
Demoralised former opposition	~15%	~4.5%	2023 defeat, scepticism	75-85% return once viability shown
Genuinely apolitical	~10%	~3%	Disengagement, low information	Split roughly evenly, turnout-dependent

### 8.1 The five crystallisation triggers

**Trigger 1: Sustained legal theatre (ongoing).** Estimated conversion: 3-5% of the undecided bloc.

**Trigger 2: Yavas escalation (projected summer-autumn 2026).** Estimated conversion: 5-8%.

**Trigger 3: Constitutional manipulation (projected autumn 2026 to early 2027).** The single largest trigger. 66.3% already oppose it. Estimated conversion: 8-12%.

**Trigger 4: Economic pain deepening (winter 2026-27).** Estimated conversion: 5-8%. Recent PA Turkey reporting shows minor AKP gains amid short-term inflation relief, so timing could shift.

**Trigger 5: Opposition unification event (spring 2027).** Estimated conversion: 5-7%. After this, the undecided pool shrinks to 8-12%.

### 8.2 The crystallisation timeline

Period	Event/Trigger	Effect on Undecideds
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Mar-Jun 2026	Imamoglu trial continues. Espionage trial opens May. Diploma hearing June. HRW reports court-access restrictions (Mar 23).	Slow drip of outrage. Undecideds view judiciary as political tool. Soft AKP voters begin disengaging.
Summer 2026	COP31 international scrutiny. Inflation reacceleration. Yavas investigation escalates.	International spotlight sharpens contrast. Yavas charges trigger second mobilisation wave.
Autumn 2026	AKP-MHP push constitutional amendment or snap election mechanism.	Single largest trigger. 66% already oppose it. Gives undecideds a concrete thing to vote against.
Winter 2026-27	Energy costs spike. AKP succession debate leaks. Bilal Erdogan floated and rejected. MHP below threshold.	AKP base fracture becomes visible. Economic pain converts remaining soft supporters.
Spring 2027	CHP candidate selection with endorsements from all blocked figures.	Final crystallisation event. Opposition enters campaign with 46-50% consolidated support.
2027-2028	Campaign period. Regime faces choice between competitive election or final escalation.	Undecided bloc largely dissolved into opposition column.

### 8.3 The vote flow

Bloc	Current Polling	After Crystallisation	Swing
<b>CHP + allies</b>	~38-40%	~ <b>46-50%</b>	+8-10 pts
<b>AKP + MHP</b>	~38-40%	~ <b>34-37%</b>	-3-6 pts
Other parties	~8-10%	~7-9%	-1-2 pts
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>28-35%</b>	~8-12%	<b>Dissolved</b>

**The post-crystallisation electorate is not a close race.** It is a 10-15 point opposition lead. Current polling gives the illusion of a tight contest because 28-35% of voters are parked in a holding pattern.

## 9. The Institutional Cascade

Voter crystallisation triggers cascading effects across every political institution. The cascade is self-reinforcing: the regime cannot stop the crystallisation without accelerating it.

Domain	Pre-Crystallisation	Post-Crystallisation	Regime Response Options
Parliament	AKP-MHP hold slim majority	Defections accelerate. 5-15 AKP MPs position for post-Erdogan era.	Whip discipline, but leverage diminishes.
Military	Conditionally cooperative	In comparable transitions, military establishments have historically begun contingency planning and signalling neutrality (Levitsky and Way, 2010).	Cannot purge without triggering the crisis.
Judiciary	Largely captured, not monolithic	In competitive authoritarian breakdowns, lower courts have historically begun issuing unexpected rulings as judges position for transition (Schedler, 2013).	Reassignment cannot match institutional hedging.
Business	Divided	Capital flight accelerates. Regime-aligned business hedges through opposition contacts.	Punishment tools worsen the economic crisis.
Media	Mainstream controlled	Self-censorship cracks. Leaks increase.	Blocking platforms confirms narrative.
International	EU cautious, NATO leverage	EU escalates rhetoric. COP31 becomes leverage point.	Isolation worsens economy.

## **10. The Incumbent Side**

Erdogan is constitutionally term-limited. The available paths, constitutional amendment (360 votes) or snap elections resetting the term count, are both beyond AKP-MHP's current reach. If Erdogan does not run, AKP faces a succession crisis: Saros Research shows Bilal Erdogan as AKP leader would produce crushing lack of support. A non-Erdogan AKP candidate would likely perform 5-10 points worse.

### **10.1 Regime tactical assets and counter-arguments**

FDD's analysis (Ciddi, February 2026) argues that Erdogan has been systematically shaping succession conditions, with the cabinet reshuffle installing loyalists at Justice and Interior. The Washington Institute's Cagaptay (March 2026) warns of foreign-policy levers. FDD's earlier analysis (Ciddi, October 2023) made a stronger pessimistic case that Erdogan may have consolidated control over the military beyond reversibility. These tools are real but structurally limited by economic constraints, social media penetration, and the YSK's 2019 backfire in Istanbul.

## 11. Candidate Decision Tree

**Branch 1: Imamoglu runs (~5-10%).** Requires legal reversal. If it opens, opposition win: ~65-75%.

**Branch 2: Yavas runs (~35-45%).** Requires investigations not escalating to detention. Opposition win: ~60-70%.

**Branch 3: Ozel runs (~25-35%).** Fallback if top two blocked. Opposition win: ~45-55%.

**Branch 4: Fourth candidate (~15-25%).** Combined endorsement and martyrdom. Opposition win: ~50-65%. The decision tree is not a declining staircase.

## 12. Election Day Scenarios

Election Scenario	Probability	Result	Aftermath
Normal 2028 election, competitive	<b>35-40%</b>	Opposition wins 52-56% or runoff 55-60%	Orderly transition. Erdogan retires. Imamoglu released.
Early election 2027	<b>15-20%</b>	Opposition wins, narrower margin	Faster transition. Economic stabilisation challenge.
Heavily managed election	<b>20-25%</b>	Opposition wins tighter margin	Tense transition. Possible negotiated exit.
Opposition wins, non-recognition attempted	<b>5-10%</b>	Mass mobilisation forces recognition	Turbulent but ultimately successful.
Full authoritarian consolidation	<b>5-10%</b>	Sustained unrest, isolation, collapse	Eventual transition under worse conditions.

Combined probability of opposition-led government: approximately **80-90%**. Path D (negotiated transition) is the regime's optimal strategy, though it is psychologically the hardest.

### **13. Conclusions**

- 1.** An opposition-led power shift is the most likely outcome, estimated at 47-51% as a single-bucket probability, 80-90% across all pathways. The four buckets sum to 100% at their midpoints.
- 2.** The regime's legal strategy is structurally self-undermining. Each act of repression generates compounding legitimacy costs.
- 3.** The opposition's strength is movement-based, not personality-based. The 67% change demand is a structural force no amount of candidate removal can neutralise.
- 4.** The regime's escalation capacity is self-limiting. It cannot credibly block all candidates without destroying its democratic legitimacy claim.
- 5.** Even the worst-case candidate scenario is not the worst case for the opposition. The decision tree is not a declining staircase.
- 6.** The 28-35% undecided bloc is latent opposition. Once it dissolves, the 1-4 point CHP lead becomes a 10-15 point wave.
- 7.** The institutional cascade is self-reinforcing. The regime cannot interrupt the loop because its tools are driving it.
- 8.** The real question is not whether the opposition wins, but how. The uncertainty is in the manner of transition.
- 9.** The regime's optimal strategy is negotiated transition, which it is psychologically least capable of choosing.

## 14. Conditions Under Which This Analysis Does Not Hold

The probability estimates in this paper rest on a set of structural assumptions. If any of the following conditions materialise, the framework requires fundamental revision rather than incremental updating. These are not predictions. They are the boundary conditions of the model.

**1. Elections are not held.** The entire framework assumes a general election occurs no later than 2028. If the regime suspends, indefinitely postpones, or cancels elections through constitutional manipulation, emergency decree, or manufactured crisis, the electoral probability architecture becomes moot.

**2. A major war involving Turkey.** A regional conflict in which Turkey is a direct belligerent, as distinct from the current Gulf crisis, would transform the political environment. Rally-around-the-flag effects, martial law provisions, and media blackouts would suppress opposition mobilisation and could justify election postponement.

**3. Economic shock produces a rally effect.** The analysis assumes economic pain converts into anti-incumbency sentiment. If external sanctions or commodity shock is successfully framed as foreign aggression against Turkey, economic discontent could channel toward nationalist solidarity rather than regime change.

**4. The opposition fragments beyond reconstitution.** The model assumes the opposition reconstitutes around a new vehicle even if CHP is decapitated. If internal divisions prevent consolidation and the 67% change demand disperses across four or five parties that cannot cooperate, the opposition could lose despite majority support.

**5. The security apparatus intervenes directly.** The paper treats the military and security services as conditionally cooperative, not monolithically loyal. If the security apparatus prevents a transfer of power after an opposition victory, the institutional-cascade model does not apply.

**6. A constitutional amendment extends Erdogan's eligibility.** If the AKP-MHP alliance obtains 360 parliamentary votes for a constitutional amendment resetting term limits, Erdogan could run again as incumbent. The analysis assumes this threshold is beyond current reach.

**7. The Kurdish movement re-enters armed conflict.** A return to large-scale PKK violence would shift issue salience from economics to security, benefiting the incumbent. MIT assessments that PKK has repositioned toward eastern Iran suggest this risk is not negligible.

**8. A credible AKP succession candidate emerges.** If a popular successor distances the party from Erdogan's liabilities while retaining its organisational advantages, the AKP-normal-win bucket would need substantial upward revision.

**9. International actors actively support regime consolidation.** If major powers support Erdogan's consolidation in exchange for geopolitical alignment, the international-cost channel of the repression ratchet weakens. The current US administration's posture, with Vice President Vance rallying with Orban days before his defeat, suggests this is plausible but not decisive.

**10. Polling data is systematically wrong.** If nine independent polling houses systematically overstate CHP support due to measurement error or social desirability bias, the evidentiary base is compromised. The Genar outlier is noted to hedge against this risk, but systematic failure across all houses would invalidate the crystallisation model's inputs.

**Postscript: April-May 2026 developments.** Since this paper was finalised, three developments have occurred that strengthen rather than weaken the analysis. First, the crackdown has continued to accelerate: four additional CHP mayors have been arrested since the Imamoglu trial began on March 9, including the mayor of Bursa, Turkey's fourth-largest city, whose arrest on April 4 handed AKP control of the municipality. The trial itself has entered its second month, with 18 defendants released on April 3 but Imamoglu and other key figures remaining detained. Erdogan has officially stated that there are no plans for early or midterm elections, consistent with this paper's assessment that the regime prefers to run out the clock rather than risk an early contest.

Second, and most consequentially for the comparative framework, on April 12, 2026, Viktor Orban conceded defeat in Hungary's parliamentary election after 16 years in power. Peter Magyar's centre-right Tisza party won a supermajority of 138 of 199 seats on 53.6% of the vote, carried by record turnout. The parallels to this paper's model of Turkey are direct: a competitive authoritarian incumbent who controlled the media, judiciary, and constitutional framework was defeated by an opposition challenger who emerged only two years ago, running on kitchen-table issues of economic stagnation and corruption rather than ideology. Magyar explicitly framed the election as a referendum on governance, exactly the frame CHP is running in Turkey. The Hungarian result provides a contemporaneous demonstration of the crystallisation dynamics modelled in this paper: accumulated economic discontent, regime fatigue penetrating the governing party's own base, a candidate who became a vessel for broader change demand, and turnout that shattered records when previously disengaged voters realised their vote could matter. Orban's fall also removes Erdogan's most important ally within the European Union,

tightening the international constraint on Turkey's crackdown precisely as the Imamoglu trial intensifies. The strongman model has an expiration date. Hungary has just demonstrated it.

Third, the regime appears to be escalating from personalised candidate removal toward institutional decapitation of the opposition party itself. A May 6, 2026 court hearing over alleged irregularities in CHP's 2023 congress, at which Ozgur Ozel replaced Kemal Kilicdaroglu as party leader, could result in a "mutlak butlan" (absolute nullity) ruling annulling the congress entirely. Such a ruling would pave the way for Kilicdaroglu, a proven electoral loser, to be reinstated as CHP leader via judicial trusteeship (*kayyum*). PA Turkey analyst Atilla Yesilada argues (April 13, 2026) that this move, combined with potential CHP closure proceedings at the Constitutional Court and direct targeting of Yavas and Ozel, suggests Turkey may be entering a phase where competitive elections are no longer viable. This scenario represents a qualitative shift from blocking individual candidates to dismantling the opposition's organisational infrastructure through the judiciary.

However, this paper's legitimacy-constraint framework suggests the butlan scenario is more likely to backfire than succeed. A court reinstalling a leader whom the party's own members voted to replace would be so transparently a regime operation that it would amplify rather than suppress the opposition. The most probable consequence is that Imamoglu, Ozel, and their supporters leave CHP and form a new party, consolidating opposition voters around a fresh vehicle, exactly as Magyar did with Tisza in Hungary. The regime's personalised legal strategy cannot keep pace with the opposition's ability to reconstitute. If CHP is decapitated, the change demand (67.1%) does not disappear. It finds a new institutional home.

Fourth, the multi-party peace process with the Kurdish movement has been shelved indefinitely. Yesilada reports that following the outbreak of the Gulf conflict, the legislative timeline shifted from "within a month" to "summer months" and is now suspended entirely. National Intelligence Organisation assessments indicate that the PKK has not disarmed but has repositioned forces toward eastern Iran. This removes one of the regime's tactical cards that the paper identified in Part 10: the Kurdish-opening optics that could have temporarily broadened AKP's appeal. Simultaneously, MHP's polling decline has continued to accelerate, with the party now at serious risk of falling below the 7% electoral threshold. If MHP fails to clear the threshold, the People's Alliance loses its parliamentary majority regardless of what happens to CHP, a structural constraint the regime cannot solve through legal manoeuvres.

**Revised probability implications.** These developments do not break the paper's framework but they do shift the distribution within it. The CHP-win bucket (47-51%) holds: the demand-side dynamics are unchanged and Hungary strengthened the case. The AKP normal-win bucket stays at 15-17%, with no evidence of genuine electoral recovery. Gaining municipalities through defections and arrests is not the same as winning votes. The managed-competition bucket drops to 14-17%, because the middle ground where the regime tilts the field but holds a recognisable election is being squeezed from both sides. The defection and arrest strategy simultaneously makes managed competition look less like a tilted election and more like institutional capture. The hard-rupture bucket rises to 17-21%, the most significant revision, because the simultaneous escalation across all fronts, arrests, espionage trials, congress annulment proceedings, the defection campaign, municipal takeovers, and ICBM testing, suggests the regime is preparing for a scenario where it does not need to win fairly. The combined probability of opposition-led government is revised to 78-84%, an honest downward shade from 80-90%. The reason is not that the opposition is weaker. It is that the tail risk of the regime choosing full authoritarian consolidation, accepting the costs and riding it out, is higher than assessed in March. Midpoints:  $49 + 16 + 15.5 + 19 = 99.5$ . The main risk to this analysis is not that the opposition lacks support. It is that the regime is willing to pay a higher legitimacy price than the model assumes.

**May 2026 update.** Five further developments since the postscript above was written strengthen rather than weaken the framework. First, on May 6, the Ankara court postponed the butlan hearing to July 1, ruling that a businessman who gave a confession statement in the separate Imamoglu corruption case would be heard at the next session. The regime delayed rather than acted, suggesting it is calculating whether the move produces a net gain or triggers the reconstitution dynamic predicted above. Second, on May 11, Imamoglu's separate espionage trial opened at Silivri. The court kept all four defendants in pretrial detention and adjourned until July 6. Imamoglu told the court: 'Who will call this a case of espionage? This is a political case brought by those who are afraid of facing me at the ballot box.' This adds a second simultaneous trial track carrying 15-20 years in prison but does not change the structural dynamics.

Third, the regime has opened a new front: coerced or incentivised defections. Afyonkarahisar Mayor Burcu Koksall, a Kilicdaroglu-era figure who had feuded with Imamoglu and refused to open her municipality to DEM Party, formally joined AKP on May 12, along with the Dinar district mayor. At least fifteen CHP mayors have now defected to AKP since the 2024 elections. This is a mechanism the original analysis undermodelled. However, the defections are concentrated in smaller conservative cities

where CHP's hold was always fragile. The major metropolitan areas remain CHP-held even where mayors are in jail. And the defectors are disproportionately Kilicdaroglu-aligned, nationalist-leaning figures whose departure consolidates rather than fragments the opposition. Ozel's response was aggressive rather than defensive: 'When the Republican People's Party comes to power, do not come knocking on our door begging.'

Fourth, Freedom House's 2026 report confirmed that 'hundreds of CHP politicians and party officials were detained over the course of the year, and the state actively interfered in the party's internal governance.' Critically, the report documented a direct precedent for the national butlan scenario: in September 2025, a court annulled CHP's Istanbul provincial congress and removed the Istanbul branch chair, but CHP responded by holding an emergency congress and re-electing him. This precedent is directly relevant to the July 1 hearing: the opposition has already demonstrated it will reconstitute immediately after a congress annulment.

Fifth, on May 20, Kilicdaroglu posted a video attacking CHP's current leadership, accusing the party of being 'dirty' and calling for 'purification.' This is positioning for the butlan scenario: he is building a public case for his return before the July 1 court date. The public response was catastrophic. Sentiment analysis of thousands of comments showed the reaction was overwhelmingly negative, with the comment section described as 'a wall of protest.' The dominant themes were demands that he leave politics entirely and fury over past election losses. Ozel responded by referencing the butlan demands with the pointed Turkish saying: 'Rather than being marble in the Palace, be soil so roses grow in your bosom.' This is the single strongest real-time confirmation of the crystallisation model. If Kilicdaroglu cannot post a video without triggering a wall of negative sentiment from his own party's base, a court-ordered reinstatement would produce exponentially more backlash. The regime's problem is becoming clearer by the day: every tool it deploys generates more opposition energy than it absorbs. That is the repression ratchet in its purest form.

***Turkey's opposition is more likely than not to achieve power because the regime's strategy of personalised legal warfare is fundamentally mismatched against a structural majority demanding change, the massive undecided bloc is a latent opposition wave waiting to break, and every act of escalation simultaneously widens the strategic mismatch and accelerates the crystallisation.***

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