

This week has been bustling for Türkiye with significant activities in domestic politics, international relations, and economic strategies:

- The President's recent engagements, including a notable visit to the CHP, could potentially shift Turkish political dynamics.
- Researcher Burak Elmalı discusses Hakan Fidan's recent diplomatic activities, highlighting the BRICS+ and GCC foreign ministers' meetings as key events.
- An anticipated removal of Türkiye from the FATF Grey List holds multiple implications, analysed by researcher Şeymanur Yönt.

Is President Erdoğan Reshaping Turkish Politics?

Last week, three photographs of President Erdoğan hinted at significant presidential activities. A notable one was Meral Akşener's visit to the presidential palace. This encounter between the former Good Party leader and Erdoğan was hotly debated. Many speculated that Akşener's new hair colour might signal a fresh political path.

On June 11, two significant meetings occurred, beginning with Erdoğan's reciprocal visit to CHP headquarters. Though no formal statements followed the warm one-and-a-half-hour meeting, Erdoğan extended an invitation to Özel for the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Cyprus Peace Operation in Northern Cyprus, scheduled for July 20. This meeting holds substantial symbolic value, underscoring the cooperative stance of both parties on the Cyprus issue—a matter of national consensus in Türkiye. This collaboration echoes the historic coalition between CHP and MSP, a precursor to the AK Party, during the original Cyprus Operation.

While politics often fosters unusual alliances, the ongoing dialogue between the AK Party and CHP is unlikely to culminate in a coalition. In the current political climate, both parties find mutual benefits in maintaining this conversation. For Erdoğan's administration, engaging with CHP leadership is a strategic approach to connect with opposition segments while implementing economic reforms. Conversely, this engagement offers the CHP an opportunity to transform its opposition stance into actionable demands that could sway government policies.

The dialogue between Türkiye's two main parties significantly shapes the internal dynamics of both the ruling and opposition blocs. Although both the AK Party and the CHP are influenced by smaller parties necessary for electoral majorities and the need to secure 50%+1, this interchange could strengthen their positions within their respective alliances. By representing over 70% of voters, according to recent election results, their discussions can play a crucial role in balancing power within their alliances as polarisation in the country increases.

Shortly after his meeting with the CHP leader, President Erdoğan met with Ayşe Ateş, widow of Sinan Ateş, the late



Turkish President and Leader of the Justice and Development (AK) Party Recep Tayyip Erdogan (L) poses for a photo with Leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP) Ozgur Ozel (R) at the CHP Headquarters in Ankara, Türkiye on June 11, 2024. (Harun Özalp - Anadolu Agency)

head of the nationalist organisation Ülkü Ocakları, linked to the MHP, who was assassinated on December 30, 2022. Ayşe Ateş has expressed suspicions about certain MHP members' involvement in her husband's murder. These allegations could potentially influence the dynamics within the coalition between the AK Party and MHP.

Akşener's recent retweet of Ayşe Ateş's gratitude to President Erdoğan, following her meeting with him, suggests she is positioning herself politically anew. Despite her departure as leader of the İyi (Good) Party and cooling relations there, her strong connections with many of the party's deputies hint at a potential political realignment with Erdoğan, which could shift the nationalist right's dynamics within the ruling coalition.

Additionally, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli expressed his support for "the formation of a broad-based alliance between the AK Party and the CHP" on Wednesday in a statement that also included some reproach. The statement also underlined the sacrifices made by the MHP and emphasised its support for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership. This statement can be considered as one of the most concrete indicators so far of the above-mentioned reshaping of the balance within the alliances.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's Recent Diplomacy Analysed

Researcher Burak Elmalı reviews the significant diplomatic engagements of Hakan Fidan, highlighting his active role in international affairs:

"Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's recent diplomatic efforts included attending the 6th Türkiye-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) High-Level Strategic Dialogue meeting of foreign ministers in Doha and the BRICS+ foreign ministers' meeting. Both engagements were significant, reflecting the current geopolitical landscape and the messages conveyed.

In Doha, it was decided to extend the joint action plan between the GCC and Türkiye, initially established in 2010, to 2029. This will enhance political, economic, and security cooperation



Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan attends the BRICS+ session on a two-day BRICS foreign ministers summit held in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia on June 11, 2024. (Sefa Karacan - Anadolu Agency)

in the coming years. Minister Fidan also urged GCC member states to take all necessary measures against Israel and its allies in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by Israel's war on Gaza.

At the BRICS+ foreign ministers' meeting in Russia, Minister Fidan met with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, before being received by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Their discussions covered regional and international conflicts, and a positive stance towards Türkiye's potential membership in the BRICS+ platform was emphasised. Putin underscored the importance of his friendship with President Erdoğan in advancing Russia-Türkiye relations and stated that both leaders would have a bilateral meeting in Astana on 3-4 July.

These significant diplomatic engagements underscore Türkiye's commitment to multilateralism in economic cooperation and reflect a balanced foreign policy approach. Although some analysts view this as a shift or uncertainty in Turkish foreign policy, Fidan's visit, along with President Erdoğan's planned participation in both NATO and Shanghai Cooperation Organization summits in July, indicates that Türkiye is steering clear of a bloc-based or unilateral approach. Proposals for mediating regional and global conflicts, combined with efforts to develop bilateral and multilateral economic relations with neighbours, other partners, and groups of states, suggest that cooperation and multilateralism will be key themes in Turkish foreign policy during the second half of 2024."

Türkiye Exits FATF Grey List

Turning our attention to researcher Şeymanur Yönt for insights on this significant development:

"In the upcoming FATF plenary in Singapore, Türkiye's anticipated removal from the FATF "grey list" signifies a critical achievement in its efforts to curb illicit financial activities. This move, reflecting substantial progress in regulatory reforms and

international cooperation, aligns with Türkiye's shift towards orthodox economic policies and the goal of a stronger economy under Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek. While the final decision is pending, the expected delisting enhances Türkiye's appeal as a stable and attractive investment destination, marking a significant step towards economic stability and growth."

Highlights

- Pensioners have begun receiving a 3,000 TL Eid al-Adha payment. Given retirees' significant role in the AK Party's voter base, their dissatisfaction with pension issues likely contributed to the party's previous electoral setbacks, with many considering this payment insufficient. Meanwhile, economic policies under Mehmet Şimşek are expected to remain stringent.
- Baykar, Türkiye's leading exporter in the defence and aerospace sector, has become one of Türkiye's top 10 largest exporters, according to the Turkish Exporters Assembly. This ranking also highlights the defence industry's expanding influence on the national economy.
- Following Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's visit to China, Turkish authorities introduced a 40% tariff on Chinese vehicle imports, aiming to safeguard the country's economic interests and entice Chinese investments.

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Next week, as Türkiye and the Islamic world observe Eid al-Adha, political activities usually slow down. "Türkiye in Focus" will return the week after Eid to continue our coverage.