

FALLING WALLS CIRCLE

ROUND TABLE “SIX MONTHS AFTER THE ELECTIONS – TURKEY’S ROLE ON THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA”

The 2023 parliamentary and presidential elections in Turkey raised hopes for a new chapter in the country’s foreign policy and international collaboration. After President Erdogan’s approval of Sweden’s NATO accession, analysts even spoke of a new start for the frozen Turkish-European relations. But how sustainable is this rapprochement? This Falling Walls Circle discusses the political developments in Turkey after the elections and their implications for Turkey’s role in the world and Turkish-European relations.

Panelists: [Hürcan Asli Aksoy](#) (Centre for Applied Turkey Studies, DE), [Ayse Bingöl Demir](#) (Turkey Human Rights Litigation Support Project, UK), [Fuat Keyman](#) (Istanbul Policy Center, Sabanci University, TR), and moderator [Senem Aydın-Düzgit](#) (Sabanci University / Robert Bosch Academy, TR/DE).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1. Turkey on the path to ‘active neutrality’.** As the experts explain, the 2023 elections marked a potential turning point for Turkey’s foreign policy, coinciding with its centennial as an independent nation-state. This led to a new dichotomy, between a path of democratisation on one side and conservative modernity on the other. In this regard, Turkey has recently shown a tendency towards ‘active neutrality’ rather than an increased alignment with Western institutions, which has led to a shift in Turkey’s global role, particularly in areas such as energy supply.
- 2. Human rights issues put a strain on Turkey-EU relations.** Turkey’s systemic human rights issues, that include challenges to democratic institutions and shrinking civic space, have weakened the country’s relations with the European Union. Meeting the criteria for EU membership, particularly regarding democratic standards and the rule of law, remains a challenge for Turkey: In the negotiations, "it often feels like putting two steps forward, one step back", says Hürcan Asli Aksoy. On the one hand, Turkey tries to move away from the West. On the other hand, elites are aiming to mend relations with the EU for economic gains, thus putting pressure on internal politics.
- 3. Turkey continues to assert more regional influence.** According to the panelists, the rise of Islamist parties continues to challenge the foundational principles of the Turkish Republic. At the same time, it leads to more regional power and, by proxy, to Turkey being a more dominant global actor. In recent years, Turkey has grown in influence, especially in the Muslim-populated parts of Africa.

This event is supported by Stiftung Mercator.