

The future of power in Turkey: family format

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On 30.03.2024 *The Wall Street Journal* has published an article about a potential successor to Turkish President Erdogan in the next presidential elections. According to the newspaper, it could be the Turkish leader's son-in-law Selçuk Bayraktar. In addition to the family ties with Erdogan, he has huge authority in Turkish society, and, above all, due to the development and implementation of the unmanned combat aircraft program of Turkey. It was the drones manufactured at S. Bayraktar's enterprises, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, that helped to stop "Russia's invasion into Ukrainian territory". They were also "successfully operated" by Azerbaijan against Armenian forces in Karabakh in 2020. And they were used to "neutralize attacks of Moscow's ally, Marshal Khalifa Haftar, on the Libyan capital of Tripoli".

The article also mentions that in an interview given to *The Wall Street Journal* last fall, S. Bayraktar said that he "is not involved in active politics", but if his father-in-law Erdogan turns to him with such a suggestion, he might not mind running for the office in the forthcoming presidential elections. "It all depends on circumstances", Bayraktar said then.

It can hardly be considered a coincidence that this article was published on the eve of the midterm municipal elections in Turkey, the results of which turned out to be a failure for Erdogan and the ruling AKP (Justice and Development) party. The ruling party lost to the opposition in all key regions of the country, as well as in the megacities, including the capital Ankara. It can be assumed that the mentioning of Bayraktar's name by a famous world periodical in connection with the future of the country's political power was caused by the desire of his father-in-law, the leader of Turkey, to reveal his cards and play ahead before his defeat became known. After all, it seems to have been clear already on the eve of the elections that the AKP's chances of winning were very doubtful, and that Erdogan would become a "lame duck" of the ruling party itself.

Thus, we can expect that Erdogan himself will soon introduce his son-in-law S. Bayraktar as a candidate for the presidential post. By the way, the ARVAK analytical center already has predicted a high probability of such a combination on the eve of the [presidential elections in 2023](#). However, then Erdogan won the race, while now the failure of the AKP in local elections threatens the incumbent Turkish leader with the complete loss of political power, and probably before the term.

«*The pack needs a new leader*» – the Party needs a new face. And if Erdogan's choice stops on Bayraktar, this will mean that the incumbent is relying on family ties with Bayraktar, his charisma and high public sympathy rating. Thus, forecasts that Erdogan, having nominated Hakan Fidan as Foreign Minister, is preparing the former MIT head as his successor, may not come true. By the way, although Fidan, a Kurd by origin, enjoys Erdogan's unconditional trust, has the necessary management skills and, is, of course thoroughly informed on the entire range of state affairs, still lacks the necessary political charisma and personal "glamour". His personality and mindset bent toward non-publicity

are typical of a classic intelligence man, which, perhaps, may make him in the eyes of Erdogan, who is guided by his personal political experience, a wrong figure to rebrand the AKP.

In any case, there is no confirmation yet that Erdogan has (definitively) decided on a successor. It is also possible that he may still resort to an unconventional solution.