

Trump and Erdogan

Published: January 13, 2026, 8:01 pm

Was Trump alone in [calling Erdogan](#) to congratulate him on his referendum 'win' in Turkey? I don't know, to be honest. I suspect others, from Hungary, Poland and Russia for example, might also have done so. But the fact that he did so matters.

First it matters because international observers have made it clear that this election was not conducted fairly. Rigged could not be a better word.

Secondly, the fact that rules on counting were changed so that unstamped voting papers were not excluded makes it look extraordinarily like fraud took place.

Third, the margin of victory looks so small as to be really indicative of Erdogan having actually lost as a result.

Fourth, as now seems normal in the case of a referendum, this means a mass of people will have imposed upon them a decision that they quite definitely do not approve of but which will be hard to reverse.

It is, however, the nature of that decision that matters most. A parliament has been sidelined. Autocracy has been reinforced. Anti-intellectualism is being promoted. Many freedoms are being oppressed. And all this in a country that says it aspires to EU membership.

I am worried by the corruption at so many levels inherent in what is happening in Turkey.

And Trump called to congratulate Erdogan.

That's not quite as worrying, but it's still troubling.