Turkish Referendum

Why in news?

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Turkey is voting on 16 April 2017 on whether to grant President sweeping new powers.

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What is the referendum about?

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- The new draft constitution would change the country from a **parliamentary to a presidential republic.**
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- It brings following changes -
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1. The President, currently just the head of state, also becomes the head of the executive.
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2. Prime minister post will be scrapped and position of vice president will be created.
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3. The President will be able to issue decrees, **declare emergency rule** and appoint ministers and top officials.
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4. A President will be limited for two, five-year terms.
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5. Parliamentary and presidential elections will be held every five years, on the same day.
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6. Parliament will be able to investigate or impeach the president via a majority vote in parliament. It would need a two-thirds majority to send the president to trial.

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How did Turkey get to this stage?

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- In 2007, Turkey embraced a semi-presidential system, putting the election of the president to a public vote.
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- But there was a desire to move to a fully presidential system.
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- The failed coup attempt was taken as the oppurtunity by Turkish President.
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What are the arguments in favour?

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- Turkey’s security is threatened by wars in neighbouring Syria and Iraq and a spate of ISIL and Kurdish militant attacks.
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- So the supporters view the plans as a guarantee of stability.
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- It is also seen as an attempt to modernise Turkey’s constitution.
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- Proponents also say it will improve decision-making.
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What are the arguments against?

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- There is abolition of parliamentary accountability.
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- It is seen as the erosion of the separation of powers i.e there will be no checks and balances on Turkish Presdient’s power.
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- He will be head of state, head of government and have full power over the judiciary.

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- He will have the power to issue decrees, which is huge, because it pretty much makes parliament ineffective.
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What about the relations with the EU?

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- Turks living in Europe are also eligible to vote in the referendum.
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- Turkish President’s allies drew up plans to organise rallies in European cities to mobilise support among the turks living there.
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- Several European countries like Austria, Switzerland, have banned such rallies due to raising security concerns and fear of domestic political repercussions.
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- They also fear that Turkish President’s outreach could help the anti-Muslim far-right parties in the continent.
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- The EU needs Turkey in terms of its help with controlling migration into Europe.
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- Turkey needs EU, because EU is its biggest trading partner.
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- The Turkish President might win short-term political dividends from this ongoing spat, but in the longer run he is endangering both Turkey’s ties with Europe and the prospects of the thousands of Turks living in the continent.
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Source: The Hindu

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