



**Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.**

Source: [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru), via Wikimedia, [https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir\\_Putin\\_and\\_Recep\\_Tayyip\\_Erdogan\\_\(2020-03-05\)\\_03.jpg](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_and_Recep_Tayyip_Erdogan_(2020-03-05)_03.jpg), CCA-4.0

## Turkish-Russian Relations Possibly Diverging

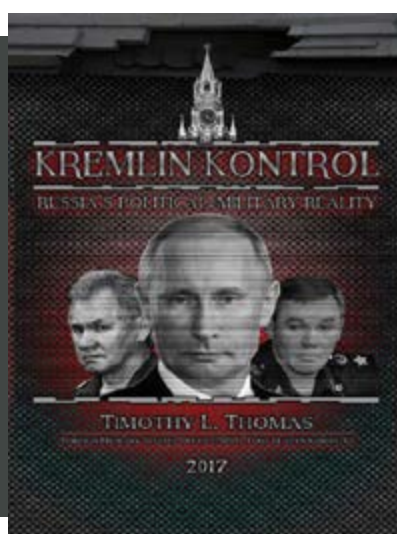
By Ihsan Gündüz  
OE Watch Commentary

Turkey and Russia have been on opposing sides of multiple conflicts in the Caucasus, the Middle East, and North Africa, and their continued working relationship might be diverging over competing regional interests. As the accompanying article from *al-Monitor*, a news site with analysts from the Middle East points out, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had hoped for a different trajectory for Turkish-Russian relations while cozying up to Russia at the expense of his Western allies. The article states that Erdoğan expected to establish relationships in a broad range of areas, including military cooperation and energy projects, to gain leverage in Turkey's relations with European

countries and the United States. A retired Turkish Ambassador told the article's author that current Russian-Turkish relations are not institutionally established and well defined. They are rather based on the Turkish President's and his Russian counterpart's personal and transactional relationships. The author also claims that Turkey's Russia-dependent foreign policy is on the verge of collapse and cites Russia's obstruction of Turkey's plan in Syria despite Turkey's limited gains there. Turkey's current effort to repair relations with its Western allies and Egypt is another indication of a failing Russia-dependent foreign policy.

The article notes that the latest friction point between Turkey and Russia is over Turkish support for Ukraine, including supporting Ukraine's efforts to join NATO as well as the sale of Turkish-made drones to Ukraine. Additionally, the joint statement following Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to Turkey stressing the territorial integrity of Ukraine and Turkey's commitment to seeing occupied Ukrainian territories freed from Russian occupation did not sit well with Russia. Following the aforementioned visit, the Russian Foreign Minister called on Turkey and other countries to refrain from feeding into "militaristic sentiment" in Ukraine. Russia also restricted the number of flights to Turkey in a blow to the already battered Turkish tourism industry. One of Turkey's leading experts on Russia told the author that the flight restriction was a reaction to Zelensky's visit to Istanbul and the Erdoğan's remarks on the situation in Crimea. Current economic and military projects maintain Turkish-Russian relations but they may not be sustainable in the long run.

“The partnership of convenience... between Turkey and Russia is gradually reverting to the traditional rivalry between the two countries over diverging regional interests.”



In 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov instituted sweeping changes that have reorganized the country's security forces and reestablished the nation's military prowess. This study, *Kremlin Kontrol*, aims to describe how control over the security services and the military have hastened those changes.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/197266/download>

## Continued: Turkish-Russian Relations Possibly Diverging

**Source:** Semih Idiz, “Turkish-Russian ties marked more by rivalry than cooperation today,” *al-Monitor* (a news site with analysts from the Middle East), 26 April 2021. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/04/turkish-russian-ties-marked-more-rivalry-cooperation-today>

*The partnership of convenience — some call it a transactional partnership — between Turkey and Russia is gradually reverting to the traditional rivalry between the two countries over diverging regional interests.*

*The crisis in Ukraine, which comes on the heels of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, has resulted in mutual suspicions surfacing again.*

*Turkey and Russia back opposing sides in these conflicts. The same is true in Libya and Syria where they are also at odds over a number of issues.*

...

*[Turkish President] was keen on a wide-ranging relationship, from military cooperation to vast energy projects, in order to counterbalance the losses Turkey had been incurring from its worsening ties with the West.*

*Many believed the personal relationship Erdogan built with Russian President Vladimir Putin and their shared dislike of the West would help facilitate his vision.*

...

*Retired Ambassador Yusuf Buluc... “Turkey and Russia relations are not necessarily governed by a well-defined and institutionally established policy; at least not at its Turkish end,” he added.*

*...Nevertheless, Erdogan believed that developing ties with Russia to the maximum degree possible would provide Ankara with leverage against the United States and Europe after Turkey’s ties with them took a nosedive.*

*What he ended up with, however, is a Russia that ultimately obstructed his plans in Syria and Libya. The limited gains Russia allowed Turkey, especially in Syria, in order to appease it do not alter this fact.*

...

*Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov set the record straight in October 2020...*

*“We have never considered Turkey our strategic ally,” Lavrov said at a meeting with Russian media representatives.*

...

*Turkey’s strong backing for Ukraine has ruffled more feathers in Moscow where there are already grumblings over the sale of Turkish-made military drones to Kyiv.*

*Hosting President Volodymyr Zelensky in Istanbul on April 10, Erdogan promised “unconditional support” for Ukraine’s struggle to maintain its territorial integrity...*

*Ankara also vowed to continue supporting Ukraine’s bid to join NATO.*

*Following Zelensky’s Istanbul visit, Lavrov called on all countries — although he went on to name Turkey only — to weigh the situation well and refrain from feeding what he referred to as “militaristic sentiments” in Ukraine.*

...

*Hakan Aksay, Turkey’s leading expert on Russia, believes Moscow’s decision [to restrict the number of flights to Turkey] was a reaction to the results of the Erdogan-Zelensky talks in Istanbul, as well as Erdogan’s remarks regarding Crimea.*

...

*In many ways, the relative benefits to Turkey from cooperating with Russia in Syria have reached their limits.*