

EXPLORING THE PROSPECTS FOR RUSSIAN-TURKISH COOPERATION IN A TURBULENT NEIGHBORHOOD

GRF-CARNEGIE MOSCOW CENTER WORKING GROUP

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Even though tensions over Ukraine will inevitably cast a shadow over the bilateral relationship, Russia and Turkey—a NATO member—continue to share a range of important interests. Indeed, there are a number of areas in which the two can work together in their common neighborhood, which stretches from the South Caucasus and the Levant to Central Asia and Afghanistan. A high-level working group on Russian-Turkish regional cooperation has sketched a forward-looking approach for Russia and Turkey in tackling regional challenges.

Key Issues

- Russia and Turkey's vast common neighborhood is a source of multiple threats, including terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking, which can affect both countries.
- Both countries have compelling reasons to work together to promote geopolitical and social stability and economic prosperity in their overlapping neighborhoods, particularly in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.
- Moscow and Ankara have their differences on regional issues, rooted in their respective national interests, outlooks, and perceptions. Yet, they can manage those differences with a modicum of goodwill, shared respect for the tenets of international law and states' territorial integrity, regular and open dialogue between their political leaderships, and support from both countries' elites and societies.

Next Steps for Russia and Turkey

- Russia and Turkey should work together to enhance stability in the South Caucasus, particularly on issues related to the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.
- Moscow and Ankara should strive to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria. Such a solution would help lay the foundation for future stability in the region.
- Russia and Turkey need to work to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and to help bring about an acceptable final agreement on Iran's nuclear program between Tehran and its international negotiating partners.
- In Afghanistan and Iraq, both Turkish and Russian interests demand that the two cooperate to combat extremism and help to create political stability.
- Central Asia would benefit from Russia and Turkey working together, rather than at cross-purposes, to enhance the economic well-being of countries in the region and prevent radicalism from undermining regional stability.

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