India – Turkey Relations

What is the issue?

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Recently, the Turkish President Erdogan visited India. The dialogue between the Indian PM and the Turkish President is hopefully the first step in the long road towards a more productive partnership.

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India-Turkey on global issues:

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- The Turkish establishment’s uncritical embrace of Pakistan has been unchanging, irrespective of who dominated Ankara — the secular army or the current Islamist leadership.
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- On global issues, India was non-aligned and Turkey, a member of the Western Cold War alliances.
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- Turkey was also part of a regional military bloc — the Baghdad Pact — that Great Britain stitched together in the early 1950s with Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan.
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- On regional issues, **Turkey tilted to Pakistan on the Kashmir question,** and India moved closer to Nicosia in Turkey’s dispute with Cyprus.
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How well was India’s relationship in the past?

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- The **friendship treaty with Turkey** that Jawaharlal Nehru signed in 1951 underlined India’s hopes for building a lasting partnership in the post-colonial era.
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- It is not that there were no major Indian efforts after Nehru.
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- Two strong prime ministers, Rajiv Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, tried to end the stalemate in relations with Turkey, but did not succeed.
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What is Turkey’s view on India?

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- Erdogan **called for a de-escalation of the Kashmir violence** and urged India to embark on dialogue with Pakistan to resolve the long-standing dispute.
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- He also affirmed that Turkey would like to see both India and Pakistan in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
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- Erdogan was making it clear that he would not dilute Turkey’s friendship with Pakistan in order to build a new partnership with India.
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What was India’s response?

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- On its part, **Delhi seemed quite unfazed** by differences with Erdogan on Pakistan.
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- Just before Erdogan arrived in Delhi, India received the president of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, and sent Vice President Hamid Ansari to Armenia.
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- Delhi, however, is prepared to complement this **hardball diplomacy** with a genuine effort to expand areas of cooperation with Turkey, for example, in security and commerce.
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What are the potential areas of cooperation?

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- Beyond the prospects for cooperation in **countering terrorism and extremism,** Erdogan is also eager to develop **economic and trade ties** with India.
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- As he deals with a messy neighbourhood in the Middle East, Erdogan has a desire to find new partners like India that can boost Turkey's economic prospects and lend its foreign policy greater depth.
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- For Modi, too, Turkey is an important regional player that must be factored into India's current recalibration of its Middle East policy.
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- The essence of the strategy was to raise their economic and political stakes in India and make Pakistan less salient for the bilateral relationship with Delhi.
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What is the way ahead?

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- There are three key propositions: **One,** diplomacy is about making friends into allies, neutrals into friends, and adversaries into neutrals.
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- **Second,** political will and clever diplomacy can alter the perspectives of other nations on issues of vital interest to India.
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- **Third,** as the interests of countries evolve, so will their positions over time.
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Source: Indian Express

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