

AN UNCERTAIN ALLY: TURKEY'S RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE

May 13, 2022

This report by Columbia University's Program on Peacebuilding and Human Rights (PBHR), with research support from the Turkish Democracy Project (TDP), documents Turkey's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Turkey has played both sides of the conflict in order to enhance its regional power and gain economic benefits. Its approach undermines NATO's unity and weakens international sanctions aimed at punishing Russia for its aggression and compelling President Vladimir Putin to change course.

Context

On February 21, 2022, Russia recognized the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts as independent "people's republics" and deployed additional Russian troops to those areas. Three days later, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Biden Administration led a coordinated diplomatic response involving NATO, the European Union (EU) and G7 countries. Member States coordinated their humanitarian, political, financial and material support, sending weapons for Ukraine's self-defense. On May 11, The US Congress authorized nearly \$40 Billion in military and other forms of assistance to war-torn Ukraine. Through UN agencies, donors have supported more than five million refugees displaced by Russia's aggression.

Turkey: An Outlier

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan initially condemned Russia for its aggression against Ukraine, calling it "unacceptable" and a "violation of international law." However, Turkey opposes Western sanctions in principle and has refused to join them in practice, actively seeking ways to benefit from the war.¹ Erdoğan laid out his plan to insiders of his Justice and Development Party (AKP): "With the Ukraine crisis, our country has become a rising star in sectors such as finance and tourism. By God's will, we will fulfill our promise to make our country one of the world's top 10 economies by making the best use of opportunities." The war offers an opportunity to distract Turkish voters from Turkey's multiple crises. Erdoğan's close business associate, Ethem Sancak, went to Moscow to deliver a message to Russian officials and

¹ China and the Gulf states are also neutral, cooperating closely with Russia in many different sectors.

appeared on Russian news channel RBC, calling NATO a “cancerous tumor.”² Accompanied by a delegation from Erdoğan’s allied Homeland Party, Sancak reportedly discussed ways to help Russia circumvent sanctions.³ In coalition with the AKP, his party favors stronger relations with Russia, China, and Iran.

Turkey's assistance to Russia includes diplomatic cover with international organizations. For example, Turkey abstained from voting on Russia’s suspension from the Council of Europe (CoE). Russia returned the favor when the CoE voted on infringement proceedings against Turkey after Osman Kavala, the pro-democracy civil society activist, was sentenced to “aggravated life in prison” for allegedly “attempting to overthrow the government” through his support for the Gezi Park protests in 2017.⁴

International Sanctions: A Coordinated Response

Multilateral sanctions seek to limit the Kremlin’s ability to finance and wage war. Demonstrating a remarkable unity, countries in NATO, the EU, and members of the G7 demanded that Russia immediately cease its military actions, unconditionally withdraw all forces and military equipment from Ukraine, and fully respect Ukraine’s territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.⁵

The EU imposed six packages of sectoral and individual sanctions.⁶ Specific projects, such as Nord Stream 2, were suspended. Landing and overflight rights by Aeroflot were revoked. The EU adopted sanctions against 217 individuals and 18 entities including a full transactions ban on four Russian banks.⁷

The fifth package of sanctions, adopted on April 8, targeted imports of Russian coal and other solid fossil fuels.⁸ It prohibited access by all Russian vessels to ports in EU countries, as well as

² Ahval, “[Erdoğan-linked businessman Ethem Sancak facing expulsion from ruling AKP](#),” 04/01/2022.

³ Ahval, “[Meet the Turkish oligarch who is pushing Kremlin talking points](#),” 03/25/2022.

⁴ Bianet, “[Gezi Trial Unveiled the State of Judiciary](#),” 05/04/2022.

⁵ Council of the European Union, “[EU response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#),” 05/03/2022.

⁶ As of this publication on May 12, 2022: Reuters, “[Sixth EU sanctions package vs Russia is close, Germany says](#),” 04/09/2022.

⁷ Council of the European Union, “[EU response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#),” 05/03/2022.

⁸ [Council of the European Union, “EU adopts fifth round of sanctions against Russia over its military aggression against Ukraine,” 04/08/2022.](#)

the sale of Russian wood, cement, seafood and liquor. Crypto-currency transactions were also banned.

A sixth package of sanctions is currently being considered, including a total ban on imports of Russian oil. The sixth package would also call for prosecution of war criminals who committed atrocities in Bucha, a city north of Kyiv, and Mariupol, a coastal city on the Black Sea. Sanctions also disconnected Russian banks from SWIFT, further isolating the Russian financial sector from the global financial system. The SWIFT ban affects Sberbank, which represents 37% of Russia's banking sector. Sanctions also closed the EU media space to Russian propaganda, banning three Russian state-owned broadcasters from European airwaves. Restrictions included cable, satellite, Internet and smartphone apps.⁹

Additional sanctions were announced after the G-7 meeting on May 8, including measures to cut off Kremlin-controlled media outlets from American advertisers. Channel One Russia, Television Station Russia-1, and NTV Broadcasting Company were sanctioned. Together, they received more than \$300 million in advertising revenue from Western countries in 2021. New export controls against Russian industries were also imposed, including Promtekhlogiya LLC, which makes weapons, as well as about 2,600 visa restrictions on Russian and Belarusian officials and Gazprom executives.¹⁰

Security Cooperation

Besides Turkey's unwillingness to implement sanctions against Russia, Turkey has also refused to join NATO members sending military equipment to Ukraine. Ankara has in fact criticized the Alliance for providing weapons to Ukraine, which it believes helps escalate tensions. At the beginning of Russia's invasion, Turkey created a crisis within NATO by challenging the sovereignty of Greek islands. It has also drastically increased its violations of Greek airspace and provocative overflights of Greek territory.

⁹ Ukinform, "[Sixth package of EU sanctions against Russia: Switching off SWIFT, banning propaganda](#)," 05/04/2022.

¹⁰ CNN, "[US announces sanctions against Kremlin-controlled media companies and bans Russia from using some American consulting services](#)," 05/08/2022.



As Ukrainian cities were bombarded with missiles and air power, Turkey rejected Washington's proposal to transfer the S-400 surface to air missiles that it acquired from Russia to Ukraine. Ankara also refused to send other Soviet-era weaponry that would have helped deter Russia's aggression.¹¹ Turkey's acquisition of the S-400 system is a sore spot in US-Turkey relations. In response, members of US Congress pledged to sanction Turkey in accordance with the Countering American Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), while the US Department of Defense suspended Turkey's participation in the F-35 stealth fighter program.

Turkey sold 24 unmanned combat aerial vehicles to Ukraine and agreed to co-produce Bayraktar TB2 armed drones at a production site in Ukraine.¹² While Turkey's drones have proven invaluable to Ukraine's efforts against Russia, Turkey has also sought to distance itself from these sales, claiming that contracts were signed before Russia's invasion and that the co-production was a private venture.¹³ Prevaricating is characteristic of Turkey's attempts to play both sides in the war.

¹¹ The World News Monitor, "[Turkey rules out transfer of Russian S-400 to Ukraine](#)," 03/28/2022.

¹² Radio Free Europe, "[Analysis: Erdogan Hoping Russian Invasion Of Ukraine Can Bolster Turkish Regional Power](#)," 04/30/2022.

¹³ AI Monitor, "[Ukraine war shakes up Turkey's ties with both Russia and NATO](#)," 03/08/2022.

Black Sea Access

The Biden Administration and other Western leaders heralded Ankara's decision to close the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus to warships sailing from the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The decision was taken in accordance with the 1936 Montreux Convention's wartime provisions, which Russia originally supported. The Montreux Convention effectively limits access to the Black Sea by NATO and Western naval forces during peacetime. The decision to close the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus straits to warships came in response to Kyiv's appeal.

Closing the straits effectively trapped Russian warships in the Black Sea, affecting Russia's military activities in Syria.¹⁴ Turkey's delay in closing the straits, however, gave at least six Russian warships and a submarine the opportunity to access Ukraine's southern coast and to bomb Ukraine's strategically important Snake Island, Odessa, and other Ukrainian cities bordering the Black Sea.

Russia also took advantage of its existing presence in the Black Sea to attack merchant ships delivering goods to Ukraine. Three non-military vessels have been attacked since the start of the war. *Yasa Jupiter*, a Turkish flagged merchant ship registered to the Marshall Islands, was hit by a Russian missile near Odessa on February 25, 2022. *Millennial Spirit*, a Moldova flagged chemical ship carrying 600 tons of diesel for Ukraine, was attacked by a Russian military ship.¹⁵ *Namura Queen*, a Japanese-owned cargo ship registered in Panama, was struck by Russian missiles. Closing the straits and attacking non-military vessels affected the delivery of weapons from western countries to Ukraine.

Turkish Mediation

Erdoğan has sought to broaden Turkey's regional influence by serving as mediator between Russia and Ukraine. Playing the role of interlocutor helps diffuse international pressure on Turkey. It allows Erdoğan to maintain good relations with Putin and has been rewarded by Russian investment in Turkey.



¹⁴ Forbes, "[How Turkey Blocking Russia From The Black Sea Harms Neutral States](#)," 03/02/2022.

¹⁵ Inquirer.net, "[Ukraine says two commercial ships hit by Russian missiles near Odessa port](#)," 02/26/2022.

While France's President Emmanuel Macron and others have sought to mediate, only Turkish officials have succeeded in bringing Ukrainian and Russian officials together. A meeting between Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was held at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum on March 11, 2022. During the discussion, Kuleba proposed that Ukraine would agree to neutral status and abandon its proposal to join NATO. Roman Abramovich, a well-known oligarch, attended as an "observer."

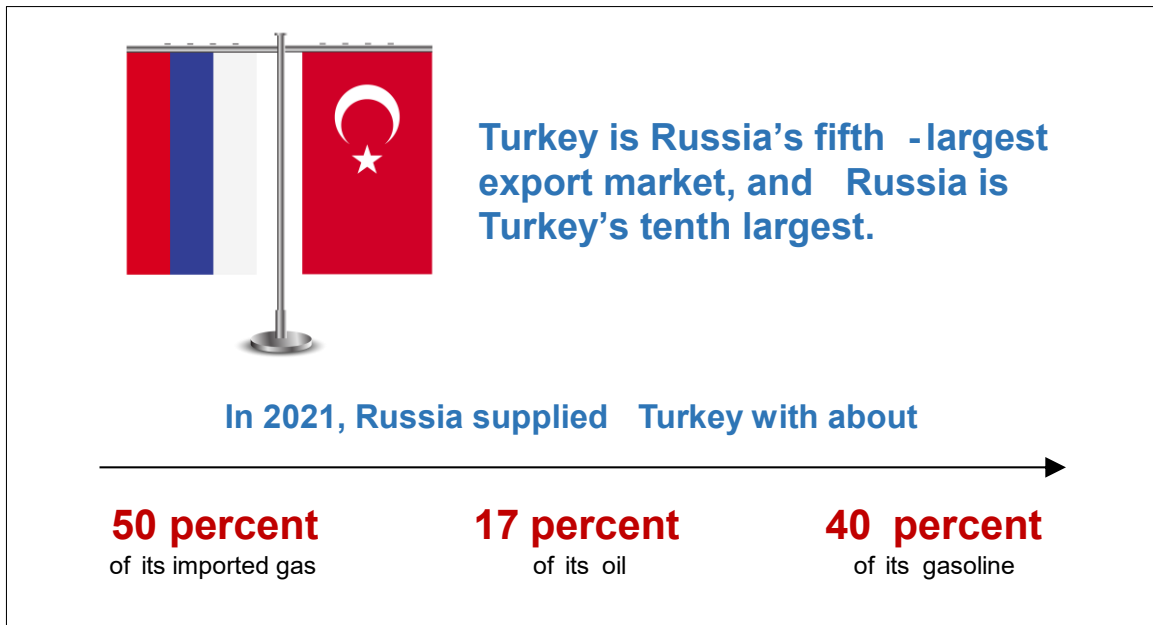
The offer was made more explicit in writing at a follow-up meeting in Istanbul on March 29, 2022. In exchange for abandoning its NATO aspirations, Ukraine proposed that a group of countries, including China, Russia, the US, France, Turkey, Germany, Canada and Israel, act as guarantors. This reworking of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum is akin to the NATO Article 5 commitment, pledging assistance to Ukraine in the event of an attack. Although hailed by all sides as "constructive," discussions failed to produce any tangible breakthroughs. Erdoğan has extended an open invitation to both Putin and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky to meet in Istanbul for further talks.

Ibrahim Kalin, deputy chairman of the Security and Foreign Policy Council of Turkish Presidency and Erdoğan's chief adviser, played a prominent role in discussions. He has also advocated for a new security approach: "We need to talk to Russia. If everybody burns bridges with Russia who is going to talk to them at the end of the day?"¹⁶ The new security approach involves diminishing NATO's importance.

Turkey and Russia: Economic Ties

Turkey has extensive economic contact with Russia. Moreover, Erdoğan believes that preserving economic relations with Russia and Ukraine will cushion the conflict's impact on Turkey's economy. Inflation in Turkey, which recently hit a 20-year high, is compounded by the rising cost of energy, wheat and fertilizer resulting from the Ukraine war.

¹⁶ The Guardian, "[Turkey leads pack of countries vying to mediate between Ukraine and Russia](#)," 03/31/2022.



Europe meets about 20% of its natural gas requirements and, of the rest, about half comes from Russia. Weaning reliance off Russian gas requires new sources, including gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, development and delivery of natural gas supplies from the Eastern Mediterranean are complicated by geopolitical disputes, namely Turkey's occupation of Northern Cyprus. Natural gas supplies from fields in Israeli territorial waters are also complicated by the Cyprus situation, as a natural gas pipeline would traverse Cypriot waters. Until supplementary gas sources become available, Europe will be forced to rely more on oil and coal, which contradicts its goal to reduce carbon emissions and counteract global warming.¹⁷ Beyond Turkey's occupation of Cyprus, its challenge to Greece's territorial waters and its approach to the EastMed Pipeline limit European energy independence from Russia.

A unified approach to energy sanctions is already unravelling. Victor Orban, Hungary's nationalist leader who is friendly with Putin, recently voiced opposition to EU sanctions on Russian oil. Though the EU's executive commission proposed a gradual schedule for phasing out imports of Russian crude and refined products, Orban adamantly opposes any energy sanctions. Slovakia and other EU members may follow Orban's lead.

¹⁷ The New York Times, "[Many Hurdles in Europe's Effort to Replace Russian Gas](#)", 05/06/2022.

In 2021, Turkey exported a record of nearly 1.5 million metric tons of fresh fruit and vegetables to Russia. That year, Russia accounted for 56 percent of Turkish grain imports, valued at \$2.24 billion.

Russian tourism is a key contributor to Turkey's economy with seven million Russians visiting in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic affected tourism revenues, but the number of Russian visitors rebounded to 4.7 million last year. Turkish officials predict that Turkey would break a record for tourism in 2022. Some of this increase includes Russian tourists who are encouraged by Russia's Ambassador to Cyprus to redirect their travel from Greece and Cyprus to Turkey. Turkish banks are expanding the Russian payment system for electronic fund transfers, "Mir", to facilitate tourist payments.

While many countries have denied Aeroflot landing and overflight rights, Turkey has kept its airspace open to the Russian state carrier. The Turkish government and a consortium of private businesses recently created a special new airline, Southwind, based in Antalya, to transport Russians to Turkish beach resorts. First flights are scheduled for the end of May.¹⁸

Ankara envisions financial gain through business ties with both Russia and Ukraine. In 2021, Turkey invested some \$4.5 billion in Ukraine, making it the country's biggest foreign investor. Turkey acquired more than 13 percent of its grain from Ukraine last year. On February 3, weeks prior to Russia's invasion, Erdoğan and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed an agreement pledging to increase annual trade to \$10 billion.

Nuclear Power

Russia is helping to build Akkuyu, a Turkish Nuclear Power Plant in Büyükeceli, Mersin Province. At a cost of \$20 billion, the facility is the first nuclear power station in Turkey and is expected to meet around 10% of the country's electricity demand.

After Erdoğan and Putin attended a ground-breaking ceremony on April 3, 2018, Russia's Rosatom and the Turkish Energy and Natural Resource Ministry started work with financing from Russian investors. Rosatom holds a 99.2% stake in the project.¹⁹ The Turkish Electricity Trade and Contract Corporation signed a 15-year agreement to purchase 70% of power generated from the first two units. Erdoğan proposed to collaborate with Rosatom on the

¹⁸ Aviactionline, "[Southwind is born: Turkey creates airline targeting Russian tourists](#)," 04/18/2022.

¹⁹ Informnny, "[Ukraine war stokes concerns over Turkey's nuclear plant](#)," 04/27/2022.

construction of two further plants, tethering Turkey's nuclear ambitions to Russia for the foreseeable future.

Nuclear power plants are a source of great concern for public safety. Akkuyu lies near a seismic fault line, and a powerful quake could cause a radioactive leak, affecting Turkey and neighboring countries. Turkey is adamant about completing the project with Russian support, ignoring public concerns and objections of several members of the European Parliament.²⁰

Russian Oligarchs

Russian oligarchs, who accumulated vast wealth during the period of privatization in the 1990s, wield enormous influence through their wealth and personal association with Putin. During the early stages of Russia's attack on Ukraine, the US, Canada, Japan, and European countries sanctioned Putin and the oligarchs directly. These sanctions sought to drive a wedge between Putin and wealthy Russians who condone aggression against Ukraine. Sanctions froze their foreign assets, restricted travel, and targeted business ties.

Oligarchs have since tried to hide their wealth in order to prevent Western nations from freezing their assets. While some took their yachts to Dubai or the Maldives, Turkey became the most popular destination for oligarch-owned yachts and money.²¹

Real estate purchases by foreigners have also boomed. On a year-over-year basis, home sales to non-Turkish buyers increased by 55% in February 2022. Sales to Russian buyers grew by 96% and sales to Ukrainians rose by 85%. In March, foreigners bought 21% more homes than in February. Through its citizenship investment program, anyone investing at least \$250,000 in real estate or \$500,000 in government bonds, companies, investment funds or a local bank account is entitled to a Turkish passport in 3-4 months.²²

Increasingly stringent sanctions target the banking sector (e.g., Sberbank, VTB Bank, Promsvyazbank; the energy sector (e.g., Rosneft, Gazprom); transportation (e.g., Aeroflot, United Aircraft Corporation, Russian Airlines Pjsc); and mineral exploitation (e.g., United Aircraft mineral development, Alrosa diamond mining).

²⁰ European Parliament, "[Parliamentary Questions](#)," 05/12/2020.

²¹ The Wall Street Journal, "[Superyachts, Seaside Apartments and Suitcases Full of Cash: Russians Pour Money Into Turkey](#)," 04/07/2022.

²² Forbes, "[Why Turkey Could Become The Next Haven For Russian Oligarchs Fleeing Sanctions](#)," 05/03/2022.

The US “Task Force on KleptoCapture” was established as an interagency group to investigate and target oligarchs. The Task Force is mandated to impose sanctions and seize the assets of oligarchs that the US government determines are derived through collusion with the Russian government and for their involvement with the war against Ukraine. The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project and the Russian Asset Tracker were established to showcase the ill-gotten gains of Russian oligarchs. Under US pressure, Turkish banks must complete paperwork proving that the Russian individual or company opening a bank account is not subject to sanctions.

Roman Abramovich stationed at least \$1.2 billion of his fortune in Turkey. His super-yachts avoided European waters by docking at Turkish ports. The *Eclipse* is moored in Marmaris and the *Solaris* in Bodrum. Additionally, Abramovich’s private jets are subject to foreclosure. Assets used by Abramovich to acquire the Chelsea football club are also under scrutiny. Members of the US Congress have demanded that seized assets be used for refugee relief and reconstruction in Ukraine.

Alexander Nesis’ \$110 million *Romea* is currently anchored in the town of Göcek near Fethiye; Andrei Molchanov’s \$110 million *Aurora* is in Marmaris; Oleg Deripaska’s \$58 million *Clio* departed Göcek on April 16, while Iskander Makhmudov’s \$55 million *Predator* left the port of Kuşadası a month earlier. Vagit Alekperov’s \$8 million *Space* is in the marina of Tuzla in Istanbul; Arkady Rotenberg’s \$38 million *Rahil* was in Tuzla until April 27 when it sailed to the Sochi in Russia.²³

Owner	Vessel	Price	Location in Turkey
Alexander Nesis	<i>Romea</i>	\$110 million	Göcek near Fethiye
Andrei Molchanov	<i>Aurora</i>	\$110 million	Marmaris
Oleg Deripaska	<i>Clio</i>	\$58 million	Göcek
Iskander Makhmudov	<i>Predator</i>	\$55 million	Kuşadası
Vagit Alekperov	<i>Space</i>	\$8 million	Tuzla in Istanbul
Arkady Rotenberg	<i>Rahil</i>	\$38 million	Tuzla

Most European countries are pro-actively identifying and seizing assets of the oligarchs. The 157-ft yacht, *Lady Anastasia*, owned by Alexander Mikheyev, was detained by Spanish

²³ Ibid.

authorities at a Mallorca marina. Mikheyev, who heads the Russian weapon exporting group, Rosoboronoexport, is on the EU sanctions list. Spanish authorities seized the 279-foot superyacht *Valerie*, valued at \$140 million, in Barcelona. It belongs to Sergei Chemezov, a former KGB officer who heads the state conglomerate Rostec. Under US pressure, Cyprus revoked the citizenship from 8 of 15 Russian billionaires including the mineral magnate, Oleg Deripaska.²⁴

Many Russian oligarchs have set up new bank accounts in Turkey to shield their assets from foreclosure. In addition, Russian companies are repackaging themselves as Turkish entities."²⁵ Bodrum, Fethiye and Marmaris, coastal resort cities, are the most likely destinations for Russian oligarchs seeking to invest in Turkish real estate. In addition to real estate, Russians are investing in fertilizer production and energy industries. Activities of the oligarchs are undertaken in close coordination with Turkish officials who have made statements welcoming them as both tourists and investors. As a matter of policy, Turkey refuses to freeze assets of the Russian central bank. It also refuses to comply with the exclusion of some Russian and Belarusian banks from the SWIFT banking system.

Pattern of Disregard for International Sanctions

Turkey has demonstrated a disregard for sanctions beginning in the 1980s and continuing over forty years. These include (i) violations of UN sanctions on oil transport from Iraq during the Gulf War, (ii) support for jihadi groups that evolved into ISIS, beginning in 2014, and (iii) gold shipments providing hard currency to Iran between 2017 and 2019. The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Network indicates that Turkey's current efforts to evade sanctions are more extensive than officially reported.²⁶

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) imposed sanctions on Iraq through UNSC Resolution 661 (August 6, 1990), which stayed in force until May 22, 2003. Sanctions banned all trade and financial transfers with both Iraq and occupied Kuwait except for humanitarian supplies such as medicine and food supplies. Turkish border guards either turned a blind eye or accepted bribes to let oil-laden lorries cross the Habur gate on the border of Turkey and Iraq. The road was covered by a giant oil slick for kilometers on either side of the border.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ [VOA News, "Turkey's Opposition to Russian Sanctions Stokes Suspicions of Sanctions-Busting,"](#) 03/17/2022.

²⁶ FDD, "[Iran's Turkey-Based Sanctions Evasion Scheme More Extensive Than Previously Reported,](#)" 09/23/2020.

²⁷ Observed by the author in February 1992.

In 2015, the UNSC voted unanimously to cut off financial support for extremist Islamist organizations. The resolution called for an asset freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo.²⁸ Turkey's collusion with ISIS is well documented. Its National Intelligence Agency (MIT) provided weapons, financing, and communications equipment to jihadis crossing the border.²⁹ Then Vice Present Biden publicly criticized Turkey for sponsoring the jihadi highway from Sanliurfa in Turkey to Raqqa which enabled 40,000 foreign fighters from 80 countries to join the battle.

In October 2019, US attorneys for the Southern District of New York charged Halkbank, a Turkish state-owned bank, with fraud, money laundering, and sanctions offenses related to its participation "in a multibillion-dollar scheme to evade U.S. sanctions on Iran." According to prosecutors, Halkbank helped Tehran transfer \$20 billion worth of restricted funds, with at least \$1 billion laundered through the US financial system. A federal jury convicted Halkbank's general manager, Mehmet Hakan Atilla, to 32 months in prison for sanctions evasion and bank fraud. Reza Zarrab pleaded guilty to bribing Turkish ministers and Halkbank executives.³⁰ According to Zarrab, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan personally approved the scheme to evade sanctions.

Axis of Autocracy

Turkey and Russia constitute an axis of autocracy. Putinism is the government system in Russia, characterized by the concentration of political and financial powers in the hands of former intelligence officials, including Putin himself. The takeover of state assets was accomplished by a circle of Putin associates and friends, including oligarchs who provide financial services to Putin and his family. Although Putin's financial disclosure suggests he is a man of modest means, his personal fortune exceeds \$200 billion. Putin and his inner circle have taken control of the financial, media and administrative resources of the Russian state. Putinism, marked by the control of information, imposes severe limitations on political rights. Political opponents like Alexei Navalny have been poisoned and arrested. Elections in Russia are a process to consolidate powers of the state.

Erdoganism is a form of populist authoritarianism and political ideology based on the cult of personality. Corrupt at its core, it is chauvinistic, nationalistic and discriminatory towards

²⁸ [United Nations Press Release](#), 11/20/2015

²⁹ Phillips, David. L. (2017). *An Uncertain Ally: Turkey under Erdogan's Dictatorship*. Routledge.

³⁰ AlJazeera, "[Turkey's Halkbank urges US judge to dismiss Iran sanctions case](#)," 09/18/2020

ethnic and religious minorities. Many Russian civil society activists who relocated to Turkey found that Turkey is a gulag of a different sort. Erdoğan and his family have allegedly amassed a huge personal fortune since the AKP came to power in 2003. Erdoğan's rhetoric and his actions have contributed to the view that he is an unreliable partner. Both Putinism and Erdoganism use elections as window-dressing to consolidate power around the leader. In both systems, the rule of law and separation of powers are insignificant. Government exists to advance the interests of leadership rather than to serve the electorate.

As the Biden Administration considers designating Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism, it should also consider ways to address Turkey's duplicity. Erdoğan's close ties and cooperation with Putin makes him an accomplice to Russia's crimes.

Biden casts the conflict between Russia and Ukraine as a contest between autocracy and democracy. Ukraine is on the frontline preventing Putin's authoritarian style of government from bleeding West. Putin's Russia is a lost cause, run by gangsters and kleptocrats. Turkey under Erdoğan's dictatorship is also on the brink of pariah status. Erdoğan wants to have it both ways. However, he cannot give lip service criticizing Russia while promoting and safeguarding Russia's aggression. Turkey's Euro-Atlantic standing has been damaged over the years. Turkey would not be admitted to NATO if the alliance were formed anew.

Turkey is at a fork in the road. Down one path lies reform and a truly democratic Turkey that respects minority and human rights. Down the other lies greater kleptocracy and human rights abuses. Turkey's cooperation with Russia makes it an outlier in the Euro-Atlantic community.



Columbia University

Columbia University is one of the top academic and research institutions in the world, conducting path-breaking research in medicine, science, the arts, and the humanities. It includes three undergraduate schools, thirteen graduate and professional schools, and a school of continuing education.

The Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) was the first academic center in the world to be founded on an interdisciplinary commitment to the study of human rights. ISHR is also renowned for bridging the study and practice of human rights on both a national and international level. ISHR seeks to promote dialogue between scholars and practitioners through human rights research, education, lectures, conferences, and capacity building activities.

The Program on Peace-building and Human Rights (PBHR) is an applied research endeavor, testing peace-building strategies in actual conflict settings. PBHR works with local partners, emphasizing knowledge sharing and capacity building. PBHR shapes policy, working closely with U.S. officials and international stakeholders at the UN and in foreign governments. PBHR works on political transition, power-sharing, peace implementation, preventing violent extremism, and dialogue/reconciliation. Gender issues are mainstreamed in PBHR projects.

David L. Phillips is PBHR's director. He is the principal author of this report.



TURKISH
DEMOCRACY
PROJECT

Turkish Democracy Project

The Turkish Democracy Project is a non-partisan, non-profit international policy organization formed in opposition to Turkey's authoritarianism, its oppression of the Turkish people, and its malign and destabilizing international activities.

To read more about the Turkish Democracy Project, [click here](#).