

Mutual Representations: Turkey in Russian Media and Russia in Turkish Media. An Analysis of Two Countries' Media, January–August 2026

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Abstract

This article examines, through comparative analysis, how Turkey was represented in Russian media and Russia in Turkish media between January and August 2026. Its principal aim is to determine how the media image of the other country varies with the political context of specific events and the editorial and political positions of media organizations. The analysis covers material published by state, government-aligned/mainstream, and critical media outlets in Russia and Turkey. The S-400 issue, the Fifth Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's visit to Russia, the Ankara NATO summit, the possible transfer of weapons from Turkey to Ukraine, Black Sea security, and the Erdoğan–Putin meeting were selected as the principal groups of events for which to examine media coverage. The materials were compared in terms of how they defined problems, attributed causes and responsibility, offered political evaluations, represented the other country, selected sources, employed emotional language, and proposed or implied solutions.

The principal media corpus comprises 61 items. In this article, “media item” refers to a news report, analytical article, opinion or column piece, or interview.

The analysis shows that representations of the other country are neither uniform nor fixed in either media sphere. Russian

media portray Turkey, on the one hand, as an important strategic partner and, on the other, as a NATO member drawing closer to the West whose reliability is questioned in certain circumstances. Turkish media frame Russia both as a strategic and economic partner and as a security risk and political actor through which they evaluate Turkey's foreign policy. Media organizations' political and ideological positions also influence the selection of events and sources, the emotional tone of coverage, and the political meaning assigned to the other country.

Keywords: Russia–Turkey relations, media framing, mutual images, political communication, Russian media, Turkish media, foreign policy, S-400, NATO, Ukraine.

Introduction

Russia–Turkey relations have recently undergone another period of fluctuation.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these relations, always sensitive in terms of geopolitical balance and security, have been characterized at different times by serious crises and strategic cooperation.

The serious tensions that arose between the two countries after Turkey shot down a Russian Su-24 military aircraft near the Syrian border in November 2015 gradually subsided from 2016 onward. Erdoğan's visit to Russia in August, Putin's visit to Turkey in October, and the TurkStream agreement were signs of rapprochement.[\[1\]](#)

The shift toward a military-strategic phase of rapprochement occurred at the end of 2017, when Turkey and Russia agreed on the purchase and sale of S-400 surface-to-air missile systems worth \$2,5 billion.[\[2\]](#)

This state of relations began to erode again amid the conflict in Libya and the Idlib crisis. Subsequently, although

divergent interests in Karabakh and, by extension, the Caucasus, as well as Turkey's position on the war in Ukraine, did not directly precipitate a crisis, renewed competition became increasingly pronounced.

The outcome of the Karabakh war, Russia's failure to achieve its objectives in Ukraine, and the collapse of the Assad regime substantially weakened Russia in this competition. Turkey, meanwhile, was able to increase its influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, regions historically within Russia's sphere of dominance.[\[3\]](#)

Finally, Turkey's renewed rapprochement with the West beginning in 2024 marked a new phase.

The year 2026 has been one of the most dynamic and tense periods of this latest phase. These dynamics and tensions have naturally also affected how the other country is represented in Russian and Turkish media.

The media do not merely convey all aspects of an event equally. They select certain aspects, make them more salient, and create discourses that shape how events are perceived. Headlines, word choices, the selection of experts, the context in which an event is presented, and the facts emphasized all shape readers' perceptions of the other country. İker Erdoğan describes framing as an integrated process encompassing production, content, and media use, and shows that news frames can explain differences in the presentation of various issues, including events between countries.[\[4\]](#)

Emotional framing is another important element of this process. Research indicates that the emotional framing of a news story can affect audiences' emotional responses, information processing, and positions on an event.[\[5\]](#)

The image of Turkey in the Russian press, and of Russia in the Turkish press, is neither stable nor unchanging. Periods of tension and rapprochement in political relations also

influence media language. During periods of cooperation, the other country may be portrayed primarily as a pragmatic and useful partner. During political crises, elements of threat, confrontation, distrust, and historical rivalry become more visible. Studies of the formation of mutual images in Russian and Turkish media show that this process is connected to historical, cultural, geopolitical, and economic contexts.[\[6\]](#)

Historical memory must also be considered in the formation of perceptions of Turkey in the Russian media sphere. Research on images of Turkey and Turks in Russian society shows that Russian–Ottoman conflicts played a role in shaping these historical perceptions.[\[7\]](#)

Consequently, coverage of Turkey may reactivate historical memory and familiar images. The media can explain a given event not only through the current political situation but also through inherited perceptions. Turkey may thus be presented not simply as a state making a specific political decision but within a broader emotional and symbolic frame as a “historical rival,” “regional power,” “difficult partner,” or “unstable actor.”

Emotional portrayals of Turkey in the Russian press are not exclusively negative. Turkey’s activity in regional politics, capacity for diplomatic maneuver, and independent decision-making are sometimes portrayed as signs of strength and political flexibility.

The image of Russia in Turkish media is similarly dual. Russia is depicted both as a state with substantial military and political power and as an actor whose interests periodically conflict with Turkey’s regional interests. The key question is less which portrayal is “correct” than which aspects a particular media text selects and which it relegates to the background. This is consistent with the logic of framing.[\[8\]](#)

The emotional tone of coverage of Russia is not solely a consequence of foreign-policy events. In politically polarized

media systems in particular, foreign policy can become part of domestic political contestation.

In such cases, a news report about Russia is not exclusively about Russia. It can be used to evaluate the Turkish government's foreign policy and to criticize or support its diplomatic decisions.

The same event may be presented in entirely different emotional tones by different media organizations. One outlet may depict diplomatic engagement as an example of successful foreign policy, while another may portray the same event as a risk, a concession, or a mistaken political decision.

Media representations of foreign-policy events may be influenced by a state's foreign-policy position, its diplomatic alignment, and newspapers' political positions; this influence can be evident from source selection through to the presentation of events.[\[9\]](#)

The central problem of this study follows from this observation: What political meaning does the same Russia–Turkey event acquire in the media of the two countries, and how does that meaning vary according to an outlet's editorial and political position?

The topic is timely because Russia–Turkey relations in 2026 simultaneously contain elements of cooperation and competition, while the way those relations are presented to the public also matters.

The different meanings and evaluative frames assigned to the same event by outlets with different political positions make it important to examine how Russia–Turkey relations are constructed in media discourse.

Research Aim and Central Thesis

This study aims to identify how the other country was framed in Russian and Turkish media from January to August 2026,

compare differences among media categories, and examine the role of foreign-policy discourse in the formation of each country's image.

The article's central thesis is that the image of the other country in Russian and Turkish media in 2026 was neither uniform nor stable but varied according to the political context of particular events and the outlet's editorial and political position. Russian media generally portrayed Turkey between the frames of strategic partnership and geopolitical unreliability, while Turkish media situated Russia within frames of strategic cooperation, security, and domestic political evaluation. Official government statements also exerted substantial influence on the direction of media framing, particularly on sensitive foreign-policy issues.

Main Research Question:

During the first eight months of 2026, within which frames were the principal events in Russia–Turkey relations presented in Russian and Turkish media, and how did those frames differ according to the outlets' political positions?

Subquestions:

1. Within which different frames of meaning and evaluation is the same event presented in Russian and Turkish media?
2. How does an outlet's political position affect its representation of the other country and of its own government's foreign policy?

Main Observation Period

Although the principal observation period covers January–August 2026, materials about the Erdoğan–Putin meeting on 1 September 2026 were also included in the comparative analysis because the meeting was a logical continuation of earlier events and the related reports appeared in the first

days of September.

Principal Media Outlets Examined:

Russia

State media:

RIA Novosti, TASS, RT Russian

Government-aligned or government-adjacent media:

Izvestia, Kommersant, RBC, Vedomosti, Interfax, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Ritm Evrazii, Pravda.ru, Regnum, Discred

Critical or independent media:

Meduza, Novaya Gazeta Europe, The Moscow Times

Turkey

State media:

Anadolu Agency

Government-aligned or government-adjacent media:

Yeni Şafak, Sabah, Haber7, A Haber, Milliyet, **Hürriyet**

Critical or independent media:

Sözcü, Cumhuriyet, T24, Odatv, Aydınlık

The S-400 “Triumpf”

In 2026, the S-400 air and missile defense systems that Turkey had purchased from Russia again became the subject of debate in both countries’ press. This debate unfolded in two phases. The first began in March, when Iran launched ballistic missiles toward Turkey. This discussion differed from the earlier discourse. Previously, attention had focused on Turkey’s cooling relations with the West and strategic

cooperation between Russia and Turkey, but the actual situation shifted the direction of debate. NATO air and missile defense systems had intercepted the missiles.[\[10\]](#) The non-use of the S-400 systems in intercepting them became a topic of discussion in Turkey. Pro-government Turkish media largely confined themselves to relaying the Ministry of National Defense's official statement.[\[11\]](#) Independent outlets, by contrast, argued that purchasing the system from Russia had been a mistake from the outset and that a NATO member had no need for it. Some described the S-400s as "showpieces."[\[12\]](#) Sözcü portrayed the purchase as an example of the "New Turkey's" flawed decision-making model.[\[13\]](#)

Russian media covered the development in a largely factual manner. For example, on 12 March, RIA Novosti published a report titled "Turkey explains why S-400s were not used to intercept the missiles," which stated that Zeki Aktürk, a representative of Turkey's Ministry of National Defense, had confirmed that the systems were not used in the incident.[\[14\]](#)

The second phase of the S-400 debate began in July. On 10 July, Abdülkadir Selvi claimed that Turkey had sold the systems to a Gulf country and that the sale would be announced that day.[\[15\]](#) Although no official statement confirmed the report, negotiations to that effect were said to be under way.

That same day, Russian outlets ran headlines stating that "Peskov calls the issue of Turkey's resale of the S-400s 'extremely sensitive.'" [\[16\]](#)

In its report on the episode, Meduza emphasized that Turkey had been seeking to return the S-400 systems in recent years, and that the matter, in particular, had been discussed at the December 2025 meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Vladimir Putin in Turkmenistan.[\[17\]](#)

More sharply critical views also appeared. One commentator characterized the episode as another Turkish betrayal of Russia under the headline "Sale of the S-400s: Another

‘yataghan in the back,’ or Turkey’s definitive self-determination?” [\[18\]](#)

Pravda.ru ran the headline “Ankara’s disgraceful bargain: Turkey secretly sells the S-400s for American fighter jets.” [\[19\]](#)

Criticism in Turkish opposition media had a different approach. For example, in an article titled “Why did we buy the S-400s? Why are we selling them?” Sözcü wrote: “The S-400s have been kept in hangars for seven years. In return, we were excluded from the next-generation F-35 fighter program, which was to form the backbone of our air force; we could not receive the aircraft for which we had paid; and our defense industry faced severe sanctions. This situation prompted the question in Turkish society and politics: ‘Did we sacrifice billions of dollars for a system we will never be able to use?’” [\[20\]](#)

Pro-government Turkish media, meanwhile, published articles presenting the purchase of the S-400s from Russia as a tactical success and the decision to sell them as a further resolution of a crisis.

Yeni Şafak wrote: “The emerging security environment opens considerable scope for strategic diplomatic moves by Turkey and important steps in the defense industry.” [\[21\]](#)

An article in Sabah stated that “during this period, Turkey gained time through tactical moves and largely realized its strategy of building a domestic air-defense system.” [\[22\]](#)

Russian and Turkish coverage attached different political consequences to the S-400 controversy: Russian outlets primarily used it to assess Turkey’s reliability and geopolitical orientation, whereas Turkish outlets used it to evaluate the costs and effectiveness of Ankara’s defense-policy decisions. Official Russian media presented the episode factually, while other segments framed it in terms of an

unreliable partnership and a bargain with the West. Pravda.ru's phrase "disgraceful bargain" creates a frame distinct from "another yataghan in the back." Here, Turkey's conduct is presented less as a betrayal than as the exercise of political bargaining and material advantage. The epithet "disgraceful" adds a moral judgment. Two strands therefore emerge in the harsher discourse of government-aligned Russian media: Turkey is constructed not merely as emotionally untrustworthy but also as an actor willing to change its foreign-policy decisions for material and geopolitical gain. Turkish media, by contrast, primarily evaluate the S-400 decision in terms of Turkey's defense policy and the government's decision-making model. Thus, the same episode becomes a question of Turkey's reliability in Russian media and of the consequences of the government's strategic decisions in Turkish media.

Fifth Antalya Diplomacy Forum

The Fifth Antalya Diplomacy Forum, held on 17–19 April 2026, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's participation in it was another significant event in coverage of Russia–Turkey relations included in our sample.

Turkish media discussed the forum's standing and its role in Russia–Ukraine negotiations. Yeni Şafak wrote: "Especially during the Russia–Ukraine war, its ability to bring the parties together, and its emergence as a platform that conveyed the voices of the oppressed to the world during the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza, further strengthened the forum's international role.

The Antalya Diplomacy Forum stands out as a mature expression of the principles of 'leader diplomacy' and multidimensional engagement in Turkish foreign policy."[\[23\]](#)

RIA Novosti treated Lavrov's invitation to the forum as a separate news story, foregrounding Turkey's willingness to

host the Russian foreign minister at a prominent international diplomatic event.[\[24\]](#) This emphasis is consistent with a broader Russian media frame in which participation in the Antalya forum demonstrated that Moscow continued to maintain active diplomatic channels despite tensions with the West. The report also noted that Hakan Fidan had previously called Lavrov the “star of the forum.” On 8 April 2026, Maria Zakharova announced that Sergey Lavrov would attend the Antalya Diplomacy Forum at Hakan Fidan’s invitation. According to the official description she provided, the agenda included the Middle East, the South Caucasus, the Black Sea, and bilateral relations.[\[25\]](#)

From the perspective of Russia–Turkey relations, the forum’s most significant issue was the possibility of resuming Russia–Ukraine talks in Istanbul.

Russian media highlighted Lavrov’s statement that “the resumption of talks on Ukraine is not the number-one priority.”[\[26\]](#)

Turkish media, by contrast, emphasized a positive attitude toward the prospect of talks in Istanbul.

Anadolu Agency led with Lavrov’s statement, “We welcome the possibility of resuming talks in Istanbul.”[\[27\]](#) Hürriyet published its report under the headline “Lavrov points from Antalya to Istanbul.”[\[28\]](#)

Russian and Turkish media used the Antalya forum to construct different forms of diplomatic agency: Russian coverage presented the event as evidence that Moscow retained active international channels, whereas Turkish coverage emphasized Ankara’s capacity to convene different parties and facilitate diplomacy. In Russian media, the forum therefore helped weaken perceptions of Russia’s international isolation, while in Turkish media it reinforced the image of Ankara as an active diplomatic intermediary.

No distinctive analytical treatment of the forum specifically in relation to Russia–Turkey ties was identified in Russian opposition media.

Nor was such a distinctive analytical treatment identified in Turkish opposition media.

Hakan Fidan's Visit to Russia

Another major event discussed in the Russian and Turkish press was Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's visit to Russia on 16–17 June 2026.

Before the visit, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova announced that Fidan would make a working visit to Moscow on 15–17 June.

Reporting Zakharova's announcement, Kommersant noted that talks with Lavrov would be the main component of the visit and that other bilateral meetings were also planned.[\[29\]](#) Interfax reported the same information and stated that bilateral cooperation and international and regional issues would be on the agenda.[\[30\]](#)

Sözcü noted that the visit would take place at Lavrov's invitation and that the agenda included trade, energy, security, and consular affairs.[\[31\]](#) Cumhuriyet emphasized the Black Sea, the South Caucasus, trade and tourism, and the safety of Russian tourists visiting Turkey.[\[32\]](#) Odatv drew attention to differences in the messages issued about the visit.[\[33\]](#)

In an analytical article framing Fidan's visit as an example of "multidimensional diplomacy" and a "multifaceted, independent foreign policy based on regional interests," Anadolu Agency interpreted its central meaning as Turkey's capacity to work with different centers of power simultaneously. The author argued that the visit's principal

outcome was confirmation at the highest level that, in an international system marked by deepening crises, Turkey was an actor that solved rather than created problems and transformed crises into geopolitical opportunities.[\[34\]](#)

The Russian foreign minister said that Russia and Turkey maintained intensive dialogue at the levels of presidents, parliamentary leaders, and foreign ministries. RIA Novosti and Interfax used this formulation directly in their headlines.[\[35\]](#) [\[36\]](#)

One of the principal points of divergence in coverage of Fidan's meeting with Sergey Lavrov concerned Turkey's offer to mediate Russia-Ukraine talks.

In Moscow, Fidan said that Turkey could both mediate renewed Russia-Ukraine talks and provide a venue for them. Russian media presented this statement as a diplomatic offer from Ankara.[\[37\]](#)

Turkish media assigned the same development a different meaning. Habertürk highlighted Fidan's words, "Russia and Ukraine must return to the negotiating table."[\[38\]](#) Here Turkey is portrayed as a power capable of influencing the talks.

Under the headline "A stern warning from Turkey to Russia," Sözcü again covered statements concerning the talks.[\[39\]](#)

Fidan met not only Lavrov but also Putin administration advisers Vladimir Medinsky and Igor Levitin, Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu, Rosneft head Igor Sechin, and other senior officials.

Fidan's reception by Putin in Kazan on 17 June was the visit's most significant symbolic event. Putin sent greetings to Erdoğan through Fidan and stated that Russia-Turkey relations had moved beyond a formal framework to acquire a "friendly character."[\[40\]](#)

Haber7 ran the headline "Putin praises President Erdoğan in

meeting with Minister Fidan.”[\[41\]](#)

Coverage of Fidan’s Moscow visit produced two distinct frames: Russian media emphasized the continuity and institutional depth of bilateral dialogue, while Turkish media presented the visit as evidence of Ankara’s multidimensional diplomacy and ability to engage different centers of power simultaneously. Russian media’s emphasis on dialogue among presidents, parliaments, and foreign ministries presents the relationship as an enduring institutional channel. Turkish media, by contrast, interpret the visit through a frame of “multidimensional diplomacy” as evidence of Ankara’s capacity to engage with different centers of power in parallel.

The Ankara NATO Summit

The NATO summit held in Ankara on 7–8 July 2026 was more than another political meeting of the North Atlantic Alliance. It again brought the underlying paradoxes of Russia–Turkey relations into view. As host and the member with NATO’s second-largest armed forces, Turkey occupied a central position in the Alliance’s collective defense policy. At the same time, Ankara kept channels with Moscow open on energy, trade, security, and mediation over the war in Ukraine. This dual position led Russian and Turkish media to present the summit through different discourses.

Even before the summit, Russian press coverage had begun to express concern about its possible effect on Ankara’s policy toward Moscow.

In an article titled “NATO, Turkish Style,” published in *Kommersant* on 30 June, the author observed: “The main geopolitical question in Ankara will be whether Erdoğan’s European guests can persuade him to accept an alternative agenda that entails abandoning dialogue with Moscow and increasing military aid to Kyiv.”[\[42\]](#)

The summit's final political text, which described Russia as a long-term threat to NATO, also became a principal point of departure for Russian media discourse.[\[43\]](#)

In a report headlined "Foreign Ministry: Confrontation with Russia is systemic for NATO," RT Russian cited Zakharova.[\[44\]](#)

On 10 July, Kommersant wrote: "The main outcome of discussions on Ukraine at the Ankara NATO summit was a consensus among the United States and its Euro-Atlantic allies on the need to strengthen Kyiv's ability to strike deep inside Russian territory in order to compel Moscow to make peace."[\[45\]](#)

In an article titled "Pleasing Daddy," Novaya Gazeta Europe criticized NATO's excessive focus on satisfying Trump and argued that this increased the risk of weakening the Alliance.[\[46\]](#)

In late July, Vedomosti published an article titled "Lavrov points to Turkey's dual position on Ukraine." It highlighted the passage concerning Turkey in an interview with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov: "Our Turkish neighbors say they are once again ready to help on the Ukrainian question, yet at the same time they sign NATO documents emphasizing the need to restore the territorial integrity of the Kyiv regime."[\[47\]](#)

Government-aligned Turkish media and Anadolu Agency explicitly portrayed the summit as a diplomatic and political success for Turkey. They highlighted President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's post-summit statement that the Ankara meeting had shown Turkey to be an actor shaping NATO's security agenda.[\[48\]](#)

An article in Sabah asserted Turkey's role in preserving NATO's standing.[\[49\]](#)

Turkish opposition and critical media did not portray the summit as a diplomatic victory. An article in Cumhuriyet argued that the United States and the United Kingdom had an

interest in positioning Turkey against Russia and Iran at the summit.[\[50\]](#)

The Ankara summit generated sharply different interpretations of Turkey's position within NATO. Russian media treated Ankara's growing integration into NATO's security agenda as a potential source of strategic tension with Moscow, whereas government-aligned Turkish outlets presented the summit as evidence of Turkey's political weight within the Alliance and its capacity to influence decisions. Turkish opposition outlets, by contrast, interpreted the summit through the possibility of increasing Western influence over Turkey.

The Transfer of Weapons from Turkey to Ukraine

In the first half of August, information emerged in US congressional documents concerning the transfer of US-made weapons held by Turkey to Ukraine. Vedomosti presented it as an intention to supply Ukraine with M270 MLRS systems and ATACMS missiles.[\[51\]](#)

The initial media language was relatively neutral and technical: Reports listed the weapons, their financial value, and possible intermediaries without applying emotional categories such as "betrayal" or "hostility."

That language changed rapidly following statements by Maria Zakharova, the official spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[Regnum](#) reported her statement under the headline "Weapons supplies to Kyiv will undermine Russia's trust in Turkey – Foreign Ministry."[\[52\]](#)

RT Russian chose the headline "Zakharova: The United States and Turkey have decided to open 'Pandora's box' to support Kyiv."[\[53\]](#)

The coverage emphasized that a potential transfer would damage relations between Russia and Turkey.

The Moscow Times published the news without commentary.[\[54\]](#)

In an article dated 18 August titled “Beware the Trap,” a Haber columnist Salih Tuna presented the matter not merely as a weapons transfer but as an external political mechanism intended to drive Turkey–Russia relations into crisis.

Tuna wrote that transferring US-made weapons to Ukraine could enable Turkey to renew its older weapons stocks. He argued, however, that forces seeking to draw Turkey into a more severe confrontation with Russia lay behind the proposal. The article’s most striking rhetoric appeared in its comparison of Russia and the United States. Tuna portrayed Russia as an actor that had stood by Turkey in recent years, including after 15 July, while sarcastically describing the United States as an “ally” that had kept Turkey under pressure through sanctions over the S-400 issue.[\[55\]](#)

Sözcü put “Pandora’s box” in its headline: “Russia’s explicit warning over Turkey’s decision to arm Ukraine! What did it mean? ‘Pandora’s box’ could be opened.” The article covered Zakharova’s statement.[\[56\]](#)

T24 used a similar headline: “Moscow warns Turkey over missile sales: Sales to Ukraine would open ‘Pandora’s box’ and deal a severe blow to bilateral relations.”[\[57\]](#)

The most important feature of coverage of a possible weapons transfer to Ukraine is the gradual shift in framing. Initial Russian reports treated the episode as technical military information. After the Foreign Ministry’s response, the dominant frame shifted to the “erosion of trust” and possible harm to bilateral relations.

Government-aligned Turkish media presented the issue as external pressure and an attempt to push Turkey into

confrontation with Russia, while opposition media framed it as a consequence of the government's foreign-policy choices. The same episode thus became a problem of trust in Russian media and one of external pressure and political responsibility in Turkish media.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit in Bishkek: The Erdoğan–Putin Meeting

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's 25th-anniversary summit, held in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, from 31 August to 1 September 2026, was a multilateral diplomatic event for Russia, China, and the Central Asian states. Although Turkey is not a member, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's participation in the SCO+ format, his bilateral meeting with Vladimir Putin, and his remarks on the prospect of Turkey's full membership made the summit a significant event in the discourse on Russia–Turkey relations.[\[58\]](#)

Russian media, however, gave the SCO a more explicit geopolitical meaning. Introducing the summit under the headline "SCO with a Big Plus" ("ШОС с большим плюсом"), Kommersant portrayed the Bishkek meeting as a political event within a "Greater Eurasia" that included Russia, China, India, and Turkey.[\[59\]](#) This approach also drew attention to Turkey's geopolitical weight.

The summit's central event for Russia–Turkey relations was the approximately 90-minute meeting between Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 1 September. Citing the Kremlin's official account, Russian outlets reported that Putin regarded Turkey as one of Russia's principal political and economic partners. TASS presented the meeting under the headline "Putin calls Turkey one of Russia's privileged partners."[\[60\]](#)

An opinion article in Kommersant described the press conference following the meeting. Its author wrote of Erdoğan: "Without looking toward Vladimir Putin, he spoke with deliberation and restraint. Although the scene looked unusual

from the outside, it was normal for both leaders. When Recep Tayyip Erdoğan discussed nuclear energy, looking directly at the camera—and thus at the Turkish audience to whom these messages were actually addressed and who understood the situation very well—mattered more to him.”[\[61\]](#)

Government-aligned Turkish media framed the Bishkek summit more positively and in terms of concrete outcomes. Before the summit, Yeni Şafak treated the Kremlin’s announcement of the Erdoğan–Putin meeting as a major political development and reported that Black Sea and Ukraine issues would be on the agenda.[\[62\]](#)

On the day of the summit, the newspaper emphasized Akkuyu, energy cooperation, and prospective nuclear projects in its coverage of the Erdoğan–Putin meeting.[\[63\]](#)

Anadolu Agency highlighted Erdoğan’s statement: “Relations between Turkey and Russia are now truly at a higher level than at any other time.”[\[64\]](#)

Sabah reported the meeting under the headline “The whole world is watching Turkey and Erdoğan.”[\[65\]](#)

Erdoğan’s description of the SCO as a “rising star” became one of the summit’s most positive symbolic formulations in Turkish media. Aydınlık, an outlet that promotes closer Turkey–Russia ties and cooperation, used the phrase in its headline.[\[66\]](#)

The parties had previously been in contact on Black Sea security, one of the meeting’s central subjects. In June, Hakan Fidan had said that Turkey opposed the war’s spread to the Black Sea and was undertaking certain initiatives concerning security there.[\[67\]](#)

RBC framed Fidan’s statement as “Turkey promises Kyiv maritime security guarantees.”[\[68\]](#)

Unofficial Russian propaganda outlets and military bloggers adopted a sharper position.

In an article titled "The Black Sea Fleet: The enemy has decided to push Russia back to pre-Petrine times," Yuri Kotenok interpreted the statement as an effort by Turkey to expand its military and political influence in the Black Sea.[\[69\]](#)

On 8 August, Hakan Fidan said that the security situation had come to encompass the entire Black Sea. According to him, while military targets and ports had initially been struck, the parties had subsequently begun attacking commercial vessels as well. Fidan announced that a mechanism for a moratorium on military activities in the Black Sea had been proposed to both sides.[\[70\]](#)

Russian media reported that Turkey had submitted no formal request through official channels for a moratorium on military activities in the Black Sea.[\[71\]](#)

On Black Sea security, Turkish media emphasize Ankara's role as a regional initiator and stabilizing force, whereas more hard-line Russian outlets interpret that activity as an attempt to expand Turkey's military and political influence in the Black Sea. The same initiative is thus understood through frames of security and mediation on one side and geopolitical competition on the other.

Russian and Turkish coverage of the Bishkek meeting assigned different geopolitical functions to the Erdoğan–Putin dialogue. Russian outlets treated it primarily as evidence that Moscow retained significant diplomatic partnerships outside the West and was not internationally isolated. At the same time, Russian coverage also emphasized Erdoğan's use of the dialogue with Moscow to deliver political messages to a domestic Turkish audience. Government-aligned Turkish media, by contrast, presented the meeting as evidence of continued energy and nuclear cooperation and as confirmation of Ankara's multidirectional foreign policy, which preserves its room for maneuver between East and West.

Framing the Other Country in Russian and Turkish Media: Analysis by Country and Media Category

Turkey's image in Russian media is not uniform, but three principal strands of meaning emerge across the events examined. Turkey is portrayed, on the one hand, as an important strategic and economic partner of Moscow and, on the other, as a potential source of geopolitical tension because of its NATO membership and links with the West. Material on the S-400s, NATO, and the possible transfer of weapons to Ukraine particularly questions Turkey's reliability and political orientation. In diplomatic events such as the Antalya forum and the Bishkek summit, however, Ankara is portrayed as an important channel of dialogue for Russia and an independent regional actor. Thus, the defining feature of Turkey's image in Russian media is the coexistence of partnership and competition, trust and caution.

Russia's image in Turkish media takes shape within three parallel frames: a strategic and economic partner; an actor posing a security risk; and a key point of reference for Turkey's multidirectional foreign policy. Government-aligned outlets generally discuss relations with Russia in the context of dialogue, mediation, energy cooperation, and Turkey's regional room for maneuver. Opposition outlets more often invoke Russia to assess the consequences and risks of the government's foreign-policy decisions. Russia's image in Turkish media is therefore shaped strongly by domestic political contestation: relations with Moscow serve not only as a foreign-policy issue but also as a means of evaluating the Turkish government's diplomatic choices and their consequences.

In Russian state media, representations of Turkey are built primarily on official diplomatic positions and institutional sources. Official statements and the positions of state bodies

receive more emphasis in this category than emotional evaluation. Turkey is depicted as an important partner so long as opportunities for cooperation remain, but a cautious and critical frame gains strength when NATO and Ukraine-related issues conflict with Moscow's interests.

In Russian government-aligned media, Turkey's image is more interpretive and emotionally charged than in state media. Particularly on the S-400s, NATO, and weapons transfers to Ukraine, Turkey's rapprochement with the West is framed as a question of reliability and geopolitical choice. Energy ties, diplomacy, and high-level political contacts, however, provide a counter-frame in which Turkey remains an important partner for Moscow. In this category, Turkey thus appears both as an indispensable partner in cooperation and as an actor whose political conduct is continually monitored and evaluated.

In Russian critical media, both the volume and analytical depth of material concerning Turkey are more limited than in other categories. Existing coverage generally discusses Turkey in the context of a specific event and less often constructs it as a distinct and systematic image of either a "strategic partner" or a "threat." Its defining characteristic is therefore an event-centered representation rather than a stable narrative.

In Turkish state media, Russia is generally portrayed as an external actor with which Turkey maintains diplomatic ties, can engage alongside other parties, and preserves opportunities for regional mediation. Relations with Russia are framed as part of an independent foreign policy and "multifaceted diplomacy." Dialogue and mediation, rather than confrontation, are foregrounded.

In Turkish government-aligned media, relations with Russia are chiefly interpreted in terms of the flexibility of the government's foreign policy and Turkey's geopolitical room for maneuver. Cooperation with Russia is presented not as a

departure from the West but as evidence that Turkey can engage different centers of power in parallel on the basis of its national interests. Where events generate tension, responsibility is more often attributed to external pressure and attempts to push Turkey in a particular geopolitical direction.

In Turkish critical and opposition media, Russia's image is largely used to evaluate Turkey's foreign-policy decisions within domestic politics. The emphasis is not on cooperation with Russia in itself but on its political, security, and economic consequences for Turkey. The same event may therefore be portrayed as diplomatic agility and success in government-aligned outlets but assessed as a consequence of the government's decision-making model and foreign policy in opposition outlets.

Conclusion

A comparative analysis of Russian and Turkish media from January through early September 2026 shows that representations of the other country are not uniform across events.

They vary with the political context of each event and the outlet's editorial and political position. Russian media generally present Turkey as an important partner whose reliability as a regional actor is nevertheless periodically questioned because of its NATO membership, rapprochement with the West, and differing positions on Ukraine. Turkish media frame Russia as both a strategic and economic partner and a security risk, as well as an important political reference point for evaluating the government's foreign policy.

Across the events examined, Russian and Turkish media consistently emphasized different dimensions of the bilateral relationship: Russian outlets tended to assess Turkey in terms of trust, geopolitical orientation, and the durability of its relationship with Moscow, whereas Turkish outlets more often

interpreted relations with Russia through Ankara's diplomatic room for maneuver, national interests, and the domestic consequences of foreign-policy decisions.

Differences among media categories also play an important role in forming these images. State media principally relay official positions; government-aligned media provide political and geopolitical interpretations; and critical media more often evaluate foreign-policy events in the context of governments' decisions and their consequences. Comparison of media items shows that representations of the other country in Russia and Turkey depend on more than the character of bilateral relations. They are also shaped by the media's attitudes toward their own country's foreign policy and government decisions.

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