



United Arab Emirates Crown Prince Travels to Turkey for Diplomatic Talks with the Turkish President

This week, United Arab Emirates Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ) traveled to Turkey for diplomatic talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The meeting marks a significant gathering for the leaders of the two nations, as bilateral ties between them have been strained for years over varying perspectives on key issues across the region. Subjects such as Libya, Syria, and the Qatari diplomatic crisis have seen Turkey and the United Arab Emirates at odds, with impartial analysts lamenting the latter's aggressive and destructive foreign policy which has included support for renegade warlord Khalifa Haftar in Libya and the devastating war in Yemen, among other things. Now, the two countries have announced their desire for a "new era" of improved relations. During the talks, Erdogan and MBZ discussed regional issues of security, economic policies and dealings, and steps that can be taken to expand cooperation.

Turkey and the United Arab Emirates have had tumultuous relations in recent years over an array of ideological differences which have played out in various areas across the Middle East and North Africa. In Libya, Turkey was a major backer of the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), while the United Arab Emirates supported the renegade warlord Khalifa Haftar and his Libyan National Army (LNA) forces in their failed effort to overthrow the GNA. The United Arab Emirates has also played a destabilizing role in Yemen as a part of the Saudi-led coalition's destructive war there, which has caused what experts say is the world's worst contemporary humanitarian disaster. In Syria, the United Arab Emirates has backed and supported the ruthless government of dictator Bashar al-Assad, whereas Turkey has worked to undermine the brutal regime there. Additionally, the United Arab Emirates was one of several Gulf countries who attempted to isolate Qatar diplomatically back in 2017 due to ideological disagreements, with Turkey on the other hand supporting its ally in Doha. Turkey and the United Arab Emirates have also failed to see eye-to-eye on issues of security within the region, with Turkey accusing the UAE of backing groups that have tried to subvert the Turkish government.

Analysts highlight that one of the main reasons for MBZ's visit to Turkey to discuss bilateral ties is a want for Turkish defense contractors' products. Despite the two nations being at odds on a number of vital issues, there is a clear economic incentive to put aside those differences. Some observers also contend that MBZ and Erdogan have realized the need to form stronger diplomatic ties with each other, since direct hostilities harm both of their domestic and foreign agendas. There are several fields in which the two can coordinate, including e-commerce, energy, technology, and economic investment, and as a result, these areas have been pointed to as a few of the critical driving factors behind the organization of this week's meeting.

While Turkey and the United Arab Emirates seek to improve their diplomatic ties, which may be good for further conflict resolution across the region's geopolitical landscape, there are still underlying ideological disparities that will continue to exist between the two. At the very least, it is encouraging that they have tried to find ways in which cooperation can be achieved – even in the face of other persisting matters of contention.