



[The Leaders of Turkey, Russia, and Iran Take Part in a Summit in Tehran](#)

This week, a summit was held in Tehran between Turkish, Russian, and Iranian leaders to discuss the ongoing conflict in Syria, among other topics. The conference is part of the Astana Peace Process, which is the main mechanism aimed at ending Syria's brutal 11-year conflict. There is another dimension however, as Turkey is deeply opposed to a semiautonomous Kurdish administration in Syria's northeast region. President Erdogan of Turkey has repeatedly pledged to launch an offensive against the Kurdish militants, and demanded Russia and Iran back them in their goals. The Turkish government has long associated the PKK, or Kurdistan Workers Party, with the Kurdish administration in Syria. The PKK is a militant and political group responsible for attacks on Turkish soil, and they are classified as a terrorist organization by the United States, Turkey, and the European Union. The Turkish government says it wants to create a "safe zone" of 30 kilometers from their border. No major breakthroughs were made at this Tehran summit concerning Syria, and some analysts argued that it seemed to be more of a chance for each party to voice their demands and concerns related to this and other key issues.

Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad arrived in Tehran shortly after the summit concluded. The minister stated in a press conference that President Erdogan "had many goals and policies that he wanted to impose on the meeting" and that those goals "were not achieved thanks to the serious discussions and opinions put forward by Iranian and Russian friends." The talks were fraught with tension, as NATO member Turkey tries to maintain its delicate balancing act to sustain amicable ties with both Russia and Ukraine. They have so far been extremely careful, not directly taking either country's side, instead attempting to play the role as a mediator between the two. They have pushed for an end to violence and held multiple summits between the two countries, but so far to no avail. There was also tension between Iran and Turkey, as Turkey continues its strategy of rapprochement with Saudi Arabia.

Among other topics discussed was the possibility of an arms sale between the countries, and the release of grain that has been trapped in Ukraine. These two areas were slightly more fruitful for the participants, as it has been reported that some headway was made in negotiations to release grain. This is a critical matter, as many countries in the Middle East continue to grapple with food shortages and skyrocketing prices as a result of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. Allowing the grain to be released would at least partially remedy these issues and help to stabilize many Turkish allies. New arms deals have not been put into place, but Turkey appeared to be very interested in buying air defense systems from Russia, much to NATO's dismay. This comes after NATO allies refused to sell air defense systems on acceptable terms.

Overall, the Tehran summit is another example of a new emerging reality in Middle East geopolitics, where elements of realpolitik are beginning to show more prominently. Turkey has been working with both its traditional allies in NATO and traditional adversaries like Russia and Saudi Arabia to meet its own needs. It will remain to be seen if Turkey can maintain this balancing act without causing any major disruptions.