The Moscow Times
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Putin and Erdogan Discuss Plans for 'Turkish Stream' Gas Pipeline

By The Moscow Times

March 18, 2015



Russia's President Vladimir Putin (L) is pictured during a joint news conference with his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara on Dec. 1, 2014.

MOSCOW/ANKARA — Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan discussed the "Turkish Stream" gas project during a phone call, the Kremlin has said in a statement, as Moscow continues to push for its new undersea pipeline to Europe.

Facing objections from the European Union, Russia in December abandoned its $40 billion South Stream project that would have passed under the Black Sea to Bulgaria and carried up to 63 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas annually to Europe.

It has now pinned its hopes on Turkey, hoping to construct a "Turkish Stream" pipeline with the same capacity to an as-yet unbuilt hub on the Turkey-Greece border by the end of 2016.

Turkish officials have said the plans are unlikely to progress as quickly as Russia would like,

given Ankara's concerns about overdependence on Russian energy.

However, the Kremlin statement said Tuesday that Putin and Erdogan discussed the project during a phone call, without giving further details.

Turkish presidential sources also said the two discussed developments in Ukraine, with Erdogan saying he plans to visit Ukraine this week.

They also discussed the "events of 1915," the sources said, a reference to the killings of Armenians by Ottoman soldiers during World War I. The contested events continue to sour relations between Turkey and Armenia, a former Soviet republic.

Ankara accepts that many Armenians were killed in clashes, but denies that up to 1.5 million were killed in an act of genocide — a description used by some historians and governments.

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