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Ankara NATO Zirvesi ve
Transatlantik İttifakın Geleceği

Cem Tuna Aksu

Beyond the 5% Target: NATO Burden-Sharing
and Europe's Defence-Industrial Challenge

İrem Nur Yaşar

All Quiet on the Ukrainian Front:
Why Russia and Ukraine Cannot Convert Tactical Gains
into Strategic Victories

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2026 ABD-İsrail İran Harekâtı:
Askerî Üstünlüğün Stratejik Sınırları

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Turkey's Balancing Policy and
Liminal Identity Between NATO and Russia

Ayşem Köymen

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Ankara NATO Zirvesi ve Transatlantik İttifakın Geleceği

Cem Tuna Aksu

1. Giriş

Kuzey Atlantik Antlaşması Örgütü (NATO), 1949 yılında Washington Antlaşması'nın 5. Maddesi temelinde kolektif savunma amacıyla kurulduğu günden bu yana, uluslararası sistemdeki güç dengelerine paralel olarak yapısal dönüşümler geçirmiştir. Soğuk Savaş döneminin simetrik tehdit algısına odaklanan "NATO 1.0" evresinden, 1990'lar ve 2000'lerde genişleme dalgaları ve sınır ötesi kriz yönetimi operasyonlarıyla şekillenen "NATO 2.0" evresine geçiş ittifakın esnekliğini kanıtlamıştır. Ancak günümüzde uluslararası güvenlik mimarisi, Ukrayna savaşıyla somutlaşan konvansiyonel tehditler, çok boyutlu hibrit sınamalar ve transatlantik bağlardaki yapısal aşınmalar nedeniyle yeni bir kırılma noktasına ulaşmıştır.

Bu dönüşüm sürecinin en kritik kilometre taşlarından biri, 7-8 Temmuz 2025 tarihlerinde gerçekleştirilen Ankara Zirvesi olmuştur. Zirvede kabul edilen deklarasyon, ittifakın caydırıcılık ve savunma mimarisini yalnızca geleneksel askeri tedbirlerle değil tedarik zinciri dayanıklılığı, savunma sanayii entegrasyonu ve ortak kapasite artırımıyla tahkim etmeyi hedefleyen "NATO 3.0" paradigmasını somutlaştırmıştır. (Burchell, 2026; North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], 2026). Keza Ankara Zirvesi Bildirisi, transatlantik bağın 360 derecelik güvenlik yaklaşımıyla sürdürüleceğini yinelerken, Avrupa kanadının ve Kanada'nın savunma yükümlülüklerini daha fazla üstlenmesi gerektiğini tescillenmiştir. (NATO, 2026). Bununla birlikte, savunma harcamalarındaki artış ve yeni askeri taahhütler, ittifak içi siyasal uyumun ve sürdürülebilir bir barış vizyonunun tesis edildiği anlamına gelmemektedir (Yetkin, 2026; Fırat, 2026).

2. NATO 3.0 ve Ankara Deklarasyonu:

Ankara Zirvesi'nin en belirgin sonuçlarından biri, ittifakın Soğuk Savaş sonrası vizyonunu revize eden "NATO 3.0" konseptinin salt bir teori olmaktan çıkıp kurumsal bir zemine oturtulmasıdır. Burchell'a (2026) göre NATO 3.0 askeri birliklerin rotasyonu veya sınır ötesi kriz müdahalelerinden çok lojistik dayanıklılığın, ortak endüstriyel kapasitenin ve teknolojik üstünlüğün entegre edildiği yeni bir caydırıcılık pratiğidir. Bu pratiğin merkezinde ise üye devletlerin savunma harcamalarındaki yapısal artış talebi yer almaktadır. Ankara Zirvesi Bildirisi'nde, Gayrisafi Yurt İçi Hasıla'nın (GSYH) asgari %2'sinin savunmaya ayrılması hedefi (Yatırımlar ile birlikte %5) artık ulaşılması gereken bir tavan değil, ittifakın caydırıcılığını sağlamak için tartışmasız kabul edilen bir taban olarak tescillenmiştir (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], 2026). Altına üye ülkelerin imzasını attığı bu taahhüt yalnızca genel askeri bütçelerini artırmalarını değil, aynı zamanda bütçenin asgari %20'sini yeni teçhizat alımlarına ve araştırma-geliştirme (Ar-Ge) faaliyetlerine yönlendirmelerini zorunlu kılıyor.

Savunma harcamalarındaki bu artışın hedefi, niteliksel bir sanayi dönüşümüyle desteklenmesi beklenmektedir. Ankara Deklarasyonu, ittifakın savunma sanayii tabanının güçlendirilmesini, transatlantik tedarik zincirlerinin güvence altına alınmasını ve mühimmat stoklarının acilen ikmal edilmesini stratejik bir öncelik olarak kayda geçirmiştir (NATO, 2026). Özellikle Ukrayna'da devam eden konvansiyonel yıpratma savaşının gözler önüne sermiş

olduğu mühimmat üretim eksikliği ya da açığı, NATO'nun müşterek savunma tedarik projelerine ağırlık vermesine yol açmıştır. Müttefiklerin savunma sanayilerinde birbiriyle yıkıcı rekabete girmek yerine birlikte çalışabilirlik (interoperability) ilkesi etrafında kenetlenmesi, yeni dönemin savunma mimarisi için hayati bir ön koşul haline gelmiştir (Burchell, 2026).

Temelden gelen bu yapısal dönüşümün lojistik ya da endüstriyel zorunluluktan çok, Atlanitik eksenindeki yük paylaşımının (burden-sharing) yeniden nitelendiğini gösterir. NATO, kurulduğu günden bu yana ABD'nin güvenlik şemsiyesi altında, ABD'ye göre savunma bütçelerinden daha az katkı yapan Avrupa ülkeleri, (temel olarak MAGA politikasının bir çıktısı olarak da okuyabileceğimiz gibi) güvenlik maliyetlerini yükseltmek zorunda kalmıştır. Nitekim Fırat (2026) analizinde altı çizildiği gibi, Ankara Zirvesi kurum olarak NATO bütünlüğünü korusa da, ABD'nin tek taraflı sübvans ettiği "eski NATO" artık kalmamıştır. Bu dengesindeki değişim, NATO 3.0 döneminin Avrupa için daha ağır maliyet ve artan sorumluluk, ABD için ise Hint-Pasifik vizyonu ile dengelenmiş yeni bir liderlik tasarımı anlamına geldiğini göstermektedir.

3. Güvenlik, Barış ve İttifak İçin Heyelan

Ankara Zirvesi'nin askeri ve endüstriyel taahhütler bakımından bir başarı olarak takdim edilmesine karşın, toplantının yarattığı stratejik tablo derin siyasi çelişkileri ve yapısal kırılmaları da beraberinde getirmiştir. Zirvenin en temel açmazı, güvenlik parametrelerinin maksimize edilmesi ile sürdürülebilir bir bölgesel barış vizyonunun inşası arasındaki dengesizlikte düğümlenmektedir. Yetkin (2026), zirve sonucunda savunma bütçelerinin, mühimmat üretim hedeflerinin ve ittifakın doğu kanadının tahkimatının mutlak bir güvenlik tahkimatı sağladığını, lakin bunun diploması ve uzun vadeli bir barış perspektifi üretmekten uzak kaldığını vurgulamaktadır. İttifakın tamamen silahlanma ve caydırıcılık sarmalına kilitlenmesi, Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde hedeflenen kapsayıcı Avrupa güvenlik mimarisinin yerini kalıcı bir bloklaşmaya ve askeri gerileme bıraktığını göstermektedir.

Bununla birlikte, Ankara Bildirisi'nin yansıttığı kurumsal uzlaşma görüntüsünün ardında ittifakın belirgin çatlaklara ve stratejik öncelik farklılıklarına sahip olduğunu görüyoruz. Fırat (2026) analizinde ifade edildiği üzere, ittifak dağılmamış olsa da üyelerin eşit güvenlik kaygılarına sahip olduğu "eski NATO" kavramı artık varlığını yitirerek tarihe karışmıştır. Bir yanda Doğu Avrupa ve Baltık ülkeleri Rusya'yı varoluşsal bir tehdit olarak görüp ittifakın tüm kaynaklarını Doğu Kanadı'na teksif etmesini isterken; diğer yanda Güney Kanadı ülkeleri terörizm, yasa dışı göç olgusu ve Akdeniz havzasındaki istikrarsızlıklara dikkat çekmektedir (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], 2026). Ankara Deklarasyonu'nda terörizmle mücadelenin de tartışılması, Türkiye'nin güvenlik önceliklerinin metne yansımaları açısından önemli bir diplomatik kazanım olmuştur ancak üyeler arasındaki coğrafi ve stratejik odak ayrışmasının devam ettiğini kanıtlamaktadır.

Transatlantik ilişkilerin geleceğine dair belirsizlikler ve Avrupa'nın "stratejik özerklik" arayışı ise Ankara Zirvesi sonrasında daha da görünür bir hal almıştır. ABD'nin iç siyasetindeki dalgalanmalar ve Washington'ın küresel stratejisinde Hint-Pasifik bölgesine ağırlık vermesi Avrupalı müttefikleri daha bağımsız bir askeri kapasite oluşturmaya zorlamaktadır (Burchell, 2026). Ancak Avrupa savunma sanayiinin parçalı yapısı, mali kapasite yetersizlikleri ve

Washington'ın teknolojik liderliğine olan bağımlılık, bu dönüşümü sancılı kılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Ankara Zirvesi bir yandan NATO'nun kurumsal dayanıklılığını teyit etmiş, diğer yandan ittifakın artan savunma harcamaları ile kırılğan siyasi uzlaşmalar arasında sıkışan yeni bir jeopolitik evreye girdiğini tescillemiştir. (Fırat, 2026; Yetkin, 2026).

4. Sonuç ve Gelecek Projeksiyonu

2026 NATO Ankara Zirvesi, transatlantik ittifakın Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemden bu yana yaşadığı en kapsamlı kurumsal ve stratejik dönüşümlerden birini somutlaştıran ilk adım olmuştur. Zirve bildirisiyle tescillenen %2'lik savunma harcaması tabanı, mühimmat üretim kapasitesinin artırılması ve savunma sanayii tabanının tahkimi, "NATO 3.0" paradigmasının yalnızca askeri değil aynı zamanda endüstriyel ve lojistik bir mecburiyet olduğunu ortaya koymuştur (Burchell, 2026; North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], 2026). Ancak bu askeri tahkimat, ittifakın siyasal uyum ve sürdürülebilir barış inşası konularındaki temel açmazlarını ortadan kaldırmamıştır (Yetkin, 2026).

Gelecek projeksiyonunda NATO'nun başarısı; Avrupalı müttefiklerin artan savunma yükünü ne ölçüde verimli yönetebileceğine, Doğu ve Güney kanatları arasındaki güvenlik önceliği farklılıklarının nasıl dengeleneceğine ve artan askeri harcamaların diplomasiyle ne derece tahkim edilebileceğine bağlı olacaktır. Kurumsal olarak varlığını ve caydırıcılığını korumuş olsa da ABD sübvansiyonuna dayalı konfor alanının sona erdiği bu yeni dönem, transatlantik ilişkilerde çok merkezli ve daha kırılğan bir güvenlik mimarisini kalıcı kılacağını göreceğiz. (Fırat, 2026).

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2026 ABD-İsrail İran Harekâtı: Askerî Üstünlüğün Stratejik Sınırları

Dr. Mehmet Akar

Giriş

Ağustos 2026 itibarıyla, ABD ve İsrail'in İran'a karşı yürüttüğü ve ilki 13-25 Haziran 2025 tarihleri arasında gerçekleşen askerî harekât on dört ayı aşkın bir süredir devam etmektedir. Koalisyon güçleri, 28 Şubat-8 Nisan 2026 tarihleri arasındaki ikinci hava harekâtı döneminde 10.000'den fazla hedefi vurmuştur (Mearsheimer, 2026). Bunu, 13 Nisan-17 Haziran 2026 tarihleri arasında Hürmüz Boğazı'nda uygulanan deniz ablukası izlemiştir. Kullanılan güç, dünyanın en gelişmiş hava filosunu, hassas güdümlü mühimmat depolarını ve tartışmasız deniz üstünlüğünü kapsamaktadır. Bu ölçek, harekâtı yirmi birinci yüzyılın en kapsamlı konvansiyonel operasyonlarından biri haline getirmektedir. Harekâtın başlangıcındaki stratejik hesaplama açıktı. Bu ölçekte bir askerî baskının Tahran'ı nükleer programından vazgeçmeye veya en azından önemli tavizler vermeye zorlayacağı varsayılmıştı. Ancak Ağustos 2026 itibarıyla İran ne teslim olmuş ne de nükleer altyapısını sökmüştür. Buna karşılık, Washington'da hassas mühimmat stoklarının azalması nedeniyle diplomatik bir çıkış arayışının belirginleştiği bildirilmektedir (Cohen, 2026).

Bu iki gözlem, harekâtın temel bir stratejik çelişki barındırdığını göstermektedir. Koalisyon güçleri savaşı kazanma kapasitesine sahip gibi görünmekte, ancak aynı aktör bir çıkış yolu aramaktadır. Bu çelişki, makalenin temel araştırma sorusunu doğurmaktadır: ABD ve İsrail'in belirgin operasyonel üstünlüğüne rağmen, 2026 harekâtı neden kesin ve kalıcı bir siyasi sonuca dönüşmemiştir? Makale, bu sorunun yanıtını dört analitik değişken üzerinden aramaktadır: operasyonel yıkım düzeyi, mühimmat yenileme kapasitesi, tırmanmanın stratejik maliyetleri ve İran'ın direnme kapasitesi. Çalışma, bu dört değişken arasındaki etkileşimi 2026 harekâtı özelinde incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Makalenin argümanı şudur: ABD ve İsrail'in İran'a zarar verme kapasitesi hiçbir aşamada ciddi biçimde sorgulanmamıştır. Ancak bu kapasitenin siyasi sonuca dönüşmesi, yalnızca vurulan hedef sayısı ile değil, yüksek yoğunluklu operasyonların ne kadar süreyle sürdürülebildiği, mühimmatın ne hızla yenilenebildiği ve tırmanmanın maliyetlerinin ne ölçüde kabul edilebilir kaldığıyla sınırlanmıştır. Bu çalışma, zorlama teorisi (coercion theory) ve asimetrik çatışma literatüründen yararlanarak operasyonel üstünlük ile stratejik sonuç arasındaki ilişkiyi analiz etmektedir. Makale, bu teorik çerçeveyi dört analitik değişken (operasyonel yıkım düzeyi, mühimmat yenileme kapasitesi, tırmanmanın stratejik maliyetleri

ve İran'ın direnme kapasitesi) üzerinden 2026 harekâtına uygulamakta ve askerî üstünlüğün siyasi sonuca dönüşümünün sınırlarını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Aşağıdaki bölümler, bu mekanizmayı sırasıyla harekâtın kısa tarihçesi, operasyonel sonuçsuzluk, mühimmat sürdürülebilirliği, Hürmüz krizi ve İran'ın direnç kapasitesi üzerinden analiz etmektedir.

Nükleer Uyuşmazlıktan Askerî Baskıya

İran'ın nükleer programı onlarca yıllık bir uyuşmazlığın konusu olmuştur. Ancak 2025-2026 çatışmasını doğrudan tetikleyen gelişme, ABD'nin 2018'de Kapsamlı Ortak Eylem Planı'ndan (JCPOA) tek taraflı çekilmesinin ardından yaşanan tırmanmadır. Yaptırımların yeniden yürürlüğe girmesine karşılık İran, zenginleştirme oranını kademeli olarak yükseltmiştir. 2025 yılı ortasına gelindiğinde, İran'ın %60 saflıkta zenginleştirilmiş uranyum stoku 400 kilogramın üzerine çıkmıştır (International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], GOV/2025/50). Tahran, resmî bir silahlanma eşiğini aşmadan bu eşiğe yaklaşma kapasitesini elinde tutan bir strateji izlemiştir.

İran'ın nükleer programına ilişkin belirsizlik, 2025'te askerî çatışmaya dönüşen stratejik gerilimin önemli unsurlarından birini oluşturmuştur (Akar, 2026). Ancak bu çalışma, söz konusu gerilimin kökenlerinden ziyade, askerî üstünlüğün neden siyasi sonuca dönüşmediğine odaklanmaktadır.

Çatışma, 13 Haziran 2025'te İsrail'in İran'ın nükleer ve askerî tesislerine yönelik hava saldırılarıyla başlamıştır. Yaklaşık bir hafta sonra ABD'nin doğrudan müdahalesiyle çatışma genişlemiştir (Raine, 2025). "12 Gün Savaşı" olarak anılan bu ilk aşama, haziran ayının sonunda kesin bir sonuca ulaşmadan sona ermiştir.

Takip eden sekiz aylık dönemde İran, askerî baskıyı geri çekilme gerekçesi olarak değil, askerî olarak güçlenme fırsatı olarak değerlendirmiştir. İran, zenginleştirilmiş uranyum stokunu artırmaya devam etmiştir. Bu tercih, Tahran'ın askerî baskıyı bir teslimiyet sinyali olarak değil, kaldıraç artırma fırsatı olarak okuduğunu göstermektedir. İran'ın bu stratejik hesaplaması, müzakere masasında elini güçlendirme ve iç kamuoyuna direniş mesajı verme gibi amaçlara hizmet etmiş olabilir. Bu tepki, zorlama stratejilerinin arkasındaki temel varsayımla doğrudan çelişmektedir. Söz konusu varsayım, askerî baskının rakibi geri adım atmaya iteceği yönündedir. İran'ın tercihi ise baskı dönemini bir hazırlık ve pekiştirme fırsatına çevirmek olmuştur.

Bu arka plan, 2026 harekâtının neden kısa vadeli bir askerî operasyon olarak değil, uzun vadeli bir baskı stratejisinin parçası olarak değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir. İran'ın ilk baskı dalgasına direnerek güçlenme stratejisi, 2026'nın şubat ayında başlayacak ikinci ve çok daha kapsamlı hava harekâtının zeminini hazırlamıştır. Bu seyir, askerî üstünlüğün siyasi sonuca dönüşmesinin önündeki engellerin yalnızca askerî kapasiteyle ilgili olmadığını, aynı zamanda rakibin stratejik hesaplamalarına da bağlı olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

2026 Harekâtı: Operasyonel Başarı ve Siyasi Sonuçsuzluk

28 Şubat 2026'da ABD ve İsrail, ilk savaştan çok daha kapsamlı bir hava harekâtı başlatmıştır. Yaklaşık kırk gün süren bu harekâta koalisyon güçleri, nükleer tesisler, füze üsleri, komuta merkezleri ve hava savunma sistemleri dahil 10.000'den fazla hedefi vurmuştur (Mearsheimer, 2026). Operasyon, binlerce hassas güdümlü mühimmat kullanılarak İran hava savunmasının önemli ölçüde etkisiz hale getirilmesini sağlamıştır.

Harekât, salt yıkım kapasitesi bakımından tartışmasız bir operasyonel başarı olarak değerlendirilebilir. Operasyonel başarı, belirlenen askerî hedeflerin (örneğin belirli sayıda hedefin imha edilmesi) gerçekleştirilmesidir. Stratejik başarı ise bu askerî hedeflerin, rakibin siyasi davranışını değiştirecek düzeyde sonuç vermesidir. Bu ayrım, makalenin merkezi argümanını anlamak açısından kritiktir.

Buradaki temel sorun ABD'nin İran'a zarar verip verememesi değildir. Harekâtın bu aşaması, bunun mümkün olduğunu açıkça ortaya koymuştur. Asıl soru, bu yoğunluğun somut bir siyasi sonuca, yani İran'ın nükleer programından tavizler vermesine dönüşüp dönüşmediğidir. Mearsheimer'ın (2026) değerlendirmesine göre, hedef seçimine dayalı bu hava harekâtı İran'ı teslimiyete zorlamamıştır. Buna karşılık Washington, daha yoğun ve ayırım gözetmeyen bir bombardıman kampanyasına geçmekten kaçınmıştır.

ABD, saldırının yoğunluğunu artırmamış ancak geri de çekilmemiştir. Bu ikili tutum, harekâtın siyasi olarak sonuçsuz kalmasının ilk işaretidir. Bu duraksama tesadüfi değildir. Kırk günlük harekâtın sonunda ortaya çıkan tablo, ABD'nin elindeki seçeneklerin görüldüğünden daha dar olduğunu düşündürmektedir. Harekâtın 8 Nisan'da sona ermesinin ardından çatışma deniz alanına kaymıştır. Akabinde ABD, Hürmüz Boğazı'nda deniz trafiğini kısıtlamaya yönelik bir abluka uygulamaya başlamıştır (Mearsheimer, 2026).

Bu geçiş, hava harekâtının tek başına yeterli bir siyasi kaldıraç üretmediğinin dolaylı bir kabulü olarak okunabilir. Bir devlet, elindeki en yoğun hava gücünü kullandıktan sonra

farklı bir baskı aracına yönelmişse, bu genellikle ilk aracın yetersiz kaldığının işaretidir. Ablukanın hava harekâtına göre farklı bir stratejik mantığı bulunmaktadır. Abluka, doğrudan fiziksel yıkım yerine ekonomik baskı yaratmayı, uluslararası kamuoyunu yönetmeyi ve zaman kazanmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu geçiş, ABD'nin stratejik seçeneklerinin daraldığını ve farklı bir baskı mekanizmasına yönelmek zorunda kaldığını göstermektedir.

Bu noktada iki açıklama birbirini dışlamaksızın bir arada değerlendirilmelidir. Birincisi, ABD'nin daha yoğun bir kampanyaya geçmeyi siyasi ihtiyat gereği tercih etmemiş olmasıdır. Sivil kayıpların artması, müttefiklerin tepkisi ve kamuoyu desteğinin aşınması gibi kaygılar bu ihtiyatı besleyebilir. İkincisi, böyle bir kampanyayı uzun süre sürdürebilecek mühimmat kapasitesinden yoksun kalmış olmasıdır. Bu iki açıklama pratikte kolayca ayrıştırılamaz. Siyasi ihtiyat çoğu zaman zaten sınırlı kaynakların farkında olmaktan doğar. Bir sonraki bölümün göstereceği gibi, mevcut açık kaynaklı veriler ikinci açıklamayı da güçlü biçimde desteklemektedir. Dolayısıyla en makul okuma, iki nedenin aynı anda ve birbirini güçlendirerek işlediği yönündedir.

Mühimmat ve Sürdürülebilirlik Sorunu

2026 harekâtının en somut ampirik izini mühimmat tüketim verilerinde bulmak mümkündür. Bu bölümde sunulan veriler, açık kaynaklı askerî analiz raporlarına dayanmaktadır ve Savunma Bakanlığı'nın resmî verileriyle doğrulanmamıştır. Açık kaynaklı tahminlere göre, savaş boyunca ABD'nin kritik hava savunma önleyicilerinde ve uzun menzilli hassas saldırı mühimmatında belirgin bir azalma yaşanmıştır. CSIS'in tahminlerine göre Patriot önleyicilerinin yaklaşık üçte ikisi kullanılmıştır (Boccia & Martinez, 2026). THAAD sisteminde ise savaş öncesine göre yaklaşık yarı oranında eksilme olduğu tahmin edilmektedir (Cancian & Park, 2026b). Saldırı mühimmatı tarafında da benzer bir tablo görülmektedir. Savaşın ilk aşamasında 1.000'den fazla Tomahawk ve JASSM kullanılmıştır (Cancian & Park, 2026a). Ağustos 2026 itibarıyla Hassas Vuruş Füzesi (PrSM) stoklarının yarısından biraz fazlasının kaldığı bildirilmiştir (Baier & Munneke, 2026). ABD yönetimi içinde bu azalmanın "tehlikeli derecede düşük" bir düzeye ulaştığına ilişkin kaygıların dile getirildiği aktarılmaktadır (Cohen, 2026; Copp vd., 2026).

Bu rakamlar tek başına bir kırılma göstergesi değildir. Asıl belirleyici olan, tüketilen mühimmatın ne hızla yeniden üretilbildiğidir. Bir devlet, envanterinin büyük bölümünü kısa bir sürede harcamış olsa bile, bu envanteri hızla tazeleyebiliyorsa, tüketim oranı stratejik açıdan ikincil bir sorun olarak kalır. Burada ise zaman ölçekleri arasında çarpıcı bir uyumsuzluk ortaya

çıkılmaktadır. Cancian ve Park'ın (2026a) Savunma Bakanlığı bütçe tahminlerine göre, yeni sipariş edilen sistemlerin teslim edilmesi 2,5 ila 3 yılı bulmaktadır. PAC-3 MSE ve THAAD için bu süre yaklaşık 2,5 yıl, Tomahawk için yaklaşık 3 yıl, SM-6 için ise 3 yılı aşmaktadır. Aynı tahminlere göre, savaş öncesindeki Patriot stok seviyelerine ancak 2029 ortalarında, Tomahawk stoklarına ise 2030 sonu veya 2031 başında yeniden ulaşılabilir.

Bu veri, harekâtın temel doğasını özetlemektedir. Bir devlet belirli bir askerî kapasiteyi günler veya haftalar içinde yoğun biçimde kullanabilir. Ancak aynı kapasiteyi aynı yoğunlukta yıllar boyunca yeniden üretmek çok daha yavaş işleyen bir sürece bağlıdır. Tüketim saatler veya günler ölçeğinde gerçekleşirken, yenileme yıllar ölçeğinde ilerlemektedir. Bu iki hız arasındaki fark, harekâtın uzunluğu arttıkça giderek daha belirleyici hale gelmektedir. Bu uyumsuzluğun üç somut stratejik sonucu bulunmaktadır. Birincisi, ABD'nin kısa vadede başka bir bölgede (örneğin Doğu Asya) benzer ölçekte bir operasyon yapabilme kapasitesi sınırlanmaktadır. İkincisi, mevcut çatışmayı daha da yoğunlaştırma seçeneği pratikte ortadan kalkmaktadır. Üçüncüsü, müttefiklerin ABD'nin uzun vadeli güvenlik garantisine olan güveni zayıflama riskiyle karşı karşıyadır.

Savunma sanayii bu açığı tamamen göz ardı etmemiştir. Lockheed Martin'in PAC-3 MSE 2025 yılı üretimini 2024 yılının yüzde 20'lik fazlası olarak planlaması bunun bir göstergesidir (Malyasov, 2025). Ancak mevcut üretim artışlarının stok açığını kısa vadede kapatması mümkün görünmemektedir. Üretim hattının genişletilmesi, yalnızca bütçesel değil endüstriyel bir süreçtir. Yeni tesis, iş gücü ve tedarik zinciri kapasitesi gerektirir. Savunma sanayiinde tedarik zincirinin yeniden yapılandırılması, özel sektördeki üretim artışlarına göre önemli ölçüde daha uzun zaman almaktadır. Bu nedenle savaş temposuna aynı hızla uyum sağlayamamaktadır.

Bu tablonun stratejik anlamı açıktır. Mühimmat tükenmesi, Washington'ın karar alıcılarını harekâtı yoğunlaştırma ya da sınırlama arasında bir tercihe zorlamıştır. Nitekim Cancian ve Park (2026b), Orta Doğu'daki yüksek tüketimin, Çin'i içeren olası bir Batı Pasifik senaryosunda ABD'nin hazırlık düzeyini de etkileyebileceğine dikkat çekmektedir. Bu kaygı, 2027 mali yılı bütçesinde talep edilen 95 milyar dolarlık ek mühimmat tahsisatına da yansımıştır (Cancian & Park, 2026b). Başka bir ifadeyle, İran'a karşı sürdürülen harekâtın maliyeti, yalnızca bölgesel değil küresel bir stratejik fırsat maliyetine dönüşmüştür. Orta Doğu'da harcanan bir mühimmat birimi, aynı anda başka bir olası cephede kullanılamayan bir birim anlamına gelmektedir.

Hürmüz, Tırmanma ve Stratejik Maliyet

Küresel petrol ve sıvılaştırılmış doğal gazın (LNG) sevkiyatının yaklaşık beşte biri Hürmüz Boğazı'ndan geçmektedir (Stewart, 2026). Bu coğrafi gerçeklik, askerî kapasitesi ABD ile kıyaslanamayacak kadar zayıf olan İran'a orantısız bir kaldıraç sağlamaktadır. Mühimmat kısıtı, bu stratejik maliyetle birleşmektedir. Boğazın güvenliğini tehdit etmek için büyük bir donanmaya sahip olmak gerekmez; sınırlı sayıda mayın, hızlı tekne veya kıyı füzesi bile küresel enerji piyasalarında dalgalanma yaratmaya yetebilmektedir.

Nisan ayı ortasında başlayan ve 17 Haziran'a kadar süren dönemde uygulanan deniz ablukası, İran'ı ekonomik olarak baskı altına almayı amaçlamıştır. Stewart'a (2026) göre, savaş başladığından bu yana Washington, 20'den fazla savaş gemisi de dahil olmak üzere Orta Doğu'ya on binlerce asker göndermiştir. ABD Savunma Bakanı Pete Hegseth, ABD Donanması'nın İran'a yönelik deniz ablukasını "süresiz" olarak sürdürebileceğini belirtmiştir. Abluka başladığından bu yana ABD ordusu, ablukayı delmeye çalışan 55'ten fazla ticari gemiyi yönlendirmiş, üç gemiyi devre dışı bırakmış ve iki gemiye el koymuştur (Stewart, 2026). Ancak ticari gemilere yönelik saldırılar küresel enerji fiyatlarında dalgalanmalara yol açmış ve bölgesel güvenlik ortamını istikrarsızlaştırmıştır. Holland ve Azhari'ye (2026) göre, BAE merkezli ADNOC şirketinin verilerine göre çatışma başladığından bu yana 15 gemi saldırıya uğramıştır. Bir mürettebat üyesi hayatını kaybetmiş ve yirmi kişi yaralanmıştır (Holland & Azhari, 2026). Bu rakamlar büyük görünmeyebilir; ancak küresel taşımacılık sigorta primlerini ve rota tercihlerini etkilemesi bakımından orantısız bir ekonomik etki yaratmıştır.

Bu tablo, ABD'nin tırmanma kapasitesinin sınırsız olmadığını göstermektedir. Daha yoğun bir bombardıman kampanyası, özellikle nüfus yoğunluğunun yüksek olduğu kentsel alanlarda sivil kayıplarını artırma riskini de beraberinde getirecektir. Musul ve Rakka örnekleri, yoğun hava bombardımanının bina yıkımı ve sivil kayıplarıyla yakından ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir (Airwars, 2018). İran'ın Tahran, İsfahan, Tebriz ve Şiraz gibi büyük ve yoğun nüfuslu şehirlerine yönelik geniş ölçekli bir hava harekâtı bu nedenle yalnızca askerî hedeflerin imhası bakımından değil, öngörülebilir sivil maliyetler ve bunun yaratabileceği siyasi-diplomatik sonuçlar bakımından da ABD'nin tırmanma kapasitesini sınırlayabilecektir.

Ayrıca, yoğun bombardıman İran'ın misillemesini genişletecek ve bölgesel aktörleri çatışmaya çekme riskini yükseltecektir. İran'ın misilleme kapasitesi, 2.000 kilometre menzile sahip füzeleriyle İsrail, Suudi Arabistan ve BAE'deki hedefleri vurabilecek düzeydedir (Elwelly, 2026). Elwelly'ye (2026) göre, İran'ın cephaneliği İsrail'e ulaşabilen Sejil (2.000 km),

Emad (1.700 km), Ghadr (2.000 km), Shahab-3 (1.300 km), Khorramshahr (2.000 km) ve Hoveyzeh (1.350 km) gibi çok sayıda uzun menzilli füze kapsamaktadır.

Hizbullah'ın İsrail'e yönelik 150.000'den fazla füze ve roket kapasitesi, çatışmanın kuzey cephesine yayılması riskini artırmaktadır (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026). Nitekim Council on Foreign Relations'a (2026) göre, ABD ve İsrail'in Şubat 2026'da İran'a yönelik harekât başlatmasının ardından Hizbullah, İsrail'e yönelik misilleme saldırıları başlatarak çatışmayı genişletmiştir. Aynı kaynak, Hizbullah'ın Lübnan'da "devlet içinde devlet" olarak tanımlandığını ve ülkenin Şii çoğunluklu bölgelerinin çoğunu kontrol ettiğini belirtmektedir (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026).

Kara harekâtı ise çok daha yüksek maliyetli bir seçenektir. Mearsheimer'a (2026) göre, boğazın kalıcı biçimde güvence altına alınması 100.000'den fazla muharip asker gerektirebilecek ölçekte bir konuşlandırmayı gündeme getirmektedir. Bu rakam, örneğin 2003 Irak Savaşı'ndaki 151.000 kişilik konuşlandırmanın yaklaşık üçte ikisine karşılık gelmektedir (Vego, 2003). Bu, Washington'ın bugüne kadar üstlenmeye hazır olmadığı bir yükür. İç siyasette geniş bir askerî sefer için gerekli desteğin bulunup bulunmadığı da ayrı bir belirsizlik kaynağıdır.

Vego'nun (2003) 2003 Irak Savaşı analizinde belirttiği gibi, "askerî zaferler, politika hedefleri ve istenen stratejik son durum yetersiz kalırsa veya hiç elde edilemezse, çok az anlam ifade eder ve hatta zarar verici olabilir." Bu gözlem, 2026 harekâtının karşılaştığı benzer zorlukları anlamak için tarihsel bir emsal sunmaktadır. Vego ayrıca, 151.000 askerlik bir kuvvetin lojistik hatlarının hızlı ilerleme nedeniyle zorlandığını ve bunun operasyonel duraklamalara neden olduğunu belirtmektedir (Vego, 2003). Bu örnek, 100.000'den fazla asker gerektirecek bir kara harekâtının karşılaştığı lojistik zorlukları öngörmek açısından önemlidir.

Bölgesel aktörler de bu tırmanma sınırını fark etmiş görünmektedir. Suudi Arabistan, Türkiye ve Pakistan'ın 7 Ağustos 2026'da Mekke'de imzaladığı karşılıklı savunma pakı (Holland & Azhari, 2026) bu duruma örnek oluşturmaktadır. Reuters'in aktardığına göre, Türkiye pakının "herhangi bir ülkeyi hedef almadığını ve tamamen savunma amaçlı olduğunu" belirtirken, imzacı devletler yaptıkları ortak açıklamada, üç ülkeden birine yönelik silahlı bir saldırının üçüne yönelik sayılacağını öngörmüştür (Holland & Azhari, 2026). Suudi Arabistan'ın ABD ile yakın ilişkisi, Türkiye'nin NATO üyeliğı ve Pakistan'ın Çin ile stratejik ortaklığı göz önüne alındığında, bu üç ülkeyi bir araya getiren ortak tehdit algısı dikkat çekicidir. Bu tür bir pakt, normal koşullarda beklenmeyecek ölçüde farklı çıkarlara sahip üç

devleti bir araya getirmiştir. Bu durum, bölgesel aktörlerin ABD'nin sağladığı güvenlik şemsiyesine artık aynı güvenle bel bağlamadığını düşündürmektedir. Paktın sembolik mi yoksa operasyonel bir işlev mi taşıdığı henüz net değildir; ancak imza süreci bile bölgesel güvenlik mimarisinde önemli bir değişimin göstergesi olarak değerlendirilmelidir.

İran'ın Hürmüz stratejisinin de kendi içinde maliyetleri bulunmaktadır. Uzun süreli bir abluka, İran'ın kendi petrol ihracatını da sınırlayacak ve uluslararası toplumdaki desteğini zayıflatacaktır. Ayrıca, Çin ve Rusya gibi İran'ın ekonomik ve askerî destekçileri, küresel enerji fiyatlarındaki dalgalanmalardan olumsuz etkileneceği için Tahran üzerinde baskı kurabilir. Denizdeki asimetrik kapasite, hava veya kara kuvvetlerine göre daha kırılmandır ve yoğun bir karşı operasyonla etkisiz hale getirilebilir. Bu sınırlılıklar, Hürmüz stratejisinin İran için düşük maliyetli bir araç olmakla birlikte, uzun vadede sürdürülebilirliğinin sınırlı olduğunu göstermektedir.

Sonuç olarak Hürmüz Boğazı, harekâtın askerî kapasite ile stratejik sonuç arasındaki farkı en açık biçimde ortaya koyan unsur haline gelmiştir. ABD'nin boğaz çevresinde önemli bir operasyonel üstünlüğü olsa da bu üstünlüğü İran'ın uzun vadeli davranışını değiştirecek kalıcı bir siyasi sonuca dönüştürmek çok daha karmaşık bir mesele olarak kalmaya devam etmektedir. Boğazın yeniden açılması, Washington için artık yalnızca askerî değil, diplomatik bir ön koşul haline gelmiştir (Spetalnick, 2026).

İran'ın Direnç Kapasitesi ve Stratejik Çıkmaz

Bu tablonun bir boyutu da İran tarafından okunmalıdır. İran'ın askerî kapasitesinin ABD ile kıyaslanabilir olduğunu iddia etmek gerçekçi değildir. Koalisyon güçleri hemen her taktik angajmanı kazanabilmiştir. Ancak İran'ın avantajı askerî üstünlük kurmak değil, ABD'nin üstünlüğünün siyasi olarak yeterli bir sonuç üretmesini engelleyecek kadar direnebilmesidir. Bu ayrım basit görünse de harekâtın seyrini anlamak açısından belirleyicidir. Bir aktörün taktik düzeydeki yenilgileri stratejik yenilgi anlamına gelmez

Bu direnç üç unsurdan beslenmektedir. Birincisi, İran'ın nükleer altyapısının coğrafi olarak dağınık yapısıdır. Uluslararası Atom Enerjisi Kurumu'nun (IAEA) raporlarına göre, İran'ın Natanz, Fordow, İsfahan ve Arak gibi farklı bölgelere dağılmış 20'nin üzerinde nükleer tesisi bulunmaktadır (IAEA, GOV/2026/33, para. 20). Bu dağınık yapı, tek bir harekâtla tüm tesislerin tamamen ve kalıcı olarak etkisiz hale getirilmesini güçleştirmektedir. İkincisi, İran hasarı absorbe etme konusunda belirgin bir tolerans göstermiştir. Bununla birlikte, 1980-1988 Irak-İran Savaşı'nda ağır kayıplara ve uzun süreli yıpranmaya rağmen savaşmayı sürdürmüş

olması, İran'ın tarihsel olarak yüksek bir direnç kapasitesine sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Harekâtın Haziran 2025 tarihinde başlayan ilk aşamasının ardından geçen sekiz aylık dönemde İran, askerî kapasitesini ve nükleer programını güçlendirmeyi tercih etmiştir. Bu tercih, Tahran'ın askerî baskıyı bir teslimiyet sinyali değil, kaldıraç artırma fırsatı olarak okuduğunu göstermektedir. Üçüncüsü, Hürmüz'deki asimetrik deniz savaşı ve erişimi engelleme/alani kullanıma kapatma (Anti-Access/Area Denial, A2/AD) kapasitesidir. İran'ın çok sayıda hızlı saldırı botu, deniz mayınları, kıyı savunma füzeleri ve insansız sistemlerden oluşan deniz A2/AD kapasitesi, ABD Donanması ile simetrik bir deniz üstünlüğü mücadelesine girmekten ziyade, stratejik bir chokepoint'te Amerikan deniz gücünün operasyonel hareket serbestisini sınırlamaya ve müdahalenin maliyetini yükseltmeye yönelik bir asimetrik caydırıcılık mekanizması oluşturmaktadır (Vianello & Giorguli, 2026). Bu kapasite, İran'a ABD'nin teknolojik ve konvansiyonel üstünlüğünü doğrudan dengelemeksizin, Washington'ın askerî müdahalesinin operasyonel ve ekonomik maliyetlerini artırma imkânı sağlamaktadır. Dolayısıyla burada söz konusu olan klasik anlamda bir askerî zafer değil, maliyet dengesini rakibin aleyhine değiştirmeye dayalı bir deniz stratejisidir.

Ancak İran'ın direnç kapasitesinin de belirgin sınırları bulunmaktadır. Uzun süreli çatışmanın yarattığı enflasyon, işsizlik ve kamu hizmetlerindeki bozulma gibi ekonomik maliyetler, zamanla Tahran'ın iç siyasi istikrarını aşındırabilir. Özellikle rejim karşıtı protestoların devam ettiği bir ortamda savaş yorgunluğunun toplumsal ve siyasal etkileri, İran yönetiminin çatışmayı sürdürme kapasitesi açısından önemli bir kısıt oluşturabilir. Buna ek olarak, askerî kayıpların, özellikle komuta kademesinde yoğunlaşan kayıpların, İran'ın kuvvet üretme ve uzun süreli operasyon yürütme kapasitesi üzerinde birikimli etkiler yaratması beklenebilir. Son olarak, Rusya ve Çin gibi dış ortakların çatışmanın uzaması karşısında maliyet fayda hesaplarını yeniden değerlendirmeleri, İran'ın diplomatik ve ekonomik destek kapasitesini zaman içinde zayıflatabilir.

Bu üç kısıtın, ekonomik baskı, askerî yıpranma ve dış desteğin belirsizliği, birlikte etkisi, harekâtın Temmuz Ağustos 2026 döneminde stratejik bir çıkmaza sürüklenmesine katkıda bulunmuştur. Buradaki stratejik çıkmaz, taraflardan hiçbirinin askerî araçlarla kesin ve sürdürülebilir bir zafer elde edemediği, ancak her iki tarafın da çatışmadan geri çekilmeyi kabul etmediği bir durumu ifade etmektedir. Dolayısıyla ortaya çıkan durum basit bir kazanma kaybetme ikiliğinden ziyade, tarafların birbirlerinin hedeflerini engelleyebildiği, ancak kendi siyasi ve askerî amaçlarını da kesin biçimde gerçekleştiremediği bir karşılıklı sınırlama dengesidir.

17 Haziran'da imzalanan Mutabakat Muhtırası'nın ihlal edildiği iddialarının ardından karşılıklı misilleme saldırıları sürmüştür. Ancak taraflardan hiçbiri kesin bir siyasi sonuç elde edememiştir. Spetalnick'in (2026) aktardığına göre, çatışma uzadıkça artan siyasi ve ekonomik maliyetler Washington'ın seçeneklerini daraltmıştır. Bu durum, müzakere edilmiş bir çıkışa doğru baskı oluşturmıştır.

Burada altı çizilmesi gereken husus şudur: İran'ın direnci, onun askerî olarak güçlü olduğu anlamına gelmemektedir. Bu direnç, ABD'nin üstünlüğünün otomatik olarak yeterli bir siyasi kaldıracı dönüşmediği anlamına gelmektedir. Bu ayrımın gözden kaçırılması, harekâtın sonuçlarının hem abartılı bir "İran zaferi" hem de gerçekçi olmayan bir "ABD başarısızlığı" olarak okunmasına yol açabilir. Oysa mevcut kanıtlar, her iki tarafın da kendi sınırlarıyla karşılaştığı daha dengeli bir tabloya işaret etmektedir.

Sonuç

Bu makalenin başında sorulan soru şuydu: ABD ve İsrail'in belirgin operasyonel üstünlüğüne rağmen, 2026 harekâtı neden kesin ve kalıcı bir siyasi sonuca dönüşmemiştir? Yukarıdaki analiz üç temel çıkarım sunmaktadır.

Birincisi, operasyonel üstünlük tek başına siyasi sonuç garantilemez. Bölüm 3'te gösterildiği gibi, ABD ve İsrail kırk gün içinde 10.000'den fazla hedefi vurabilecek kadar güçlüdür. Ancak bu güç, İran'ı teslimiyete zorlamaya yetmemiştir. Hava harekâtının ardından deniz ablukasına geçilmesi, ilk aracın tek başına yeterli siyasi kaldıracı üretmediğinin dolaylı bir kabulü olarak değerlendirilmelidir (Mearsheimer, 2026).

İkincisi, mühimmat sürdürülebilirliği harekâtın seyrini belirleyen kritik bir değişken olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bölüm 4'te sunulan verilere göre, Patriot, THAAD ve Tomahawk gibi sistemlerdeki tüketim oranları ile bunların yıllarla ölçülen yenileme süreleri arasındaki uyumsuzluk, kısa vadeli operasyonel kapasite ile uzun vadeli stratejik kapasite arasında önemli bir fark yaratmıştır. Cancian ve Park'ın (2026a) tahminlerine göre, savaş öncesindeki Patriot stok seviyelerine ancak 2029 ortalarında, Tomahawk stoklarına ise 2030 sonu veya 2031 başında yeniden ulaşılabilecektir. Bu durum, ABD'nin kısa vadede başka bir bölgede benzer ölçekte bir operasyon yapabilme kapasitesini sınırlamakta ve mevcut çatışmayı daha da yoğunlaştırma seçeneğini pratikte ortadan kaldırmaktadır.

Üçüncüsü, rakibin direnme kapasitesi ve tırmanmanın artan maliyetleri askerî üstünlüğün etkisini sınırlamıştır. Bölüm 5 ve 6'da tartışıldığı üzere, bu maliyetler özellikle

Hürmüz Boğazı üzerinden belirgin hale gelmiştir. İran'ın nükleer altyapısının coğrafi dağılımı, hasarı absorbe etme toleransı ve Hürmüz'deki asimetric misilleme kapasitesi, ABD'nin üstünlüğünün siyasi olarak yeterli bir sonuca dönüşmesini engellemiştir. Ancak bu direncin de sınırları bulunmaktadır; ekonomik yaptırımların birikimli etkisi ve savaş yorgunluğu, Tahran'ın uzun vadeli direnme kapasitesini sınırlayan faktörler olarak değerlendirilmelidir.

Bu üç değerlendirme birlikte ele alındığında, 2026 harekâtının klasik anlamda bir “askerî başarısızlık” olarak nitelendirilmesi güçleşmektedir. ABD ve İsrail, İran'ın güç projeksiyonu kapasitesini önemli ölçüde zayıflatmış, füze, İHA ve deniz kuvvetleri kapasitesinin yanı sıra savunma sanayii tabanının önemli bir bölümünü tahrip etmiş ve savaşın ilk 72 saati içinde hava üstünlüğünü sağlamıştır (Carter & Carl, 2026). Bununla birlikte, bu operasyonel ve askerî başarıların siyasi ve stratejik hedeflere ulaşılıp ulaşılmadığı açısından değerlendirilmesi gerekmektedir. Nitekim Lamson, ABD ve İsrail'in operasyonel hedeflerinin önemli bir bölümünü gerçekleştirmiş görünmesine rağmen, bu başarıların stratejik başarıya dönüşüp dönüşmediğinin belirsizliğini koruduğunu vurgulamaktadır (Young, 2026). Mearsheimer ise savaşın değerlendirilmesi gereken temel ölçütün, başlangıçta belirlenen siyasi hedefler ile bu hedeflere ulaşmak için benimsenen stratejiler arasındaki uyum ve stratejilerin hedeflere ulaşıp ulaşmadığı olduğunu ileri sürmektedir (Mearsheimer, 2026). Dolayısıyla askerî üstünlüğün siyasi başarıya dönüşümü otomatik değildir; elde edilen üstünlüğün sürdürülebilirliği yüksek mühimmat tüketimi, stratejik hedeflerin sürdürülebilirliği ve karşı tarafa yüklenebilecek maliyetin kabul edilebilirlik sınırı gibi kısıtlarla karşı karşıyadır (Young, 2026).

Bu bulguların politika yapıcılar için üç somut çıkarımı bulunmaktadır. Birincisi, mühimmat stoklarının çeşitlendirilmesi ve tek bir sistem türüne aşırı bağımlılığın azaltılması gerekmektedir. İkincisi, savunma sanayiinde üretim kapasitesinin kriz dönemlerinde hızla artırılmasına olanak tanıyan esnek üretim modelleri geliştirilmelidir. Üçüncüsü, uzun süreli çatışmalar için lojistik planlamanın ve mühimmat ikmal zincirinin yeniden tasarlanması, stratejik öngörünün bir parçası haline getirilmelidir.

Gelecek araştırmalar, özellikle resmî askerî verilere erişim sağlanması durumunda, mühimmat tüketiminin daha kesin bir analizini sunabilir. Bu çalışma, açık kaynaklı verilere dayanmaktadır ve Savunma Bakanlığı'nın resmî verileriyle doğrulanmamıştır. Resmî verilere erişim, mühimmat tüketim oranlarının ve yenileme süreçlerinin daha hassas bir şekilde ölçülmesine olanak tanıyacaktır. Ayrıca, İran'ın karar alma süreçlerine ilişkin birincil kaynaklara erişim, direnç kapasitesinin analizini derinleştirebilir.

2026 ABD-İsrail İran harekâtı, askerî üstünlüğün siyasi sonuca dönüşümünün otomatik olmadığını göstermektedir. Bu dönüşüm, mühimmat stoklarının derinliğine, savunma sanayisinin üretim hızına, tırmanmanın kabul edilebilir maliyetlerine ve rakibin direnme kapasitesine bağlı kalmaktadır. Bir devletin günler içinde kullanabildiği güç ile aylar boyunca sürdürebildiği güç arasındaki fark, 2026 harekâtının gösterdiği üzere, stratejik başarı ile stratejik çıkmaz arasındaki çizgiyi belirleyebilmektedir.

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Beyond the 5% Target: NATO Burden-Sharing and Europe's Defence-Industrial Challenge

İrem Nur Yaşar

1. Introduction

Recent geopolitical shifts, most notably Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have transformed the transatlantic security environment and returned burden-sharing to the center of NATO politics (Ratti, 2023; Guiberteau et al., 2023; Deni & Agachi, 2025). The war not only reawakened NATO's territorial-defence mission, but also exposed Europe's continuing dependence on the United States for political leadership, high-end military capability, and defence-industrial depth (Ratti, 2023; Engelbrekt, 2022). At the same time, the conflict strengthened the case for a larger European role within a more closely coordinated EU–NATO framework, particularly as Washington's long-term strategic priorities continue to shift beyond Europe (Ratti, 2023; Jones, 2026).

In response to these developments, the Hague Summit of June 2025 marked a new stage in alliance burden-sharing by committing allies to raise defence and security related spending to 5% of GDP by 2035 (Brzoska, 2026; Olejnik & Kuna, 2025). Yet the significance of this decision lies not only in the scale of the target, but also in the broader fiscal and strategic adjustment it demands from European allies (Brzoska, 2026; Cylus & Mckee, 2026; Olejnik & Kuna, 2025). This limitation is especially important in the current environment, where the central challenge is not simply spending more, but converting higher budgets into military readiness, industrial output, and sustainable capability generation (Guiberteau et al., 2023; Olejnik & Kuna, 2025; McGerty et al., 2022).

This pressure has been intensified by the changing strategic posture of the United States. The 2025 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) puts forward a more transactional and direct conception of transatlantic relations, urging Europe to adopt greater responsibility for its own security while reordering fiscal priorities around defence and industrial strength (Cylus & Mckee, 2026; Daßler & Weiss, 2025). Although the United States has not formally abandoned its NATO commitments, the literature increasingly treats long-term American support for European security as less certain and more conditional than at any point in the post-Cold War era (Daßler & Weiss, 2025; Williams, 2025; Jones, 2026; The New US National-Security, 2026). Ultimately, the 5% reflects a deeper attempt to redefine the division of labour inside

NATO under conditions of strategic uncertainty, fiscal strain, and renewed industrial competition (Engelbrekt, 2022; Caverley & Kapstein, 2025; Cimbala & Forster, 2017).

Given this strategic context, this article examines the feasibility of NATO's 5% spending target by asking whether higher defence budgets can be converted into genuine military readiness under conditions of structural industrial constraint and fiscal pressure. To address this question, the analysis proceeds in two steps. It first examines the conceptual limits of top-line expenditure metrics, considering the extent to which aggregate spending levels, and the two-tier structure of the new target, capture actual readiness, force preparedness, and resilience against hybrid threats. It then analyses the structural constraints that condition any conversion of higher budgets into deployable capability, namely the European defence-industrial bottleneck, market fragmentation, and the fiscal trade-offs that intensified rearmament is likely to generate for allied governments.

2. Beyond Top-Line Spending: The Conceptual Limits of NATO Benchmarks

2.1. The Illusion of Top-Line Metrics: Lessons from the 2% Target

The 2% figure first appeared in 2002, when NATO used it in the accession context and candidate countries were asked to commit sufficient defence resources (Weiss, 2019; Feldman & Shipton, 2024). By the time of the 2014 Wales summit, the United States still accounted for over 65% of transatlantic defence spending, and NATO's burden-sharing debate had sharpened around aging equipment, weak Research and Development (R&D), and inadequate training in Europe (Becker, 2019; Kim & Sandler, 2020).

At the 2014 Wales Summit, allies agreed to aim to move toward spending 2% of GDP on defence within a decade and 20% of defence budgets on equipment modernization (Alozious, 2021; Becker et al., 2024; Weiss, 2019). This was the first time heads of state and government publicly adopted quantitative NATO spending targets, in a strategic context shaped by Russia's annexation of Crimea and NATO's renewed emphasis on territorial defence (Becker et al., 2024; Weiss, 2019). The pledge was framed as non-binding as its language emphasized "aim" and "as GDP grows," which helps explain why allies interpreted it differently and why some openly signaled they would not reach 2% by the deadline (Alozious, 2021; Weiss, 2019).

Figure 1
Military spending as a share of GDP in Europe:
Percentage change from 2004 to 2014

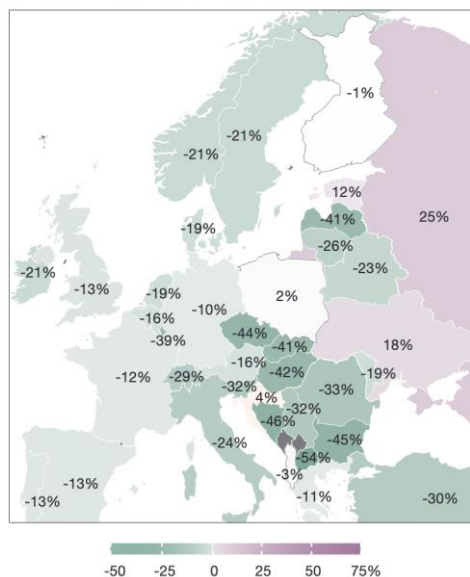
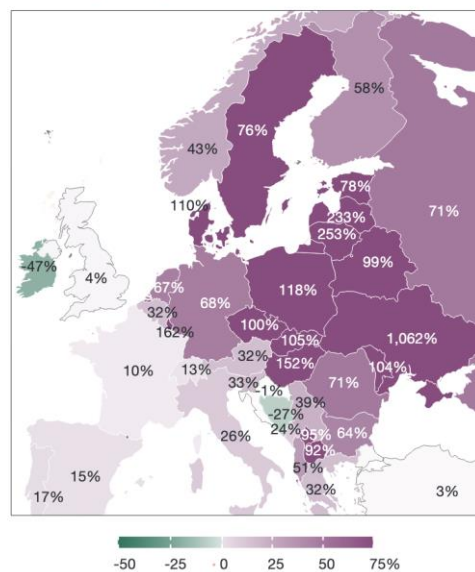


Figure 2
Military spending as a share of GDP in Europe:
Percentage change from 2014 to 2024



Note. Reprinted from "Can Europe Deliver NATO's Five Percent?: Fiscal Constraints, Political Feasibility and Security Beyond Spending Targets," by A. A. Bolouri, T. Lohse, and S. Qari, 2026, *Interconomics*, 61, p.87

As Figures 1 and 2 illustrate, this ambiguity had material consequences: nearly all European states continued to cut their military burden between 2004 and 2014, and only reversed trajectory sharply after 2014, and especially after 2022, exposing how little the 2% pledge itself altered the pre-Crimea trajectory of disarmament (Bolouri et al., 2026).

For instance, Czechia represents a clear case where weak institutions cannot manage sudden budget increases. In Czechia, rising defence funds ended up expanding administrative bureaucracy rather than building actual military strength, simply because the defense system lacked the capacity to manage the budget effectively (Dvorak, 2021). Belgium and Portugal spent about a third of their military budgets just on pensions in 2017, while France used nearly a quarter for the same reason. This fiscal constraint creates a budget illusion: while headline spending numbers appear to rise, personnel and pension costs structurally crowd out critical equipment modernization (Alozius, 2021).

Top-line spending figures also fail to measure operational contribution and risk-taking. For instance, Greece consistently met the 2% spending target but provided limited operational deployment. In contrast, Denmark and Canada long spent well below the threshold, yet contributed frontline troops and combat aircraft to high-risk NATO missions in Afghanistan and Libya (Deni, 2015; Techau, 2015). Therefore, a high budget does not automatically mean a high willingness to fight.

2.2. Operational Readiness, Force Sustainment, and Hybrid Resilience

A budget produces operational force only when equipment is present, functional, crewed, supplied, and repairable (Kudrytskyi et al., 2024; Dalzochio et al., 2023). Behind these visible indicators lie essential upstream pipelines, including industrial-base throughput, maintenance depots, training ranges, spare-parts supply, and qualified maintainers (Junor, 2017).

Accordingly, combat readiness is best understood as the combined readiness of materiel support, personnel readiness, and training level. More advanced weapons raise maintenance complexity, increase ammunition consumption, and require faster battlefield diagnosis and repair close to the battlefield. Training is also not separable from equipment readiness because combat effectiveness depends on combat-ready systems being paired with trained crews and consumables (Kudrytskyi et al., 2024; Keegan et al., 2021).

The war in Ukraine demonstrates that the critical bottleneck in high-intensity conflicts is not the nominal ownership of advanced platforms, but rather consumption rates and stock replenishment (Caverley, 2023; Sollfrank, 2024). During the initial stages of the conflict, Ukraine's operational limitations stemmed not from a shortage of artillery pieces, but from a rapid depletion of ammunition reserves (Sollfrank, 2024; Stefanovich, 2023). This outcome proves that static equipment numbers are misleading indicators of military power unless supported by sustainable supply chains and deep operational stockpiles.

In response to shifting transatlantic priorities and heightened regional threats, NATO members agreed to raise defense expenditures to 5% of GDP, allocating 3.5% to military capabilities and 1.5% to infrastructure and cybersecurity at the NATO Summit in The Hague in June 2025. The realignment of US foreign policy, alongside NATO's updated 5% defense spending benchmark, highlights the accelerating pressure on European nations to take ownership of regional security (Bogers, 2026). This two-tier structure reflects an evolution in

burden-sharing metrics, moving beyond raw input targets to value coordinated contributions and resilience against hybrid threats (Bolouri, 2026).

Note. Reprinted from "Can Europe Deliver NATO's Five Percent?: Fiscal Constraints, Political Feasibility and Security Beyond Spending Targets," by A. A. Bolouri, T. Lohse, and S. Qari, 2026, *Intereconomics*, 61, p.88.

Figure 3 illustrates the scale of the adjustment this implies: reaching the target would require states such as Luxembourg and Spain to more than triple their current military burden by 2035, while others, including Poland, need comparatively modest increases, underscoring how unevenly the starting points are distributed across the alliance (Bolouri et al., 2026).

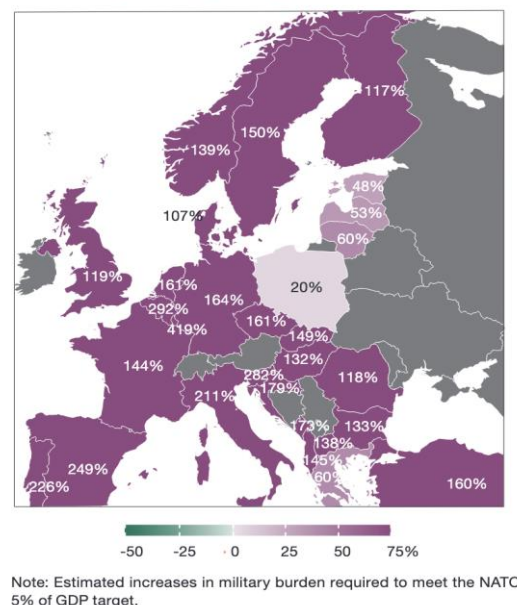
Crucially, the primary security risks confronting Europe are shifting away from traditional state-on-state military conflicts. As highlighted by the European University Institute, non-conventional hybrid challenges, specifically cyber warfare, foreign information manipulation, and critical infrastructure disruption, constitute the most immediate danger in the near term (Bolouri, 2026). The 1.5% allocation recognizes that modern security depends on protecting critical infrastructure from hybrid and cyber threats, not just fielding conventional forces (Somogyi & Nagy, 2025). NATO militaries regard themselves as unequipped to protect civilian critical infrastructure from cyberattacks, relying overwhelmingly on private corporations for defense even during violent conflict (Neilsen & Pontbriand, 2025). Critical infrastructure resilience depends on institutional support and comprehensive interaction between state institutions, private sectors, and international organizations (Shkuropadska et al., 2025).

3. Structural Constraints to Rearmament in Europe

3.1. European Defence-Industrial Bottlenecks and Fiscal Constraints

While elevating defense expenditure targets to 5% reflects heightened political resolve, converting expanded budgetary allocations into deployable military capability is fundamentally constrained by the structural limits of the European Defence Industrial Base (EDIB). The main issue is that fiscal capacity and physical capacity are not the same. European governments can

Figure 3
Military spending as a share of GDP in Europe:
Estimated percentage change from 2024 to 2035



raise defence budgets quickly, but the European defence-industrial base will struggle to meet increased demand in the short term because capacity consists of far more than factories, requiring tooling, specialized workers, and component networks that cannot be restarted quickly (Aries et al., 2023; Kancs, 2024). This mismatch reflects a longer structural problem: decades of underinvestment, downsizing, and low post-Cold War demand left Europe with reduced production capabilities, small-volume manufacturing, and an industrial base not designed for rapid wartime expansion (Aries et al., 2023; Kancs, 2024; Mueller, 2024; Fiott, 2024). Several studies therefore argue that Europe's ambitions currently exceed its available industrial resources, especially in a security environment that now demands both rearmament at home and support for Ukraine (Ivančík & Majchút, 2026; Jurčák & Gubáš, 2026).

A second constraint involves supply chain dynamics. European defense production relies on customized, small-batch manufacturing with shared suppliers, meaning larger budgets alone cannot rapidly increase output. Adapting supply chains requires up to two years for supplier onboarding and certification, while low inventory levels leave minimal flexibility to handle demand spikes (Hellberg et al., 2025). Lead times show why this becomes a readiness problem. For instance, BAE Systems estimated a 30 to 36-month lead time to restart M777 howitzer manufacturing, while Rheinmetall reported delays of up to 12 months for specialized armor steel and 24 months for critical tank electronics (Aries, 2023). These examples explain deep-seated supply chain bottlenecks across the defense sector and why larger budgets do not immediately translate into usable capability.

3.2. Market Fragmentation and Procurement Inefficiencies

There are four structural barriers to an integrated European defence market: national protectionism, high unit costs from duplicated platforms, reliance on ready-made US equipment, and political friction between large and small states (Wolff et al., 2025; Kleczka et al., 2020a; Ivančík & Majchút, 2026; Calcara & Simón, 2021). The European defence market is divided into 27 separate national markets, which prevents firms from achieving the scale economies needed to lower costs (Wolff et al., 2025; Mueller, 2024; Sempere, 2025). Governments tend to protect domestic defence companies through national protectionism, which fragments resources among many small national programmes rather than building shared European platforms (Mueller, 2024; Ivančík & Majchút, 2026). This fragmentation creates protected national monopolies in closed domestic markets, where national prime contractors like Dassault in France or Leonardo in Italy dominate their home countries without facing cross-border competition (Mueller, 2024).

European armed forces operate multiple different weapon platforms at much smaller volumes than the United States, leading to costly duplications that prevent firms from exploiting economies of scale (Klecza et al., 2020b; Mueller, 2024; Giumelli & Marx, 2023). However, the degree of duplication varies by defence sectors; for example, since 2008 the only production line for new Main Battle Tanks in the EU has been for the German Leopard 2, which is comparable to the single US production line for the M1 Abrams (Andersson & Britz, 2025). Despite some consolidation in specific sectors, the broader persistence of diverse national platforms complicates spare parts management, maintenance, and operational interoperability across the continent (Andersson & Britz, 2025; Kleczka et al., 2020b).

Under pressure to build missing defence capabilities quickly, most EU member states deprioritise European industrial considerations in favor of off-the-shelf available capability options and short delivery times (Andersson & Britz, 2025). The Russian-Ukrainian war has negatively impacted EU defence cooperation by increasing non-EU dependencies, as states rush to buy ready-made weapons rather than waiting for collaborative programs (Anicetti, 2024). This reliance on external suppliers exposes deep-seated structural weaknesses in the European defence industry and threatens the concept of European strategic autonomy (Ivančík & Majchút, 2026; Fiott, 2024). The European Defence Fund represents an attempt to reverse this trend by co-funding research and development to strengthen the European industrial base and reduce reliance on foreign suppliers (Sabatino, 2022; Fiott, 2024).

First-tier states like France and Germany push for defence market integration because their market size gives them a competitive advantage over fellow Europeans (Calcara & Simón, 2021; Calcara & Simón, 2024) while Second-tier states resist market integration out of fear that it might lead to first-tier dominance, leading them to hedge by relying on external US suppliers (Calcara & Simón, 2021). Member states with large defence industries seek to protect national interests, while those with small industries seek new market opportunities through EU directives (Kananoja et al., 2025). This tension between efficiency and autonomy underlies all debates on defence-industrial cooperation, making it difficult to achieve true consolidation (Calcara & Simón, 2024).

3.3. Macroeconomic Trade-offs: Fiscal Rules, Debt, and the Opportunity Cost of Defense

Raising defence spending from around 2% of GDP toward 3.5 or 5% would put direct pressure on other parts of the public budget because military outlays compete with health,

education, social protection, and infrastructure for the same limited fiscal resources (DiGiuseppe et al., 2023; Dabelko & McCormick, 1977; Bhattacharjee & Mazumdar, 2018). Cross-national research finds that opportunity costs of defence exist for education and health, although the average effect is sometimes weak and varies by political setting (Dabelko & McCormick, 1977). Other work finds a stronger crowding-out pattern, showing that military expenditure can displace spending for social upgrading such as health, education, social security, and public works (Apostolakis, 1992). The economic effects are also not uniform over time: heavy reliance on the military sector appears to carry high opportunity costs, while some country studies find that defence can support growth in the long run even if it creates short-run trade-offs (Emmanouilidis, 2022; Malizard, 2013). This mixed but consistent literature supports a cautious conclusion: even where long-run gains are possible, a rapid increase in defence spending is likely to tighten budgets for civilian priorities in the short to medium term (Bhattacharjee & Mazumdar, 2018; Emmanouilidis, 2022; Malizard, 2013).

Public opinion makes this trade-off politically difficult. Survey evidence from advanced democracies shows widespread opposition to welfare cutbacks used to finance higher military spending (Sacchi et al., 2025). In Germany, only a minority actively support additional defence spending regardless of personal cost, while many respondents prefer either budget consolidation or mixed financing rather than a straightforward budget increase (Bolouri et al., 2025). Broader welfare-state research points in the same direction: support for desirable policies falls sharply once voters are told that financing them requires cuts elsewhere in the welfare state, especially to pensions and transfers (Busemeyer & Garritzmann, 2017). That is why the “guns versus butter” literature argues that renewed militarization in an era of permanent austerity is likely to politicize welfare retrenchment and create electoral risk for governments that shift too much too fast from social spending to defence (Sacchi et al., 2025).

The financing problem is not only political but institutional. If governments do not raise taxes, higher defence spending must be financed through borrowing, yet EU fiscal governance limits how far member states can rely on debt (Bolouri et al., 2025; Guttenberg & Redeker, 2025). Recent studies argue that high debt levels after repeated crises leave little room for large new debt-financed commitments, and that the current rules still offer very little room for maneuver for urgent defence spending beyond 2% of GDP (Blanchard et al., 2021; Guttenberg & Redeker, 2025; Darvas et al., 2018). The broader EU fiscal-capacity literature reaches a similar conclusion: the Union has developed more instruments, but structural fiscal and governance weaknesses still limit its ability to mobilize resources at scale (Woźniakowski et

al., 2023). In practice, this means that countries facing the same threat environment do not have the same ability to fund rearmament, especially when debt is already high and fiscal rules still frame national budget choices (Blanchard et al., 2021; Darvas et al., 2018).

However, the main counter-argument is that large defence programmes can generate a positive innovation shock. Evidence from OECD countries shows that government-funded defence R&D tends to crowd in, rather than crowd out, private R&D, with spillovers that can cross borders and lift productivity (Moretti et al., 2019). Long-run US data similarly show persistent output gains when military spending shifts toward R&D, boosting innovation and GDP over time (Antolín-Díaz & Surico, 2025). Yet crowding-in does not establish defence R&D as an efficient route to productivity growth, and its benefits depend on how well defence and civilian innovation systems are connected (Moretti et al., 2019; Heuner, 2025). Learning by necessity is therefore plausible in the long run, but it does not eliminate the near-term fiscal squeeze and opportunity costs of a rapid spending increase (Sacchi et al., 2025; Guttenberg & Redeker, 2025; Malizard, 2013).

4. Conclusion

NATO's 5% target reflects extraordinary political resolve across Europe, yet overall spending increases alone cannot guarantee real military power. As the limitations of the earlier 2% benchmark demonstrated, top-line budget figures are misleading metrics for operational capability. In high-intensity conflict, true readiness depends on ammunition depth, industrial throughput, rapid stock replenishment, and the maintenance of complex weapon platforms rather than nominal equipment inventories.

Converting expanded defense budgets into deployable force faces three major structural challenges. First, decades of post-Cold War underinvestment have left the European Defence Industrial Base capacity-constrained, suffering from prolonged lead times, skilled labor shortages, and fragile supply chains. Second, severe market fragmentation, national protectionism, and duplicated platform lines drive up unit costs and prevent benefits of mass production. While members use off-the-shelf purchases to fill immediate gaps, protectionist EU procurement rules risk excluding key non-EU NATO partners. Yet, these partners offer the manufacturing capacity and battle-tested systems vital for short-term alliance readiness. Third, these industrial bottlenecks are compounded by strict EU fiscal rules, high public debt, and the political sensitivity of welfare trade-offs, which tightly constrain sustained, debt-financed rearmament.

Ultimately, NATO's 5% target requires a transition from input-oriented spending goals to output-driven strategic planning. To prevent expanded budgets from merely triggering procurement queues and defense inflation, European defense policy must prioritize long-term demand visibility, joint procurement, and cross-border industrial integration. Achieving credible deterrence will depend not on headline compliance, but on Europe's ability to turn financial investments into sustainable operational firepower and resilient infrastructure.

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NATO 3.0: The Transformation of the Alliance's Security Paradigm in the Age of Hybrid Threats

Simge Naz Ertem

Since the end of the Cold War, the international system has witnessed multifaceted developments that have fundamentally transformed the concept of security and the foundations of alliances. Although the claim that the possibility of conventional warfare between states has been completely replaced is not accurate, new and multifaceted threats such as terrorism, irregular migration, cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, sabotage attempts against critical infrastructure, AI-enabled security risks, and competition in space are causing the scope of security to change and expand significantly. In this regard, it is evident that the methods states employ to ensure their security, as well as their threat perceptions, are constantly evolving in line with the technological and geopolitical dynamics of the era. In the contemporary international environment, armed forces continue to serve as a crucial instrument of deterrence in maintaining lasting peace, as they have historically done and are likely to do in future. (Türkmen, 2023) However, in the modern era, it is evident that the deterrent role of armies is beginning to be tested not only on physical battlefields or with conventional weapons, but across a multidimensional and complex spectrum that extends from cyberspace to space platforms. In particular, high-intensity conflicts which have resurfaced with the Russia-Ukraine war and the increasingly complex security environment in the Middle East demonstrate that international security can no longer be assessed solely through the lens of military power balances. In this context, states today must simultaneously contend with traditional military threats as well as multi-layered security risks posed by non-state actors, technological advancements, and hybrid methods.

This change has also directly affected the strategic security approach of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which is based on the principle of collective defense. Established in 1949 to preserve peace and stability in the international system in the wake of the devastating effects of World War II, NATO has undergone a conceptual, strategic, and operational transformation in line with evolving threat perceptions. The alliance, established in 1949 to counter the Soviet threat, was shaped by the persistent Soviet threat throughout the Cold War era. Its rigid collective defense and security framework centered on conventional deterrence and nuclear threats shifted toward crisis management and counterterrorism following the end of the Cold War. However, the technological transformation that has accelerated in recent years, coupled with the diversification of hybrid threats, has necessitated

that NATO redefine not only its scope of operations but also its strategic approach to security and defense. It is evident that the dynamics of new-generation conflicts, as concretely reflected in the Russia-Ukraine War and the U.S./Israel-Iran War have, when combined with elements such as artificial intelligence, cyberattacks, critical infrastructure security, and hybrid warfare, propelled NATO's security and defense approach into an entirely new phase: the NATO 3.0 concept. In this context, the NATO 3.0 concept, which took concrete form at the 2026 Ankara Summit, stands out as an analytical approach that explains the Alliance's efforts to adapt to the evolving threat environment.

Understanding the evolution of the concept of security through the lens of international relations theories is crucial for analyzing the various security and strategic defense approaches that have emerged within NATO at different times. Realist theory, which was the dominant approach throughout the Cold War years, interpreted security largely in terms of military power, state-centered threats, and nuclear deterrence. During this period, security was assessed in the context of protecting borders and balancing the military capabilities of hostile states. However, with the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the bipolar international order, criticism of the approach that viewed security solely through a military and state-centered lens gained momentum; approaches such as the Copenhagen School, the Paris School, and Constructivism expanded the scope of security. Consequently, in addition to military security, the sectors of economic, social, environmental, and political security have also begun to find their place in both academic and practical spheres.

The rapid advancement of technology and its spread into every aspect of life have added a new dimension to security efforts. In particular, the increasing permeability of borders driven by globalization and its integration with technological advancements have not only turned space into an arena of competition but have also significantly transformed the traditional structure of warfare. The profound impact of technology has blurred the line between today's environments of peace and war. Consequently, the increasing integration of information and communication technologies into the activities of states and individuals has created new security risks. (Çelik, 2022) These new risks have created an asymmetric threat environment that goes beyond traditional interstate conflicts, where non-state actors and even individual hackers have the potential to threaten global security. Security is now measured not so much by the equipment of a soldier on the front lines, but rather by how resilient a country's financial databases or energy grids are against cyberattacks. This sweeping transformation has forced NATO to revise its strategic framework as well.

NATO's first version, known as "1.0," was largely based on the protection of the Euro-Atlantic front through deterrence and collective defense against the Soviet Union. Alliance members, united around Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, had established a collective security and defense mechanism against a specific enemy and a clear geographic front. During this period, security was largely addressed within a state-centered framework based on conventional and military capabilities, and NATO's deterrence policy was built on the principles of nuclear balance and collective defense. For many years, the Alliance's approach to security prioritized the maintenance of the military balance of power in the Euro-Atlantic region and was framed within the context of a clear threat perception, symmetric weapons systems, and a specific war environment.

However, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the security environment facing NATO was fundamentally redefined, accompanied by a shift in threat perceptions. In particular, during this period, the disruption of the common threat led to growing question about NATO's purpose. Consequently, the alliance moved beyond being a military structure focused solely on collective defense and shifted toward new areas of responsibility, such as crisis management, partnership policies, and the promotion of international stability. Operations in the Balkans and the intervention in Afghanistan serve as concrete examples illustrating how NATO expanded its geographic and operational scope during this period. Thus, the concept of security has begun to focus not only on the possibility of interstate war but also on regional instability and threats posed by non-state actors. This conceptual shift can be understood as a transition from the post-Cold War military defense paradigm which primarily focused on territorial protection, toward a broader strategic security approach aimed at safeguarding national survival beyond conventional territorial borders and addressing threats from a greater distance. (Şahin, 2017)

This new strategic era for NATO, characterized by crisis management, cooperation, and partnership policies, experienced its second major turning point with the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Invoking Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for the first time in its history, the Alliance identified international terrorism as one of the key threats to collective security. During this process, asymmetric threats and the fight against terrorism took on a prominent role in NATO's strategic planning. This period, in which NATO took on a new form, was dubbed "NATO 2.0" and was institutionalized at the 2004 Istanbul Summit.

Starting in the mid-2010s, the concept of security has once again undergone a comprehensive transformation. The accelerating pace of digitalization, along with new types of

threats such as cyberattacks on critical infrastructure and information manipulation, have begun to redefine the security agenda, and the concept of hybrid warfare has become the key term of this era. Hybrid threats refer to the simultaneous and coordinated use of various tools such as cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and proxy actors in addition to the use of conventional military force. Conceptualized by Frank G. Hoffman, this new form of warfare is defined as “*a complex form of warfare in which conventional and unconventional warfare are intertwined.*” (Öztürk, n.d., p.1) Consequently, security is now shaped not only in traditional war environments but also in the information domain, digital infrastructures, economic systems, and the resilience of societies. In this context, the hybrid security approach highlights that military capabilities alone are insufficient and necessitate a holistic approach to political, economic, technological, and social factors, while also demonstrating that in the future battlefield, cyberspace, AI-enabled systems, and critical infrastructure have become just as decisive as traditional military elements.

Russia’s intervention in Georgia in 2008 and its subsequent annexation of Crimea in 2014 represent one of the most concrete examples of hybrid warfare. Special forces without uniforms (the “little green men”), state infrastructure brought to a standstill by cyberattacks, and intense social media propaganda are blurring the line between war and peace and clearly demonstrating the multidimensional nature of modern conflicts. Furthermore, the Russia-Ukraine War, which began in 2022, stands as one of the most significant examples illustrating how hybrid threats operate in practice. “*The subsequent U.S./Israel-Iran War has also concretely demonstrated that security cannot be achieved through military capacity alone, and that war is no longer a phenomenon limited to battlefronts, armies, and weapons systems.*” (National Intelligence Academy (NIA) ,2026, p.5) During the course of the conflict, not only conventional military operations but also intense cyberattacks, the struggle over satellite communication systems, pressure on energy supplies, and information warfare have become integral parts of the conflict, highlighting a multilayered security environment in which cyber capabilities are employed in tandem. These developments demonstrate that hybrid warfare has evolved from being an exceptional form of conflict to becoming a dominant layer of the contemporary security environment and from NATO’s perspective, these threats have moved beyond being a theoretical discussion to become an issue that is now central to its operational planning and security mechanisms.

However, unlike conventional warfare, the cost of attacks in the cyber realm is extremely low, and it is quite difficult to identify the perpetrators. This new form of asymmetry

stemming from the technological and network-based nature of cyberattacks distinguishes cyberwarfare from traditional warfare. This is because cyber operations can potentially be carried out by individuals or groups who can disguise themselves as actors acting on behalf of a particular state. (Çelik, 2022) In this regard, as stated in NATO's own official policy documents, it is not possible to adapt to this new threat environment through a static defense. Conversely, *"responses need to be continuous and draw on elements of the entire NATO toolbox that includes political, diplomatic and military tools."* (North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 2024)

On the other hand, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and unmanned systems (UAVs, UCAVs, etc.) into the battlefield, along with their tactical and operational speed, goes beyond the limits of human capability. Similarly, new-generation technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, quantum technologies, biotechnology, and autonomous systems have also become an integral part of security policies. *"NATO's 'Emerging and Disruptive Technologies' initiative highlights that these technologies are of critical importance not only for achieving military superiority but also for enabling the Alliance to redefine the capabilities necessary to maintain its long-term strategic competitiveness and ensure effective deterrence and defense capabilities in the new security environment."* (NATO, 2026)

These shifts in the global system have necessitated that NATO formalize its shift in mindset through a new official document. *The new Strategic Concept, titled "Active Engagement - Modern Defense," agreed upon at the 2010 Lisbon Summit and the 2022 Madrid Summit, is crucial for institutionalizing what Ivo Daalder, the U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO, has termed the "NATO 3.0" era, an era that will ensure the alliance is prepared to address the challenges of the 21st century.* (Flockhart, 2011, p.5) *At the same time, Russia which had been referred to as a "strategic partner" in previous concepts or with which attempts had been made to integrate was once again declared a threat to the Alliance following its attempt to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.* (İldem, 2022, p.3) This situation is also stated in an official NATO document as follows: *"The Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to the Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area."* (NATO, 2022, p.4)

As noted in the assessment report prepared by Retired Ambassador Tacan İldem for the Center for Economic and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), *"NATO's Strategic Concept serves as a long-term policy document and a roadmap outlining how the Alliance should adapt in the face of a changing international security environment."* (İldem, 2022, s.1) This roadmap now

encompasses not only territorial defense, as was the case during the Cold War era, but also cyberspace, outer space, multilayered security dimensions, and resilience. What is noteworthy here is that NATO does not view technology merely as a tool for developing new weapons systems, but rather seeks to integrate it into the entire security architecture from decision-making processes to intelligence analysis, and from logistics planning to early warning systems. All these developments have once again necessitated a top-to-bottom update of NATO's ontological and operational structure, placing not technology itself but the transformation of the security mindset through technology at the center of NATO 3.0.

In this context, the discussions on "NATO 3.0" that emerged following the 2026 Ankara Summit signify not merely a technical transformation involving the development of new capabilities for the Alliance, but also a redefinition of the conceptual framework of security. Consequently, the NATO 3.0 approach is seen to redefine deterrence not only through military power but also through resilience, technological adaptation, multi-domain defense capabilities, and integrated coordination among allies. Security is now assessed within a broad security network that extends from data security to energy supply, and from critical infrastructure to the artificial intelligence ecosystem, not merely through the protection of borders. In this regard, NATO 3.0 represents far more than a military modernization initiative. It entails a comprehensive transformation of the Alliance across multiple dimensions, including political consensus, defense planning, operational concepts and its industrial base. (Türkgenç, 2026)

Consequently, the relatively stable and predictable security environment of the post-Cold War era is giving way to a system characterized by intensified great power competition, increased uncertainty, and a more fragmented international order. *"In parallel, the renewed intensification of great power competition, the rupture in the European security architecture caused by the Russia-Ukraine War, China's economic, technological, and military rise, deepening crises in the Middle East, the emergence of energy and supply chain security as strategic issues, and the proliferation of hybrid threats are fundamentally transforming the international security paradigm. The most significant consequence of this transformation is that security can no longer be defined solely in terms of military capabilities, border defense, and Alliance commitments."* (NIA, 2026, p.11)

For this reason, NATO must once again demonstrate its ability to adapt. *"Operating in an increasingly complex security environment shaped by artificial intelligence and facing the reality of hybrid warfare, NATO must be proactively prepared to counter new threats."* (Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, 2026, p.12) The NATO mindset which spans from the static trenches of the

Cold War to the counterterrorism era of the early 2000s has now entered the age of “Hybrid Threats,” characterized by autonomous systems, artificial intelligence algorithms, cyberattacks, and storms of disinformation that is, the NATO 3.0 phase. In this context, the approach referred to as NATO 3.0 aims to strengthen not only the alliance’s military deterrence but also its resilience. *“Collective deterrence, one of NATO’s cornerstones, is now measured through an integrated architecture that spans from defense industry production to cybersecurity, from air and missile defense to critical infrastructure, and from artificial intelligence to societal resilience.”* (NIA ,2026, p.8)

Within this framework, it is evident that in today’s international system where hybrid wars, cyber threats, and multi-actor conflict environments are defining factors, successful security and defense can be achieved not only through military power but also through technological capabilities, institutional and societal resilience, strategic coordination among allies, and the ability to integrate threats originating from different regions under a common strategic vision. Consequently, NATO’s future depends not only on its ability to uphold the principle of collective defense but also on its capacity to develop a flexible, integrated, and sustainable approach to security that can adapt to the evolving threat and security environment. *In this regard, the alliance’s long-term effectiveness depends on its ability to translate defense spending into tangible capabilities, to redefine the division of labor between the U.S. and Europe without weakening deterrence, to establish a more balanced security approach between its eastern and southern wings, and to make resilience an integral part of collective defense. Indeed, the lasting significance of the Ankara Summit will be determined by the degree of inter-allied coordination achieved across all these areas.* (NIA ,2026, p.49) In this context, the NATO 3.0 approach should be viewed not merely as a new phase in the Alliance’s history, but as a strategic response to the changing nature of the international security landscape.

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The Consequences of Russian Expansionism for NATO and Emerging Expectations of the Alliance

Dudu Hilal Koç

The onset of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, initially marked by the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequently leading to a full-scale invasion in 2022, has resulted in an escalation in the perception of security threats across Europe and the broader region. The present escalation has had considerable military and political ramifications for the entire region. Furthermore, the situation has also had significant institutional and practical effects on NATO. The present article will examine the effects of the aforementioned military intervention on NATO, in conjunction with an analysis of the dynamics of NATO–Russia relations leading up to the war and recent political history. This will provide a clear understanding of the background to the conflicts that have been ongoing since 2022.

The end of the Cold War

The dissolution of the USSR is the termination of the bipolar world order. Following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the initial rounds of NATO enlargement, the leadership of the United States within the Western alliance was further consolidated (Bozo, 2002, p. 4). However, the Alliance was subjected to considerable strain during the 1990s and 2000s due to numerous crises. The crises in the Balkans (particularly in Kosovo and Bosnia), the Gulf Wars, and subsequently the 11 September attacks, which brought US security threats to a peak, resulted in both NATO and the United States facing serious security threats. It is evident that the crises in the Balkans have served to illuminate the divergent perspectives held by the United States and Europe on a range of issues. However, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and in light of global developments, NATO's 1991 publication, *The Alliance's New Strategic Concept*, stated that the Alliance aimed to combat the threat of terrorism (NATO, 1991). Following this development, it was evident that the NATO organisation's primary focus shifted from counteracting a perceived Russian threat to addressing the increasingly prevalent global threat of terrorism, with the aim of safeguarding its members from potential attacks. Therefore, NATO has preserved its existence by adapting institutionally to successive changes in its perception of threat.

Debates on NATO's role

Following a brief overview of the institutional changes NATO underwent following the collapse of the USSR, the significant developments within NATO—particularly in the period following the annexation of Crimea—can be briefly examined. In contemplating the period before the war, Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential election signified a pivotal moment in transatlantic relations. While a more thorough discussion of this pivotal moment will be reserved for a forthcoming article, it is crucial to acknowledge the substantial damage inflicted upon NATO, a transatlantic military alliance, during this era. As Trump has repeatedly expressed since the commencement of his election campaign, his sceptical perspective on NATO and Europe has been accompanied by severe criticism of the organisation. In particular, while emphasising the US's share of the NATO budget, Trump has strongly criticised other member states for failing to increase their defence budgets to the 2 per cent level.

During the period under discussion, Trump's criticisms of the Alliance also resulted in a breakdown in trust amongst all member states. This, in turn, made it more difficult to fulfil one of NATO's primary tasks: the deterrence of aggression (Atlantic Council, 2021). Concurrently, the Alliance confronted a multitude of challenges during this period. Additionally, during this period, French President Macron's statement in a 2019 interview that NATO had suffered 'brain death' brought the Alliance's internal disagreements to the fore (Guibert & Stroobants, 2019). In the aftermath of Macron's remarks, a number of other countries, most notably Germany, have voiced their opinions. However, it was emphasised that the resolution of the internal disagreements within the Alliance must be addressed within the Alliance itself. Concurrently, Turkey's military operations in northern Syria, aimed at combating terrorist groups, further exemplified the divergent perspectives within NATO. These statements gave rise to a number of questions concerning the future of NATO and its effectiveness. Furthermore, the questioning the military operations against terrorism carried out by a member state such as Türkiye – a nation that is of significant importance to NATO – in the defence of its own security, and all statements regarding Türkiye's exclusion from NATO on these grounds, severely undermined the Alliance's deterrence capability in that period.

The intensifying war in Ukraine

At this stage, having briefly discussed NATO's actions prior to the war, the focus should shift to the political and military steps taken by NATO following the outbreak of hostilities. This will facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the institutional ramifications of the war.

The debate over whether NATO enlargement triggered Russian aggression has remained central since the escalation of the war in Ukraine in 2022. From the initiation of the war, certain experts in the West have emphasised that NATO's enlargement is regarded by Russia as a threat. They have noted that this has served as a reason for Russia's military interventions in Ukraine, which have been ongoing since 2014.

In this regard, certain experts have attributed Russia's concerns regarding NATO to political rather than military threats. These experts have argued that Putin has been deeply concerned about Russia's diminishing political influence within the former Soviet sphere during the post-Cold War era, as evidenced by these perspectives (Council on Foreign Relations [CFR], 2022). In essence, Russia's exclusion from the emerging European security architecture following the Cold War, alongside NATO's expansion, has been interpreted as a period of political isolation.

Conversely, the argument that NATO enlargement has been an unnecessary military and political move since the start of the war has also been advanced. This argument is supported by two fundamental principles. Firstly, it is important to note that the process of NATO enlargement has not yielded substantial benefits for the organisation, particularly in the context of the recently admitted members. Furthermore, it is argued that, in contrast to the anticipated outcome, these expansions have resulted in a unification of both Russia's political elite and its people in an anti-American stance. This is due to the absence of a formal written agreement, yet it is commonly asserted that, at the time of the Soviet Union's dissolution, the political elite of the United States provided Russian officials with a guarantee that NATO would not expand in an eastern direction. Those who articulate this assertion emphasise that, even in the absence of a written agreement, the failure to honour this promise has rendered the US an untrustworthy actor in Russia's eyes, thereby fuelling the aforementioned anti-American sentiment (CFR, 2022)

NATO's response to the war and the war's impact on NATO

Although the differences of opinion mentioned above emerged in academic circles with the outbreak of the war, the members of the Alliance took care to act as a unified whole. Despite each member's own political agenda, statements made regarding the war emphasised their common interests.

In the aftermath of extensive deliberations concerning the relevance and efficacy of the Alliance, the war that intensified in eastern Ukraine in 2022 instigated a period of considerable

challenge for all member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. A new era has commenced, during which members have recommitted to the principles and objectives of NATO. Consequently, following a period in which the bonds of alliance had been observed to weaken in comparison with preceding periods, members were yet again reminded of the necessity of collective security through NATO.

One of the first notable responses from NATO members to the escalating war in Ukraine was the publication of NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept. While the previous document, published in 2010, emphasized that NATO–Russia cooperation was important for the Alliance's objectives (NATO, 2010), the 2022 Strategic Concept explicitly identifies Russia as the most significant and direct threat to the Alliance's security and to peace in the Euro-Atlantic region (NATO, 2022). It is also mentioned that the Russian Federation is pursuing the expansion of its sphere of influence through the use of force, employing hybrid methods, and concurrently modernising its nuclear capabilities. In response to these developments, the document emphasises the objective of strengthening NATO's deterrence and reinforcement defence capabilities to cover all member states (NATO, 2022). Despite the fact that the objective of increasing NATO members' defence budgets is not explicitly stated in this concept document, it has since become a key priority on the Alliance's agenda.

The declaration issued following the NATO Summit held in Madrid that same year also highlighted the security threats posed by Russia's use of force in Ukraine, whilst the introductory section of the same text emphasised the member states' commitment to the Washington Treaty and, in particular, Article 5. It was emphasised that Russia bore full responsibility for its actions in Ukraine; it was also stressed that political and practical support for Ukraine would be increased.

The political language of the Strategic Concept and the diplomatic rhetoric of the Madrid Declaration reflected the shift in NATO's approach towards Russia. In other terms, the escalating conflict has prompted NATO member states to come together and take more decisive action. In this regard, NATO's support for Ukraine has continued to increase since then. NATO is providing support to Ukraine in the form of air defences and other vital equipment. (NATO, 2026).

The commitment by member states to increase their defence budgets, prompted by rising tensions and growing security concerns, has also been one of the significant impacts of the war in Ukraine on NATO. As mentioned above, whilst both Trump and his predecessors had

repeatedly voiced targets for increasing the defence budget, no concrete steps had been taken towards this end. From the year the war began, the clarification of member states' political rhetoric and their emphasis on the importance of cooperation have marked a significant shift for NATO. Consequently, analyses were conducted during that period, suggesting that the war in Ukraine could act as a unifying force for NATO. These analyses particularly argued that it could serve as a driving force to dispel the uncertainties the Alliance had faced in the post-Cold War era. (Meaney, 2022) All these developments have shown that, in the face of the emerging Russian threat, NATO has been able to act in unison on key issues within a short space of time, despite all its differences of opinion.

In the subsequent years, the Alliance pursued a series of substantial initiatives aimed at augmenting its territorial reach within Europe, a course of action that was undertaken in response to the Russian aggression that was becoming increasingly evident on the continent. The most significant development was the accession of Sweden and Finland to the Alliance. Consequently, NATO underwent a substantial expansion. In 2022, Sweden and Finland submitted their applications for NATO membership in response to perceived security threats along their borders. However, it should be noted that certain differences of opinion re-emerged within the Alliance during this process. Türkiye adopted a cautious stance towards the accession of both countries, due to concerns regarding security. Türkiye has expressed concerns regarding the activities of members of terrorist organisations such as the PKK/PYD and FETÖ in Sweden and has outlined its expectations for cooperation on counter-terrorism from these countries (Çeliker, 2024). Consequently, the Trilateral Memorandum was signed, in which both countries committed to this cooperation (Çeliker, 2024). In addition, a Permanent Joint Mechanism was established between the three countries. Following Türkiye's approval, Finland joined NATO in 2023 and Sweden in 2024 (Çeliker, 2024). Thereby increasing the organisation's membership to 32. It is imperative to emphasise that this expansion was of significant importance in terms of enlarging NATO's sphere of influence in Europe and incorporating the military capabilities of these two countries into the alliance.

Another development creating new uncertainties and expectations regarding NATO's position on Ukraine is the possibility of Trump winning the US presidential election for a second time in 2024. This is particularly salient in the context of the weakening of transatlantic relations during the President's first term and his ongoing criticism of NATO members. Consequently, concerns have once again arisen regarding US-NATO relations and NATO's position in the war in Ukraine. Trump has frequently expressed his dissatisfaction with the

United States shouldering the majority of the burden regarding European security. In addition to the criticisms, he expressed during his first term in office, it is also known that Trump has expressed opposition to Ukraine's membership of NATO. Indeed, Trump has cited NATO's enlargement plans, which included Ukraine, as the cause of the invasion that began in 2022. For the aforementioned reasons, a second Trump presidency fuelled concerns that NATO assistance to Ukraine would be reduced (CSIS, 2024). Thus, with Trump's re-election, the issue of burden-sharing has once again come to the fore in NATO's stance on the war in Ukraine. Despite the meeting between Trump and Putin, which was held subsequently, there has been no resolution of the conflict in Ukraine to date.

In considering the changes that NATO has undergone during the war in Ukraine, the NATO Summit held in Ankara last July can also be regarded as another significant turning point for the organisation. The concept of 'NATO 3.0', which suggests that NATO is on the cusp of a conceptual shift, has begun to be debated. Consequently, the Ankara Summit was marked by discussions on NATO 3.0 and budget matters. At this point, the other topics discussed at the Summit, particularly NATO 3.0, should be addressed.

An examination of the scope of NATO 3.0 reveals that it principally entails extensive modifications to the security architecture through the innovations it introduces. The upper tier, which includes nuclear deterrence and space technologies under US leadership, and the lower tier, which encompasses areas such as conventional deterrence and the defence industry—where Europe's security responsibilities are set to increase—form the main outlines of the new security architecture envisaged for the 3.0 era (Ceylan et al., 2026, pp. 7–8). Another point of note is the establishment of new military centres as part of member states' new defence plans, designed to enable a faster response to attacks, and the fact that this is planned to differ from the rotational model under Version 2.0 (Ceylan et al., 2026, pp. 7–9). In this regard, Turkey's role in NATO defence is also expected to increase as a Framework Nation. Furthermore, with regard to the functionality of defence capabilities, it is planned to enhance coordination amongst member states in defence industry production through the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) and the Defence Production Action Plan (Ceylan et al., 2026, p. 9).

When considering the innovations introduced by NATO 3.0, it should be emphasised that the intended changes actually run parallel to developments on the ground.

In particular, significant shifts in the nature of warfare are being observed in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, with the use of hybrid warfare tactics (İldem, 2026). Concurrently, the

escalating utilisation of artificial intelligence and the mounting significance of cyber security have compelled NATO, in its capacity as an organisation, to direct enhanced attention towards these domains. Within this framework, NATO's ability to meet operational requirements by enhancing cooperation in these areas is also essential for the new security architecture that is to be established. In this regard, the repercussions of the war in Ukraine – which, as mentioned above, has not only altered the political rhetoric of member states but has also influenced all of NATO's defence strategies – cannot be overlooked.

Another dynamic that is shaping NATO 3.0 is the ongoing debate within the alliance on burden-sharing. In particular, the United States' expectation that European countries should assume greater responsibility for their own defence, in conjunction with the United States' desire to focus more intently on the Indo-Pacific region, means that European countries must assume a greater role in the new security architecture (İldem, 2026). The Ankara Summit was also of critical importance in clarifying the new roles of European countries. It can therefore be argued that NATO 3.0 serves as a significant roadmap in terms of burden-sharing.

It is clear that the changes within NATO, partly driven by the war in Ukraine, will shape the organisation's future position. Alongside this, NATO must take more effective political steps in the coming period to reduce disagreements amongst its members. For example, enhancing NATO–EU cooperation is a key issue for European security. However, at this stage, NATO member states such as Turkey, which are not members of the EU, must not be excluded from this cooperation. Furthermore, the resolution of issues between Turkey and Greece in accordance with international law is also essential for the European security architecture and the functionality of NATO. In these matters, member states taking reciprocal steps to safeguard stability in the region will also serve the collective security framework of the Euro-Atlantic area.

In conclusion, from 2022 to the present day, the war in Ukraine has had significant theoretical and practical implications for NATO. In response to the growing threat of war on Europe's borders, NATO members have implemented practices of collective action that had long been lacking. Furthermore, the ongoing hostilities provide important insights into how the nature of warfare has evolved. The impact of these changes can also be seen in the defence policies NATO has developed in recent years. The 2026 Ankara Summit has also been significant in terms of these changes becoming objectives. In the coming period, NATO will be able to maintain its effective position provided it is able to implement the changes highlighted by the war in Ukraine and support cooperation amongst member states.

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Between Russia and NATO: Turkey's Balancing Policy and Liminal Identity

Ayşem Köymen

Since the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine war in February 2022, Turkey's position within NATO has become increasingly controversial. While most NATO members have adopted a clear stance against Russia, Turkey has pursued a more balanced approach, maintaining diplomatic, economic, and strategic relations with both Russia and Ukraine. This policy has led to growing debates about Turkey's reliability as an ally and whether its actions undermine NATO unity. However, Turkey's behavior cannot be understood solely through the lens of alliance loyalty. Rather, it reflects broader structural changes in the international system, including the shift toward multipolarity, increasing regional instability, and rising interdependence among states. As a country with deep economic, military, and geopolitical ties to multiple actors, Turkey operates within a framework of complex interdependence, which constrains its ability to adopt a strictly one-sided foreign policy. In addition, Turkey's unique geopolitical and historical position gives it what is often described as a "liminal identity" situated between East and West, and simultaneously embedded in Western institutions while maintaining strong relations with non-Western actors. This identity enables Turkey to pursue a multidimensional and flexible foreign policy, including mediation efforts in international conflicts.

This paper argues that Turkey's balancing strategy in the Russia–Ukraine conflict is not necessarily a sign of declining trustworthiness within NATO, but rather a rational response to its strategic environment and national interests. In particular, I will focus on the following question: Why is Turkey, as a NATO member, able to maintain relations with both Russia and Ukraine instead of taking a clear position against Russia like other NATO countries? And does this approach make Turkey appear less trustworthy to its allies?

Turkey and NATO relationship

In this section, I will argue that Turkey and NATO benefit from each other and explain why they are strategically important to one another. First of all, there are two main reasons why Turkey joined NATO. During the stagnation period of the Ottoman Empire, the country fell behind Western Europe in industry, science, and technology. After the establishment of the Republic, Turkey turned its direction toward the West and adopted many Western-style reforms. In the 1950s, Turkey followed a pro-Western foreign policy. The main reasons for joining NATO were the Soviet threat, the search for a security umbrella, and the desire to become part

of the Western system in order to modernize its military (Özalp, 2018,p.3; Bilge-Criss, 2012, p.4).

NATO, as a military alliance, has collective defense as its most important mission (Diriöz, 2012, p.658). As described in Article 5, “an armed attack against one NATO member shall be considered an attack against them all” (NATO, 2025). From this perspective, NATO guarantees a security umbrella for all member states. From Turkey’s perspective, NATO’s role has been especially important in times of regional conflict. For example, during the Syrian civil war that began in 2011, tensions increased along Turkey’s southeastern border due to actions by the Assad regime. In response, Turkey requested Patriot air defense systems from NATO. These systems were deployed in Kahramanmaraş, Adana, and Gaziantep. Turkey also emphasized that these systems were for defensive purposes only, particularly to reassure neighboring countries such as Russia (BBC News Türkçe, 2012; NATO, 2013). More recently, looking at the current Gulf conflict, ballistic missiles launched from Iran have been intercepted thanks to Patriot systems. This demonstrates how NATO continues to contribute directly to Turkey’s security (Defense News, 2026). In addition, the military modernization cooperation I mentioned above is important for Turkey. To explain further, Turkey is rapidly upgrading its defense capabilities while strengthening its alignment with NATO Standardization Agreements (STANAGs) to ensure seamless cooperation with allied forces (NATO, 2022).

Turkish defense companies are placing greater emphasis on designing, testing, and exporting systems that comply with NATO requirements, particularly in areas such as advanced unmanned platforms and armored vehicles. A notable example is a 2025 NATO exercise in which Turkish unmanned systems including UAVs and UUVs were deployed using the STANAG 4817 framework to support a Shared Platform for Innovative Solutions Evaluation (SHINE) Common Operational Picture (Yıldırım & Yıldırım, 2025).

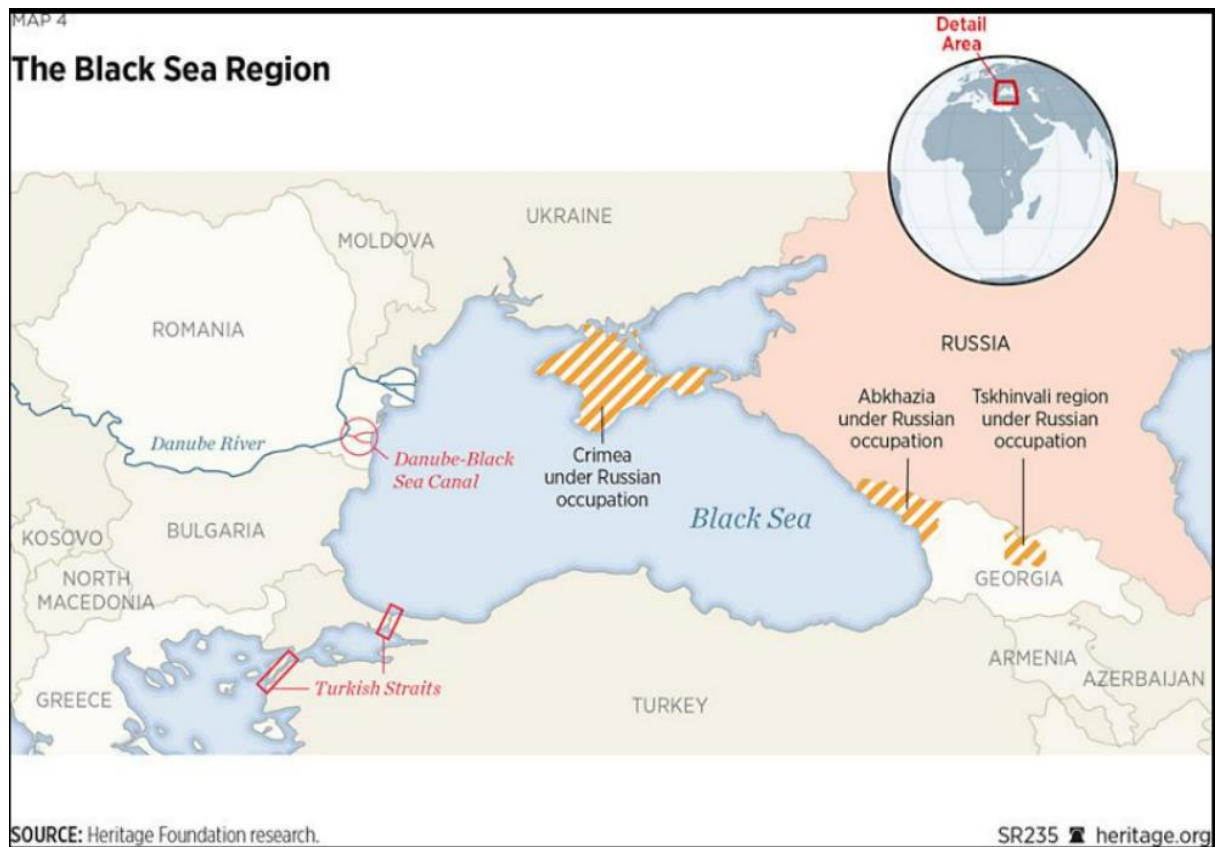
At the same time, the growth of Turkey’s defense industry is being reinforced through collaboration. Companies like Sefine Shipyard and TUSAŞ are producing NATO-compliant equipment that contributes to the alliance’s logistical and operational capabilities (Defence Turkey, 2023).

From a statistical point of view, we can see that Turkey’s membership in NATO has helped develop its defense industry. Turkey’s defense sector has grown rapidly, with over 3,500 companies across the country. This is more than the total number of companies in the 29 European NATO member states, which is around 2,800. Turkish-made armed drones make up about 65% of the global UAV market. This large share is mainly due to their strong performance in real combat situations. From 2020 to 2024, Turkey became the 11th biggest exporter of

defense products in the world. In addition, Ankara ranks 7th among NATO's 32 members in terms of contributions to the Alliance's budget. Turkey is expected to contribute about \$355 million in 2026, and the total contribution is predicted to exceed \$730 million by 2030 (TRT World, 2026).

It would not be accurate to say that these developments happened only because of NATO. In contrast, NATO's support, combined with the contributions of its member states and the growth of Turkey's national defense industry, has helped improve Turkey's military modernization and defense capacity. At the same time, Turkey has also made important contributions to NATO through its financial support, military strength, and defense industry. Turkey is one of the largest contributors to NATO operations and missions and currently leads the Kosovo Force (KFOR) while providing a significant number of troops. In addition, around 2,000 Turkish personnel have participated in NATO's Steadfast Dart 2026 exercise, together with a naval group led by the amphibious assault ship TCG Anadolu (TRT World, 2026). Beyond its military contributions, Turkey's geopolitical position is also highly important. Its location has strengthened NATO's eastern and southern flanks, and during the Cold War, Turkey played a key role in expanding the West's defensive line against the Soviet Union (Özalp, 2018, p. 9).

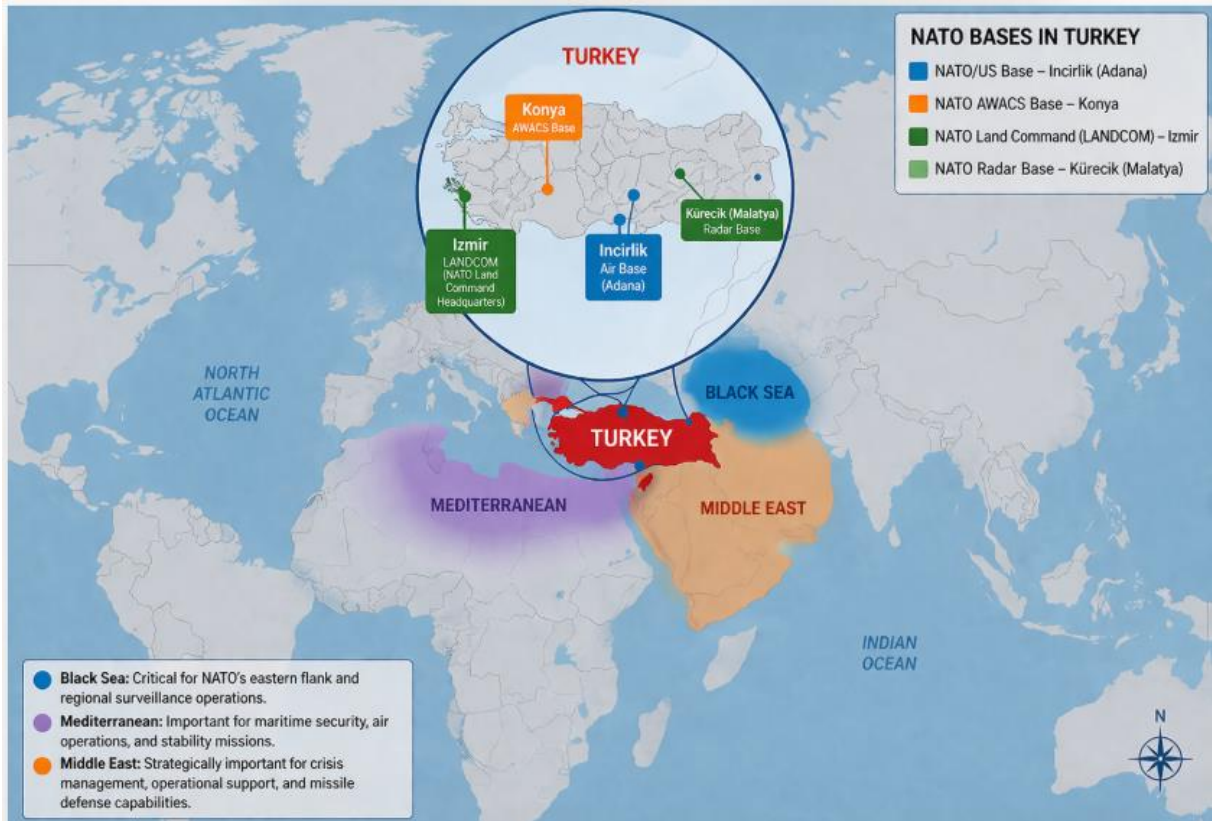
Moreover, Turkey acts as a regional military power with the ability to project force across multiple neighboring regions, including the Middle East (notably in Syria and Iraq), the Eastern Mediterranean (such as Cyprus and Libya), and the Black Sea, where it maintains significant naval presence. This demonstrates that Turkey is not merely a passive member of NATO, but rather a "regional powerhouse" that is actively shaping its own strategic environment and pursuing independent regional policies. Turkey's advantage lies in both its longest coastline along the Black Sea and, more importantly, its control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. These waterways are the only maritime gateway between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, giving Turkey unique authority over naval access and movement between regions. As a result, Turkey occupies a critical position that allows it to influence both regional security dynamics and broader NATO strategy. (The Heritage Foundation, 2020, p. 52)



(The Heritage Foundation, 2020, p. 51)



Türkiye Nato Üsleri



1

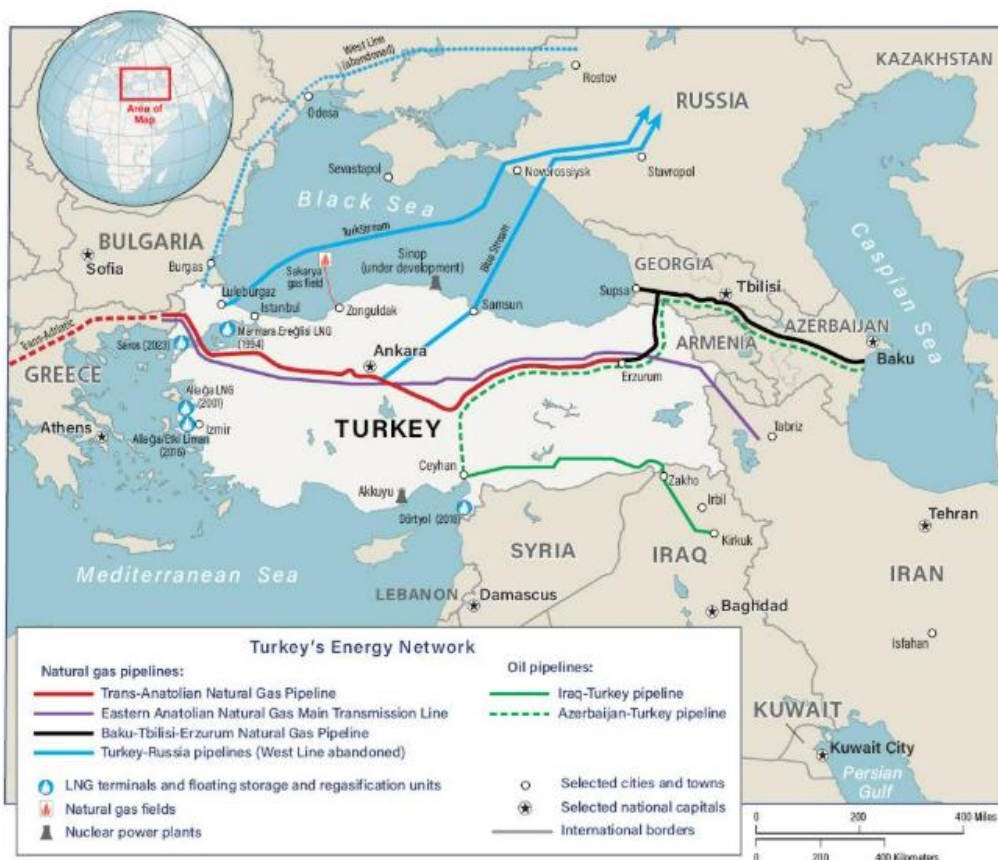
Another point of importance is the NATO bases, which are strategically significant. The Incirlik Air Base in Adana is one of the main bases actively used in NATO operations. The air base in Konya hosts NATO's early warning and surveillance (AWACS) activities. The NATO Land Command (LANDCOM) located in Izmir serves as the main headquarters for the

¹ The original image from Wikipedia (the picture above) was transformed by artificial intelligence to clearly show Turkey's military bases on the world map.

https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/NATO-T%C3%BCrkiye_ili%C5%9Fkileri

alliance's land operations. In addition, the radar base in Kürecik, Malatya, is an important part of NATO's missile defense system. These facilities are very important for NATO's activities in the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Black Sea regions (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).

For example, Incirlik, have been repeatedly used in NATO operations, including Operation Provide Comfort (1991), Operation Northern Watch (1997–2003), operations in Afghanistan after 2001, the Iraq War (2003), and anti-ISIS missions since 2015 (Özdemir, 2017).



(Siccardi, 2024, “Turkey’s energy network” map)

The energy security of NATO member states, in other words many EU countries, is partly ensured through Turkey. Turkey’s neutral position in the Russia–Ukraine war has made it an important transit country for energy routes. This has allowed European countries to use Turkey as a bridge for transporting energy resources, which is very important for their energy security.

Turkey's particular location on the world map, positioning her at a critical juncture and making her a bridge between east and west will eventually help it become a crucial energy hub for Europe (Erdağ 2021, p.217-2018).

As Russian gas stopped flowing through the Ukrainian transit at the end of 2024, Turkey's importance as a regional energy hub has increased. In 2024 total transportation via the TurkStream pipeline that directly connects the largest gas reserves in Russia to the Turkish gas network and further transported to southeast Europe reached a 23% increase year-over-year (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2025). For example, countries like Hungary and Slovakia still rely heavily on Russian gas that reaches them via Turkey and the Balkans. In addition, some EU countries (such as France, the Netherlands, and Belgium) continue to import Russian LNG, meaning Russian fossil fuels still enter the European market both via pipelines and seaborne routes (Kriwak, 2025).

Summary Table of Mutual Interest

Turkey Benefits from NATO	NATO Benefits from Turkey
Security umbrella	Strategic location
Collective defense	Eastern flank strength
Missile defense systems	Military manpower
Military modernization	Regional power projection
Interoperability (STANAGs)	Black Sea access
Crisis support	Middle East proximity
Defense cooperation	Energy transit hub
Advanced technology	Key military bases
Political alignment	Operational contributions

Turkey and Russia's Relationship

The relations between Russia and Turkey are described as 'cooperative rivalry' (Bechev, 2021, p.10) and 'adversarial collaboration' (Yildiz, 2021, p.3) so the countries are 'frenemies' to each other (Pearson, 2022, p.2). Their economic connections are particularly strong in sectors such as energy, trade, and military.

Firstly, Energy cooperation has been one of the most important factors strengthening relations between Turkey and Russia. Scholars argue that the relationship between the two countries has gradually shifted from rivalry to a form of managed competition and multidimensional partnership, largely because of their economic interdependence in the energy

sector (Kardaş ,2011,p.82). Turkey began importing natural gas from Russia toward the end of the Cold War, which marked the beginning of their energy cooperation. Although Russia's share in Turkey's energy supply has fluctuated in recent years, it remains Turkey's main energy supplier. Turkey imports about 98% of its natural gas, and in 2021 around 44% of these imports came from Russia. For Russia, Turkey is also an important energy market; in 2021 it was Russia's third-largest gas market after Germany and Italy. Energy cooperation expanded with major pipeline projects. The Blue Stream pipeline, built between 2001 and 2002, carries Russian gas directly under the Black Sea to Turkey, avoiding the environmentally sensitive Turkish Straits. In addition, in 2009 Turkey allowed Russia to develop the South Stream pipeline in its exclusive economic zone in the Black Sea, further strengthening energy ties between the two countries.

After Russia cancelled the South Stream pipeline project in 2014, Gazprom announced a new project called the TurkStream pipeline. This pipeline uses part of the infrastructure planned for South Stream and has been operating since early 2020. In addition to pipeline cooperation, Russia and Turkey agreed to build the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant in southern Turkey, which was officially inaugurated in April 2023 (Erşen & Köstem 2020,p. 239; Erdağ 2021, p.208-209).

Turkey is not only a major buyer of Russian energy resources but also an important transit route for natural gas from the Caspian Sea region to European markets. While Russia aims to maintain control over pipeline routes in the region and limit non-Russian energy projects, Turkey seeks to strengthen its position as an energy corridor connecting Caspian energy resources to Western markets. This strategy also supports Turkey's long-term goal of becoming a regional energy hub.

Economic and trade relations are one of the main driving forces behind the relationship between Turkey and Russia. Russia has long been one of Turkey's most important trading partners. In 2019, the total trade volume between the two countries reached about 26.3 billion USD. During that year, Turkey exported goods worth approximately 3.8 billion USD to Russia, while its imports from Russia amounted to about 22.4 billion USD. Economic cooperation is also visible in the construction sector. Turkish contractors have completed around 1,972 projects in Russia with a total value exceeding 75.7 billion USD. In addition, mutual investments between the two countries have reached around 10 billion USD each (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

Trade relations have continued to grow in recent years. According to statements by Russian Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov, Turkey has become Russia's

second-largest trading partner. Official data also show that Russia–Turkey trade reached approximately 52.6 billion USD in 2024. Turkey exported goods worth about 8.56 billion USD to Russia, while imports from Russia were around 44 billion USD (Turkish Minute, 2025).

In terms of military cooperation between Russia and Turkey, an important development occurred when the United States did not respond positively to Turkey's request to purchase the Patriot missile defense system. As a result, Turkey began to look for alternative options and eventually accepted Russia's offer to buy the S-400 air defense system. Turkey's need for a stronger air defense system increased during the Syrian Civil War, when security threats in the region grew and Turkey's airspace became more vulnerable. However, Turkey's decision to purchase the S-400 system from Russia created tensions with North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies, especially the United States. In response, the United States imposed sanctions on Turkey and removed it from the F-35 Lightning II program. The United States also emphasized that even if Turkey were to receive F-35 fighter jets in the future, there could be restrictions on how and where these aircraft could be used (Demirci, 2019; Euronews Türkçe, 2025).

Turkey-Ukraine Relationship

Turkey and Ukraine cooperate in several areas, including defense and military affairs, aerospace technology, trade, energy, and cultural relations. Starting with military cooperation, Ukraine is one of the key suppliers for unmanned combat aircraft. For example, Baykar introduced the Akıncı combat drone in 2021 and is also developing the Kızılelma combat drone. The two countries also cooperate in the maritime sector. Since 2021, Turkey has been building two Ada-class anti-submarine corvettes for Ukraine's navy, which are expected to be completed and delivered soon (Dost, 2024).

There is also cooperation in military equipment. The Ukrainian Armed Forces have received Cobra II tactical vehicles, which were developed by the Turkish company Otokar, and these vehicles were reportedly used last year. In 2023, Ukraine also sent two aircraft engines to Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) for the T929 ATAK-II attack helicopter project. Ukraine has committed to sending twelve more engines by 2025. Moreover, the Ukraine–Turkey bilateral defense partnership still has room to expand. On February 21, TAI announced that its KAAN fighter jet successfully completed its first flight. A future partnership between Ukraine and Turkey on joint engine production for the KAAN jet could support Ukraine's economy and provide Turkey with a reliable partner in strengthening its defense industry (Dost, 2024).

Turkey and Ukraine have developed strong cooperation in the aerospace and defense technology sectors. Ukrainian companies such as Motor Sich and Ivchenko-Progress supply

aircraft engines that are used in Turkish unmanned aerial vehicles, including the Bayraktar Akıncı and the next-generation Bayraktar Kızılelma systems. These engines, such as the AI-450 turboprop and the AI-322F turbofan, play an important role in the development of Turkish drones. In addition to supplying engines, the two countries have also signed agreements for joint research and development, the production of drones, and the exchange of aerospace technology. These initiatives show that Ankara and Kyiv are building a strategic technological partnership in the defense and aerospace fields (Çetiner, 2021).

Trade between Türkiye and Ukraine is an important part of their bilateral relationship. In 2019, the trade volume between the two countries reached 4.8 billion US dollars. Türkiye exported goods worth 2.09 billion US dollars to Ukraine, while it imported 2.72 billion US dollars from Ukraine. Turkish investments in Ukraine are also significant. Around 600 Turkish companies operate in Ukraine, with total investments of about 3 billion US dollars, including investments made through third countries. In addition, Turkish construction companies have carried out projects in Ukraine worth approximately 6.28 billion US dollars. Tourism is another important area of cooperation between the two countries. In 2019, about 1.6 million Ukrainian tourists visited Türkiye, showing strong people-to-people connections and tourism cooperation (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.)

Summary Table of Mutual Interests

Mutual Importance (Turkey ↔ Russia)	Mutual Importance (Turkey ↔ Ukraine)
Energy interdependence	Defense cooperation
Gas pipelines cooperation	Drone technology
Trade partnership growth	Aircraft engine supply
Economic interdependence	Joint production projects
Energy hub ambitions	Aerospace innovation
Regional influence balance	Naval cooperation
Strategic autonomy	Military equipment exchange
Black Sea cooperation	Trade partnership
Defense cooperation (S-400)	Investment flows
Political leverage	Tourism connections

Turkey's National Strategy and its Role in Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Before discussing the Turkey's strategy in this conflict, we need to briefly look at first the History of Turkish foreign policy. According to Baskın Oran, Turkish foreign policy from the 1950s to the 2000s evolved through distinct phases of alignment and autonomy. In the 1950s, Turkey was strongly oriented toward the West, firmly embedded in the Western bloc during the Cold War. In the 1960s and 1970s, this strict alignment softened into a period of relative autonomy, as Turkey remained in the Western camp but sought to reduce dependence and diversify its relations. The 1980s marked a return to strong Western alignment, driven by strategic and economic considerations. In the 1990s, while still largely West-oriented, Turkey began to pursue a more diversified foreign policy, expanding its engagement with neighboring regions. Finally, in the 2000s, Turkish foreign policy became increasingly multi-directional and semi-autonomous, maintaining ties with the West while simultaneously deepening relations with other regions and actors (Oran, 2010, pp. 45–120; pp. 120–180).

It is crucial to note that following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the bipolar system gave way to a more multipolar order, as the global influence of the United States declined (Wallerstein, 2007).

Especially in the 2010s, regional instability increased due to events such as the Syrian Civil War and the Arab Spring. When we look at global developments, events like the massive migration wave in 2015, the annexation of Crimea, the Russia–Ukraine war, and the current conflicts in the Gulf region all indicate that the international system has become more chaotic, unstable, and less reliable.

Today's foreign policies are shaped according to this reality. In the 100th anniversary of the Republic, Turkey announced its mission: to pursue an independent and national foreign policy, to contribute to regional peace and security, and to increase its role in mediation efforts. At the same time, Turkey aims to diversify its international relations and strengthen its ties with all countries.

For this reason, Turkey cannot follow a one-sided foreign policy. It seeks to be active in multiple regions such as Africa, the Caucasus, the Balkans, Europe, Asia, and the Turkic world, and to build strong cooperation-based relationships. The main reason behind this approach is the principle that states depend on each other. If relations with one country deteriorate, Turkey can turn to alternative partners. This helps protect its national interests and prevents it from being isolated in this unstable system (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

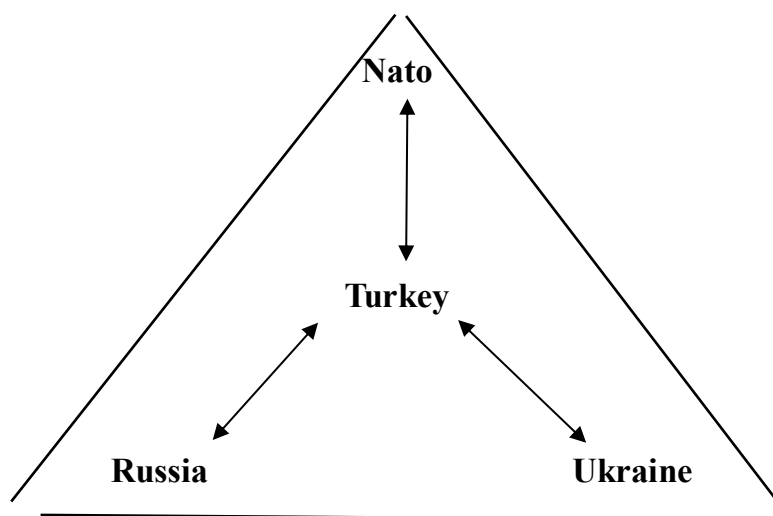
In addition, the world between 1950 and 1980 was very different from today. Now, every state shapes its foreign policy according to the current global order. In line with its national interests, Turkey follows a balanced and multidimensional foreign policy.

An important question is: When did Türkiye's balance of power policy begin? Since the Ottoman period, especially during the reign of Abdulhamid II, the Ottoman Empire tried to benefit from the conflicts of interest among the great powers during the Crimean War and prevented its early collapse. In other words, the empire attempted to survive by balancing the major powers of the time -Russia, Britain, and Germany- against each other (Ulutaş, 2018, p. 41–42)

If we apply this situation to Russia and Ukraine today, Russia is a major power in Asia, while Ukraine is supported by Western allies and especially the United States, which is a superpower. In the current international context, Turkey is considered a middle power. Middle powers have significant influence in international relations, especially through diplomacy such as mediation and peacekeeping-cooperation, and international institutions. Rather than acting alone, they usually influence global affairs by working with other countries, supporting multilateral diplomacy, and helping to resolve international conflicts. This characteristic also gives Turkey what is called a liminality identity, meaning that it has mixed cultural, political, and geopolitical characteristics. Turkey cannot be described through a single dimension, such as Iran, which is more Eastern-oriented, or Germany, which is more Western-oriented. Due to its geopolitical position and historical background, Turkey is located in-between the East and the West. (Coşkun, 2023, p.1126). States with this identity try to balance different alliances and can act as bridges between regions or civilizations. Since Turkey has ties with both Europe and Asia, it stands in between these regions, and this identity allows it to pursue shuttle diplomacy. For example, in the West Turkey is connected to institutions such as the European Union through the Customs Union Agreement, as well as the NATO, the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the G20. On the other hand, in Asia Turkey participates in organizations such as the Organization of Turkic States, the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (as an observer), and the Economic Cooperation Organization (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

Moreover, when we look at Turkey's relations with Nato, Ukraine and Russia, we can see that Turkey is dependent on multiple sides in areas such as the military, economy, energy and defense. In international relations, this situation is called “complex interdependence” (Keohane & Nye, 2011). It describes a situation in world politics where countries are highly connected and dependent on each other through many economic, political, and social

relationships. For this reason, it becomes more difficult for Turkey to choose one side between its two neighbors plus Nato with which it has good relation.



To illustrate complex interdependence, I use a triangle model where Turkey is placed in the center. All actors have mutual interests and are connected to each other. If one side reduces or ends its relationship with Turkey or vice versa, both sides would be negatively affected, because they depend on each other and cannot easily risk losing these benefits.

The main reason for this is the protection of its national interests. If Turkey clearly chose one side, the cooperation mentioned above would become very costly for Turkey. Therefore, Turkey has focused on reconciling its two neighbors and taking on a mediation role. For example, through the mediation of Turkey and the United Nations, ships carrying grain from Ukraine were allowed to pass through a safe corridor and reach global markets despite the war with Russia (Dellal, 2023). As I mentioned earlier, Turkey's neutral or balanced position is beneficial for both NATO and EU countries. First, Turkey plays an important role as a mediator in negotiations, providing a platform for dialogue between different actors. Second, in terms of energy, Turkey acts as a transit country, which serves the interests of several European states. If Turkey were to take a strictly aligned position, diplomatic meetings such as those held in Istanbul might not take place. In addition, some EU countries could face energy supply difficulties due to reduced transit options.

Does Turkey's balancing policy create distrust among its NATO allies? When we look at the issue from the perspective of fundamental interests, cooperation, and geopolitics, I would argue that the answer is no. Every state must first protect its own interests and security. As

emphasized in the theory of Realism, the international system is anarchic, and states are responsible for protecting their own interests (Morgenthau, 1948). From this perspective, I believe that Turkey's allies should understand Turkey's position in a rational way.

Besides economic, military, drone technology, and energy interests, in recent years Turkey's Western allies have created difficulties regarding Turkey's requests for weapons. For example, Turkey has faced challenges in obtaining military equipment such as the F-35 Lightning II, the F-16 Fighting Falcon, and the Eurofighter Typhoon. These difficulties in agreements and deliveries can push Turkey to cooperate with other countries in order to ensure its security. It should also be noted that NATO provides Turkey with an essential form of military protection. For example, Turkey is defended by NATO's Patriot missile systems, which demonstrates this security cooperation. However, it is important to emphasize that these systems are under NATO command and therefore are not fully controlled by Turkey itself. In comparison, the S-400 system, despite its controversial purchase from Russia, is considered a system under Turkey's own control.

As a result, while there is extensive military cooperation between Turkey and NATO and both actors are important for each other, recent tensions especially with the United States as NATO's leading member have complicated this relationship. Difficulties in arms procurement and restrictions have encouraged Turkey to seek alternative defense partnerships. From this argument, it is also important to ask how much allied countries respect and protect Turkey's interests. In other words, it is necessary to look at the issue from the opposite perspective as well.

Conclusion

International relations between states are not the same as human relationships. In personal relations, when someone makes a mistake, people may cut contact or reduce their closeness. However, in international relations, this is not usually the case. Even if states experience conflicts, they may still continue their relations because of mutual interests and the fact that they cannot fully act alone. For this reason, they may ignore disputes and open a new diplomatic chapter, often preferring reconciliation.

For example, after the Second World War, diplomacy began to play a more important role, and the establishment of the United Nations reflected this development. Although this behavior of states is sometimes seen as hypocrisy, it is actually a natural part of international politics. A friend today can become an enemy tomorrow, and an enemy can become a partner in the future. Therefore, states cannot completely cut their relations. It is important to

understand that states always prioritize their own national interests, and international relations function in this way.

In conclusion, the international system can be compared to a chess game. Every state must protect its own interests in order to survive. Whether they are allies or not, national interests usually come first. Therefore, each country follows a different foreign policy. To understand these differences, it is important to evaluate the situation by trying to think from that country's perspective.

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All Quiet on the Ukrainian Front: Why Russia and Ukraine Cannot Convert Tactical Gains into Strategic Victories

Şerif Sav

The Russo-Ukrainian War entered a new, full-scale phase on 24 February 2022, when Russia launched what Western sources generally describe as a full-scale invasion of Ukraine and what the Russian government officially calls a “special military operation,” with the apparent objective of achieving a rapid strategic decision. Russian forces advanced toward Kyiv, advanced across the east and south, and appeared to expect the Ukrainian state and armed forces to collapse. Instead, Ukraine repelled the assault on the capital and later recovered territory around Kharkiv and Kherson in 2022; yet the war’s return to manoeuvre proved temporary. Later, Ukraine’s 2023 counteroffensive failed to rupture Russia’s layered minefields and fortified positions (Wilk & Zochowski, 2023), while Russia’s subsequent offensives achieved costly, incremental gains without producing the operational collapse of Ukrainian defences (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026). The conflict is therefore not frozen as villages change hands, salients expand or contract, drones strike hundreds of kilometres behind the front, and both armies continuously adapt. Nevertheless, movement is trapped within a defence-dominant system. Breakthrough requires troops, armour, engineers, ammunition, and logistics to concentrate, breach, exploit, and sustain momentum, but concentration now exposes forces to mines, artillery, persistent drone surveillance, electronic warfare, and rapidly connected reconnaissance-strike networks. Molloy shows that during the 2023 counteroffensive, force concentrations could be detected and disrupted before an assault fully developed, while drones themselves remained unable to seize and hold territory (Molloy, 2024, 22-26). Kunertova similarly describes an “unprecedented level of transparency” that compels dispersion and deception even though offensive success still demands mass (Kunertova, 2024, 23). In this respect, the title *All Quiet on the Ukrainian Front* deliberately echoes Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*, not because the two wars are identical, but because both expose the cruel distance between strategic communiqués and the soldier’s lived reality. “Quiet” becomes an administrative illusion in which a front may appear stable on a map while people are killed in trenches, vehicles burn in contested fields, families endure missiles and drones, and tactical gains consume lives without resolving the war. By July 2026, the United Nations had verified 1,839 civilian deaths in the first seven months of the year alone, while warning that the actual toll was higher (Janowski, OHCHR, 2026). Military estimates remain contested, but CSIS assessed that combined Russian and Ukrainian battlefield casualties had exceeded two

million by June 2026 (Jones & McCabe, 2026). The central tragedy is thus not inactivity, but relentless activity without decision: adaptation improves killing faster than either side can restore decisive manoeuvre.

The central paradox of the Russia-Ukraine war is not technological stagnation, actually it is the opposite. Digital command-and-control, electronic warfare, drones, precision fires, industrial production, and organizational design have all been rapidly advanced by both armies. Ukraine has demonstrated that commercial technology that is relatively inexpensive can offset the drawbacks of conventional mass production. Russia has replicated numerous Ukrainian innovations and integrated them with a more mobile defense-industrial base, artillery, glide munitions, missiles, and a larger workforce, following its initial failures (Horowitz et al, 2026). However, neither party has consistently translated these tactical enhancements into a significant operational breakthrough. Consequently, the war is more accurately characterized as a situation in which movement is impeded by the interaction of depth, observation, fires, attrition, and adaptation, rather than as a simple frozen conflict.

Operational breakthrough necessitates more than the destruction of hostile positions. An attacker must conceal or protect concentration, breach mines and fortifications, suppress enemy reconnaissance and fires, move reserves and logistics through the breach, and then exploit the situation faster than the defender can restore the front. Almost every stage of that sequence is contested in Ukraine. The attacker is impeded by fortifications and terrain, while mines channel it, drones reveal it, digital command systems accelerate targeting, FPVs, artillery, and loitering munitions attack it. Electronic warfare disrupts its own reconnaissance, and reserves entering the breach become observable targets. The outcome is a battlefield in which dispersion is essential for survival, while concentration is still required for breakthrough (Molloy, 2024, 22-26; Kunertova, 2023, 587).

Ukraine's ongoing resistance has been highly dependent on Western assistance; however, this operational dilemma has not been resolved. Assistance is politically variable, constrained by inventories and production, and accompanied by training, maintenance, ammunition, and integration requirements (Maksak, 2025). It is also heterogeneous. In the interim, Russian quantitative advantages have facilitated the continuation of pressure, while Russian attackers have been subjected to the same transparent, lethal defensive environment. The ensuing ambiguity is exemplified by recent assessments. For instance, in July 2026, CSIS contended that Russia had forfeited the initiative and chronicled an exceptionally slow offensive movement (Jones & McCabe, 2026), whereas Russia Matters concluded that Ukraine's

endurance did not yet represent a durable strategic turning point (Saradzhyan, 2026a). Therefore, the most compelling conclusion is that neither "drones have rendered maneuvering impossible" nor "technology has reestablished maneuverability" are true. Rather, the cost of operational concentration has increased faster than either actor has been able to develop a system for suppressing the enemy's sensors, fires, and reserves across operational depth due to technological developments.

Operational Breakthrough as the Missing Link

The operational theory of the Soviet Union offers a helpful conceptual beginning. The reconstruction of Svechin, Tukhachevsky, Triandafillov, and Isserson that Klug has done highlights the fact that industrial-age forces that were ranged in depth became too resilient for a single tactical win to generate strategic decision (2024). In order to establish a connection between tactical acts and broader theatrical objectives, operational art came into reality. The terminology that Svechin came up with, which states that "Tactics make the steps from which operational leaps are assembled; strategy points out the path," is particularly effective in capturing the subject matter. To be successful in deep operations, it was not enough to merely emerge victorious in the initial engagements as Russia did already (Klug, 2024, 34). Deep operations required simultaneous pressure across depth, several echelons, mechanization, logistical planning, reserves, and sustained development.

According to Klug, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was almost the opposite of this logic. In addition, there was insufficient preparation, shallow echelons, and inadequate logistics, which accompanied predictions of a speedy collapse of the Ukrainian political system (2024, 35). Following the failure of the initial main operation, the conflict shifted toward positional warfare, which is characterized by the recurring generation of combat strength by both armies, the achievement of tactical successes, the culmination of the conflict, and the confrontation of counterattacks rather than the restoration of prolonged maneuver (Klug, 2024, 33-37). The exceptional offensives that took place in Kharkiv and Kherson during the autumn of 2022 in Ukraine illustrate that maneuver is not intrinsically outmoded. Rather, breakthrough is feasible when defenses are worn down, command is disrupted, surprise is accomplished, or the defender's position becomes logistically untenable.

Furthermore, Ukraine has been fortifying its defense and security apparatus since 2014, especially under the Poroshenko government, as a reaction to the crises in Crimea and Donbass. Russia's initial misjudgment of Ukraine's readiness, along with the benefits afforded to a well-

prepared defender, provided Kyiv with crucial time to organize its troops and inflict significant casualties on the encroaching Russian military (Mevlutoglu, 2022). This elucidates the disparity between Russia's swift capture of multiple southern cities in the initial stages of the invasion, including as Berdyansk, Tokmak, and Kherson (Sheth et al, 2022), and the significantly more drawn-out and costly confrontations for fortified metropolitan centers like Bakhmut, Avdeyevka, and Pokrovsk (Kottasova et al, 2025). In several instances, established defensive positions, congested urban environments, minefields, artillery, and drone-assisted reconnaissance considerably impeded Russian progress and resulted in substantial casualties for both sides.

a. Defensive Landscape, Fortress Belts, Terrain, and Minefields

The first problem to breakthrough is physical depth. Denysyk et al. describe the Ukrainian battlespace as a combative environment in which artificial defenses interact with settlements, farms, forests, waterways, topography, and subsurface infrastructure rather than operating as isolated trench lines. Their "natural-anthropogenic compatibility" approach describes how fortresses derive advantage from slopes, river valleys, and ravines (Denysyk et al., 2025, 34). They describe the current southeastern battle zone as horizontally and vertically complicated, with trenches, dugouts, strongpoints, subterranean positions, and severely mined terrain (Denysyk et al., 2025, 34-38).

ISW's geospatial analysis of Ukraine's Donetsk "fortress belt" offers a concrete modern example. The Kostyantynivka-Druzhkivka-Kramatorsk-Slovyansk system spans around 50 kilometers, had a combined pre-invasion population of over 380,000, and has been fortified since 2014 (Solomon, 2026). Its urban density, Siverskyi Donets/Oskil water impediments, local elevation, and field fortifications such as fighting positions, anti-vehicle ditches, dragon's teeth, wire, and mines all support one another. According to ISW, the terrain west of the belt is significantly less conducive for Ukrainian defense, explaining both its military worth and Russia's desire to acquire it (Solomon, 2026). RUSI also cautioned that relinquishing this belt in a settlement would force Ukrainian forces to retire to much worse prepared terrain (Watling, 2026).

The operating mechanism is multiplicative. To be effective, a minefield does not have to destroy the assault force; it might simply impede, channel, or expose it. Mittal and Goetz examined a week during Ukraine's June 2023 counteroffensive and discovered unusually high Ukrainian military-UAV and armored losses (2025). They argue that Russian minefields restricted movement into predictable engagement areas while counter-UAS activity degraded

Ukrainian reconnaissance (Mittal & Goetz, 2025, 500). Molloy's interviews reach a similar conclusion from a different angle: as Ukrainian units prepared for the 2023 onslaught, Russian UAVs could watch the buildup and communicate targeting information to fires before the assault gained sustained momentum (Molloy, 2024, 22).

From a Ukrainian/Western perspective, these dynamics explain why Russia's numerical superiority has resulted in unusually costly and sluggish progress. CSIS estimated notable first-half 2026 advances at only 50-90 meters per day and describes an eastern "kill zone" around 20-40 kilometers deep, formed by trenches, barriers, mines, artillery, and drones (Jones & McCabe, 2026). However, from a Russian standpoint, this does not rule out offensive action. Russia is increasingly avoiding large armored concentrations, instead infiltrating with small dismounted groups supported by FPVs, artillery, and glide bombs; these tactics can capture ground while minimizing signatures, but CSIS claims they produce incremental pockets rather than operational collapse (Jones and McCabe, 2026).

Thus, the fortress problem is not an unbreakable barrier. It is a system that consumes offensive tempo. The attacker may cross a minefield, grab a trench, or invade a settlement, only to arrive at the next defensive layer depleted, observed, and with insufficient new forces to exploit.

b. Drones, Digital Command, and Battlefield Transparency

Drones amplify this effect by reducing the defender's ambiguity about where an offense is forming. Kunertova observes that small unmanned aerial vehicles provide airborne reconnaissance to formations as small as platoons. Drone intelligence combined with digitized C2 can shorten the detection-to-strike time from half an hour to minutes (Kunertova, 2023, 581). Molloy's detailed depiction of Ukraine's Kropyva-enabled reconnaissance-strike procedure describes battery deployment in around three minutes, engagement of some unanticipated targets in around one minute, and extremely quick counter-battery cycles (Molloy, 2024, 17-18). Kunertova's subsequent research on systems such as Delta and GIS Arta identifies examples where AI-assisted processing has reduced sensor-to-shooter cycles even further (Kunertova, 2024, 19-20). The most essential consequence is not the FPV drone acting as a small missile on its own. HCSS portrays dense UAV, EW, and satellite coverage as providing persistent battlefield transparency, arguing that cheap precision weapons at increasingly low tactical levels make concentration observable and targetable within minutes (Sweijts et al., 2026). This creates the key offensive challenge. To break a planned system, a brigade must concentrate engineers, armor, infantry, air defense, electronic warfare,

ammunition, and fuel; nevertheless, each extra vehicle, radio, and logistical node increases its observable signature.

FPVs and loitering munitions convert surveillance into economic lethality. Chavez and Swed demonstrate why Ukraine first adopted the model: commercially available drones were inexpensive, interchangeable, and capable of ISR, artillery correction, command support, and direct attack. They enabled Ukraine to "purchase parity" that it could not obtain through traditional channels alone (Chavez & Swed, 2023, 596-597). Kunertova therefore contends that "scalability, not sophistication" became critical for drone purchase, while noting that heavy conventional weaponry remained fundamental and drones were important rather than independently decisive (Kunertova, 2023, 584).

Mittal and Goetz provide preliminary quantitative confirmation. Their Oryx-derived dataset reveals a strong negative relationship between Ukrainian military-UAV losses and Russian armored vehicle losses: as Ukrainian UAV losses increased, Russia's documented vehicle losses decreased, implying that successful counter-UAS action degraded drone-assisted targeting (Mittal & Goetz, 2025, 497). Their evidence is crucial but not causative proof: Oryx requires visual confirmation, virtually definitely undercounts losses, and their drone sample excludes the commercial FPVs and loitering weapons that became central to later conflict (Mittal & Goetz, 2025, 494, 501).

The pro-technological argument is still compelling. Drones have helped Ukraine overcome manpower and artillery disadvantages, limited Russian mechanized deployment, and had operational effects at sea and in the deep rear. However, Molloy's qualification is crucial: "drones alone cannot and will not win wars or battles," because they cannot grab and hold ground; sustained offensives still require troops, armor, artillery, ammunition, and logistics (2024, 25-26).

c. Industrial Capacity, Attrition Economics, and Western Aid

High attrition shifts the primary rivalry from individual platform performance to replacement costs. Kunertova observes that small drones can be lost in huge numbers exactly because low unit pricing enables high-attrition methods (Kunertova, 2024, 12). Bilousova et al. chronicle Ukraine's huge expansion from 3,000-5,000 UAVs production in 2022 to around 300,000 in 2023, with capacity expected to reach four million by 2024 (Bilousova et al., 2024, 10). According to the same research, the technology-change cycle might be as short as three

months, and Ukrainian defense firms have the capacity to produce about three times more material than the state can afford to purchase (Bilousova et al., 2024, pp. 14-15).

That divide explains why Western backing is still required even as Ukraine localizes production. Aid can directly deliver weapons, refill inventories, finance Ukrainian companies, or fund governmental finances. According to Massie and Tallova, donor behavior varies greatly: geography, Russian threat perception, and pre-existing defense spending all have a significant impact on contributions (2026, 266-267). In absolute terms, the United States dominated first-year support, although Baltic and eastern-flanking states frequently bore higher burdens in relation to GDP. They also emphasize that modern systems generate "long tails" of ammunition, maintenance, spare parts, training, and upgrades (Massie & Tallova, 2026, 278, 283-286).

Current government figures emphasize both the scale and the accounting problem. NATO reports that allies provided more than €50 billion in 2024, with nearly 60% coming from European allies and Canada; at the 2026 Ankara Summit, they pledged €70 billion in military equipment, assistance, and training for 2026 and at least an equivalent level for 2027 (NATO, 2026, "Pledge of Long-Term Security Assistance"). The EU and its member states report €216.7 billion in total support, including €77 billion in military and €110.9 billion in financial, economic, and humanitarian aid (Council of the EU, 2026, "Total EU Support"). According to Kiel's tracker, European military funding remains high, with increasing drone spending, while non-military disbursements have slowed (Kiel Institute, 2026). Ukraine is likewise experimenting with transforming industrial capacity to self-finance. Its July 2026 wartime export structure allocates 20% of earnings from finished defense products and 30% from components to a defense fund, while enterprises must demonstrate that export activity will not jeopardize Ukrainian orders (Hunder & Popeski, 2026).

The consequence is critical: Western aid has frequently been sufficient to stall Russian strategic triumph, but aid volume alone cannot produce a breakthrough. Timing, ammunition depth, maintenance, trained personnel, procurement stability, Ukrainian manpower, and the opponent's output all influence its military effectiveness. Given the massive loss of Ukrainian manpower, we question the long-term viability and effectiveness of Western help.

d. Organizational and Doctrinal Adaptation

Technology is only relevant when companies can absorb it. Ukraine gained an early advantage by avoiding conventional procurement in favor of volunteers, independent firms, and frontline developers. Chavez and Swed refer to this as bottom-up battlefield adaptation;

Bilousova et al. demonstrate that it is becoming institutionalized through investment networks, battlefield testing, and quick engineering feedback (Chavez & Swed, 2023, 598-600; Bilousova et al., 2024, 19-21). Molloy emphasizes that not all wartime learning leads to military success; tactical inventions may fail to scale due to procurement, training, doctrine, or adversary interference (2024, 57-64).

Ukraine's corps reorganization exposes the same tactical-to-operational dilemma at the organizational level. By early 2026, 18 corps were formed, but several continued to command mixed sectors rather than their allocated brigades. Major rotations are dangerous due to a lack of strategic reserves and continuous Russian drone observation; while several better-resourced corps have demonstrated improved coordination, quality remains extremely uneven across the force (Farrell, 2026). The reform demonstrates both Ukrainian agility and the challenge of implementing elite-unit methods across a large deployed army. Moreover, visible confrontations between different groups such as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Oleksandr Syrskyi and Former Minister of Defence Mykhailo Fedorov shows the lacking unity within the army and possibility of confrontations within the Ukrainian forces (Dokuzlu, 2026).

The Ukrainian Ministry of Defence's June 2026 service reforms such as fixed-duration contracts, improved infantry remuneration, and easier intra-corps transfers are clearly intended to sustain frontline infantry and combat units (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 2026). On the other hand, Russia has also evolved on an organizational level. Small-group infiltration techniques diminish the mass signatures that Ukrainian sensors can exploit, while large-scale fires, glide bombs, and drones compensate for limits in typical combined-arms maneuvering (Kasapoglu, 2026). Russia Matters also cautions against repeated forecasts of Russian depletion, citing evidence of manpower and material reconstitution despite massive losses (Saradzhyan, 2026). Meanwhile, Russian state media portrays the battlefield through daily claims of Ukrainian manpower, drone, and infrastructure losses which shows attempts to reform the army are not avoiding massive losses (TASS, 2026a; 2026b). The organizational lesson is that although innovation raises the ceiling of a force, breakthrough requires rising the floor. A couple of outstanding drone units or brigades can win small encounters; nevertheless, an operational offensive necessitates constant proficiency across engineers, infantry, artillery, EW, logistics, staff, and reserves.

Conclusion

Taken together, the evidence indicates that the Russia-Ukraine conflict is more accurately viewed as a dynamic military equilibrium rather than a frozen stalemate. In this context, both sides possess the capability to destroy, disrupt, and capture limited territory without translating those actions into a sustained operational breakthrough. Tactical success can secure a trench, village, or road junction; however, achieving operational breakthrough necessitates penetrating multiple defensive layers, overcoming reserves, maintaining logistics, and capitalizing on the breach before the defender can reestablish the front. Achieving a strategic victory necessitates the further action of converting military successes into political pressure. Russia and Ukraine consistently reach the first level, sometimes nearing the second, yet they are still distant from the third.

The main challenge lies in the interplay of fortifications, terrain, mines, surveillance, and rapid fires. The southeastern front is a complex defensive landscape characterized by three-dimensional trenches, dugouts, strongpoints, underground positions, settlements, waterways, and extensively mined areas (Denysyk et al., 2025, 38). Drones and digital command systems subsequently reveal and target the concentrations required to penetrate that terrain. Bendett and Nersisyan contend that the prevalence of drones renders the massing of forces “an extremely dangerous and difficult endeavor” (2024, 183). Molloy similarly demonstrates that during Ukraine’s 2023 counteroffensive, troop and vehicle concentrations were identifiable and could be disrupted prior to gaining momentum (2024, 22-26). The resulting contradiction is significant: survival necessitates dispersion and concealment, while breakthrough calls for concentration, synchronization, and logistical mass.

The Russian adaptation adds complexity to any straightforward assertion that technology consistently advantages the defender. Fiber-optic FPVs, reconnaissance-strike integration, and attacks on Ukrainian supply routes have produced constrained battlefield-interdiction effects and enabled localized advances (Stepanenko, 2025). However, these innovations enhance Russia's capability to undermine Ukrainian positions rather than to dismantle the entire defensive system. Their advantage is also temporary, as each successful measure prompts a countermeasure (Stepanenko, 2025). Ukraine is confronted with the opposite challenge. Western aid has played a crucial role in ensuring state survival, enhancing air defense, and achieving certain successes on the battlefield; however, it has not proven to be independently decisive in winning the war (Floyd & Webber, 2024. 1159-1160, 1169). Aid is characterized by its uneven distribution, political constraints, and reliance on factors such as

ammunition, maintenance, training, and integration (Massie & Tallova, 2026, 267). Ukrainian reforms and domestic production enhance resilience; however, they cannot independently establish the trained reserves, protected mobility, and logistical depth necessary for effective exploitation.

The most likely scenario is a prolonged stalemate resulting in an armed armistice instead of a clear victory. Russia would persist with expensive local advances and near-rear interdiction, while Ukraine would employ a strategy of defense in depth, utilizing drones, long-range strikes, and external support to avert operational collapse. The front would persist in its movement, yet at a pace that was both sluggish and inconsistent, preventing either side from fully realizing its ultimate political objectives. Ultimately, shortages of manpower, financial constraints, damage to infrastructure, and the toll of casualties would render the halt of large-scale conflict more desirable than an endless continuation, despite neither side relinquishing its claims.

Such an armistice would not signify peace. It would result in unresolved borders, heavily fortified lines, rearmament, and an ongoing risk of renewed conflict. The tragedy suggested by All Quiet on the Ukrainian Front is not one of inactivity, but rather of unyielding violence without resolution: Russia is unable to dominate Ukraine, Ukraine is unable to reclaim all territory through force, and both sides are forced to suspend the conflict rather than resolve it.

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Türkiye'nin NATO Üyeliğinde Türk Boğazları ve Deniz Jeopolitiğinin Rolü (1945-1952)

Naime BATTAL

1. Giriş

II. Dünya Savaşı'nın ardından hem Avrupa hem de uluslararası sistem köklü bir dönüşüm sürecine girmiştir. Batı dünyası açısından değerlendirildiğinde, I. Dünya Savaşı sonrasında demokrasiler ile faşist rejimler arasında bölünen ve Sovyet Sosyalist Cumhuriyetler Birliği (SSCB) ile Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin (ABD) yükselişine tanıklık eden Avrupa, II. Dünya Savaşı'nın sonunda uluslararası sistemdeki belirleyici konumunu büyük ölçüde kaybetmiş; dünya siyasetinin merkezi olmaktan çıkarak yeni güç dengeleri içerisinde ikincil bir konuma gerilemiştir (Oran, 2009, s. 485).

Savaş sonrasında ortaya çıkan iki kutuplu uluslararası sistem, ABD'yi SSCB'nin artan nüfuzu karşısında kapsamlı bir güvenlik ve dış politika stratejisi geliştirmeye yöneltmiştir. Bu dönemde ABD, sahip olduğu ekonomik ve askerî üstünlüğü koruyabilmek için uluslararası sistemde yalnız kalmaması gerektiğinin farkındaydı. Dünya nüfusunun görece küçük bir bölümünü temsil etmesine rağmen küresel liderlik iddiasını sürdürebilmesi, geniş bir müttefik ağı oluşturmaya bağlıydı. Aksi takdirde komünizmin yayılması hem ABD'nin uluslararası alandaki etkinliğini zayıflatacak hem de ideolojik rekabeti ülke içine taşıyarak ulusal güvenliği açısından ciddi bir tehdit oluşturabilecekti (Akın, 2017, s. 122).

Bu nedenle ABD, SSCB'nin nüfuz alanını sınırlandırmayı, komünizmin yayılmasını engellemeyi ve Sovyet baskısı altındaki devletleri ekonomik, siyasi ve askerî araçlarla desteklemeyi dış politikasının temel öncelikleri arasına almıştır. Böylece savaş öncesinde büyük ölçüde izolasyoncu eğilimler gösteren Amerikan dış politikası yerini, uluslararası güvenlik ve istikrarın korunmasında aktif rol üstlenen küresel bir stratejiye bırakmıştır. Nitekim ABD, diğer devletler için örnek teşkil eden bir güç olma iddiasını sürdürebilmek adına artık uluslararası gelişmelerden uzak ve yalıtılmış bir politika izleyemez hâle gelmiştir (Gaddis, 2005, s. 15).

2. Türk Boğazlarının Jeopolitik ve Jeostratejik Özellikleri

Boğaz, karalar arasında denizin oldukça daraldığı doğal bir geçittir. Geniş birer ırmağı andıran boğazlar, genel kullanımında ekseriyetle deniz boğazı anlamında ifade edilmektedir. İstanbul Boğazı, eski bir akarsu vadisinin deniz seviyesinin yükselmesi ve suların vadiyi basması sonucunda boğaz niteliği kazanmış hâlidir. Avrupa yakasında yer alan Haliç ise

İstanbul Boğazı'nın bir kolunu oluşturmaktadır. Benzer biçimde Çanakkale Boğazı da geçmişte bir akarsu vadisi iken, aynı jeomorfolojik süreçler sonucunda Ria tipi kıyı özelliği gösteren bir Boğaz halini almıştır (Ayar, 1999, s. 5).

Çanakkale ve İstanbul Boğazları ile Marmara Denizi'ni kapsayan ve uluslararası hukuki düzenlemelerde “*Türk Boğazları*” kavramıyla ifade edilen bu dar su yolu sistemi, Asya ile Avrupa arasında yer alması nedeniyle jeopolitik, stratejik ve uluslararası deniz ulaşımı bakımından tarih boyunca sürekli bir önem taşımıştır. İlk çağlardan günümüze kadar söz konusu önemini koruyan Boğazlar, bu niteliği dolayısıyla devletlerarası mücadelelere, uluslararası konferanslara ve çeşitli antlaşmalara sıklıkla konu olmuştur (Şener, 2015, s. 328).

Türk Boğazları; dünya politikasındaki bazı dengelerin belirlenmesi, sürdürülmesi ve değiştirilmesi bakımından önemli bir rol oynamıştır. 1453 yılında İstanbul'un fethinden sonra, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun egemenliği altına giren boğazlar, 1453-1809 yılları arasında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun, Fransa, İngiltere, Hollanda ve Rusya gibi devletlere çeşitli tarihlerde tek taraflı tasarruflarla tanıdığı ayrıcalıklar dışında, yabancı ticaret ve savaş gemilerine “İmparatorluğun Kadim Kaidesi” gereği kapalı tutulmuştur. Osmanlı'nın Karadeniz'deki egemenliğini kaybetmeye başlaması sonrasında, Türk Boğazları'nın hukuki statüsü 1809-1841 döneminde iki taraflı andlaşmalarla, 1841 sonrasında ise çok taraflı andlaşmalarla düzenlenmiştir. Yaklaşık 450 yıl devam eden Osmanlı egemenliğinin ardından, I. ve II. Dünya Savaşı ve sonrasında dünyanın yeniden şekillendiği ve güç dengelerinin yeniden kurulduğu sırada boğazlara ilişkin siyasi gelişmeler göz önüne alındığında, Türk Boğazları'nın gerek doğu Akdeniz gerekse dünya tarihinin akışı bakımından ne denli önemli bir denge unsuru olduğu açıkça görülebilir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti döneminde, Türk Boğazları'ndan geçiş rejimi çok taraflı andlaşmalarla düzenlenme geleneği çerçevesinde, ilk olarak 1923 tarihli Lozan Boğazlar Sözleşmesi ile belirlenmiştir. 1930'lu yıllarda uluslararası siyasi koşullarda kaydedilen olumsuz gelişmeler karşısında Türkiye, Lozan Boğazlar Sözleşmesi'nin '*rebus sic stantibus ilkesi*' ışığında değiştirilmesi yönünde, barışçı bir diplomatik süreç başlatmış ve nihayet 1936 yılında Montreux'da toplanan konferans sonucu, geçerliğini günümüzde de koruyan Montreux Boğazlar Sözleşmesi kabul edilmiştir (Güneş, 2007, s. 218).

3. Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi ve Türkiye'nin Deniz Egemenliği

Montrö Boğazlar Konferansı 22 Haziran 1936–20 Temmuz 1936 tarihleri arasında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Konferansta, bir taraftan Japonya tarafından desteklenen İngiltere'nin,

diğer tarafta ise Karadeniz’e kıyıdaş devletler ve Fransa tarafından desteklenen Türkiye’nin yer aldığı söylenebilir. Konferans sonunda, savaş gemilerine uygulanacak sınırlamalar bakımından İngiliz tasarısına; Türkiye’nin kendisini çok yakın bir savaş tehdidi altında görmesi durumu, Boğazların askerileştirilmesi ve “*Boğazlar Komisyonu*”nun kaldırılması hususlarında ise Türk tasarısına uygun bir metin kabul edilecektir. 20 Temmuz 1936’da imzalanan “Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi” 29 madde, 4 ek ve bir protokolü kapsamaktadır (Şener, 2014, s. 487). Buna göre;

1-Boğazlarda denizden geçiş ve ulaşım serbestisi kabul edilmiş; ancak ticaret ve savaş gemilerinin geçişi barış, Türkiye’nin taraf olmadığı savaş, Türkiye’nin taraf olduğu savaş ve savaş tehlikesi hâli olmak üzere dört ayrı statüye bağlanmıştır.

2- Ticaret gemileri, barış zamanında ve Türkiye’nin taraf olmadığı savaş durumunda, bayrak yükü ne olursa olsun Boğazlardan serbestçe geçebilecek. Türkiye eğer savaşta ise, yalnız tarafsız ticaret gemileri belirlenen koşullar çerçevesinde geçişine izin verilecektir.

3- Barış döneminde savaş gemilerinin Boğazlardan geçebilmeleri için, Türkiye’ye önceden bildirimde bulunduracak. Bu bildirim süresi Karadeniz’de kıyısı olmayan devletler için 8, kıyısı olanlar için de 15 gün olacaktır. Ayrıca gemilerin varış noktası, adı, tipi, sayısı ile gidiş-dönüş tarihleri Türkiye’ye bildirilecek.

4- Karadeniz’e kıyısı olmayan devletlerin savaş gemileri, uçak gemileri ile denizaltıları dışında, Boğazlardan geçebilecek. Ancak bunların toplam tonajı 15 bin tonu, Karadeniz’de bulunduracakları savaş gemilerinin toplamı da 30 bin tonu geçmeyecek ve 21 günden fazla Karadeniz’de kalmayacaktır.

5- Karadeniz’e kıyıdaş devletler, 15 bin tonun üzerindeki savaş gemileri ile denizaltılarını, Türkiye’ye önceden bildirimde bulunmak koşuluyla belirli şartlar altında Boğazlardan geçirebilecektir.

6- Türkiye’nin savaş hâlinde bulunması veya yakın bir savaş tehdidi görmesi durumunda ise savaş gemilerinin geçişi konusunda takdir yetkisi Türkiye’nin istediği gibi olacaktır.

7- Sözleşmenin süresi 20 yıl olarak belirlenmiştir. Ancak bu sürenin sona ermesinden iki yıl önce imzacı devletlerden hiçbiri fesih talebinde bulunmazsa, sözleşme, olası bir fesih talebinden itibaren iki yıl daha yürürlükte kalacaktır (Kaya, 2021, s. 605-606).

İstanbul Boğazı'ndan 1938 yılında toplamda 4.500 gemi geçerken ve yaklaşık 7.500.000 ton yük taşırken, 2005 yılına gelindiğinde boğazdan geçen gemi sayısı 54.794'e yükselmiştir. Bunlardan 10.027'si tehlikeli yük taşımış; bu yükün toplam miktarı ise 143.567.196 metrik ton olmuştur. Günümüzde İstanbul Boğazı'ndan her gün ortalama yirmi yedi tehlikeli yük taşıyan gemi geçmekte, 2005 yılında Çanakkale Boğazı'ndan geçen 49.077 geminin yaklaşık yüzde 18'i tehlikeli yükten oluşmaktadır. Çanakkale Boğazı'ndan ise her gün ortalama yirmi dört gemi geçmektedir. Türk boğazlarının fiziki yapısı, jeomorfolojik ve hidrolojik özellikleri ve meteorolojik koşulları değişmeden kalmasına rağmen, boğazdan geçen gemi sayısı son yetmiş yılda on iki kat artış göstermiştir (Kurumahmut, 2006, s. 16). Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi, Lozan Sözleşmesi'nin getirdiği kısıtlamalara son vermiş ve Türkiye'nin egemenlik haklarını yeniden teyit etmiştir (Kurumahmut, 2006, s. 19).

4. Sovyetler Birliği'nin Boğazlar Politikası (1945-1946)

Çarlık Rusyası ve ardılı devleti Sovyetler Birliği tarih boyunca boğazlara ilişkin uluslararası hukuk anlayışını dört kategoriye ayırarak düzenleyen bir taraftar olmuşlardır;

1. Baltık ve Karadeniz gibi kapalı denizleri açık denizlere bağlayan ve bir ulusun denetiminde olan Boğazlar bütün devletlerin ticaret gemilerine açık olmalıdır.

2. Bu boğazlar kıyıdaş olmayan devletlerin savaş gemilerine kapalı tutulmalıdır.

3. Cebelitarık gibi iki açık denizi birbirine bağlayan boğazların her türlü serbest geçişe açık olmalıdır.

4. Bir devletin egemenlik alanından geçen fakat diğer devletlerin kıyıdaş olduğu denizin açık denizlere bağlantısını sağlayan boğazlar da bütün devletlerin ticaret gemilerine açık, kıyıdaş olmayan devletlerin savaş gemilerine kapalı olmalıdır. Burada kastedilen boğaz açıkça Türk Boğazları'dır. Bu hukuksal görüş hakkaniyeti değil, Rus çıkarlarını koruyacak şekilde oluşturulmuştur. Ayrıca Soğuk Savaş döneminde yenilenecek olan Sovyet görüşü Süveyş ve Türk Boğazları'nın sadece kıyıdaş devletlerin meselesi olduğu, kıyıdaş olmayanların bu boğazlardaki geçiş rejimine kesinlikle müdahale etmemesi gerektiği şeklinde revize edilecektir (Köse, 2019, s. 1128).

II. Dünya Savaşı'nın arifesinde Sovyetler Birliği'nin boğazlar konusunda barışçıl yaklaşımı değişerek Çarlık Rusya'sının Boğazları istilaya yönelik geleneksel politikalarına geri dönmüştür. Nitekim Sovyetler Birliği, 1936 yılında Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi'ni imzalamış olmasına rağmen, 1939 Eylül-Ekim aylarındaki ittifak görüşme-lerinde Montrö'nün değiştirilmesini talep etmiş, 1940 yılı Kasım ayında Dışişleri Bakanı Molotov ile Hitler arasında Berlin'de gerçekleştirilen müzakerelerde ise Türk Boğazlarının (İstanbul Boğazı: 27 km. uzunluğunda, en dar yeri 550 m. ve Çanakkale Boğazı: 64 km. uzunluğunda ve en dar yeri 1.800 m.) denetiminin kendisine bırakılmasını istemiştir. Üstelik Hitler, 1941 yılı Mart ayında Berlin Büyükelçisi Hüsrev Gerede ile yapmış olduğu görüşmede Molotov tarafından kendisine sunulan teklifleri açıklamıştır (Köse, 2015, s. 243).

Alman-Sovyet ilişkilerinin bozulması üzerine Türkiye ile ilişkilerini düzeltmek isteyen Sovyetler Birliği, Türkiye'ye 1941 ilkbaharında bir nota vererek, Boğazlar üzerindeki taleplerini geri çektiği ve bu konuda herhangi isteği bulunmadığını bildirmiştir. Bu yaklaşımın bir yansıması olarak, 25 Mart 1941 tarihinde Türk-Sovyet Saldırmazlık Bildirisi (Deklarasyonu) yayınlanmış; Almanya'nın Sovyetler Birliği'ne saldırmasının ardından Sovyetler Birliği Türkiye'ye 10 Ağustos 1941'de yeni notasında Türk toprakları ve Boğazlar üzerinde hiçbir talebi olmadığını ifade etmiştir. Söz konusu iki nota ile Sovyetler Birliği, Türkiye'nin savaş sürecinde en azından tarafsız kalmasından yana olduğunu belirtmiştir (Alpyavuz, 2009, s. 61-62).

Türkiye'ye yönelik Sovyet taleplerinin ilk sinyalleri 4-11 Şubat 1945 tarihleri arasında gerçekleşen Yalta Konferansı sırasında belirginleşmiştir (Dokuyan, 2013). Konferans sırasında Sovyet lider Josef Stalin, Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi'nin değişen uluslararası koşullar karşısında geçerliliğini kaybettiğini, özellikle bazı hükümlerinin, örneğin Japonya'nın imzacısı olması ve sözleşmenin Milletler Cemiyeti mekanizmasına bağlı olması gibi maddeleri gerekçe göstererek sözleşmenin yenilenmesi gerekliliğini gündeme getirmiştir (Luca, 1977, s. 511). ABD Başkanı Franklin Roosevelt, Stalin'in önerisine olumlu yaklaşarak Rusların sıcak denizlere güvenli şekilde erişim sağlayabilmesi gerektiğini belirtmiştir. ABD-İngiltere ve Sovyet Rusya'nın katılımıyla 17-25 Temmuz ve 28 Temmuz-2 Ağustos 1945 tarihleri arasında Berlin'de düzenlenen Potsdam Konferansı'nın 22 Temmuz tarihli altıncı oturumunda Boğazlar meselesi ele alınmıştır. Konferans sırasında İngiltere Başbakanı Winston Churchill, Sovyet savaş gemilerinin Türk Boğazları'ndan serbest geçişine ilke olarak olumlu yaklaşmakla birlikte, Türkiye'nin bu konuda endişeye sevk edilmemesi gerektiğini ayrıca savunmuştur. Potsdam

Konferansı'nda Sovyetler Birliği'nin Boğazlar meselesini Türkiye ile Sovyetler Birliği arasında ikili bir sorun olarak ele alma girişimi, diğer müttefik devletler tarafından kabul edilmemiştir. Truman, Boğazların uluslararası su yolları statüsünde değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini savunurken, ABD ve İngiltere, Sovyet gemilerinin Boğazlardan geçişinin yalnızca üç büyük devletin değil, Boğazlarla ilgili diğer devletlerin de güvencesi altında düzenlenmesini istemiştir. Ancak Stalin bu öneriyi kabul etmemiştir. Taraflar arasında ortak bir uzlaşma sağlanamaması üzerine, her üç devletin kendi görüşlerini ayrı ayrı Türkiye'ye iletmesi kararlaştırılmıştır. (Dokuyan, 2013, s. 119, 123).

Birinci Sovyet Notası: Potsdam Konferansı'ndaki kararlar doğrultusunda Sovyetler Birliği, 7 Ağustos 1946 tarihinde Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi'nin değiştirilmesine ilişkin görüşlerini içeren notayı Türkiye'ye iletmiş, notanın bir örneğini de ABD ve İngiltere'ye göndermiştir. Sovyetler Birliği, notasında II. Dünya Savaşı sırasında Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi hükümlerinin birkaç kez ihlal edildiğini ve bu nedenle Sözleşme'nin Boğazların düşman devletler tarafından kullanılmasını engelleyemediğini ileri sürmüştür. Bu gerekçeyle Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi'nin değiştirilmesini talep etmiş ve değişikliğe esas teşkil etmek üzere beş temel ilke önermiştir (Alpyavuz, 2009):

1. Ticaret gemilerinin Boğazlardan serbest geçişinin sağlanması.
2. Karadeniz'e kıyıdaş devletlerin savaş gemilerine sürekli geçiş hakkı tanınması.
3. Karadeniz'e kıyısı olmayan devletlerin savaş gemilerinin geçişinin sınırlandırılması.
4. Yeni Boğazlar rejiminin yalnızca Karadeniz'e kıyıdaş devletler tarafından belirlenmesi.
5. Boğazların güvenliğinin Türkiye ve Sovyetler Birliği tarafından ortaklaşa sağlanması.

İngiltere ve ABD'nin notalarının ardından Türkiye, 22 Ağustos 1946'da Sovyet notasına cevap vermiştir. Türkiye, II. Dünya Savaşı sırasında Boğazlardan geçen ve Sovyetler Birliği'nin Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi'ni ihlal ettiğini ileri sürdüğü gemilere ilişkin açıklamalarda bulunarak bu ihlallerden sorumlu tutulamayacağını belirtmiştir. Bununla birlikte, Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi'nin değişen koşullar ve teknolojik gelişmeler doğrultusunda gözden geçirilebileceğini de kabul etmiştir. Türkiye, Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi'nin değiştirilmesi amacıyla taraf devletler ve ABD'nin katılacağı uluslararası bir konferansa hazır olduğunu bildirmiştir. Fakat, yeni Boğazlar rejiminin yalnızca Karadeniz'e kıyıdaş devletlerce belirlenmesi ve Boğazların Türkiye ile Sovyetler Birliği tarafından ortak şekilde savunulmasına

yönelik Sovyet önerilerini, egemenlik hakları ve ulusal güvenliğiyle bağdaşmadığı gerekçesiyle reddetmiştir (Alpyavuz, 2009).

İkinci Sovyet Notası: Bu nota, İngiltere ve ABD'nin itirazlarına rağmen 24 Eylül 1946'da yalnızca Türkiye'ye iletilmiştir. İlk notadan daha kapsamlı olan bu belgede, Türk Hükümeti'nin Sovyet iddialarını kesin biçimde reddetmediği ve söz konusu ihlallerin münferit olaylar olduğu ileri sürülmüştür. Türk notasının etkisinde kalınarak hazırlanmış Sovyet notasında, Türkiye'nin 1941 ve 1942 tarihli denizci ilanlarıyla, transit geçen gemilerin kılavuz kaptan almak mecburiyetinde tutulduklarından Boğazlardan geçen gemilerin kontrollerinin daha sert kurallarla kontrolü belirtilmekteydi. Fakat söz konusu ilanlar, savaşın Karadeniz ve Ege kıyılarına kadar gelerek Türk sınırlarını tehdit etmesi üzerine, ticaret gemilerinin geçiş esnasında Boğazlardaki ağ, mania ve mayınlardan korunmaları için yapılmıştı. Uygulamanın kontrolle herhangi bir ilgisi yoktu. Nitekim ikinci notada, tutarlılığı tartışmalı saptama karmaşası yaratılıp, olaylar tek taraflı bir bakışla tevil edilerek Montrö'ye itiraz haklı çıkarılmaya çalışılmıştır. Sovyetler Birliği, ikinci notasında tüm bunlara ek olarak Boğazların Süveyş Kanalı ve Cebelitarık Boğazı'ndan farklı olarak Karadeniz'in tek çıkış yolu olduğunu ileri sürmüş ve bu nedenle özel bir statüye sahip olması gerektiğini savunmuştur. Bu kapsamda Moskova Antlaşması'na (1921) ve çeşitli tarihî örneklere atıfta bulunarak Boğazlar ile Karadeniz'in statüsünün yeniden düzenlenmesini talep etmiştir. Her ne kadar nota yalnızca Türkiye'ye verilmiş olsa da mesajlarının asıl hedefinin ABD ve İngiltere olduğu değerlendirilmektedir (Köse, 2019, s. 1140-1141).

5. Türkiye'nin NATO'ya Üyelik Süreci

NATO'nun kurulmasına kadar geçen süreçte ve uluslararası bir savunma ittifakı olan NATO'nun oluşumunda bazı sözleşme ve anlaşmalar etkili olmuştur. (Balci, 2018, s. 885). Ayrıca 22 Şubat 1948'de Çekoslovakya'da Komünist Parti'nin bir darbeyle iktidarı ele geçirmesi ve Sovyetler Birliği'nin 24 Haziran 1948'de başlattığı, 9 Mayıs 1949'a kadar devam eden Batı Berlin Ablukası, Batı Avrupa Birliği düşüncesinden doğan NATO kavramının ortaya çıkmasında belirleyici gelişmeler olmuştur. Karşılıklı yardım anlaşmasının metnini müzakere etmek amacıyla 4 Mart 1948'de Belçika, Fransa, Lüksemburg, Hollanda ve Birleşik Krallık delegeleri bir araya gelmiştir. Bu görüşmelerin ardından, 17 Mart 1948 tarihinde söz konusu devletlerin temsilcileri tarafından Brüksel Antlaşması imzalanmıştır. Antlaşmayı imzalayan devletler, ortak bir savunma sistemi oluşturmanın yanı sıra ekonomik ve kültürel bağlarını güçlendirmeyi de taahhüt etmişlerdir. Brüksel Antlaşması'nın on maddesinden özellikle 5. ve

9. maddeler büyük önem taşımaktadır. Antlaşmanın 5. maddesine göre, taraf devletlerden herhangi birinin Avrupa'da silahlı bir saldırıya uğraması hâlinde, diğer taraf devletler Birleşmiş Milletler Şartı'nın 51. maddesi uyarınca sahip oldukları bireysel veya kolektif meşru müdafaa hakkını kullanarak saldırıya uğrayan devlete gerekli askerî ve diğer tüm yardımları sağlayacaklardır. Antlaşmanın 9. maddesinde ise, *"Antlaşmayı imzalayan devletler, oy birliğiyle alacakları bir kararla herhangi bir devleti bu Antlaşma'ya katılmaya davet edebilirler."* hükmüne yer verilmiştir (Bağcı, 1991, s. 3).

Soğuk Savaş boyunca Türkiye, NATO üyeliğini dış politikasının temel unsurlarından biri olarak görmüştür. Bunun başlıca üç nedeni bulunmaktadır. *İlk olarak*, Sovyetler Birliği'nin Boğazlarda üs ile Kars ve Ardahan'a yönelik talepleri karşısında Türkiye'nin güvenliğini tek başına sağlaması mümkün görülmediğinden, NATO üyeliği en önemli güvenlik güvencesi olarak değerlendirilmiştir. *İkinci olarak*, NATO üyeliği Türkiye'nin Avrupa güvenliğine katkı sağlayan bir ülke olarak kabul edilmesini sağlamış ve Cumhuriyet döneminden itibaren izlenen Batılılaşma politikasını desteklemiştir. Ayrıca NATO'nun sağladığı güvenlik ortamı, Avrupa'daki ekonomik bütünleşme sürecine de katkı sunmuştur. *Üçüncü olarak* ise NATO, Türkiye'nin Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ile ilişkilerini çok taraflı ve kurumsal bir ittifak çerçevesinde yürütmesine imkân sağlayarak dış politika açısından önemli bir avantaj oluşturmuştur (Oğuzlu, 2012, s. 102).

Batılı devletlerin Sovyet tehdidine karşı Brüksel Anlaşması çerçevesinde oluşturduğu savunma sistemine katılmak isteyen Türkiye yoğun diplomatik girişimlerde bulunmuştur. Batı Avrupa savunma yapılanmasına dâhil olamayan Türkiye, NATO'nun kuruluş sürecinde üyelik için başvurularını sürdürmüştür. Başbakan Hasan Saka ve Dışişleri Bakanı Necmettin Sadak, ABD ve Avrupa devletleri nezdinde çeşitli girişimlerde bulunmuştur. Ancak İngiltere'nin Ortadoğu merkezli güvenlik politikası ve bazı üye devletlerin olumsuz tutumu nedeniyle Türkiye'nin ilk üyelik girişimleri sonuçsuz kalmıştır. Buna rağmen Türkiye, Avrupa Konseyi'ne kabul edilmesi ve ABD ile gelişen ilişkilerin etkisiyle NATO üyeliğini dış politikasının temel hedeflerinden biri olarak sürdürmüş ve 11 Mayıs 1950'de resmî üyelik başvurusunu gerçekleştirmiştir. 1951 yılına gelindiğinde değişen uluslararası güvenlik ortamı, ABD'nin Türkiye'nin NATO üyeliğine yönelik tutumunu değiştirmiştir. SSCB'nin atom bombasına sahip olması, Çin-SSCB yakınlaşması ve Kore Savaşı'nın ortaya çıkardığı güvenlik riskleri, NATO'nun güney kanadının güçlendirilmesini zorunlu kılmıştır. Bu kapsamda ABD, 15 Mayıs 1951'de Türkiye ve Yunanistan'ın NATO'ya kabul edilmesini müttefiklerine önermiştir.

Türkiye'nin stratejik konumu, Türk Boğazları ve hava sahasının Sovyetler Birliği'ne karşı taşıdığı askerî önem ile Kore Savaşı'nda Türk askerinin gösterdiği başarı, üyelik sürecini hızlandıran başlıca etkenler olmuştur. ABD'nin desteğine rağmen özellikle İngiltere ve bazı İskandinav ülkeleri Türkiye'nin üyeliğine çekinceyle yaklaşmıştır. Yapılan müzakereler sonucunda NATO Bakanlar Konseyi, 16-20 Eylül 1951 tarihlerinde Ottawa'da gerçekleştirilen toplantıda Türkiye ve Yunanistan'ın NATO'ya davet edilmesini oy birliğiyle kabul etmiş, üye devletlerin onay süreçlerinin tamamlanmasının ardından Türkiye'ye resmî üyelik daveti gönderilmiştir. Türkiye'nin NATO ittifakına dahil edilmesi 18 Şubat 1952'de TBMM'de görüşülüp kanunlaştırılmıştır (Erkmen, 2020, s. 1030-1035).

6. NATO Açısından Türk Boğazlarının Deniz Jeopolitiği

II. Dünya Savaşı sonrasında Türkiye'nin en güvenilir müttefiki konumundaki ABD, Monroe Doktrini'nin ötesinde, uluslararası hukuk ve güvenlik stratejileri çerçevesinde Türk Boğazları rejimine yönelik belirgin bir politika geliştirmiştir. ABD'nin Türk Boğazları ve Karadeniz'e ilişkin stratejik yaklaşımı, Soğuk Savaş boyunca NATO'nun savunma politikalarının temel unsurlarından biri hâline gelmiştir. Bu yaklaşım, Sovyet Donanması'nın Akdeniz'e ve Ortadoğu'daki enerji kaynaklarına erişiminin sınırlandırılmasını hedeflerken, aynı zamanda NATO'nun savunma ve güvenlik stratejisinin şekillenmesinde belirleyici bir rol oynamıştır (Caşın, 2017, s. 68).

Soğuk Savaş döneminde Türkiye'nin 1952 yılında NATO'ya katılmasıyla birlikte, Karadeniz'e kıyısı bulunan tek NATO üyesi ülke Türkiye olmuştur. Bu nedenle NATO, Karadeniz'e yönelik güvenlik ve savunma politikalarını büyük ölçüde Türkiye üzerinden yürütmüştür. Montrö Boğazlar Sözleşmesi'nin Karadeniz'e kıyısı bulunmayan devletlerin savaş gemilerine tonaj, süre ve geçiş bakımından çeşitli sınırlamalar getirmesi, Türkiye'nin stratejik önemini daha da artırmıştır. NATO, bu hukuki çerçeve içinde Türkiye'nin jeostratejik konumundan yararlanarak Karadeniz'deki askerî ve istihbarî faaliyetlerini desteklemiş; Türkiye topraklarında kurulan radar, dinleme ve izleme tesisleri sayesinde başta Sovyetler Birliği olmak üzere Varşova Paktı ülkelerinin Karadeniz'deki askerî faaliyetlerini yakından takip edebilmiştir. Bu dönemde Türk Boğazları, Varşova Paktı deniz kuvvetlerinin Akdeniz'e çıkışını kontrol edebilecek en kritik jeostratejik geçiş noktalarından biri olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Soğuk Savaş boyunca Karadeniz havzasında Türkiye dışında yer alan Sovyetler Birliği, Romanya ve Bulgaristan'ın Varşova Paktı üyesi olmaları, bölgeyi NATO ile Varşova Paktı arasındaki askerî

rekabetin en yoğun yaşandığı alanlardan biri hâline getirmiştir. Bu kapsamda NATO, Türkiye'nin savunma kapasitesini güçlendirmek amacıyla önemli altyapı yatırımları gerçekleştirmiştir. İstanbul Boğazı ile Kefken, Karadeniz Ereğli ve Bartın gibi stratejik noktalarda radar ve gözetleme sistemleri kurulmuş; hücumbotlar, denizaltılar ve mayın harbi unsurlarının konuşlandırılmasına yönelik üs, iskele ve lojistik tesisler inşa edilmiştir. Bu yatırımlar, Türk Boğazlarının kontrolünü güçlendirmenin yanı sıra, Varşova Paktı deniz unsurlarının Akdeniz'e intikalinin izlenmesi ve gerektiğinde engellenmesine yönelik NATO savunma stratejisinin önemli bir parçasını oluşturmuştur (Bayer, 2018, s. 843).

Sonuç

II. Dünya Savaşı'nın sona ermesinden sonra Türkiye, başta Türk Boğazları olmak üzere egemenliği ve toprak bütünlüğüne yönelik Sovyetler Birliği kaynaklı güvenlik tehditleriyle karşılaşmıştır. Türkiye, güvenliğini sağlamak ve Sovyet baskısını dengelemek amacıyla dış politikasını Batı ittifakıyla bütünleşme yönünde şekillendirmiştir. Bu çerçevede, 1947 yılında Yunanistan ile birlikte Truman Doktrini kapsamında sağlanan askerî ve ekonomik yardımlardan yararlanarak savunma kapasitesini güçlendirmiş, takiben Avrupa'nın ekonomik yeniden yapılanmasını ve Sovyet yayılcılığının sınırlandırılmasını amaçlayan Marshall Planı'na da dâhil olmuştur. Soğuk Savaş'ın Avrupa merkezli uluslararası sistemi iki kutuplu bir yapıya dönüştürdüğü bu dönemde Türkiye, Batı dünyasının siyasi, ekonomik ve güvenlik kurumlarıyla yakın ilişkiler geliştirmeyi tercih etmiştir. Bu tercih, Türkiye'yi ABD'nin Sovyetler Birliği'ni çevreleme (containment) stratejisinin önemli bir unsuru hâline getirmiştir. Nitekim Türkiye, jeostratejik konumu ve Sovyet yayılcılığına karşı sahip olduğu kritik rol nedeniyle 1952 yılında NATO'ya kabul edilmiş ve böylece kolektif savunma sistemi içinde askerî güvenliğini büyük ölçüde güvence altına almıştır. Türkiye'nin NATO üyeliği, yalnızca ulusal güvenliğinin güçlendirilmesini değil, aynı zamanda Karadeniz ile Akdeniz'i birbirine bağlayan Türk Boğazlarının kontrolü sayesinde İttifak'ın güneydoğu kanadının savunulmasına da önemli katkılar sunmuştur. Bu bağlamda Türkiye, Varşova Paktı deniz unsurlarının Boğazlar üzerinden Akdeniz'e ulaşma kapasitesinin denetlenmesinde ve Sovyet deniz gücünün sıcak denizlere açılmasının sınırlandırılmasında NATO'nun en kritik müttefiklerinden biri olarak öne çıkmıştır. Böylece Türkiye, tarihsel jeopolitik konumunun sağladığı avantajı Batı güvenlik sistemi içerisinde stratejik bir işleve dönüştürmüş ve Soğuk Savaş boyunca NATO'nun çevreleme politikasının temel aktörlerinden biri olmuştur (Şahin, 2023, s. 36).

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From Maritime Security to Critical Infrastructure: NATO's Evolving Approach to the Black Sea through MCM Black Sea

Kaan Çankırlı

Since 2014, the Black Sea has undergone a significant transformation in its position within the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Russia's annexation of Crimea fundamentally altered the balance of power in the region and pushed NATO towards strengthening Eastern Flank of the alliance. NATO's evolving security approach to the Eastern Flank was initially based on enhanced readiness, deterrence, and forward presence of the Alliance. In 2014, Wales Summit laid the foundations for this transformation with the Readiness Action Plan establishing the framework; while the Warsaw Summit in 2016 introduced a "tailored forward presence" towards the Black Sea.

Gradually, NATO's deterrence approach to the Black Sea developed beyond conventional military means. 2022 marked a significant acceleration in the transformation of the Alliance's security posture, as the Russia-Ukraine war further demonstrated the strategic importance of maritime routes, energy infrastructure, critical infrastructure, commercial shipping and regional connectivity. One of the recent examples of this instance is NATO's Ankara Summit. It emphasized the ability to deploy, enable, and sustain its forces and highlighted investments in logistics and fuel infrastructure. Accordingly, NATO's official discourse increasingly reflected a broader understanding of resilience, infrastructure protection, and strategic dependencies, which became increasingly connected to the Alliance's collective defense and security agenda. This development can be understood as an expansion of the security agenda rather than a replacement of deterrence. As the range of security concerns expanded from territorial and military threats towards maritime routes, infrastructure, and interconnected systems, resilience became increasingly important for maintaining the functioning of these systems under disruption. In this context, connectivity provides a useful analytical lens for examining how these systems are interdependent and how their protection contributes to sustaining credible deterrence and collective defense.

This development on NATO's security approach to the Black Sea generates an important question: How has NATO's approach to Black Sea security transformed from a previously deterrence-oriented framework towards a broader security architecture comprising maritime

security, resilience, connectivity, and the protection of critical infrastructure, and how does MCM Black Sea illustrate this transformation?

This article argues that NATO has not abandoned its traditional approach to collective defense and deterrence in the Black Sea. Rather, the range of infrastructures, systems, networks, and other elements considered necessary for sustaining credible deterrence and collective defense has expanded. The establishment and subsequent development of MCM Black Sea provide a useful regional case for observing this transformation. Established by three NATO coastal Allies, the initiative focuses on countering the threat posed by drifting naval mines to the safety of navigation. Recognized by NATO as an example of “Allied regional efforts,” the initiative’s mandate was expanded through a recent agreement reached in Ankara to include the protection of the critical undersea infrastructure of the signatory countries.

The Evolution of NATO’s Black Sea Security Approach: 2014-2023

The 2014 Wales Summit represents the starting point of NATO’s adaptation following Russia’s annexation of Crimea. The Alliance adopted the Readiness Action Plan to develop rapid and effective response mechanisms in case of emerging security threats. Its purpose is to strengthen collective defense and make NATO more ready, robust, and responsive (NATO, 2014). The Wales Summit did not solely focus on military readiness; it also recognized the importance of the Black Sea for Euro-Atlantic security architecture and expressed support to regional efforts by the Black Sea littoral states for ensuring security and stability (NATO, 2014). In this sense, NATO’s 2014 Declaration contained elements that would contribute to the discussion of resilience and critical infrastructure, two emerging areas in the transformation process. Alliance also highlighted the importance of energy routes, energy diversification and interconnectivity of energy routes which are incorporated into the security considerations.

The second step for this transformation process was the 2016 Warsaw Summit where NATO’s military posture on the Eastern Flank was strengthened. The Alliance adopted a “tailored forward presence” in the Black Sea, especially to strengthen Romania and Bulgaria’s role on NATO’s regional deterrence (NATO, 2016). The Warsaw Summit was significant in defining the hybrid warfare in Article 72 of the Warsaw Summit Communiqué as conventional and unconventional threats (NATO, 2016). This broadened the security environment from a focus solely on conventional military attacks toward a multidimensional understanding of security.

In 2022, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine marked a turning point for the transformation of the security environment in the Black Sea. The Madrid Summit reaffirmed “360-degree security approach” and its contribution to deterrence and forward tailored presence of Allies. On the other hand, “resilience” started to have its place on further discussions and gained a more prominent position on Alliance’s collective defense framework. Article 9 and 10 of the Madrid Summit Declaration describe this transformation as national responsibility and collective commitment for effective deterrence and development (NATO, 2022). Resilience is not a replacement for deterrence, rather, it is a new conceptual development that supports effective deterrence. The interconnection of military capabilities with energy systems, transportation and communication networks, and supply chains makes the resilience of these systems relevant to collective defense.

The 2023 Vilnius Summit was significant for NATO’s evolving security approach. Article 61 of the Vilnius Summit Communiqué emphasizes that national and collective resilience are an essential basis for credible deterrence, defense and effective fulfillment for Alliance’s core tasks (NATO, 2023). The same article also mentions the identification and mitigation of strategic vulnerabilities and dependencies with respect to critical infrastructure, supply chains, and health systems (NATO, 2023). In article 65, NATO identified the emerging threat to critical undersea infrastructure (CUI), whose security was included as national and collective responsibility. This development is significant because it also led to the establishment of Maritime Center for the Security of CUI within MARCOM (NATO, 2023).

In this sense, before the MCM Black Sea initiative was launched, NATO’S security approach towards the Black Sea region evolved through an expansion. The Alliance’s security discourse is moved from primarily conventional military deterrence toward an understanding of critical infrastructures, dependencies, supply chains, and undersea systems. NATO also marked the strategic importance of the Black Sea, and reaffirmed support for Allied Regional Efforts with respect to Montreux Convention (NATO, 2023).

Deterrence, Resilience and Connectivity

In order to analyze the transformation of NATO’s approach to the Black Sea, this article places emphasis on three complementary analytical lenses: deterrence, resilience, and connectivity.

Deterrence is defined as a strategy to convince potential opponents not to pursue a specific action by threatening unacceptable consequences (Gündoğdu, 2016). Within NATO's contemporary framework, deterrence is closely connected to collective defense and the maintenance of a credible military posture capable of preventing aggression and responding effectively if deterrence fails (NATO, 2026). This understanding is reflected in NATO's post-2014 adaptation of its Eastern flank, particularly through enhanced readiness, increased military capabilities, and forward presence. This does not, however, imply that deterrence depends exclusively on military capabilities. The ability to sustain military operations and collective defense during a crisis also depends on transportation, energy, communications, logistics, supply chains, and other supporting systems. Consequently, the credibility of deterrence increasingly depends on the resilience of the wider security environment in which military capabilities operate.

NATO defines resilience as the individual and collective capacity to prepare for, resist, respond to, and quickly recover from shocks and disruptions (NATO, 2024). Within the Alliance's security framework, resilience has increasingly been connected to deterrence and collective defense rather than treated as a separate civilian preparedness issue. NATO explicitly identifies national and collective resilience as an essential basis for credible deterrence and defense and links resilience to the identification and mitigation of strategic vulnerabilities and dependencies, including those affecting critical infrastructure and supply chains (NATO, 2024).

This relationship is particularly important because military capabilities depend upon the continued functioning of civilian and military infrastructure. Energy systems, transportation networks, communications, supply chains, and other critical services can directly affect the ability of states and NATO forces to maintain readiness and operate during a crisis. Resilience therefore functions as a supporting condition for deterrence: while deterrence provides the capability and intent to prevent aggression, resilience contributes to ensuring that the systems supporting collective defense can continue to function when subjected to disruption (Laine & Petersson, 2025). In this sense, the increasing prominence of resilience in NATO's security discourse can be understood as an expansion of the conditions required for credible deterrence rather than its replacement (Bargués et al., 2026).

Connectivity provides an analytical lens through which the relationship between deterrence and resilience can be examined. In this article, connectivity refers to the interdependence of maritime, energy, transportation, communication, and supply-chain

networks through which economic, civilian, and strategic functions are maintained. Unlike resilience, connectivity is not treated here as a formally defined NATO security concept. Rather, it is used to capture the increasingly interconnected character of the systems that NATO identifies as relevant to security, particularly through its growing attention to critical infrastructure, strategic dependencies, and critical undersea infrastructure.

The significance of connectivity lies in the interdependence of the systems through which regional economic and strategic functions are maintained. The Black Sea serves as a critical connector between Europe, the Southern Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Eastern Mediterranean, linking transport, energy, and digital networks across the region (EEAS, 2025). Maritime routes and commercial shipping are particularly important because freedom of navigation and safety of shipping are essential to the development of transport, energy, and digital connectivity corridors (EEAS, 2025). At the same time, critical maritime infrastructure, including submarine cables and offshore installations, forms part of these interconnected networks and can therefore become a source of strategic vulnerability when disrupted (EEAS, 2025; NATO, 2023). Connectivity is consequently relevant not only to the continuity of maritime activity, but also to the resilience of the wider security environment. From this perspective, protecting maritime and undersea infrastructure contributes to maintaining the interconnected systems upon which regional security, economic activity, and credible collective defense increasingly depend.

Taken together, these concepts establish the analytical framework for the case examined in the following section. Deterrence represents NATO's strategic objective; resilience represents the capacity to maintain essential functions and withstand disruption; and connectivity highlights the interdependence of the systems whose continued operation contributes to credible deterrence and collective defense. From this perspective, the development of MCM Black Sea can be examined as an example of how maritime security and critical infrastructure protection increasingly intersect within NATO's broader Black Sea security approach.

MCM Black Sea: From Maritime Security to Critical Infrastructure Protection

The Mine Countermeasures Black Sea initiative provides a concrete regional case through which the relationship between deterrence, resilience, and connectivity can be observed. Established by Türkiye, Romania, and Bulgaria in 2024, the initiative emerged in

response to the threat posed by drifting naval mines following the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine war. Its initial purpose was to detect and neutralize drifting mines and thereby contribute to the safety of navigation in the Black Sea (AA, 2024; MoND, 2024). In this initial form, MCM Black Sea primarily represented a maritime security initiative addressing a direct physical threat to vessels and navigation.

The significance of mine countermeasures, however, extends beyond the immediate removal of mines. The safety of navigation is a prerequisite for the continued functioning of commercial shipping and maritime routes, which in turn support regional trade and supply chains. A disruption to maritime navigation can therefore produce effects beyond the immediate operational threat. From a resilience perspective, mine countermeasures contribute to maintaining the continuity of an essential regional function by reducing the vulnerability of maritime routes to disruption.

This relationship also places MCM Black Sea within NATO’s broader approach to regional security. NATO has recognized the initiative as an example of “Allied Regional Efforts” contributing to security and stability in the Black Sea in the 2024 Washington Summit (NATO, 2024). The initiative demonstrates how cooperation among the three littoral Allies can address a specific regional security problem while contributing to wider Alliance objectives. Its significance therefore lies not only in the operational capabilities involved in mine clearance, but also in the contribution of those capabilities to the resilience of the maritime environment.

The subsequent development of MCM Black Sea illustrates a broader expansion in the scope of maritime security. The Black Sea maritime environment contains infrastructure and networks that extend beyond conventional naval activity, including ports, energy infrastructure, communication systems, pipelines, and undersea cables. These systems are interconnected with commercial shipping, energy flows, communications, and wider regional supply chains. Their vulnerability to disruption therefore has implications for both national security and collective defense.

This connection became more explicit with the expansion of the initiative’s mandate through the agreement reached in Ankara among the participating Allies. The agreement expanded the MCM Black Sea Task Group’s missions to include the protection of critical undersea infrastructure, extending its activities beyond its original mine-countermeasure function (AA, 2026; MoND, 2026). This development is significant because it connects the

initiative's original focus on the physical security of maritime navigation with the protection of infrastructure operating beneath the maritime domain.

The expansion of MCM Black Sea should therefore not be interpreted as a departure from its original maritime security purpose. Rather, it demonstrates how the scope of maritime security has broadened as the strategic importance of interconnected infrastructure has become increasingly recognized. Mine threats, safety of navigation, commercial shipping, undersea infrastructure, and regional connectivity constitute distinct security concerns, but they also interact within the same maritime environment (MoND, 2026).

The initiative consequently provides an empirical illustration of the relationship established in the previous section. Its original function contributes to maritime security and the resilience of navigation, while its expanded mandate addresses vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure supporting regional connectivity. MCM Black Sea therefore demonstrates how a regional maritime initiative can contribute to the broader conditions required for maintaining resilient systems and, ultimately, credible collective defense.

Conclusion

The development of NATO's Black Sea security approach demonstrates a gradual expansion in the conditions considered necessary for credible deterrence and collective defense. Since 2014, military deterrence, readiness, and forward presence have remained central to the Alliance's regional posture. However, by 2022 and 2023, NATO's security discourse increasingly incorporated resilience, strategic dependencies, critical infrastructure, supply chains, and critical undersea infrastructure. Rather than replacing deterrence, these developments expanded the range of systems considered necessary for sustaining it.

The concepts of deterrence, resilience, and connectivity help explain this development. Deterrence remains the strategic objective of preventing aggression and maintaining credible collective defense. Resilience supports this objective by enabling essential systems to withstand and recover from disruption, while increasingly functioning as a complementary dimension of NATO's established deterrence and defense approach (Bargués et al., 2026). Connectivity highlights the interdependence of maritime routes, energy infrastructure, communication networks, transportation systems, supply chains, and undersea infrastructure, whose disruption can generate consequences across multiple domains (EEAS, 2025).

MCM Black Sea provides a regional illustration of this transformation. Initially established by Türkiye, Romania, and Bulgaria to counter drifting naval mines and ensure the safety of navigation, the initiative addressed a direct maritime security threat. Its subsequent mandate expansion to include the protection of critical undersea infrastructure, following the Ankara agreement, demonstrates how maritime security has increasingly intersected with the protection of interconnected infrastructure.

The significance of this development lies in the relationship between maritime security and the wider systems supporting regional connectivity. Protecting navigation contributes to the resilience of commercial shipping and maritime routes, while protecting undersea infrastructure contributes to the continuity of energy and communication networks. MCM Black Sea therefore illustrates how maritime security can increasingly be addressed within a broader framework of resilience, infrastructure protection, and connectivity.

The case supports the central argument of this article: NATO has not shifted from deterrence towards infrastructure protection; rather, the conditions required for credible deterrence have expanded. Military capabilities remain the foundation of collective defense, but their effectiveness increasingly depends on resilient infrastructure, secure maritime routes, functioning supply chains, and protected communication and energy networks. This broader understanding is also reflected in NATO's 2026 Ankara Summit, where the Alliance emphasized the ability to deploy, enable, and sustain its forces and highlighted investments in logistics and fuel infrastructure (NATO, 2026). MCM Black Sea illustrates the regional dimension of this broader development by linking the protection of maritime navigation with critical undersea infrastructure and regional connectivity.

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The Limitations of NATO's Role in the Middle East

Sezin Aydos

NATO has long regarded the Middle East as a region of strategic importance. Although the Alliance was established to ensure the collective defence of its members, the end of the Cold War challenged the geographical understanding of NATO's security role. The collapse of the Soviet Union removed the threat around which NATO had been organised, while terrorism, state fragility, political instability, and regional conflicts demonstrated that threats to NATO members could emerge beyond its traditional area of responsibility. NATO therefore began to reconsider not only what it was expected to defend, but also where threats to its members could originate. This shift led NATO to expand its engagement with the Middle East through political dialogue, security partnerships, capacity building, and military operations. While the Alliance has contributed to military training, institutional development, and crisis response, it has struggled to influence the political conditions that determine long-term stability. This essay argues that NATO's role in the Middle East has been constrained by divisions among member states, the complexity of regional conflicts, and questions surrounding NATO's legitimacy as an external security actor.

NATO's post-Cold War transformation was reflected in both its strategic concepts and the expansion of its partnerships. The 1991 Strategic Concept introduced a broader understanding of security, moving beyond collective defence to include dialogue and cooperation with former adversaries. The 1999 Strategic Concept continued this shift by placing greater emphasis on partnership, crisis management, and the ability to conduct different types of missions. In the two decades after the Cold War, NATO moved from being primarily a defensive alliance towards becoming a security organisation with a wider geographical and political reach. Schwarz (2020) describes this transformation as a shift from a static defence force to a reactive expeditionary force. As NATO's activities expanded beyond Europe, North Africa and the Middle East became more relevant to the Alliance because developments in these regions were increasingly connected to European security through terrorism, energy, conflict, migration, and state fragility.

NATO's first sustained engagement with the region took the form of political dialogue and security cooperation rather than military intervention. In 1994, the Alliance established the Mediterranean Dialogue with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and later

Algeria. The purpose was not to create a military alliance with these states. Rather, it sought to establish political contact, reduce misconceptions about NATO, and develop cooperation in areas of shared interest. Ambrosetti (2008) argues that the Mediterranean Dialogue was intended to improve mutual understanding between NATO and its regional partners. This approach was expanded at the 2004 Istanbul Summit through the strengthening of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the creation of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). The ICI extended NATO's partnership framework into the Gulf and initially focused on the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Its areas of cooperation included defence reform, defence planning, military-to-military cooperation, counterterrorism, non-proliferation, and civil preparedness. The logic behind these initiatives was based on partnership rather than alliance. Regional states were not expected to accept a fixed NATO security agenda; their participation was meant to shape the relationship. This gave NATO a means of developing security ties without extending Article 5 guarantees to its partners. Yet the same arrangement revealed an important limit. NATO could offer military expertise, training, interoperability, and institutional support, but it could not provide the political settlements or economic foundations required to resolve many of the region's conflicts. The distinction between what NATO could provide and what regional stability required became clearer once the Alliance moved from partnership towards operational involvement.

Iraq illustrates both NATO's capacity for institution-building and the limits of that capacity. In 2004, the Alliance established the NATO Training Mission-Iraq at the request of the Iraqi government and within the framework of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546. The mission was not a combat operation. It focused on training, mentoring, and supporting the development of Iraqi security institutions. By the time the mission ended in 2011, NATO had trained thousands of Iraqi military and police personnel. The mission therefore demonstrated an area in which NATO could make a contribution without assuming responsibility for Iraq's political order. The Iraqi case also shows why security-sector assistance cannot be separated from politics. Security institutions do not operate outside the political system. Training officers, improving command structures, and providing military equipment can increase the capacity of state institutions, but they cannot resolve sectarian divisions, political competition, weak governance, or disputes over power. NATO could contribute to the development of the Iraqi security apparatus, but it had little influence over the political conditions that determined how that apparatus would be used and whether it would be accepted as legitimate. NATO's engagement with Iraq continued after the end of the NATO Training

Mission-Iraq. Following the defeat of ISIS and the restoration of Iraqi territorial control, the Alliance expanded its advisory and capacity-building activities through NATO Mission Iraq, established in 2018. Unlike a combat operation, the mission was designed to help Iraq develop security institutions capable of addressing terrorism and maintaining security through its own forces. This represented a continuation of NATO's capacity-building role. It also exposed the same limitation: NATO can train institutions, but it cannot determine whether political elites will cooperate, whether state institutions will be trusted across different communities, or whether armed groups will accept the authority of the state. Iraq therefore illustrates a distinction between security capacity and political stability. NATO can strengthen the former without being able to produce the latter.

Libya presents a different case. Whereas NATO's role in Iraq centred on training and institutional support, Libya involved direct military action. In 2011, NATO assumed command of Operation Unified Protector following United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. The operation included an arms embargo, a no-fly zone, and measures intended to protect civilians from attack. NATO's air campaign placed military pressure on the Qaddafi regime and contributed to its collapse. The operation ended on 31 October 2011 after more than 26,000 sorties. From a military perspective, Libya demonstrated what NATO had gained from its post-Cold War transformation. The Alliance could organise a multinational operation, maintain command and control, conduct air operations, enforce an arms embargo, and operate beyond its traditional geographical area. Yet Libya also exposed the distance between military effectiveness and political outcomes. NATO could contribute to the immediate objective of protecting civilians and to the defeat of Qaddafi's forces, but the collapse of the regime did not produce a political order capable of replacing it. Libya was left with competing political authorities, armed groups, weak institutions, and disputes over political power. The central problem was therefore not NATO's ability to use force. It was the relationship between the use of force and what followed. Military power can alter the balance between political actors, but it cannot create legitimate institutions simply by removing an existing regime. NATO's mandate and capabilities were not designed to manage the full process of post-conflict state-building. The intervention addressed an immediate threat to civilians, but there was no equivalent political strategy for the order that would follow. Libya consequently demonstrated how an operation can achieve its military objective while leaving unresolved the political conditions that determine whether stability can emerge. This raises a broader question about responsibility after intervention. Once military action contributes to the destruction of an existing political

order, the consequences of that destruction cannot be separated entirely from the intervention itself. NATO could complete its mandate and withdraw, but the political vacuum that followed remained. This created a gap between the consequences of military intervention and the Alliance's capacity to shape the political environment that emerged afterwards. The Libyan experience therefore illustrates a wider problem in NATO's approach to the region: military instruments can address an immediate threat without addressing the political structures that produced the threat in the first place.

Another limitation comes from the interests of NATO's member states. Haesebrouck (2016) shows that national contributions to NATO operations are shaped not only by Alliance objectives but also by domestic politics, national interests, and relations with the United States. NATO therefore cannot be treated as a single actor with a single strategic interest. Its policies depend on agreement among states whose historical experiences, geographical priorities, economic interests, and perceptions of security differ. This problem becomes more visible in the Middle East. The United States has traditionally connected the region to energy security, terrorism, military presence, and wider strategic competition. European members are also concerned with terrorism, migration, energy security, and instability in the Mediterranean. Turkey occupies a different position because of its geographical proximity to the Middle East and its own security concerns. These interests can overlap, but they do not always produce the same policy preferences. The existence of different interests does not prevent NATO from acting. Libya demonstrated that the Allies can reach agreement when they perceive a common objective. The problem emerges when the political costs of involvement increase or when the purpose of intervention becomes contested. NATO's consensus-based decision-making requires its members to agree on a course of action. This can constrain the development of a long-term policy towards conflicts where there is no common assessment of the threat. NATO may therefore find it easier to agree on an immediate response than on the political strategy required after that response.

Syria provides a useful contrast to Libya. Despite the scale of the Syrian conflict and its direct consequences for NATO members, the Alliance did not launch an intervention comparable to Operation Unified Protector. Instead, NATO concentrated on measures connected to the defence of Turkey and supported wider international efforts while avoiding direct involvement in the Syrian civil war. The contrast suggests that the severity of a conflict does not determine NATO's response by itself. Political consensus, legal considerations,

regional dynamics, national interests, and the anticipated costs of intervention all shape the Alliance's choices. As Tardy (2022) argues, NATO has struggled to develop a coherent response to the Middle East and North Africa because the threats are diverse, many of the region's problems are not suited to military solutions, and member states do not always share the same objectives.

The nature of conflicts in the Middle East creates another problem. Regional insecurity rarely has a single cause. Political instability can emerge from weak institutions, economic problems, sectarian divisions, regional rivalries, foreign intervention, and competition between state and non-state actors. These factors reinforce one another. Removing one source of violence does not necessarily alter the political conditions that sustain conflict. NATO's military capabilities therefore address only one part of a larger political problem. Iraq illustrates this through the relationship between security institutions and political fragmentation. NATO could help create more capable security forces, but capable forces do not necessarily produce an inclusive political system. Libya presents the same problem from the opposite direction. NATO could contribute to the removal of Qaddafi, but removing a regime was easier than creating institutions capable of replacing it. In both cases, NATO encountered problems that extended beyond the instruments it was designed to use. This makes the distinction between security and stability important. Security can sometimes be improved through military means; stability requires a political order capable of sustaining that security. NATO itself recognises that military force cannot resolve every crisis or conflict and that effective crisis management requires political and civilian instruments alongside military capabilities (NATO, 2025). The difficulty arises when military capabilities are expected to produce political outcomes. Long-term stability depends on functioning institutions, political compromise, economic opportunities, public legitimacy, and local ownership. These conditions cannot be created through military training or air power alone.

NATO also operates in a region where it is often perceived as an external Western military organisation rather than a regional security institution. This creates a problem of legitimacy. Military capability does not automatically generate political acceptance. Even when NATO acts under a United Nations mandate or at the request of a regional government, questions remain about whose interests the Alliance represents and how much influence regional actors have over the security agenda. The Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative were partly responses to this problem. Their purpose was not limited to

practical security cooperation. They were also intended to improve mutual understanding and reduce perceptions of NATO as an organisation imposing its own security priorities on the region. The ICI, in particular, was based on the principle that cooperation should respond to the interests and needs of participating states. This points to an important distinction between legal and political legitimacy. A mandate may establish the legal basis for action without resolving questions about whether the action is accepted as legitimate by those affected by it. Libya illustrates this distinction. NATO could rely on United Nations Security Council resolutions as the legal basis for Operation Unified Protector. Yet the political consequences of the intervention and the instability that followed influenced perceptions of the operation. The issue was therefore not only whether NATO had the authority to act, but also what its intervention meant for the political order that followed. An external military organisation can use force with considerable effectiveness and still struggle to establish trust among the societies in which it operates. Trust is particularly important for partnerships. Security cooperation depends on continuity because institutions are built through repeated political and military interaction rather than through individual operations. If regional actors view NATO as an organisation that becomes involved during a crisis and withdraws after achieving its military objectives, it becomes more difficult for the Alliance to establish the relationships required for conflict prevention. Legitimacy is therefore connected to NATO's other limitations. Military intervention can affect perceptions of the Alliance, while divisions among member states can make sustained engagement difficult.

To conclude, since the end of the Cold War, the Alliance has expanded its activities through the Mediterranean Dialogue, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, training missions in Iraq, and military intervention in Libya. These cases demonstrate that NATO can engage with the region through political dialogue, capacity building, and military force. They also demonstrate that possessing these instruments does not give NATO control over the political processes that determine long-term stability. Iraq shows the limits of capacity building when the political foundations of the state remain contested. Libya shows the limits of military intervention when there is no political framework capable of replacing the order that intervention helps destroy. Syria shows how consensus and national interests shape NATO's willingness to use force. At the same time, questions of legitimacy constrain the Alliance's ability to establish itself as a trusted security actor in a region where it remains an external organisation. NATO's post-Cold War transformation therefore created a paradox. The Alliance acquired greater capacity to act beyond Europe, but this capacity also brought it into problems

that military power could not resolve. NATO can train security forces, support regional partners, improve institutional capacity, and conduct military operations. It cannot, by itself, resolve sectarian divisions, settle regional rivalries, construct legitimate political institutions, or determine the political order that follows state collapse. Those tasks require diplomacy, economic resources, political negotiation, and local ownership. The experience of NATO in the Middle East therefore points to a distinction between the ability to intervene and the ability to transform political conditions. NATO has demonstrated the former. The latter remains beyond the reach of military power alone.

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Reassessing NATO's Interventions in Afghanistan and Libya

Ahmet Çağrı Soylu

Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is generally defined in the International Relations literature as a collective defence alliance established in 1949 to deter Soviet expansion and provide security for its member states through the principle of collective defence under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty (Kaplan, 2004). According to NATO's official narrative, the Alliance was created to preserve peace, safeguard the freedom and security of its members, deter external aggression, prevent the resurgence of militarism in Europe, and contribute to political cooperation across the North Atlantic region (Imperial War Museums, n.d.). From this perspective, NATO is primarily understood as a security organization whose continued existence has been justified by changing security threats after the end of the Cold War.

Although this explanation remains dominant in mainstream International Relations, it provides only a partial understanding of NATO's historical development and contemporary role. Focusing exclusively on security overlooks the broader political, ideological, and institutional structures through which NATO operates. A structural perspective makes it possible to examine NATO not only as a military alliance but also as an institution embedded within the post-war international order. Such an approach shifts attention from immediate security concerns to the historical conditions under which the Alliance emerged, the interests it serves, and the functions it performs within the broader organization of international politics.

This distinction is reflected in Robert W. Cox's differentiation between problem-solving theory and critical theory. According to Cox (1981), problem-solving theories accept existing institutions and power relations as given and seek to explain how they can function more effectively. Critical theory, in contrast, investigates how historical structures are created, whose interests they serve, and how they are reproduced over time. Cox argues that world order is shaped through the interaction of material capabilities, dominant ideas, and institutions, which together form historical structures that sustain particular configurations of power (Cox, 1981; Cox, 1987). Building on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, he further maintains that international institutions contribute to the maintenance of hegemonic orders by generating both consent and coercion. Rather than acting as politically neutral organizations, they stabilize and reproduce the prevailing distribution of power.

From this perspective, NATO can be interpreted as more than a collective defence alliance. As an institution embedded within the post-war Atlantic order, it has contributed to the institutionalization of transatlantic political cooperation based on shared political, ideological, and economic objectives. When NATO is examined through this critical perspective, it appears as one of the principal institutions through which the Western-led international order has been organized and reproduced. Defining NATO primarily as an institution dedicated to preserving democracy, freedom, and collective defence risks overlooking its broader structural role in maintaining the hegemonic position of the United States and the wider Atlantic community.

This paper aims to examine NATO beyond its mainstream narrative by analysing its structural role in the reproduction of Western hegemony. Drawing on Critical International Relations, the paper investigates how NATO has functioned as an institution that supports the continuity of the Western-led international order. To illustrate this argument, the study employs a qualitative case study approach focusing on the NATO interventions in Afghanistan and Libya. Afghanistan and Libya were selected because they represent two distinct forms of NATO intervention in the post-Cold War era. Despite their differences, both cases illustrate how international law and humanitarian principles have been invoked to legitimize military intervention. By examining these two cases, this paper investigates whether such interventions can be understood as contributing to the reproduction of an American-led Western hegemonic order.

Theoretical Framework

Critical International Relations offers an alternative approach to understanding international institutions by examining the historical structures and power relations in which they are embedded. Unlike mainstream theories, which generally explain how institutions contribute to international stability and cooperation, Critical IR seeks to understand how these institutions emerge, whose interests they serve, and how they contribute to the reproduction of existing power structures. From this perspective, NATO can be examined as a political institution operating within the broader framework of the post-war American-led international order.

Robert W. Cox provides one of the most influential theoretical foundations for this perspective. Building on Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Cox argues that world order is shaped by the interaction of material capabilities, ideas, and institutions, which together form historical structures that influence the behaviour of states and other actors (Cox, 1981, 1987).

Hegemony is maintained through both coercion and consent, as dominant political and economic interests become accepted as universal interests. International institutions therefore play an important role in stabilizing and reproducing hegemonic orders by embedding dominant ideas and norms within the international system. They contribute to the continuity of existing configurations of power. Applied to NATO, Cox's framework suggests that the Alliance contributes to the reproduction of the post-war Western order by institutionalizing transatlantic political cooperation, reinforcing shared liberal norms, and legitimizing the strategic leadership of the United States and its allies. From this perspective, NATO should be understood as a collective defence alliance and it is one of the institutions through which Western hegemony is reproduced.

Kees van der Pijl further develops this Neo-Gramscian perspective by focusing on the formation of what he describes as the Atlantic ruling class. According to van der Pijl (1984), political and economic elites in the United States and Western Europe gradually formed a transnational bloc united by a common interest in maintaining a liberal capitalist order. This Atlantic ruling class exercises influence through international institutions, multinational corporations, financial networks, and military alliances. Consequently, the transatlantic relationship represents the institutionalization of a shared political, economic, and ideological project. Within this framework, NATO occupies a central position as the military pillar of the Atlantic order by reinforcing political cohesion, strategic coordination, and the continued leadership of the United States. The Alliance therefore functions as an institution through which the interests of the Atlantic historical bloc are maintained and reproduced.

While Cox and van der Pijl explain NATO's structural position within the post-war international order, Tarak Barkawi focuses on the role of military power in sustaining that order. Barkawi argues that military intervention should be understood as an important mechanism through which international order is produced and maintained (Barkawi & Laffey, 2006). Applied to NATO, his perspective suggests that the Alliance should be understood as an institution through which Western military power is projected and legitimized. NATO's post-Cold War operations can therefore be interpreted as examples of how military intervention contributes to the maintenance of a broader liberal international order. The emphasis shifts from the operational success of interventions to the ways in which they reinforce particular forms of political authority, strategic leadership, and international hierarchy.

Taken together, these perspectives provide the theoretical foundation of this study. Cox explains how hegemony is established through international organisations. Van der Pijl extends

this argument by demonstrating the Atlantic ruling class and the broader transatlantic political project. Barkawi complements these approaches by explaining how military intervention contributes to the legitimacy and projection of Western power in the contemporary international system. Building on these theoretical contributions, this study examines whether NATO's interventions in Afghanistan and Libya can be understood as contributing to the reproduction of an American-led Western hegemonic order.

Afghanistan

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, NATO invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for the first time in its history, recognizing the attacks against the United States as an attack against the entire Alliance (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2025). Although the initial military campaign was led by the United States under Operation Enduring Freedom, NATO assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2003 (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2022). The mission gradually expanded beyond counterterrorism to include state-building, security sector reform, democratic institution-building, election support, and the training of Afghan security forces (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2022). NATO maintained its presence in Afghanistan until the completion of its withdrawal in 2021, making the Afghan mission the longest military operation in the Alliance's history (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2022).

Despite two decades of military presence and extensive international assistance, the political order established after 2001 proved highly fragile. Following the withdrawal of NATO and U.S. forces in August 2021, the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces rapidly collapsed, the Taliban regained control of Kabul within days, and the internationally recognized government ceased to exist (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2022). The speed of the government's collapse raised significant questions regarding the long-term sustainability of the state-building project implemented under NATO's leadership. Socioeconomic and security indicators also reflected persistent structural weaknesses before the Taliban's return. According to the World Bank's 2019-2020 household survey, approximately 47.1 percent of Afghanistan's population was living below the national poverty line (Barriga-Cabanillas et al., 2023). At the same time, the security situation remained critical. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded 10,392 civilian casualties in 2019, including 3,403 deaths and 6,989 injuries, marking the sixth consecutive year in which civilian casualties exceeded 10,000 (UNAMA, 2020). Despite the ongoing peace negotiations, Afghanistan still experienced 8,820 civilian casualties in 2020, including 3,035 deaths and 5,785 injuries (UNAMA, 2021).

Within this framework, NATO can be understood as one of the institutions embedded in the historical structure of the post-war Western order. Concepts such as counterterrorism, democratization, humanitarian assistance, and the promotion of the liberal international order function as important sources of legitimacy for intervention. These ideas generated international consent while enabling NATO to extend its military and political engagement beyond the traditional geographical boundaries of the Alliance. NATO therefore represents the military dimension of a broader political and institutional project through which the American-led Western order is maintained. The Afghan case illustrates how military intervention, institutional reconstruction, and liberal political discourse can operate together within this historical structure and jointly produce conditions for hegemonic expansion.

Libya

The Libyan intervention emerged in the context of the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011. As protests against Muammar Gaddafi's government developed into an armed conflict, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1973, authorizing member states to take "all necessary measures" to protect civilians and establish a no-fly zone (United Nations Security Council, 2011). NATO assumed command of Operation Unified Protector on 31 March 2011 (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2012). The Alliance justified its intervention on humanitarian grounds, emphasizing the protection of civilians and the prevention of mass atrocities (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2011). During the seven-month operation, NATO conducted over 26,500 sorties, including more than 9,700 strike sorties, enforced an arms embargo, and supported military operations that ultimately contributed to the collapse of the Gaddafi government in October 2011 (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2011).

Although the intervention succeeded militarily, Libya remained politically unstable after Gaddafi's fall. Rather than transitioning to stable democratic governance, the country split into rival political authorities and armed militias. The World Bank describes the post-2011 period as marked by ongoing violence, weak state institutions, and a failed political transition, despite significant international involvement. More than a decade later, Libya continues to experience institutional fragmentation and recurring political crises despite the humanitarian and civilian protection objectives that justified the 2011 intervention (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026).

The Libyan case illustrates a pattern similar to Afghanistan. The intervention was legitimized through internationally accepted concepts, including humanitarian protection and

international law. These principles generated international consent and provided the legal and normative framework through which military intervention became politically acceptable. However, the long-term outcomes demonstrate that the removal of the existing regime was not followed by the construction of stable political institutions capable of maintaining order. Thus, Libya, much like Afghanistan, shows how NATO's intervention failed to create a stable political order and instead left the country fragmented into competing centers of power. This suggests that humanitarian justification was not the main reason for the intervention. Instead, it served to build international consent for an action that helped strengthen the hegemonic position of the Atlantic ruling class. Gaddafi had used oil revenues to fund domestic development, supported pan-African and pan-Arab autonomy initiatives, and resisted Western strategic influence in North Africa. This made Libya a persistent outlier within, and a challenge to, the U.S.-led liberal international order (Campbell, 2013). Seen this way, the intervention can be understood less as an effort to protect Libyan civilians or promote democracy, and more as an effort to remove a government whose independence from Western capital and strategic frameworks was seen as a threat to the existing hegemonic order.

Comparative Evaluation

Although Afghanistan and Libya represent different forms of NATO intervention, they reveal a similar pattern. The intervention in Afghanistan was justified through the right of collective self-defence and the global fight against terrorism, while the intervention in Libya relied primarily on humanitarian protection. However, both interventions generated broad international legitimacy through widely accepted liberal principles, allowing NATO to project military power beyond its traditional geographical area.

The long-term outcomes of both cases present a different picture from the objectives used to justify intervention. In Afghanistan, two decades of state-building and military engagement ended with the collapse of the NATO-backed government and the return of the Taliban. In Libya, the removal of the Gaddafi government was followed by prolonged political fragmentation, competing centers of authority, and continuing instability. Although the interventions differed in their duration, legal basis, and operational strategy, neither produced the stable political order or long-term security that had been presented as their primary objectives.

The comparison therefore supports the central argument of this study. NATO should be understood as more than a collective defence organization responding to immediate security

threats. As suggested by Cox's concept of historical structure and van der Pijl's analysis of the Atlantic ruling class, the Alliance functions as one of the institutions through which the American-led Western order is maintained. The ideas of counterterrorism, humanitarian protection, democracy, and the liberal international order provided legitimacy for intervention, while NATO supplied the military capacity necessary to implement these objectives. This study argues that these principles contributed to building international consent for interventions that reinforced the strategic and political position of the Atlantic alliance. Afghanistan and Libya cases therefore suggest that NATO's post-Cold War interventions can be understood not only as responses to particular crises but also as part of a broader hegemonic project that extends the political influence of the American-led Western order.

Conclusion

This study examined NATO from a Critical International Relations perspective by asking whether the Alliance can be understood solely as a collective defence organization or whether it also functions as an institution that contributes to the reproduction of Western hegemony. Rather than focusing only on NATO's official objectives, the analysis explored the Alliance within the broader historical structure of the post-war Western order. Drawing upon Robert Cox's concept of historical structure, Kees van der Pijl's analysis of the Atlantic ruling class, and Tarak Barkawi's postcolonial understanding of security, the study argued that NATO should be understood as one of the institutions through which the political and strategic leadership of the United States and its allies is maintained.

The case studies of Afghanistan and Libya provide empirical support for this argument. Although the two interventions differed in their legal foundations, political contexts, and military objectives, they followed a similar pattern. In both cases, military intervention was justified through internationally accepted principles, including collective self-defence, humanitarian protection, democratization, and the promotion of international security. These principles generated international legitimacy for intervention and enabled NATO to project military power beyond its traditional geographical boundaries. At the same time, neither intervention produced the stable political order that had been presented as its primary objective. Afghanistan experienced the rapid collapse of the internationally supported government following NATO's withdrawal, while Libya entered a prolonged period of political fragmentation and institutional instability after the fall of the Gaddafi regime. These outcomes suggest that the long-term consequences of intervention differed considerably from the political goals that accompanied military action.

Examining these cases through a Critical IR perspective broadens the conventional understanding of NATO. Rather than viewing the Alliance exclusively through its security functions, this study suggests that NATO also performs a structural role within the American-led Western order. Military capabilities, political institutions, and liberal norms operate together to create and maintain a particular international order in which intervention is presented as legitimate and necessary. From this perspective, concepts such as counterterrorism, humanitarian protection, democracy, and international security should be understood not only as normative principles but also as important sources of political legitimacy that facilitate the projection of Western power. This study argues that limiting the analysis to humanitarian concerns or security threats overlooks the broader historical and structural context in which NATO operates. Understanding the Alliance through the concepts of historical structure, the Atlantic ruling class, and postcolonial security provides a more comprehensive explanation of its post-Cold War interventions. Future research may extend this approach by examining additional NATO operations or by comparing the Alliance with emerging security institutions in an increasingly multipolar international system.

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Çin-Rusya Stratejik Ortaklığı Bağlamında NATO'nun Dönüşümü

Sayed Zakir Ahmadi

Giriş

Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde küresel istikrarın temelini oluşturan ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD) öncülüğünde tesis edilen kurallara dayalı liberal uluslararası düzen; günümüzde büyük güç rekabetinin geri döndüğü, çok merkezli ya da Flockhart'ın (2024) tabiriyle “çok düzenli” bir küresel mimariye evrilmektedir. Küresel güç dengesindeki bu makro düzeyli kayma, uluslararası güvenlik mimarisinin merkezinde yer alan Kuzey Atlantik Antlaşması Örgütü'nün (NATO) varoluşsal sütunlarını derinden sarsmakta ve İttifak'ı köklü bir dönüşüme zorlamaktadır. Tarihsel açıdan bakıldığında NATO, II. Dünya Savaşı'nın ardından yükselen jeopolitik gerilimlerin bir sonucu olarak 4 Nisan 1949'da Washington Antlaşması ile kurulmuştur. İttifak'ın kuruluşundaki birincil amacı ve stratejik varlık gerekçesi, Batı Avrupa'yı olası bir Sovyet askeri taarruzuna karşı korumak ve Soğuk Savaş boyunca komünizmin yayılmasını sınırlamaktır. Bu doğrultuda, Antlaşma'nın 5. Maddesi ile güvence altına alınan “kolektif savunma” ilkesi, İttifak'ın caydırıcılık stratejisinin temel yapı taşıını oluşturmuştur (Najam, 2025).

1991 yılında Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasıyla birlikte bu konvansiyonel tehdit ortadan kalkınca, NATO varlığını sürdürebilmek için işlevsel bir dönüşüm geçirmiştir. Bu süreçte temel odağını kolektif savunmadan, uluslararası terörizmle mücadele, barışı koruma operasyonları ve alan dışı kırız yönetime kaydırarak coğrafi ve işlevsel sınırlarını genişletmiştir (Gilli vd., 2022; Najam, 2025). Ancak günümüzde, Çin'in askeri ve teknolojik yükselişi ile revizyonist Rusya'nın derinleşen stratejik ortaklığı, kurallara dayalı uluslararası düzeni sarsarak yeni bir sistemsel meydan okuma yaratmaktadır (Flockhart, 2024). Bu doğrultuda kabul edilen 2022 Stratejik Konsepti, Rusya'yı doğrudan bir tehdit olarak tanımlarken, Çin'in zorlayıcı politikalarını ilk kez İttifak'ın çıkarlarına, güvenliğine ve değerlerine yönelik bir “sistemsel meydan okuma” olarak temel belgelere yansıtmıştır (Jones & Capie, 2024; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2022).

Bu bağlamda bu çalışma, Çin-Rusya stratejik ortaklığının yarattığı tehdit algısının NATO'nun caydırıcılık stratejilerini nasıl dönüştürdüğünü; aynı zamanda Asya-Pasifik'teki müttefiklerin bu küresel güvenlik koordinasyonuna nasıl entegre olduğunu analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

1. Değişen Küresel Güvenlik Mimarisi ve Çin-Rusya Stratejik Ortaklığı

Küresel güvenlik mimarisi, Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemin en büyük yapısal kırılmasını yaşamaktadır. Tek kutuplu liberal düzen; yerini büyük güç rekabetinin yön verdiği, “çok-düzenli” bir sisteme bırakmıştır. Bu dönüşüm, küresel güç dengelerini, caydırıcılık stratejilerini ve ittifak ilişkilerini yeniden şekillendirmektedir. Küresel ilişkiler, Batı merkezli tek kutuplu yapıdan; Amerikan liderliğindeki liberal düzenin yanı sıra Rusya liderliğindeki Avrasya ve Çin öncülüğündeki Kuşak ve Yol düzeni gibi farklı güç odaklarının bir arada bulunduğu “kümelenmiş” bir yapıya evrilmektedir (Flockhart, 2024).

Bu sistemsel dönüşümün en somut yansıması, Çin ve Rusya arasında 4 Şubat 2022’de Pekin’de imzalanan ve iki ülke ilişkilerini “sınır tanımayan dostluk” olarak tanımlayan ortak deklarasyondur. Bu deklarasyon, iki revizyonist gücün ABD hegemonyasına karşı ortak tehdit algılarını ve mevcut küresel düzeni kendi çıkarlarına göre yeniden şekillendirme arzularını yansıtan adeta bir küresel düzen dönüşümü manifestosu niteliğindedir (Flockhart, 2024).

Her iki aktör de egemenlik vurgusunu, Batı’nın renkli devrimler yoluyla rejim değişikliği yaratma girişimlerine yönelik muhalefeti ve Amerikan hegemonyasını dengeleme hedefini paylaşmaktadır. Bu kapsamda Çin ve Rusya, NATO’nun daha fazla genişlemesine ve ABD’nin Hint-Pasifik stratejisinin bölgesel istikrara yönelik olumsuz etkilerine karşı ortak bir cephe oluşturmuştur (*Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development*, 2022).

Çin ve Rusya arasındaki bu stratejik yakınlaşma, özellikle 2014 yılında Rusya’nın Kırım’ı yasa dışı ilhak etmesi ve Batı yaptırımlarıyla karşı karşıya kalmasının ardından askeri-teknolojik alanda benzeri görülmemiş bir ivme kazanmıştır (Kendall-Taylor & Shullman, 2021). 2017 yılında imzalanan ve 2021 yılında kapsamı genişletilen askeri işbirliği yol haritaları; stratejik askeri tatbikatları, ortak devriyeleri ve taktiksel kordinasyonu kurumsallaştırmıştır (Meyer zum Felde, 2022).

Rusya, Batı izolasyonunu kırmak ve ekonomik kaynak yaratmak amacıyla, daha önce Çin’in tersine mühendislik faaliyetlerinden duyduğu endişeyle satmaktan kaçındığı Su-35 savaş uçakları, S-400 hava savunma sistemleri ve gelişmiş gemisavar füzeleri gibi en hassas askeri teknolojilerini Pekin’e devretmeye başlamıştır. Bu askeri entegrasyon süreci, Vostok-2018 ve Tsentr-2019 gibi geniş ölçekli stratejik komuta-kurmay tatbikatlarına Çin ordusunun aktif katılımıyla derinleşmiştir (Kendall-Taylor & Shullman, 2021). Zamanla kapsamı daha da

genişleyen bu operasyonel işbirliği, Japon Denizi ve Ohotsk Denizi'nde icra edilen ve altı gün süren “Kuzey/Etkileşim-2024” (*Northern/Interaction-2024*) gibi çok alanlı ortak deniz ve hava tatbikatlarıyla en üst düzeye ulaşmıştır(*Russia-China Joint Military Drills End in Sea of Japan, 2024*). Ayrıca iki ülke, Japonya çevresinde ortak deniz devriyeleri düzenlemekte, Hint Okyanusu'nda İran ile üçlü tatbikatlar gerçekleştirmekte ve Japonya ile Güney Kore sınırları yakınlarında stratejik bombardıman uçaklarıyla ortak hava devriyeleri icra etmektedir. (Kendall-Taylor & Shullman, 2021).

Askeri-endüstriyel işbirliği, geleneksel silah ticaretinden öteye geçerek hassas stratejik alanlara da sirayet etmiştir. Rusya'nın Çin'e balistik füze erken uyarı sistemi inşasında teknolojik destek sağlaması, yeni nesil konvansiyonel denizaltıların ortak üretimine yönelik projeler geliştirmesi ve GLONASS ile BeiDou uydu navigasyon sistemlerini entegre etme adımları bu stratejik güvenin boyutunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, iki ülkenin bilimsel işbirliği, denizaltı harbi açısından kritik öneme sahip olan Arktik bölgesindeki sualtı akustik araştırmalarına kadar uzanmaktadır(Meyer zum Felde, 2022). Dijital alanda ise her iki ülke, yapay zeka destekli gözetleme sistemleri, 5G teknolojileri ve internet üzerinde tam devlet kontrolünü öngören “siber egemenlik” konsepti etrafında ortak bir siber güvenlik mimarisi geliştirmektedir (Kendall-Taylor & Shullman, 2021).

Rusya'nın 24 Şubat 2022 tarihinde Ukrayna'ya karşı başlattığı topyekun işgal girişimi, küresel güvenlik ortamında bir dönüm noktası olmuş ve Çin-Rusya ortaklığının sınırlarını ve dayanıklılığını test eden en büyük sınava dönüşmüştür(Flockhart, 2024). Bu süreçte Çin, her ne kadar ikincil yaptırımlardan kaçınmak amacıyla Rusya'ya doğrudan öldürücü silah sevkiyatı yapmaktan kaçınsa da Rusya'nın savunma sanayisine büyük ölçekli çift kullanımlı malzeme, silah bileşenleri ve hammadde sağlayarak savaşı sürdürmesi konusunda etkin bir rol oynamıştır. Bu doğrultuda, NATO'nun 2024 Washington Zirve Bildirisi'nde Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti, Rusya'nın Ukrayna'daki gayrimeşru savaşına verdiği büyük ölçekli destek nedeniyle resmi olarak “belirleyici kolaylaştırıcı” ilan edilmiştir (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2024). Bu durum, Asya ve Avrupa güvenlik sahalarının artık birbirinden bağımsız düşünülmemeyeceğini ve NATO'nun küresel bir güvenlik aktörüne dönüşümünü kaçınılmaz kılan en temel dinamiklerden birini oluşturmaktadır (Becker vd., 2022)

Savaş sürecinde uygulanan ağır yaptırımlar nedeniyle Batı pazarlarından dışlanan Rusya, Çin'e olan ekonomik ve teknolojik bağımlılığını derinleştirmiştir. Bu durum, Rusya'nın Çin karşısındaki pazarlık gücünü zayıflatarak ittifak içi asimetriyi Çin lehine kalıcı hale getirmiştir. Orta Asya, Arktik ve Uzak Doğu gibi bölgelerde iki ülke arasında örtük jeopolitik

rekabet ve güvensizlikler varlığını korusa da ABD ve NATO ittifak sistemini dengeleme yönündeki ortak varoluşsal motivasyon, bu bölgesel ayrılıkları arka plana itmekte ve stratejik eksenin dayanıklılığını korumasını sağlamaktadır(Berman, 2026).

2. Küresel ve Bölgesel Güvenlik Arasında NATO’nun Stratejik Yeniden Konumlanması

NATO’nun Soğuk Savaş sonrası stratejik vizyonunu çizen 2010 Lizbon Zirvesi Stratejik Konsepti; terörizmle mücadeleyi de kapsayacak biçimde kolektif savunma, kriz yönetimi ve işbirlikçi güvenlik olmak üzere üç temel görev üzerine inşa edilmiştir.(Becker vd., 2022; Turaç Baykara, 2022). Bu dönemde nükleer silahlar son çare olarak görülüyor, nükleer silahlı bir dünya nihai hedef olarak kabul ediliyor ve Rusya Federasyonu potansiyel bir stratejik ortak olarak tanımlanıyordu(Turaç Baykara, 2022). Fakat, Rusya’nın 2014 yılında Kırım’ı yasa dışı ilhak etmesi ve Ukrayna’ya yönelik saldırganlığı, bu dengeleri kökten sarsarak NATO’yu caydırıcılık rollerini yeniden düşünmeye zorlamıştır (Turaç Baykara, 2022).

2022 yılında Madrid Zirvesi’nde kabul edilen sekizinci Stratejik Konsept, NATO’nun tehdit algısında tarihi bir dönüm noktasını tescillemiştir. Yeni konseptte üç ana görev “caydırıcılık ve savunma”, “kriz önleme ve yönetimi” ve “işbirlikçi güvenlik” olarak revize edilmiş; toplu savunma açık ara en öncelikli konumuna geri döndürülmüştür(Tardy, 2022; Turaç Baykara, 2022). Yeni stratejik konseptin tehdit hiyerarşisinde Rusya birinci, terörizm ise ikinci sırada konumlandırılmıştır. 2022 konsepti, Rusya’yı müttefiklerin güvenliği ile Avrupa-Atlantik bölgesindeki barış ve istikrara yönelik “en önemli ve doğrudan tehdit” olarak tanımlamıştır(Tardy, 2022).

Öte yandan, NATO tarihinde ilk kez Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti (ÇHC) resmi bir stratejik konsept belgesine dahil edilmiştir. Belgede, ÇHC’nin zorlayıcı politikaları, dezenformasyon faaliyetleri, kötü niyetli siber ve hibrit operasyonları ile müttefiklerin kritik altyapılarını, teknolojilerini ve tedarik zincirlerini kontrol etmeye yönelik adımları İttifak’ın çıkarlarına, güvenliğine ve değerlerine yönelik “sistemsel bir meydan okuma” olarak nitelendirilmiştir. Bununla birlikte NATO, ÇHC ile yapıcı ilişkiler kurmaya ve karşılıklı şeffaflığı artırmaya yönelik diyalog kanallarını açık tuttuğunu beyan ederek dengeleyici bir yaklaşım sergilemiştir(Turaç Baykara, 2022).

2022 Stratejik Konsepti, siber operasyonların ve uzay alanındaki düşmanca faaliyetlerin de tıpkı konvansiyonel saldırılar gibi 5. Madde kapsamında toplu savunma mekanizmasını tetikleyebileceği tescil edilerek İttifak’ın savunma yelpazesi genişletilmiştir(Tardy, 2022; Turaç Baykara, 2022).

NATO'nun stratejik yöneliminin Avrupa-Atlantik coğrafyasının ötesine kayması, Çin'in küresel ölçekte yükselişi ve özellikle Asya-Pasifik bölgesinde inşa ettiği askeri ve jeopolitik kapasiteyle doğrudan ilişkilidir. Çin'in yükselişi ve Rusya ile geliştirdiği stratejik ortaklık, NATO'yu geleneksel Avrupa-Atlantik coğrafyasıyla sınırlı kalmaktan çıkararak, İttifak'ın güvenlik mimarisini Hint-Pasifik sahasıyla entegre etmeye zorlamıştır. Bu doğrultuda, Asya-Pasifik bölgesindeki gelişmelerin Avrupa-Atlantik güvenliğini doğrudan etkilediği tespitiyle NATO, bölgede müttefik çıkarlarını ve güvenlik politikalarını eşgüdümlü kılmak üzere kurumsal bir koordinasyon platformu olarak öne çıkmaya başlamıştır(Tardy, 2022).

Çin'in geliştirdiği askeri stratejiler; donanmasındaki hızlı genişleme, hipersonik füze sistemleri ve siber/uzay alanlarındaki kabiliyetleri bölgedeki geleneksel güvenlik dengelerini derinden sarsmıştır(Tokmakoglu, 2026). ABD tarafından “tempo belirleyici sına” olarak tanımlanan Çin'in bu yükselişi; başlangıçta Obama yönetiminin “Asia Pivot” hamlesiyle, ardından ise Trump ve Biden yönetimlerinin “sert dengeleme” politikalarıyla karşılanmıştır(Üngör, 2026). Bu yeni jeopolitik konjonktür, bölgedeki geleneksel güvenlik mimarisini yapısal bir dönüşüme zorlamaktadır.

ABD'nin, Asya-Pasifik bölgesinde inşa ettiği geleneksel güvenlik mimarisi, ikili savunma antlaşmalarına dayalı “*hub and spoke*” (merkez ve çevre) modeline dayanmaktadır. Bu asimetrik sistemde ABD merkezde (*hub*) yer alırken; Japonya, Güney Kore, Filipinler ve Avustralya gibi müttefik devletler çevre halkaları (*spokes*) oluşturmuştur. Günümüzde merkez ve çevre sisteminin geçirdiği yapısal dönüşüm, yalnızca garantör devlet olan ABD'nin taahhüt kapasitesine bağlı kalmamakta; çevre devletlerin Çin'e yönelik değişen tehdit algıları, güvenlik beklentileri ve ittifak içi asimetrik rollerini rasyonelleştirme çabalarıyla şekillenmektedir(Koç, 2026). Bu bağlamda müttefik devletlerin rasyonel hizalanma stratejileri; Çin'e yönelik tehdit algılarının boyutuna bağlı olarak farklı stratejik yönelimlere evrilmiştir.

Doğu Çin Denizi ve Güney Çin Denizi'ndeki egemenlik krizleri nedeniyle Çin'den doğrudan ve yüksek düzeyde askeri tehdit algılayan Japonya ve Filipinler, sert dengeleme stratejilerini benimsemiştir. Japonya tarihsel pasifist politikalarından koparak anayasal kısıtlamalarını esnetirken, Filipinler 2014 EDCA antlaşmasıyla ABD kuvvetlerine geniş askeri erişim kolaylığı sağlamıştır. Buna karşın, öncelikli tehdit odağı olarak Kuzey Kore'yi gören ve Pekin ile ticari çıkarlarını korumak isteyen Güney Kore, daha temkinli bir riskten kaçınma ve yumuşak dengeleme siyaseti izlemektedir. Avustralya ise son on yılda Çin'in Güney Pasifik'teki jeopolitik baskısının artmasıyla stratejik pozisyonunu riskten kaçınmadan QUAD ve AUKUS gibi mekanizmalar üzerinden askeri dengelemeye kaydırmıştır. Çevre devletlerin

bu farklılaşan tehdit algıları ve güvenlik talepleri, geleneksel ikili ittifak modelini aşındırarak bölgeyi çok katmanlı, esnek ve “minilateral” (küçük çok taraflı) bir güvenlik ağına sevk etmektedir. ABD, tekil ikili anlaşmalar yerine QUAD ve AUKUS gibi dinamik, amaca yönelik ve esnek koalisyonlar aracılığıyla caydırıcılığı entegre bir formda yeniden üretmektedir (Koç, 2026). Bu yapılar; özellikle siber savunma, yapay zeka gibi alanlarda geliştirilen ortak projeler, Hint-Pasifik ile Avrupa-Atlantik güvenlik sahalarını birbirine bağlayan kurumsal köprüler haline gelmiştir.

NATO’nun bu yöndeki en somut küresel açılımı; Japonya, Güney Kore, Avustralya ve Yeni Zelanda’dan oluşan Hint-Pasifik Dörtlüsü (IP4) ortaklığıdır. IP4 liderlerinin 2022 Madrid Zirvesi’ne ilk kez katılımı, NATO’nun küresel vizyonunun somut bir tezahürü olmuş ve iki güvenlik sahasını birbirine bağlayan köprüler kurmuştur(Tokmakoglu, 2026). İttifak’ın küresel caydırıcılığını güçlendirmek amacıyla NATO, IP4 ortaklarıyla siber savunma, deniz güvenliği ve yıkıcı teknolojiler alanında işbirlikçi güvenlik ağını derinleştirmektedir(Tokmakoglu, 2026).

İttifak’ın hem Avrupa-Atlantik sahasındaki konvansiyonel caydırıcılığı koruması hem de ABD’nin stratejik ağırlığını Hint-Pasifik bölgesine kaydırması, NATO bünyesinde köklü bir askeri ve ekonomik güç dengelenmesini zorunlu kılmıştır. Donald Trump’ın ikinci başkanlık döneminde ABD’nin küresel taahhütlerini rasyonelleştirme ve yük paylaşımı baskısı karşısında, NATO içerisinde güçlü bir “Avrupa Sütunu” inşa etme fikri hayati bir boyut kazanmıştır. Bu kapsamda geliştirilen ve Ankara Zirvesi’nde resmen benimsenen NATO 3.0 konsepti; ABD’nin kaynaklarını Pasifik’e odaklayabilmesi için, konvansiyonel savunma ve caydırıcılık sorumluluğunun büyük oranda Avrupa müttefikleri tarafından üstlenilmesini öngören yapısal bir dönüşümü ifade etmektedir (Jiaxuan, 2026). Bu stratejik sorumluluk transferinin finansal ve askeri alt yapısı, müttefiklerin tarihi zirve deklarasyonlarında aldıkları taahhütlerle somutlaşmaktadır. 2025 Lahey Zirve Bildirisi ile müttefikler, 2035 yılına kadar GSYİH’lerinin yıllık %5’ini savunma ve güvenlik harcamalarına ayırma taahhüdünde bulunmuştur. Bu taahhüt, %3,5’lik kısmın doğrudan NATO savunma hedeflerine ve konvansiyonel askeri gereksinimlere ayrılmasını, kalan %1,5’lik kısmın ise sivil hazırlık, kritik altyapı güvenliği, siber koruma ve inovasyonun desteklenmesi için kullanılmasını öngörmektedir (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2025). Bu doğrultuda, 2026 Ankara Zirve Bildirisi ile Avrupa müttefikleri ve Kanada, 139 milyar doları aşan savunma bütçesi artışları ve 50 milyar dolarlık yeni savunma sanayii tedarik paketleri açıklayarak konvansiyonel caydırıcılığın Avrupa kanadını güçlendirme kararlılığını ortaya koymuşlardır (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2026).

Askeri-operasyonel düzeyde ise bu dönüşüm, NATO'nun Yeni Kuvvet Modeli (*New Force Model*) ve partner kuvvetlerin entegrasyonu ile desteklenmektedir. Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemden farklı olarak Avrupa, İttifak'ın belirleyici askeri yeteneklerinin çok daha büyük bir bölümünü kendisi üretmek ve konuşlandırmak durumundadır. Bu doğrultuda, ABD askeri varlıklarının veya stratejik yeteneklerinin başka bir coğrafyada meşgul olması ihtimaline karşı İttifak'ın operasyonel planları yenilenmektedir. Bu askeri yeniden yapılanma sürecinde iki temel operasyonel ilke benimsenmiştir: İlki, ABD'nin Avrupa'daki komuta yapısı kadrolarındaki varlığını rasyonelleştirmesi durumunda ortaya çıkacak boşlukların transatlantik bütünlüğü koruyacak şekilde Avrupalı subaylarca doldurulmasıdır. İkincisi ise olası bir savunma operasyonunda Avrupalı müttefiklerin tümen veya ordu seviyesinde devasa askeri oluşumlar sağlaması öngörülürken, ABD'nin lojistik ve teknolojik destek unsurlarının her tümen seviyesindeki askeri gücün ayrılmaz bir parçası olmaya devam etmesidir (Raik vd., 2025).

Böylece güçlendirilen Avrupa Sütunu, ABD'nin küresel taahhütlerini dengelemesine ve kaynaklarını Hint-Pasifik gibi diğer stratejik öncelikli bölgelere odaklayabilmesine yardımcı olmaktadır. Bu süreç, Avrupa-Atlantik sahasındaki konvansiyonel caydırıcılığı Avrupalı devletlerin kendi askeri ve finansal kapasiteleriyle tahkim ettiği yeni bir transatlantik güvenlik dengesi olan "NATO 3.0" konseptini yaratmaktadır (Jiaxuan, 2026). Bu yeni askeri mimari, bir yandan Avrupa'nın kendi savunma sorumluluğunu kademeli olarak artırırken, diğer yandan ABD'nin hayati güvenlik garantilerini İttifak bünyesinde tutarak transatlantik bağın inandırıcılığını korumaktadır.

3. Sonuç

NATO, 1949 yılında Sovyet tehdidini çevrelemek amacıyla bölgesel bir kolektif savunma örgütü olarak kurulmuş, Soğuk Savaş sonrasında ise terörizmle mücadele ve alan dışı kriz yönetimi operasyonlarına yönelmiştir. Ancak küresel jeopolitik ağırlık merkezinin Hint-Pasifik sahasına kayması ve Çin-Rusya stratejik ortaklığının fiili bir ittifak gibi derinleşmesi, İttifak'ı konvansiyonel caydırıcılığı ve toprak savunmasını yeniden önceliklendiren bir temellere dönüş yoluna sokmuştur.

2022 Stratejik Konsepti ile tescillenen bu yeni dönemde Rusya en önemli ve doğrudan tehdit olarak tanımlanırken; Çin, İttifak'ın çıkarlarına, güvenliğine ve değerlerine yönelik ilk kez resmen bir sistemsal meydan okuma ilan edilmiştir. ÇHC'nin Rusya'nın Ukrayna'daki savaşına sivil-askeri çift kullanımlı teknolojiler ve hammadde sağlayarak verdiği destek, NATO tarafından resmi olarak belirleyici bir kolaylaştırıcı şeklinde adlandırılarak iki güvenlik

sahasının artık birbirinden bağımsız düşünölemeyeceğini kanıtlamıştır. Bu sistemsel baskılar karşısında NATO, siber ve uzay alanlarını 5. Madde kapsamındaki caydırıcılık şemsiyesine dahil ederek savunma yelpazesini genişletmiştir. İttifak, Asya-Pasifik'teki geleneksel ikili merkez ve çevre ittifak sisteminin geçirdiğı yapısal dönüşöme uyum sağlamış; siber savunma, yapay zeka ve dezenformasyon gibi kritik alanlarda QUAD, AUKUS ve IP4 ortaklıkları vasıtasıyla küresel bir güvenlik koordinasyon platformuna dönüşmüştür.

ABD'nin kaynaklarını Hint-Pasifik'e odaklama ihtiyacı ise konvansiyonel caydırıcılık sorumluluğunun büyük ölçöde Avrupa müttefikleri tarafından üstlenildiğı NATO 3.0 ve Avrupa Sütunu kavramlarının inşasını hayati kılmıştır. 2025 Lahey zirvesindeki %5 GSYİH savunma harcaması taahhüdü ve 2026 Ankara zirvesinde açıklanan bütçe artışları ile yeni tedarik paketleri, daha güçlü bir NATO içinde daha güçlü bir Avrupa'nın askeri ve ekonomik temellerini atmaktadır. Sonuç olarak NATO, çok-düzenli dünyanın karmaşık tehditleriyle yüzleşirken, transatlantik bağın inandırıcılığını kendi içsel siyasi ve askeri uyumu üzerinden yeniden üretmektedir.

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France in the Indo-Pacific Region: Regional Presence and Strategic Objectives

Zeynep Gökçe Bulgen

Today, world politics is a multi-faceted environment, full of diverse dynamics, and consequently, constantly changing. With China or India, as rising powers in Asia, playing an active role on the international stage, and the presence of new actors in a multipolar order, political weight has begun to shift from the Atlantic region to the Asian region. In particular, there are countries focusing on the Indo-Pacific region and publishing white papers on the subject because the Indo-Pacific region is of considerable strategic importance in many respects. For example, 44% of the world's landmass and, consequently, 65% of the world's population are located in this region. Furthermore, it has significant economic value, contributing 62% of the world's GDP. Furthermore, thanks to its vast oceans and sea routes, a large portion of the world's container trade and 70% of energy transfers pass through this region, making it a very large area in terms of trade volume. In other words, the most heavily used and actively utilized ports for maritime trade are located in this region. Therefore, 60% of global trade takes place in this geographical area. From a geopolitical perspective, the region is home to rapidly rising powers such as China, the U.S., Japan, and the BRICS countries, which include India, ASEAN, and Russia. The concentration of these powers, which are active in the international arena, leads to highly fragile and significant dynamics in the region. The presence of nuclear-capable countries such as the U.S., China, Russia, India, Pakistan, and North Korea in the region raises security risks, concerns about the functioning of decision-making mechanisms, and many other issues. Furthermore, the fact that the U.S., China, and Russia are also permanent members of the United Nations Security Council further amplifies the impact of their competition. Accordingly, the Indo-Pacific region is a critical area due to its importance for global prosperity and sustainability, as well as the challenges it faces, the problems arising from competition between major powers, and the increasing tensions. In this context, the Indo-Pacific attracts the attention not only of regional actors but also of Europe and France, as one of the prominent actors in the region, is trying to implement its own action plans.

The Effective Subjects and Objectives in France's Indo-Pacific Strategy

Due to the diversity and shifting balances within the Indo-Pacific region, the U.S. and many European states have developed their own strategic roadmaps for this region. While these strategies and action plans lack a common definition, their fundamental focus on the Indo-Pacific stems from one key: "The Indo-Pacific is the key to shaping international dynamics in

the New World Order (Özdemir, 2021).” While Germany and the Netherlands have recently been specifically monitoring and publishing policies on this issue, France stands out as a different player among European states in the Indo-Pacific region. Besides being a European state, France also defines itself as an Indo-Pacific state. This is because seven of France's thirteen overseas territories are located in this region, such as La Réunion, Mayotte, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis & Futuna, the French Southern and Antarctic Lands, or Clipperton Island. Furthermore, with the existence of island territories such as "La Réunion, Mayotte, New Caledonia, or French Polynesia," France defines itself not only as an Indo-Pacific entity but also as an island state within the Indo-Pacific region. These territories and borders grant France various diplomatic and economic rights and enhance its international visibility. For example, by obtaining access to the ocean around the islands, it can secure access to resources and raw materials within the region's waters. It has the potential to possess a vast area within the region's waters because it has territories and areas in both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean (Marcos, 2021). From the perspective of maritime diplomacy, this is a significant advantage because, geopolitically, France has the second-largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the world after the United States. This vast area encompassing maritime jurisdiction and territorial waters makes France's presence in the Indo-Pacific region more visible and brings action plans to a more feasible level. France's overseas territories in the region increase its sphere of influence, provide opportunities to closely analyze and observe existing regional dynamics, and offer practical tools for research and development. Therefore, French landmasses, waters, and, most importantly, the French overseas communities residing there, constitute a significant driving force for France's Indo-Pacific Strategy in economic, diplomatic, social, and cultural terms.

Unlike other European states, France's strategy is developed comprehensively, considering military, economic, social, and diplomatic aspects. The starting points of the strategy primarily include protecting overseas communities, ensuring and respecting territorial sovereignty, preserving the integrity of the EEZ, maintaining supply flows, and guaranteeing regional peace and stability. As the region becomes increasingly competitive and uncertain, France naturally needs to prepare an active action plan for the region. French Foreign Policy has long struggled with challenges in its Indo-Pacific relations, particularly since 2017 due to tensions in the region. Following Macron's initiative to focus on the Indo-Pacific in 2018, various action plans were launched. In 2019, the phrase "Liberty of Sovereignty" was emphasized as the starting argument for the Strategy (Statement on France-India Relations,

2019). In 2020, France emphasized its role as a significant force in the mission to maintain peace and security (Macron, 2020). By 2021, work on the region had accelerated, with France publishing its own action plan and the European Union adopting a jointly published "Indo-Pacific Cooperation Strategy." While the joint commission's action plan covers the years 2024-2029, France's own draft military planning law includes a longer-term strategy covering the years 2024-2030 and is regularly modernized (Bondaz, 2023). In 2022, the phrase "Balancing Power," emphasized in 2017, resurfaced with a new meaning. It suggested that France's military driving force (Armed Forces Speech, 2022) and presence would play a leading role in limiting instability in the region and establishing balance by building a stronger army with regional partners (Ambassadors's Conference, 2022). France has adopted the goal of becoming a "balancing force" in the region, through its territory, areas of access, and diplomatic capacity. In other words, it is implementing a "mutually beneficial" diplomacy with the aim of providing security, stability, and sovereignty to both its own communities and local communities in the region (Bondaz, 2023). In addition, France supports the United Nations Charter while offering alternative solutions and assuming an implementing role amidst the uncertainty surrounding the Indo-Pacific region, emphasizing that multilateralism, and based on the rule of law, will bring solutions.

France's Indo-Pacific Strategy

France's Indo-Pacific strategy is designed to protect against regional threats, promote regional integration, increase economic diversification, and address the social and security needs of overseas communities. The region is characterized by power competition, regional crises, and several key hot sections, such as the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, the escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula, or disputes in the Indian subcontinent and the Gulf. As tensions and uncertainties increase in the region, regional security decreases and carries a clear risk of crisis. This leads every country and regional state to adopt a tense security stance. France, with its multilateral and cooperative approach, has built its Strategy on four main pillars to mitigate these risks and ensure interstate cooperation: strengthening and protecting its communities abroad, reinforcing the sovereignty of partners, supporting multilateralism and cooperation, and finally, the European Union supporting the Strategy's implementation in the region (Action Report, 2025).

Overseas communities are both key actors and beneficiary groups of the Strategy. Therefore, France encourages their participation in regional organizations to integrate them into the region, such as the Pacific Community (SPC), The Indian Ocean Community (IOC), and

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Furthermore, through these communities, France has secured membership in various regional organizations, such as The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), The Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), The Pacific Community (SPC), and the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). Beyond these memberships, France is a dialogue partner of The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and a founding member of The Indian Ocean Commission. To facilitate access to these active memberships, permanent secretariat and representative offices were established in the Pacific region in 2023. In 2024, the Mayotte Regional Integration Committee (CIRM) was established to increase the visibility of French communities. Numerous funds were allocated to support the integration of French communities in economic, social, and cultural areas. Furthermore, a broad network of "overseas points of contact" was created through the established representative offices.

Amidst rising tensions, France's military capabilities have been strengthened and modernized. According to the Military Programming Law, an estimated €13 billion has been allocated for the security of all its overseas territories (Action Report, 2025). Within the budget, objectives include not only physical military deployments but also cybersecurity, submarine cable security, infrastructure resilience, and combating information manipulation. From a physical military security perspective, the region is divided into five permanent commands to prevent and enhance the capacity for any interference against French overseas territories and institutions, with approximately 8,000 French troops deployed there. This military force system, comprised of these commands, has been deployed regularly at least twice a year since 2020. However, unlike in combat, this force is used for planning and executing multiple and bilateral exercises. Furthermore, in terms of maritime security, The French Armed Forces in the Southern Indian Ocean Zone (FAZSOI) stands out and is used in maritime operations and coordination in the basin. Furthermore, France, being a proponent of multilateral and bilateral relations, is involved in numerous cooperation and military support operations in the field of security and defense. For example, an agreement was signed in 2024 for the "Regional Centre for Maritime Studies (RCMS)" project, a joint French-Sri Lankan project, which will include security training and practical applications.

France has taken many steps to develop partnerships and collaborations. It is committed to addressing the challenges in the Indo-Pacific region through partner-based and multilateral approaches. Therefore, it is reinforcing steps to build stable and strong relationships and partnerships, and also supporting regional partners by encouraging their growth. France supports regional organizations and recognizes the complementary role of minilateral

collaborations and trilateral dialogues. France has established French deployments such as CLEMENCEAU, MARIANNE, and PEGASE to facilitate cooperation in the region and is striving to develop regional military interests. At the same time, it is deepening bilateral relations with many regional countries with which it shares similar interests and values, such as Australia, India, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, New Zealand, and Singapore. These collaborations include arms cooperation and joint naval exercises. Economically, it is strengthening bilateral economic dialogues with India, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Thailand, while supporting development banks in the region, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Also, as one of the signatories to the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), France demonstrates its cooperative practices in this corridor as well, offering alternatives to existing trade routes. In the energy sector, it finances energy transition using country platforms with Indonesia, Vietnam, and South Africa. Another example is its co-chairmanship of the international Solar Alliance established between France and India. Regarding minerals and critical minerals, partnerships have been established with resource-rich Australia and Mongolia, and a bilateral partnership has been formed with Japan for mineral processing. A critical period for European-Japanese bilateral relations is the establishment of the first industrial rare earth separation project in 2025. Looking at examples of trilateral dialogues, there is the 2020 India-France-Australia agreement, which covers cooperation on maritime security and environmental issues. Another example is the dialogue between France, India, and the United Arab Emirates, which involves comprehensive cooperation among these three countries. At the 2023 Summit, France and the United Kingdom agreed on joint maritime security in the Pacific region. The Canada-France Declaration, signed in 2024, also covers security and defense issues. Regarding regional powers, France is trying to strengthen bilateral relations by emphasizing ASEAN's presence and centrality in the region. For example, it develops policies aligned with ASEAN and has served as an observer in ASEANPOL since 2019. The ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM+) is another organization where it holds observer status. Furthermore, France aims to become an ASEAN Dialogue Partner in the future.

France's strengthening of its European Union strategy is facilitated by regional collaborations. ASEAN is important not only for France but also for EU relations. In this context, the EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Team Europe Initiative has been established, and France is one of its supporters. Furthermore, France stands out as a state implementing the

EU's regional Green Pact and Green &Blue Alliance for the Pacific actions. In addition, France increases the EU's visibility by participating in organizations and forums in the region.

France's Approach in Indo-Pacific Strategy

France strives to incorporate regional analysis into its action plans to respond to current global problems and regional crises. While the Indo-Pacific region brings great power competition to the forefront, France rejects the notion that many other countries in the region are forced to choose between great powers and that multipolarity is weakening. Accordingly, France prioritizes freedom of action and emphasizes diversifying the scope of action for partner countries. In this context, within the framework of sovereignty, it shapes the atmosphere of its strategy around the protection of the sovereignty of countries, primarily within its own sovereign borders. Accordingly, France is entering the Indo-Pacific region as a proactive and solution-oriented actor, unlike other states (Bondaz, 2023). As an advantage of this proactive stance, France does not reject the China-US rivalry in the region, but acts as a catalyst by emphasizing concepts such as diplomacy, cooperation, sovereignty, and the rule of law in the competitive environment. Within this proactive framework, the development of partners is supported, mutual interests are protected, and all these actions ultimately pave the way for France to consolidate its autonomy in the international arena. However, while France's actions may seem aimed at enhancing French identity in the Indo-Pacific, this is not entirely likely to be realized. With various actors involved and each employing their own strategies in the face of uncertainties, France's collaborations are sometimes not sufficiently visible. The policies of actors such as Russia, China, and even Turkey, which are focusing on the region, can change the rules of the game at any moment. Accordingly, France's Indo-Pacific Strategy, built for justifiable reasons, has working mechanisms, but its effects will become apparent over the years.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Indo-Pacific region is a critical area with unresolved or increasingly fragile tensions in both territorial and maritime areas. Many states are striving to play an active role in the region through political, military, and economic maneuvers. France, however, defines itself as an Indo-Pacific power due to both its European and overseas territories, and aims to consolidate its power and identity in this region through a more cooperative, law-abiding, and peaceful approach. Among the many countries focusing on the Indo-Pacific region, France stands out from other powers due to the tools at its disposal and the diplomatic strategies it

chooses to employ. France, confident in its own military, social, and political capacity, and aims to be influential in this region, but it seeks to do so without adopting a confrontational military stance, instead pursuing cooperation through multilateral, bilateral, minilateral, and even trilateral dialogues.

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