

# Turkish government and corporations respond to NATO crisis with calls to deepen alliance with Europe

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Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's interview with the *Financial Times* clarified Ankara's response to the growing conflict within NATO, particularly between the United States, and Canada and the European powers.

In an article published on Thursday titled "The ex-spy-master shaping Turkey's rise", the FT presents Fidan as "one of the main architects of modern Turkish security policy over the last 15 years" and says he is touted "as a potential successor to his longtime boss, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan."

On Sunday 2 March, Fidan attended a war summit at Lancaster House in London. The summit, which was attended by the leaders of the major European powers, the leader of Canada and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, was aimed at finding a common response to the US administration's pursuit under Donald Trump of a unilateral deal with Russia over Ukraine.

Insisting on continuing the war against Russia independently of the United States if necessary, the European powers have announced an extra 800 billion euros over four years for rearmament. France has offered to extend its "nuclear deterrent" to Germany and other European countries.

Turkey, which has close relations with both Ukraine and Russia, favours a negotiated settlement between Kiev and Moscow, fearing that an escalation of the war would damage the interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie. Ankara is now responding to the possible disintegration of NATO by seeking integration into the European Union and deepening its military alliance with the European imperialist powers.

Erdoğan made this clear in a statement on Monday:

"As an integral part of Europe, we consider our European Union membership process as our strategic priority. Recent developments have once again underlined the importance of Turkey-EU relations. European security is unthinkable without Turkey."

This is "a wake-up call for us to unite and design our own centre of gravity" Fidan told the FT, referring to the deepening discord within NATO over Trump's actions. "Turkey would want to be part of any new European security architecture if NATO unravels," he added.

"The genie is out of the bottle and there is no way to put it back," Fidan said, emphasising that the conflict was not temporary: "Even if President Trump decides not to withdraw from Europe at this time, it is possible that in the future someone with similar views and political ideas might consider reducing America's contributions to European security."

In a statement at the end of February, Fidan said: "If the European security architecture is to be reconstructed, it cannot be done without Turkey. Another point that should be underlined is that a security architecture approach that excludes Turkey, that excludes a military power like Turkey, would not be very realistic."

Turkey controls the sea route from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits, has NATO's second largest army and hosts numerous US-NATO bases and possibly nuclear weapons.

Turkey is also important for existing or planned trade and energy routes between Asia, the eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and Europe. Ankara, in line with its reactionary agreement with the EU, is

blocking the passage to Europe of refugees fleeing from imperialist aggression and its consequences in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Turkey and Europe have very strong economic ties. According to the Ministry of Trade's 2024 Foreign Trade Statistics, Turkey's exports to all European countries accounted for around 57 percent of its total exports in 2024. In contrast, Turkey's exports to the US accounted for only 7 percent of the total.

The Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), which represents important segments of the Turkish business community with strong economic ties to Europe, issued a statement in line with the Erdoğan government's line.

"A European security and economy without Turkey is not possible, it is high time to write a new history," wrote Mehmet Ali Yalçın, Coordinating President of DEİK Turkey-Europe Business Councils. "Keeping Turkey out of the political and economic partnerships established and operating in our region, including the European Union, will ultimately harm the EU," he added.

Stressing Turkey's importance to the European economy, Yalçın said, "In 2024, 41.4 percent (109 billion) of our total exports of \$262 billion went to EU member countries, while Turkey provided 32.1 percent of its imports from the EU. In addition, the share of European companies in foreign investments in Turkey over the last 20 years is leading with 73 percent."

Yalçın said that Turkey, whose 2025 defence budget has reached about \$45 billion (Turkish Lira 1.6 trillion), has become a "global player" in the arms industry and has a "project volume of \$100 billion in the sector". He called on the European powers to recognise:

Given the growing importance of energy and transport corridors in the energy sector, the sustainability of supply chains and the increasing importance of energy and transport corridors, and the fact that defence spending for European security is at its highest level since the Second World War, it is clear that our country is a prominent European country in all of these areas.

Yalçın went a step further, arguing that the future of the EU's growing competition with the US and its emergence as a "world power" depended on strengthening its ties with Turkey: "If the European Union does not keep up with the changes taking place in the world, I see a strong possibility that it will be left out of the game. The EU needs to read this change well and see the opportunities, otherwise the EU will not be remembered as a world power."



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