



ANKASAM

bulletin

July 2026
ISSUE: 2026/7



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ASEAN's 12th Dialogue
Partner: Safe Haven,
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ANKASAM IN PRESS

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JOURNAL

23 Journal of International Crisis and Political Studies

Journal of Regional Studies



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

China's New Move in European Diplomacy: Why Austria?



Başak ERTUNÇ

At a time when the European Union (EU) has been strengthening its economic security policies toward China, Beijing's diplomatic approach toward Europe has also undergone a significant transformation. The EU's efforts to reduce external dependencies in critical supply chains, introduce new regulations in strategic sectors, and implement a "de-risking" policy have altered the nature of economic relations between China and Europe. Particularly in areas such as rare earth elements, electric vehicles, and advanced technologies, growing competition has placed economic relations between Brussels and Beijing on increasingly sensitive ground.

However, China's response to these developments has not been limited to economic instruments. Beijing has sought to utilize diplomatic channels more actively in its relations with the European Union by engaging with individual member states and benefiting from the different perspectives existing within the Union. A recent example of this approach is the meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs Beate Meinl-Reisinger. Wang Yi's request for Austria to play a "constructive role" in improving China-EU relations should not be interpreted merely within the framework of bilateral relations between China and Austria.

The significance of this meeting derives from the fact that it took place during a period when the European Union has been attempting to strengthen its economic security policies toward China. This situation raises an important question: why does China intensify diplomatic engagement with certain member states such as Austria rather than focusing solely on direct negotiations with the European Commission?

The answer can be found in the multi-layered structure of the European Union's decision-making process. Although the EU operates as a supranational actor that develops common trade policies and economic security strategies, the economic interests, industrial priorities, and national approaches of individual member states continue to significantly influence the Union's overall policies toward China. Therefore, the EU's China policy is not shaped exclusively by institutions located in Brussels but rather emerges from the interaction between supranational institutions and national governments.

Andrew Moravcsik's theory of liberal intergovernmentalism provides an explanatory framework for understanding this dynamic. According to this approach, the preferences and interests of national governments play a central role in the decision-making processes of the European Union. From this perspective, China's diplomatic engagement with European capitals should not be viewed as an attempt to undermine EU institutions but rather as a strategic diplomatic method that takes into account the internal political structure of the Union.

A key feature of Beijing's European strategy is that China does not perceive the EU as a completely unified actor. Instead, it approaches the Union as a complex political structure consisting of states with different economic interests, strategic priorities, and political preferences. In international relations literature, this strategy is often described as "venue shopping," referring to the practice of selecting the most effective political channels through which actors can achieve their objectives. In a multi-level governance structure such as the European Union, political decisions are not made exclusively in Brussels. The preferences of member states and their economic priorities remain highly influential in determining the effectiveness and implementation of EU policies. Recognizing this reality, China has sought to strengthen its relations not only with European institutions but also with national governments across Europe. Within this context, Austria represents a particularly significant choice for Beijing. The presence of approximately 650 Austrian companies operating in China demonstrates the depth of economic relations between the two countries. This extensive economic network makes Vienna an important diplomatic partner for Beijing. Austria occupies a unique position as a country that is integrated into the institutional framework of the European Union while simultaneously maintaining a relatively pragmatic approach toward economic relations with China.

Furthermore, Austria's historically established policy of neutrality and its diplomatic tradition based on mediation and dialogue also increase its importance from China's perspective. Since the Cold War period, Vienna has developed a balancing-oriented diplomatic identity, and Beijing may perceive this tradition as an opportunity to create a more moderate communication channel within China-EU relations.

China's interest in Austria cannot be explained solely through economic considerations. For Beijing, Vienna represents a strategic actor capable of reflecting different perspectives within the European Union and supporting a more balanced approach toward China. Therefore, the relationship developed with Austria should be understood as part of China's broader effort to expand its diplomatic space within Europe.

A similar pattern can be observed among other major European actors. Countries such as France support efforts to reduce economic dependency on China in strategic sectors; however, they also remain cautious about completely closing diplomatic and economic channels with Beijing. This demonstrates that Europe's China policy is not based on complete disengagement but rather on a complex balancing process that aims to reduce risks while continuing to manage economic interdependence.

From the perspective of the European Union, the main challenge lies in aligning economic security policies toward China with the diverse interests of its member states. Brussels' ability to develop effective policies depends largely on whether it can establish a common position that accommodates different national economic priorities. If such coordination cannot be achieved, China may continue to transform internal differences within the EU into diplomatic opportunities.

Therefore, the Chinese approach toward Europe should be understood as a form of strategic adaptation to the institutional characteristics of the European Union. Rather than confronting the EU exclusively through its central institutions, Beijing increasingly focuses on engaging with national capitals where economic interests and political preferences may create opportunities for cooperation.

In conclusion, China's diplomatic engagement with Austria represents a broader transformation in Beijing's European strategy. China is no longer approaching relations with the European Union solely through Brussels-based institutions; instead, it is developing a multi-level diplomatic approach that considers the complex decision-making structure of the Union. This strategy does not necessarily aim to directly challenge the institutional integrity of the EU but rather seeks to understand and utilize the different economic and political tendencies existing within Europe.

In the future, the direction of China-EU relations will be determined not only by negotiations between Brussels and Beijing but also by the varying strategic and economic preferences of European capitals. Consequently, China's European diplomacy is increasingly becoming a multi-layered process shaped through both EU institutions and individual member states.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Fault Lines in the Eastern European Security Architecture: History, Politics, and Geopolitical Competition



Toghru VALIKHANLI

The Russia-Ukraine War has emerged as one of the most significant developments that has fundamentally transformed the security balance of the European continent. Particularly, Eastern Europe has become the center of not only the direct consequences of the war but also broader political, economic, and social transformations. Since the beginning of the conflict, security cooperation among NATO and European Union (EU) members has considerably strengthened, and regional states have increasingly coordinated their responses against threats originating from Russia. Nevertheless, despite this growing cooperation, historical disputes, debates over national memory, and political differences among Eastern European countries have not disappeared completely. On the contrary, as the war has continued, unresolved historical issues have become more visible and, in some cases, have developed into factors that challenge regional solidarity.

The security environment in Eastern Europe is shaped not only by military capabilities and defense policies. Historical relations among regional states, societies' perceptions of the past, and the ways in which political actors utilize these narratives also constitute essential elements of the regional security architecture. Historical memory disputes between Poland and Ukraine, the deep diplomatic rupture between Belarus and Ukraine, and the increasing security concerns of the Baltic states demonstrate that regional stability depends not only on military deterrence but also on political cohesion and societal resilience.

These developments should be evaluated within the broader context of Russia's geopolitical objectives in Eastern Europe. From Moscow's perspective, weakening political cohesion among regional countries represents not only a diplomatic advantage but also a strategic opportunity. Although one of Russia's primary objectives is to maintain pressure on Ukraine, another important goal is to reduce the collective response capacity of Europe's eastern flank and weaken solidarity within the Western alliance.

In an environment where achieving a decisive military outcome has become increasingly difficult, historical disputes, identity politics, and divisions within public opinion have gained greater importance. Therefore, political tensions in Eastern Europe should not be regarded merely as domestic political issues but as factors capable of influencing regional security dynamics. Considering Russia's capacity to conduct information operations, spread disinformation, and instrumentalize historical narratives for political purposes, societal divisions within the region have acquired a more critical security dimension.

Relations between Poland and Ukraine have strengthened significantly following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Poland has become one of Ukraine's strongest supporters in Europe, providing extensive military assistance, political backing, and diplomatic support to Kyiv. Warsaw's approach is largely based on the belief that defending Ukraine against Russian expansionism is directly connected to Poland's own national security interests.

However, despite this close strategic partnership, historical issues continue to create tensions between the two countries. In particular, the Volhynia events during the Second World War, the historical role of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), and the recognition of certain historical figures as national heroes remain interpreted differently within Polish and Ukrainian societies. These disagreements are not limited to academic or historical debates; they occasionally transform into political disputes that influence contemporary diplomatic relations.

In this context, debates surrounding the Polish state decoration awarded to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have attracted attention. Claims regarding the potential withdrawal of the Order of the White Eagle previously awarded to Zelenskyy have been linked to Ukraine's decisions concerning certain historical figures and military organizations. This development demonstrates that even highly symbolic state honors can become subjects of political controversy when historical sensitivities between two countries remain unresolved.

The tensions became more visible when some Ukrainian officials reportedly returned Polish state decorations they had previously received. From the Ukrainian perspective, such actions were criticized as potentially damaging to bilateral solidarity and indirectly serving Russia's regional interests. The Polish perspective, however, emphasizes that historical memory and sensitivity regarding past events cannot simply be disregarded.

Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to conclude that these developments will completely undermine the Poland-Ukraine security partnership. Both countries continue to perceive the Russian threat as their primary security concern. However, in societies where historical memory remains deeply embedded, symbolic issues can significantly influence political decision-makers. Therefore, it is likely that security cooperation and historical disputes will continue to coexist within Poland-Ukraine relations in the future.

The timing of these debates is also significant. Ukraine policy has gradually moved beyond being solely a foreign policy issue in Poland and has become an element of domestic political competition. During election periods, stronger criticism toward Ukraine may be used as a means of gaining political support. The differing approaches between Prime Minister Donald Tusk and President Karol Nawrocki may also contribute to the continuation of political debates regarding Poland's Ukraine policy.

Relations between Belarus and Ukraine, meanwhile, are shaped by a different security dynamic. The deepening military and political ties between the Minsk government and Moscow have transformed Belarus into a direct security concern for Ukraine. Particularly, Russia's use of Belarusian territory for military operations has increased Kyiv's perception of threats along its northern border.

For Ukraine, the Belarusian border has held strategic importance since the beginning of the war. Potential military movements through Belarus directly influence Ukraine's defense planning. Therefore, Kyiv does not perceive Belarus's military integration with Russia merely as a bilateral issue but as part of a broader regional security challenge.

A potential crisis involving Belarus could create significant strategic advantages for Russia. In such a scenario, Ukraine might be forced to allocate military resources across multiple fronts, increasing Russia's ability to apply pressure on the battlefield. The Belarus factor therefore demonstrates that the Russia-Ukraine War is not simply a bilateral conflict but a multidimensional process directly affecting wider regional security balances.

The increasing political and historical divisions in Eastern Europe may create a favorable environment for Russia's strategic interests. Moscow seeks to expand its influence in the region not only through military power but also through disinformation campaigns, information operations, energy policies, and historical narratives. These methods represent important instruments of hybrid warfare, which have become increasingly significant in contemporary conflicts.

From Russia's perspective, the most advantageous scenario would be the weakening of the shared threat perception among Eastern European states and the return of historical rivalries between neighboring countries. Such a development could complicate the ability of NATO and the European Union to formulate common policies. A decline in regional solidarity would provide Moscow with greater diplomatic and political maneuvering space on Europe's eastern flank.

Maintaining political cohesion in Eastern Europe is also critically important for the Baltic states. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania largely rely on NATO's deterrence capacity and allied solidarity for their security. However, increasing political divisions within the region may facilitate Russia's use of hybrid tools, including cyberattacks, disinformation activities, and energy-related pressure.

In conclusion, current tensions in Eastern Europe should not be viewed merely as bilateral disputes between individual countries. Historical disagreements between Poland and Ukraine, tensions between Belarus and Ukraine, and security concerns in the Baltic region represent broader elements of geopolitical competition that may shape the future of European security.

For Russia, a divided and less coordinated Eastern Europe represents a strategic advantage. Therefore, the primary challenge for regional states is not only to increase military capabilities but also to preserve political solidarity and a common understanding of security. The future security architecture of Eastern Europe will continue to depend on the ability of regional actors to manage historical disputes and maintain collective action against shared threats.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Ankara Summit and NATO 3.0: Transformation of the Alliance and Türkiye's Strategic Role



Prof. Dr. Murat ERCAN

The NATO Leaders Summit to be held in Ankara is taking place at a time when the security architecture shaped after the Cold War is being reassessed and international power balances are undergoing a significant transformation. Today, the international system is experiencing a transitional period in which the previous influence of the unipolar order has declined, while multipolar competition and strategic rivalry among major powers have become increasingly visible. Therefore, the summit should not be regarded merely as a diplomatic meeting where decisions regarding NATO's future will be made. Rather, it represents a critical platform for discussing how the Alliance should position itself within a rapidly changing global security environment.

Understanding NATO's current transformation requires an examination of the Alliance's historical development. Since its establishment, NATO's security approach has evolved in response to changing threat perceptions within the international system. This transformation can generally be analyzed through three major periods.

The first period refers to Cold War NATO between 1949 and 1991. During this era, the Alliance's primary objective was to ensure collective defense against the threat posed by the Soviet Union. NATO's founding principle was based on the concept of collective security outlined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. European security was primarily shaped by nuclear deterrence and efforts to contain Soviet expansionism.

Following the end of the Cold War, NATO entered its second phase. In the post-1991 period, the Alliance moved beyond its traditional role as a military defense organization and expanded its responsibilities toward crisis management, peace-support operations, counterterrorism efforts, and maintaining international stability. NATO's interventions in the Balkans, operations in Afghanistan, and enlargement toward Eastern Europe represented significant examples of the Alliance's changing role after the Cold War. Consequently, NATO's operational focus was no longer limited exclusively to the European continent but developed into a broader approach addressing global security challenges.

Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 initiated a new transformation process for NATO. Referred to as "NATO 3.0," this period represents the Alliance's renewed focus on great-power competition and strategic rivalry. Within this framework, shaped through the Madrid, Vilnius, and Washington Summits, Russia has been identified as the most significant and direct threat to NATO, while China has been defined as a systemic challenge.

In this new era, NATO's security perspective is no longer limited to conventional military threats. Areas such as cyberattacks, artificial intelligence technologies, space security, disinformation campaigns, protection of critical infrastructure, energy security, and the resilience of supply chains have also become major priorities for the Alliance. This development demonstrates that NATO has transformed from a traditional defense alliance into a more comprehensive organization attempting to respond to complex and interconnected security challenges.

Today, the war in Ukraine, tensions in the Middle East, and strategic competition in the Asia-Pacific region are not viewed as isolated crises. Instead, they are considered different manifestations of a broader rivalry between actors challenging the existing international order and the Western-centered security system. Therefore, NATO's fundamental challenge is not only to preserve military deterrence but also to strengthen resilience in areas such as economic capacity, technological superiority, and industrial production capabilities.

The role of the United States is also highly significant in this transformation process. Washington's gradual shift of strategic priorities toward the Indo-Pacific region has increased expectations for European countries to assume greater responsibility for their own security. The growing focus of the United States on countering China's rise has intensified debates regarding the improvement of European defense capabilities and the establishment of a more balanced burden-sharing mechanism within NATO.

However, a complete withdrawal of the United States from NATO or a deliberate weakening of the Alliance does not appear to be a rational option from the perspective of global power competition. NATO remains one of the most important instruments of American global leadership. The security of global trade routes, the stability of the international economic system, and the limitation of rival powers' influence largely depend on the continuation of institutionalized alliance structures. Therefore, the current trend is not the disappearance of NATO but rather its restructuring in accordance with emerging security challenges.

Within this transformation process, Turkey occupies a significant position in NATO's evolving security framework. The organization of the Ankara Summit in Turkey demonstrates the country's strategic importance within the Alliance. Due to its geographical location, Turkey represents a critical actor for European security, Black Sea stability, Eastern Mediterranean dynamics, and Middle Eastern security.

Turkey's role has become particularly visible in the context of the Russia-Ukraine War. Ankara's importance in regional security has increased due to its management of the Montreux Convention regarding the Turkish Straits, its contributions to Black Sea security, and its diplomatic mediation efforts between conflicting parties. Furthermore, Turkey continues to assume important responsibilities on NATO's southern flank regarding energy security, counterterrorism, and regional stability.

Another factor strengthening Turkey's importance is its developing defense industry. In recent years, Turkey has achieved significant progress in unmanned aerial vehicles, military technologies, and defense production capabilities. As a result, Turkey has become one of the NATO members capable of contributing to the Alliance's defense capacity. Considering the challenges related to conventional ammunition production and Europe's need to strengthen its defense capabilities, Turkey's industrial capacity represents a valuable strategic advantage for NATO.

Nevertheless, Turkey's significance cannot be explained solely through military capabilities. Ankara's multidimensional diplomatic approach, which enables communication with different actors, provides important advantages during periods of crisis. While Turkey remains a member of the Western alliance through NATO, it simultaneously maintains diplomatic relations with Russia, Middle Eastern countries, and other regional actors. This position allows Turkey to function not only as a military ally but also as an important diplomatic and mediating actor.

In conclusion, the Ankara NATO Summit represents a significant turning point that may influence the future direction of the Alliance. NATO's security approach is no longer based solely on territorial defense; instead, it increasingly incorporates hybrid threats, technological competition, energy security, and economic resilience.

In this new era, Turkey emerges as a critical actor in NATO's transformation process due to its geopolitical position, military capabilities, diplomatic influence, and expanding defense industry. The Ankara Summit is important not only because it highlights Turkey's role within the Alliance but also because it provides insight into how NATO will adapt to the changing global security architecture.



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The Future of Strategic Rapprochement in Canada–European Union Relations



Sena BİRİNCİ

In recent years, relations between the European Union (EU) and Canada have evolved beyond a traditional economic partnership framework into a broader strategic relationship encompassing security, energy, technology, and foreign policy cooperation. Developments throughout 2026 have demonstrated that the growing rapprochement between the two sides is not merely a temporary response to emerging crises but rather a consequence of broader geopolitical transformations taking place within the international system. The Russia-Ukraine War, intensifying global power competition, vulnerabilities in supply chains, and transformations in transatlantic relations have become among the key factors increasing the importance of cooperation between Canada and the European Union. Within this context, Canada-EU relations should not be understood simply as an increase in diplomatic contacts between two actors. Instead, they should be evaluated as part of Europe's efforts to adapt to a changing security environment and Canada's process of redefining its global role. Particularly, Canada's increasing visibility in European security affairs demonstrates that Ottawa is not merely a North American actor but also an important ally directly contributing to the stability of Europe. One of the clearest indicators of this transformation is Canada's largest military deployment to Europe in the past three decades. Taking place before the NATO Ankara Summit, this decision should not be interpreted solely as the fulfillment of alliance obligations. The continuation of the Russia-Ukraine War, rising security risks on NATO's eastern flank, and the United States' gradual strategic shift toward the Indo-Pacific region have been among the main factors encouraging Canada to strengthen its military presence in Europe. Canada's decision to expand its military capabilities, particularly as the leader of NATO's multinational battlegroup in Latvia, carries significance beyond providing security assurances to allies. Through this move, Ottawa has demonstrated its intention to become a more active and visible actor within the European security architecture. Canada's increased presence in Europe also reflects NATO's broader transition from a security model primarily dependent on American leadership toward a more balanced burden-sharing framework among allies.

For decades, European security has largely relied on the military capabilities and strategic leadership of the United States. However, Washington's recent demands for European countries to assume greater responsibility for their own defense have intensified discussions regarding burden-sharing within NATO. In this process, Canada is not positioning itself as an alternative to the United States but rather as a complementary actor strengthening the transatlantic relationship between Europe and North America.

Another significant dimension of Canada's rapprochement with Europe is cooperation in the field of energy security. Energy security discussions between the European Commission and Canada have focused on developing cooperation in areas such as clean energy, hydrogen technologies, critical minerals, and secure supply chains. For the European Union, which has sought to diversify its energy sources following the Russia-Ukraine War, Canada has emerged as a reliable and stable energy partner.

Canada also possesses significant advantages regarding lithium, nickel, cobalt, and other critical minerals that are essential for Europe's green transition objectives. These resources, which are necessary for electric vehicle production, battery technologies, and renewable energy infrastructure, hold not only economic but also strategic importance in today's international system. Therefore, energy relations between Canada and the EU have moved beyond conventional commercial cooperation and have increasingly developed into a form of geoeconomic partnership.

Reducing dependency on China in the field of critical minerals has become one of the central objectives of the European Union's economic security policies. In this regard, Canada has gained importance as a partner that shares democratic values with Europe and can contribute to the establishment of secure and resilient supply chains. Consequently, Canada-EU cooperation has become an important instrument not only for energy security but also for Europe's broader objective of achieving strategic autonomy.

Economic relations represent another fundamental component of this strategic rapprochement. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the EU provides the institutional foundation for bilateral economic relations. However, the importance of CETA extends beyond increasing trade volumes. The agreement also offers a comprehensive framework for cooperation in strategic sectors of the future, including technology, investment, the digital economy, and critical infrastructure.

The rise of protectionist tendencies in the global economy and the expansion of great-power competition into economic domains have encouraged countries with shared values to establish stronger partnerships. Canada and the EU's foreign policy approaches based on democracy, the rule of law, and multilateralism provide a strong political foundation for their growing cooperation.

Within this process, Canada's increasing perception as a "natural partner of Europe" has become particularly significant. In the face of uncertainties surrounding US foreign policy, Canada's image as a more predictable and institutionally oriented partner represents an important advantage for the EU. Ottawa is no longer viewed solely as a security contributor within NATO but also as a strategic partner supporting Europe's economic resilience and energy security.

Recent discussions regarding whether "Canada could become the 28th member of the European Union" also reflect the symbolic dimension of this growing relationship. Although such a possibility is not realistic from a legal or geographical perspective, the debate illustrates the level of political and strategic closeness Canada has developed with Europe. Despite being geographically outside the European continent, Canada is increasingly perceived as an actor closely aligned with European values due to its democratic institutions, economic model, and foreign policy based on international cooperation.

Nevertheless, Canada's increasing engagement with Europe does not indicate a departure from its relationship with the United States. Ottawa's foreign policy remains largely shaped by its economic and security ties with Washington. Canada's primary strategy is not to replace the United States with Brussels but rather to diversify its foreign policy options and develop additional areas of partnership. Similarly, the EU does not perceive Canada as an alternative power to the United States but as a complementary actor contributing to the strengthening of the transatlantic alliance.

The cultural dimension of Canada-EU relations has also become increasingly visible. Developments such as Canada's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest may appear symbolic at first glance; however, they represent Canada's broader interest in strengthening social and cultural connections with Europe. This demonstrates that bilateral relations are no longer limited exclusively to security and economic cooperation.

In conclusion, Canada-EU relations are evolving from a cooperation framework shaped by temporary crises into a long-term and multidimensional strategic partnership. Military contributions in the field of security, cooperation regarding energy and critical minerals, economic integration, and cultural diplomacy demonstrate that the relationship between Canada and the EU is becoming increasingly comprehensive.

Although Canada's membership in the European Union is not legally or geographically possible, the central issue today is not formal membership but rather Canada's growing role as an important partner in Europe's security, energy, and economic policies. Therefore, the transformation of Canada-EU relations should be closely monitored not only because of its implications for bilateral relations but also because it reflects the broader restructuring of the transatlantic order and changing global power dynamics.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

The Indo-Pacific Quad of NATO and the Limits of Cooperation



Dr. Cenk TAMER

Following the end of the Cold War, the question of what kind of mission the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would undertake became one of the most significant debates in the field of international security. With the disappearance of the Soviet threat, NATO entered a period in which its original purpose and continued relevance were questioned. During the 1990s, the Alliance attempted to redefine its role through responses to the Balkan crises, ethnic conflicts, and humanitarian interventions. However, the changing nature of threats emerging in the twenty-first century made it necessary for NATO to move beyond being an organization focused exclusively on traditional military challenges. Today, NATO faces a wide range of security challenges, including conventional warfare, cyberattacks, hybrid threats, disinformation campaigns, critical infrastructure vulnerabilities, and great-power competition. This transformation has encouraged the Alliance to adopt a broader security perspective that extends beyond its traditional Euro-Atlantic focus. One of the clearest indicators of this shift was the Strategic Concept adopted at the 2022 Madrid Summit, in which China was defined for the first time as a “systemic challenge” to NATO.

NATO’s changing approach toward China has also contributed to the Alliance’s growing interest in the Indo-Pacific region. The participation of the Indo-Pacific Four, consisting of Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, in NATO summits demonstrates the increasing institutionalization of cooperation between these countries and the Alliance. Nevertheless, despite this growing engagement, significant questions remain regarding the scope, limitations, and future direction of NATO’s role in the Indo-Pacific.

One of the main factors influencing NATO’s Indo-Pacific engagement is the difference in threat perceptions among global and regional actors. In the international system, each state evaluates security challenges according to its geographical position, economic interests, and political priorities. Therefore, the United States’ perception of China as the primary strategic competitor does not always fully correspond with the approaches of European countries or NATO’s Indo-Pacific partners.

From the perspective of the United States, China represents not only a regional actor but also a global challenger to American influence and strategic superiority. Washington views China’s military modernization, technological advancement, and economic expansion as central elements of long-term strategic competition. In contrast, several European countries tend to perceive China not primarily as a direct military threat but as both an economic partner and a systemic competitor. Europe’s approach toward China is strongly influenced by economic interdependence, trade relations, and concerns regarding critical supply chains.

Similarly, the countries forming the Indo-Pacific Four do not share identical threat perceptions toward China. Japan and Australia are more directly affected by China’s regional military activities, while countries such as New Zealand tend to adopt a more balanced and cautious approach. These differences represent one of the main challenges preventing NATO from developing a fully unified and comprehensive strategy toward China. This diversity is also reflected in the level of participation of the Indo-Pacific Four in NATO summits. While these countries have been represented at the leaders’ level during certain summits, at other times they have participated through ministers or lower-level representatives. This variation indicates that the partnership has not yet developed into a fully institutionalized security mechanism comparable to NATO’s traditional alliance structures. One of the most significant limitations regarding NATO’s relations with Indo-Pacific partners derives from the Alliance’s original purpose and legal framework. NATO was established in 1949 as a regional defense alliance designed to ensure the security of the North Atlantic area. The fundamental logic of the Washington Treaty is based on the principle that an attack against one member constitutes a collective threat requiring a response from all members.

However, some allies, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, argue that contemporary security threats are no longer restricted by geographical boundaries and that NATO must adopt a more global role. This perspective has led to discussions regarding the concept of a “global NATO.” The rise of China and increasing strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific have raised questions about whether NATO can continue to function solely as a Euro-Atlantic organization. Nevertheless, NATO’s assumption of a military role in the Indo-Pacific similar to its role in Europe would involve significant challenges. Although the Afghanistan experience demonstrated NATO’s ability to conduct operations beyond its traditional geographical area, applying a similar model to the Indo-Pacific would likely produce very different consequences. Afghanistan represented an operational environment where NATO members largely shared a common threat perception, whereas the Indo-Pacific region contains far more complex geopolitical dynamics. China’s regional influence, the Taiwan issue, North Korea’s nuclear program, and Russia’s activities in the Asia-Pacific region contribute to a highly complex security environment. Under such circumstances, direct NATO military engagement in the region could increase political disagreements within the Alliance and create additional strategic risks.

The possibility of Indo-Pacific countries developing an independent collective defense mechanism also faces several limitations. Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand share democratic values and maintain close relations with Western security structures. However, individually, they do not possess sufficient military capabilities to fully counter actors such as China, Russia, and North Korea.

Therefore, Western support remains an important component of these countries’ security strategies. However, such support does not necessarily imply the formal expansion of NATO into the Indo-Pacific region. A more realistic approach would involve strengthening cooperation in areas such as intelligence sharing, cybersecurity, technology transfers, joint military exercises, and diplomatic coordination.

In conclusion, NATO’s Indo-Pacific engagement represents a significant indicator of the Alliance’s effort to adapt to the changing global security environment. The identification of China as a systemic challenge and the development of partnerships with Indo-Pacific countries demonstrate that NATO is moving toward a broader understanding of security that extends beyond its traditional geographical boundaries.

However, major structural obstacles continue to limit this transformation. Differences among allies regarding China’s threat perception, NATO’s geographical constraints stemming from its founding principles, and the complexity of regional military balances make the realization of a fully “global NATO” unlikely in the short term.

For this reason, NATO’s relations with the Indo-Pacific Four are more likely to develop through strategic coordination and security dialogue rather than transforming into a conventional military alliance in the near future. Cooperation in areas such as cybersecurity, intelligence sharing, critical technologies, and diplomatic coordination will remain the primary foundations of this partnership. Ultimately, NATO’s Indo-Pacific strategy represents an attempt to redefine the Alliance’s role within the global security order. However, the limits of this process will be determined not only by NATO’s capabilities but also by broader shifts in international power balances and the level of strategic cohesion among its members and partners.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Regional-Global Effects of the Strait of Hormuz Crisis and Exit Strategies for Türkiye



Dr. Mehmet Gökhan
ÖZDEMİR

Developments in global energy markets demonstrate that energy security is no longer merely an economic issue but has become a strategic domain directly affecting states' foreign policy capabilities, geopolitical positions, and national security. Particularly, developments such as Iran's potential attempts to restrict access through the Strait of Hormuz reveal the fragility of global energy supply chains. Any crisis occurring along this critical route, through which a significant portion of global oil trade passes, has the potential to generate consequences affecting not only regional actors but also the global economy as a whole.

Within this framework, energy security for Türkiye should not be evaluated solely as a vulnerability resulting from external dependency; rather, it should also be understood as an area of transformation capable of creating new strategic opportunities. Although Türkiye continues to rely on imports for a significant share of its energy consumption, it has taken important steps in recent years to develop domestic resources, strengthen energy infrastructure, and increase supply diversification. Natural gas discoveries in the Black Sea, oil exploration activities in the Gabar region, and investments in renewable energy represent key elements of Türkiye's objective to establish a more independent and resilient energy structure.

One of the primary goals of Türkiye's energy policy is to ensure sustainable energy supply security while reducing dependence on external sources. In this regard, the development of domestic production capacity is significant not only from an economic perspective but also in terms of strategic autonomy. Access to energy resources directly influences various aspects of state power, ranging from economic growth capacity to diplomatic flexibility. In today's international system, energy availability has become a critical factor shaping states' ability to pursue independent policies.

When Türkiye's current energy structure is examined, it becomes evident that oil and natural gas imports continue to represent significant components of the national economy. Türkiye obtains approximately 93 percent of its oil consumption and more than 70 percent of its natural gas consumption from external sources. Therefore, fluctuations in global energy prices can directly affect Türkiye's current account balance and external financing capacity. The high share of energy imports within total imports makes increases in global oil and natural gas prices economically significant.

However, this situation does not mean that Türkiye is merely an economy vulnerable to external energy shocks. On the contrary, Türkiye has attempted to develop greater resilience against global crises through energy diversification strategies and infrastructure investments. Diversifying energy sources, establishing new supply agreements, expanding LNG capacity, and supporting domestic energy production constitute the main pillars of Türkiye's energy security strategy. Potential crises in critical energy transit points such as the Strait of Hormuz present important risks for Türkiye but may also generate new strategic opportunities. Instability in a region through which approximately one-fifth of global oil trade passes could significantly alter energy supply chains. Nevertheless, Türkiye's geographical position and energy infrastructure allow Ankara to perceive such crises not only as threats but also as opportunities to strengthen its ambition of becoming a regional energy hub. A central element of Türkiye's energy strategy is supply diversification. While maintaining relations with traditional energy partners such as Russia, Iraq, and Iran, Türkiye has simultaneously developed alternative sources through LNG markets, energy producers from different regions, and new supply routes. This approach reduces dependence on a single country or transportation corridor and enhances overall energy security. Türkiye's geographical position provides an additional strategic advantage in this regard. Located at the intersection of Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and energy-rich regions, Türkiye has the potential to function not only as an energy consumer but also as an energy transit and trading center. Consequently, energy crises, when managed through effective policies, may contribute to strengthening Türkiye's role within regional energy markets. Regarding the economic consequences of global energy price fluctuations, the price transmission mechanism represents an important issue. In previous periods, significant increases in oil prices raised Türkiye's energy import costs and intensified pressure on the current account deficit. However, Türkiye has developed greater resilience against such external shocks through increased export capacity, stronger tourism revenues, and diversified financial instruments. Another important dimension of Türkiye's energy transformation is the development of natural gas infrastructure. In the past, a pipeline-centered energy supply model increased Türkiye's dependence on specific sources and routes. However, investments in LNG infrastructure in recent years have provided Türkiye with greater flexibility in energy markets. Through Floating Storage Regasification Units (FSRUs) and new terminal investments, Türkiye has expanded its ability to access natural gas from various suppliers. These developments are significant not only for energy supply security but also for industrial competitiveness. A more flexible energy market can reduce the impact of global price fluctuations on production costs and contribute to greater economic stability.

Renewable energy investments represent another essential component of Türkiye's long-term energy security strategy. In recent years, significant growth has been achieved in solar and wind energy capacity, creating notable progress at the regional level. Increasing renewable energy production is strategically important not only for environmental objectives but also for reducing dependence on imported energy resources. Nevertheless, Türkiye's energy transformation is not limited solely to accessing new energy sources. Improving energy efficiency, adopting technologies that consume less energy in industrial production, and transitioning toward a higher value-added economic model are also critical elements of long-term energy security. Looking ahead, four strategic areas are expected to shape Türkiye's energy security policies. The first is the diversification of energy resources and supply routes. Second, further development of LNG infrastructure will increase Türkiye's flexibility within global energy markets. Third, strengthening energy efficiency policies will contribute to reducing import costs. Finally, more effective use of financial risk management mechanisms will help limit the economic consequences of energy price volatility. In conclusion, potential crises in critical energy routes such as the Strait of Hormuz create significant risks for Türkiye, but these risks may also serve as catalysts for strategic transformation. Türkiye's energy security strategy is not limited to managing current vulnerabilities; rather, it aims to establish a more independent, flexible, and regionally influential energy system in the future. The development of domestic energy resources, expansion of supply diversification, strengthening of LNG capacity, and acceleration of renewable energy investments are increasing Türkiye's resilience against global energy crises. Therefore, developments in critical regions such as the Strait of Hormuz should not be viewed solely as threats but also as opportunities that encourage Türkiye to build a stronger and more sustainable energy policy framework.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

China's Cultural Diplomacy Strategy: Pursuit of Hegemony or Image Management?



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pınar
ÇAĞLAYAN

Power competition in global politics is no longer conducted solely through military capabilities, economic strength, or technological superiority. Today, a state's influence within the international system is also closely connected to its cultural attractiveness and its ability to promote and legitimize its own narratives on a global scale. Therefore, cultural diplomacy has become an important instrument of foreign policy, particularly during periods of intensified great-power competition. The global influence that the United States (US) has established for decades through cinema, television, music, and popular culture represents one of the strongest examples of this phenomenon. In contrast, China has developed a comprehensive strategy in recent years aimed at expanding its cultural influence and strengthening its global narrative in parallel with its economic rise.

In recent years, a notable transformation has taken place in China's international image. Various international public opinion surveys indicate that positive perceptions of China have increased in several countries and that, in some regions, China's image has become more favorable compared to that of the United States. While criticism toward US foreign policy choices, its responses to international crises, and its role within the global system have contributed to this shift, China's more active use of cultural diplomacy instruments has also emerged as an important factor. China's approach to cultural diplomacy extends beyond traditional efforts to promote national culture abroad. The Chinese government has developed a multidimensional soft power strategy that integrates cultural elements with broader economic and political objectives. Within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, the expansion of cultural exchange programs, the development of educational and tourism cooperation with other countries, the promotion of the Chinese language, the internationalization of traditional festivals, and the circulation of Chinese cultural content through digital platforms represent key instruments of this strategy

The global promotion of traditional events such as the Mid-Autumn Festival is part of China's broader effort to communicate its historical and cultural heritage to international audiences. Additionally, the spread of Chinese aesthetics, lifestyles, and cultural elements through global digital platforms such as TikTok aims to create a different perception of China among younger generations. Similarly, video games and digital content focusing on Chinese history and culture are increasingly used as tools supporting Beijing's narrative of a "peaceful rise."

However, China's growing influence in cultural diplomacy remains limited when compared with the global cultural impact created by the United States, particularly through Hollywood. This is because American cultural influence does not originate solely from the success of its film and television industries but also from a broader global lifestyle, value system, and consumer culture developed over decades.

Hollywood cinema has been one of the most important instruments of American soft power throughout the twentieth century. Although its initial purpose was primarily entertainment, cinema gradually became a politically significant communication tool, particularly during the periods of the World Wars and the Cold War. Films were no longer perceived merely as cultural products but also as instruments capable of shaping how societies understand global events and interpret political realities. Following the Second World War, the weakening of European film industries and the expansion of American economic power accelerated Hollywood's global influence. American cinema produced narratives associated with concepts such as freedom, individual achievement, democracy, and modern lifestyles while simultaneously creating a cultural environment that supported the United States' global leadership role. During the Cold War, Hollywood became an important arena of ideological competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. American films frequently constructed a positive image of the US through narratives emphasizing the free world, individual liberty, and capitalist prosperity, while the Soviet Union was often portrayed as an authoritarian and oppressive system. In contrast, Soviet cinema primarily functioned as a tool of ideological education and social mobilization, but it was unable to achieve the same level of global penetration as American popular culture. American cultural influence continued after the end of the Cold War. Following the September 11 attacks, Hollywood productions contributed to the creation of new threat perceptions, particularly through narratives involving terrorism, authoritarian leaders, and anti-American actors. This demonstrates that cinema and television are not merely forms of entertainment but also instruments capable of shaping international perceptions and political attitudes. China, meanwhile, has developed a different model in response to American cultural dominance. It remains debated whether Beijing's objective is to establish a global cultural hegemony similar to Hollywood's influence or primarily to reduce negative perceptions of China. Current trends suggest that China's immediate goal is not to completely replace American cultural dominance but rather to legitimize its rise and construct a more favorable image among international audiences. In this context, China's film and television industries have received significant investment in recent years. Science fiction productions such as *The Wandering Earth* emphasize China's technological capabilities and future-oriented vision, while films such as *Wolf Warrior* and *The Battle at Lake Changjin* focus on themes of state strength, national unity, and China's resilience against external threats. These productions aim not only to generate national pride among Chinese audiences but also to present international viewers with an image of a powerful and modern China. China has also developed a strategy in television and digital streaming similar to the approach that enabled South Korean cultural products to achieve global success. Chinese television dramas have reached specific audiences, particularly in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, through historical narratives, traditional culture, and visual aesthetics. Furthermore, Chinese digital platforms such as iQIYI and WeTV seek to become alternatives to Western streaming services such as Netflix within the global entertainment market. Nevertheless, significant obstacles remain in China's attempt to establish greater cultural influence. One of the primary challenges is the high level of state control over the media and cultural industries. The emphasis on messages aligned with government policies in Chinese productions may lead some international audiences to interpret these works as forms of political propaganda. This perception represents a major limitation on the global acceptance of Chinese cultural products. Another challenge concerns cultural transmission and reception. Chinese history, Confucian values, and traditional symbols may resonate more easily within Asian societies, while they may not generate the same level of attraction in societies with different cultural backgrounds. Cultural influence depends not only on a state's ability to promote its own values but also on the extent to which those values are accepted and internalized by foreign audiences. In conclusion, China has made significant progress in the field of cultural diplomacy and has become increasingly visible within global cultural markets. However, China has not yet achieved a level of global cultural dominance capable of replacing the Hollywood-centered cultural influence of the United States. Instead, China's strategy is primarily focused on strengthening its national narrative, legitimizing its rise, and reducing negative perceptions associated with Western-centered interpretations. Therefore, China's cultural diplomacy initiatives should be understood less as an attempt to establish a comprehensive cultural hegemony similar to that of the United States and more as a strategic policy aimed at increasing soft power and managing its international image within an environment of global competition. In the future, the expansion of China's cultural influence will depend not only on its economic capabilities but also on its ability to create genuine cultural attraction among global audiences.



ANKASAM ANALYSIS

Türkiye Becoming ASEAN's 12th Dialogue Partner: Safe Haven, Connectivity, and Re-Asia



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The decision taken at the 59th Meeting of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers held in Manila to grant Türkiye the status of ASEAN Dialogue Partner as of 21 July 2026 can be considered one of the most concrete diplomatic outcomes of Türkiye's recent Asia-oriented foreign policy strategy. Announced by Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, this development elevates Türkiye to one of the most comprehensive institutional partnership levels within ASEAN, a status that has so far been granted to only a limited number of countries and represents the highest level of engagement below full membership. Although this step may initially appear to be a technical diplomatic adjustment, it has taken place during a period in which global power balances are being reshaped, the Asia-Pacific region is becoming increasingly central to international politics, and middle powers are pursuing more diversified foreign policy strategies.

Türkiye's achievement of ASEAN Dialogue Partner status is not the result of a single development but rather the outcome of the convergence of political, economic, and diplomatic processes that have developed over different periods. Three main dynamics have been particularly influential in this process. The first is the recent diplomatic revitalization in Türkiye-US relations and the renewed significance of Türkiye's strategic position within the Western alliance. The second factor is the maturation of nearly sixteen years of economic and institutional cooperation between Türkiye and ASEAN countries. The third and most structural factor is the transformation of the Asia Anew Initiative, launched in 2019, into a more systematic and institutionalized foreign policy vision.

Türkiye's rising position within ASEAN cannot be evaluated separately from the changing global and regional security environment. The NATO Summit held in Ankara in July and the renewed discussions surrounding energy and security crises related to the Strait of Hormuz have demonstrated that Türkiye is not merely a country participating in military alliances, but also an actor capable of contributing to stability in regions where the interests of different power centers intersect. Particularly, the new diplomatic momentum achieved in Türkiye-US relations during the NATO Summit process has strengthened Ankara's image of reliability within the international system.

Regional organizations such as ASEAN consider not only economic capacity but also political stability, diplomatic predictability, and international positioning when determining partnership statuses. From this perspective, Türkiye's role within NATO, its contributions to Black Sea security, its position in energy corridors, and its mediation efforts in regional crises have transformed Türkiye from merely an economic partner into a strategic actor with global connections in the eyes of ASEAN members. Therefore, the timing of Türkiye's Dialogue Partner decision, coinciding with a period in which Ankara's position within the Western alliance has been reaffirmed, carries significant importance. The second major dimension of Türkiye-ASEAN relations is the long-term development of economic ties. Türkiye has developed its relations with ASEAN through sectoral dialogue partnership since 2010. During this period, economic relations have progressed steadily, and trade volume between Türkiye and ASEAN countries has increased from approximately 6.5 billion dollars to 16 billion dollars. This growth does not merely represent an increase in trade figures; it also demonstrates the strengthening of mutual economic interdependence and institutional trust. With a population of nearly 700 million and an economic size exceeding 4 trillion dollars, ASEAN offers significant opportunities for Türkiye. At a time when global supply chains are being restructured and countries are seeking alternative economic partnerships beyond single-centered production models, Southeast Asia has become a strategic economic region for Türkiye. However, for this potential to become a tangible achievement, Dialogue Partner status must not remain only a symbolic diplomatic arrangement. Türkiye's new position should be supported through investment agreements, technology transfers, logistics networks, defense industry cooperation, and new trade mechanisms. Within ASEAN, several countries hold particular importance for Türkiye. Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore are among the main actors with which Türkiye has developed intensive economic and political relations. Indonesia, one of the largest economies in the region, represents a strategic partner for Türkiye, particularly in defense industry cooperation, infrastructure investments, and commercial relations. The expansion of economic relations and defense cooperation between the two countries has made Indonesia an important center within Türkiye's ASEAN strategy. Malaysia is another significant political partner for Türkiye in Southeast Asia. Bilateral relations have increasingly diversified across defense industry, energy, education, and technology sectors. Cooperation in unmanned aerial vehicles and defense technologies has contributed to increasing Türkiye's visibility in the region. Furthermore, Malaysia's position surrounding the Strait of Malacca, one of the most critical maritime trade routes in the world, enhances its geostrategic importance for Türkiye. Singapore stands out as one of Türkiye's key connection points within ASEAN due to its advanced capacities in finance, logistics, and technology. As one of the central hubs of global trade networks, stronger relations with Singapore could facilitate Türkiye's access not only to Southeast Asian markets but also to the broader Asia-Pacific economic system. Therefore, developing deeper relations with countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore will be essential for consolidating Türkiye's position within ASEAN.

One of the most important structural elements behind Türkiye's achievement of ASEAN Dialogue Partner status is the Asia Anew Initiative. Announced in 2019, this initiative reflects Türkiye's objective of developing its relations with Asia within a more systematic framework. This policy does not indicate a departure from Europe or the Western orientation; rather, it represents an attempt to establish simultaneous and balanced relations with Europe, Eurasia, and the Asia-Pacific region. ASEAN partnership can therefore be considered a concrete outcome of this multidimensional foreign policy approach. Cultural factors also play a certain role in Türkiye's relations with ASEAN countries. Historical and cultural connections with countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, where Muslim populations constitute a significant part of society, provide Türkiye with additional advantages. However, ASEAN differs fundamentally from the European Union in terms of structure and objectives. Despite their differences in religion, language, and cultural background, ASEAN members cooperate primarily based on shared economic and security interests. Therefore, Türkiye's approach toward ASEAN should not rely solely on cultural similarities but should instead develop a broader perspective based on economic and strategic partnerships. In conclusion, Türkiye's acceptance as an ASEAN Dialogue Partner represents an important development where short-term diplomatic success has been combined with long-term strategic orientations. Türkiye's role within NATO, its contributions during global crises, sixteen years of economic cooperation, and the Asia Anew Initiative have been the main factors enabling this achievement. However, transforming this status into a genuine strategic advantage will depend on the extent to which Ankara deepens economic, technological, and security cooperation with Southeast Asian countries.

ASEAN Dialogue Partnership should not be viewed as an endpoint for Türkiye, but rather as a new starting point. In the coming period, Türkiye will need to invest further in regional connectivity projects, supply chain networks, defense industry partnerships, and diplomatic mechanisms. If effectively implemented, ASEAN partnership can become not only a tool for strengthening Türkiye's relations with Asia but also a significant diplomatic achievement that reinforces Türkiye's position as a multidimensional and influential actor within the global system.

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July 13, 2026

- Professor Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, PhD, President of ANKASAM, Published an Evaluation in Milliyet Newspaper.

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CRISIS AND POLITICAL STUDIES VOLUME VIII, ISSUE I

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