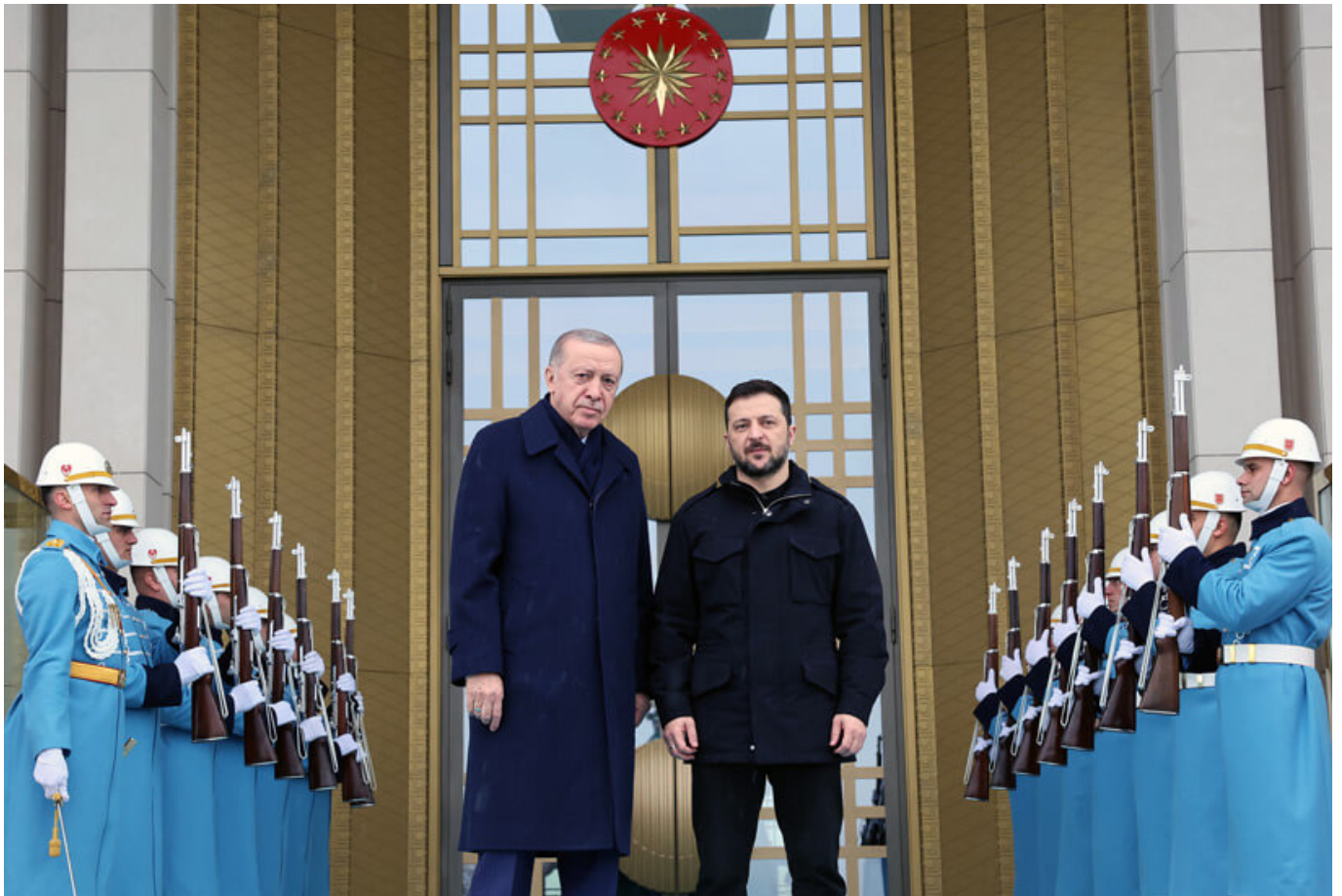




By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Europe cannot achieve security independence without Turkey



The US distancing itself from European partners through a new wave of **warnings** from President Donald Trump that Europe should look after its own security puts Turkey in a vulnerable position to choose one of the opposing approaches.

However, given its economic, political, and, above all, military stature, the crisis in transatlantic relations is certainly an opportunity for Ankara to increase its influence with its partners on both sides of the ocean.

If we are to believe the **assessment** of the leader of German conservatives and future Chancellor Friedrich Merz, we should expect major shifts within NATO in the coming months.

He said that he is not sure whether NATO leaders at the summit in The Hague next June “would still be talking about NATO in its current form or whether [they] will have to establish an independent European defence capability much more quickly.”

If these shifts really take place, and especially at the pace predicted by Mr Merz, Turkey's attitude will largely determine the outcome of these changes.

Polarisation does not suit Turkey

The sharp polarisation in security between the USA and Europe, which was set in motion by President Trump right at the beginning of his term, does not suit Turkey's interests in many respects.

The basis of this polarisation is the attitude of Western allies towards the war in Ukraine, i.e., different strategies to achieve peace. While President Trump has adopted many of Moscow's negotiating terms, Europe not only remains outside the negotiations (for now) but also has a completely opposite view of post-war Ukraine.

In this respect, Turkey has reason to feel aggrieved, as does Europe—to a lesser extent, considering that it showed great ambitions to be the main peace mediator during the three-year war.

Trump's decision to open talks on Ukraine directly with Moscow, ignoring the role of all its partners, puts Ankara in a second-class position

In some respects, it was the only one who managed to work out successful mediation agreements, such as the exchange of prisoners and the agreement on the export of grain through the Black Sea.

However, President Trump's decision to open talks on Ukraine directly with Moscow, ignoring the role of all its partners, puts Ankara in a second-class position.

Similarity with the views of Europe

Turkey's expectations were higher as it tried to maintain a balance between the warring parties throughout the three-year war. This included not imposing economic sanctions against Russia but, at the same time, strongly supporting Kyiv politically and militarily.

In this respect, Ankara's future positions on the possible redefinition of security relations between Europe and the US could be closer to European positions. Europe's interest in Ukraine preserving its independence, and especially in obtaining full security guarantees from Russia, is identical to Turkish interests.

Moreover, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has previously been an **advocate** of Ukraine's entry into NATO, thereby leading the way in satisfying Kyiv's ambitions in relation to America and Europe.

Given the new circumstances regarding security in Europe, Ankara has already

indicated that it could stand alongside European allies as it shares responsibility for the security of the common European space.

European allies understood that without Turkey, we cannot continue the defence of the European continent and Euro-Atlantic security - Mesut Casin

"Diminishing the dependency on the United States, on very strategic areas, I think will make them [European nations], all of us, much more resilient in the face of economic and geopolitical crisis," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan **told** Bloomberg during the recent G20 ministerial meeting in Johannesburg.

Mesut Casin, an advisor to President Erdogan, **accepts** the cooperation with the Europeans in building joint security capacities.

"European allies understood that without Turkey, we cannot continue the defence of the European continent and Euro-Atlantic security. Is Turkey ready to support this European security and defence capability? The answer is: Yes," said Mr Casin.

Faster removal of obstacles

A Turkish-European rapprochement with regard to changes in the area of common security does not necessarily mean a confrontation between Turkey and the USA.

As one of the five NATO member states that has American nuclear weapons on its territory, and at the same time the allies' main support in the area of several regional crises, Turkey's alliance with the US remains strategic.



Last November, after years of refusals, Germany agreed to the delivery of 40 Eurofighter jets

But the strengthening of European voices about the need to reduce the continent's dependence on the American security shield opens up an opportunity for Turkey to accelerate its ties with European partners, not only in the field of security.

Shared security interests are a priority for both sides and can be a catalyst for removing obstacles in other areas, especially in the economy or in facilitating visa regime and migration issues.

Even before the current tensions with America, Europe had already taken several important steps towards Turkey. For instance, in October last year, Berlin approved the export of arms worth several hundred million euros to Turkey, which included air defence missiles, torpedoes, and materials for the modernisation of Turkish submarines and ships.

Last November, after years of refusals, Germany also **agreed** to the delivery of 40 Eurofighter jets, which had previously been approved by the UK, Spain, and Italy.

The Europeans will therefore have to count on Turkey's support in realising their goals of greater security independence. In this process, which is of paramount importance for Europe's stability, they must be prepared to accommodate Turkey's interests much more than they have done so far.