

MP-IDSA *Commentary*

The 2026 NATO Summit in Ankara: An Analysis

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Summary

The 2026 NATO Summit highlighted the imperative to increase the alliance's defence investment, expand defence industrial production, and continue the support for Ukraine.

The Heads of State of NATO’s 32 member countries met for the 36th NATO summit in Ankara on 7–8 July 2026. The summit took place at the Bestepe Presidential Complex, hosted by Türkiye for the second time, the first being the Istanbul Summit in 2004.¹ The Summit was held in the fifth year of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, against the backdrop of the United States under President Donald Trump reassessing its military commitment to Europe.² The agenda mainly revolved around three priorities Secretary General Mark Rutte set out at his pre-summit press conference in Ankara on 6 July 2026³: increasing the alliance's defence investment, expanding defence industrial production, and supporting Ukraine.

Key Themes

At the 2025 Hague summit, allies agreed to raise their defence spending to 5 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP)—3.5 per cent of this would be core military spending, and 1.5 per cent for broader security-related needs, including cyber defence and infrastructure. Following US pressure and the Russia–Ukraine war, all 32 allies met the older 2 per cent target in 2025, as compared to only three in 2014.⁴

When NATO announced in 2025 that Türkiye would host the following year's summit, it highlighted that Türkiye has been a “strong NATO Ally for more than 70 years”.⁵ Türkiye, with the second-largest army among all the allies, sitting at the intersection of the Black Sea, the eastern Mediterranean, West Asia, and the Caucasus, was described as an indispensable power within the alliance by President Recep Erdoğan.⁶

The dominant theme at the summit was defence investment and the progress member states have made towards the 5 per cent target. The summit declaration noted that in 2025 European allies and Canada increased their spending in core defence by approximately 139 billion US dollars. Rutte called it a “sea change” in

¹ Samannay Biswas, [“NATO Summit 2026: Trump, Zelenskyy, Erdoğan and More - Full List of World Leaders Attending”](#), *Times Now*, 7 July 2026.

² Iana Maisuradze and Paul Taylor, [“Countdown to the NATO Summit in Ankara: Challenges, Expectations, Goals”](#), *EPC*, July 2026.

³ [“Pre-summit Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte Ahead of the 2026 NATO Summit in Ankara”](#), NATO, 6 July 2026.

⁴ [“NATO: Issues for the July 2026 Ankara Summit”](#), *Congressional Research Service*, 2 July 2026.

⁵ [“Türkiye to Host 2026 NATO Summit in Ankara, 7-8 July 2026”](#), *Insight EU Monitoring*, 20 August 2025.

⁶ Ali Mammadov, [“NATO’s Türkiye Paradox”](#), *Modern War Institute*, 8 June 2026.

their approach, and credited President Trump for this reform, summing it as “Trump Trillion”.⁷

Another closely related theme was defence industrial production. The first day of the summit was devoted in part to the NATO Summit Defence Industry Forum, a premier high-level event on transatlantic defence investment, innovation and production.⁸ It aimed to bring government officials and key industry leaders together to determine how the additional spending committed by allied governments would translate into increased production, cooperation and joint procurement. The summit concluded with a letter of intent for new surveillance aircraft and air-defence arrangements.

The third important pillar of the summit rested on the commitment of sustained support to Ukraine. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended the summit, and allies addressed how the role of Ukraine has evolved from being a recipient of aid to a security provider, given its wartime innovation and production of drone and counter-drone warfare.⁹

The summit asserted the understanding that European allies and Canada, working with the US, are “assuming greater responsibility for the Alliance’s defence”. In addition, the declaration flagged Russia as a source of “long-term threat” for Euro-Atlantic security and stability, alongside the persistent threat of terrorism. It reaffirmed the “360-degree approach” of NATO to deterrence and defence—the principle that the alliance must be able to respond to any threat.¹⁰

Lastly, issues relating to the emerging domains of warfare were discussed. The Declaration had allies committing to delivering capability targets in deep precision strike, cutting-edge technologies, intelligence, uncrewed systems, integrated air and missile defence, and agreed to develop an “interoperable transatlantic warfighting cloud”, along with adopting powerful AI models. The deliberations also took into account hybrid threats, i.e., activities operating below the threshold of an open war, such as sabotage and drone incursions. This featured mainly because of the repeated drone intrusions into the airspace of the allies.¹¹

⁷ Paul Belkin, “[NATO: Issues for the July 2026 Ankara Summit](#)”, *Congress.gov*, 2 July 2026.

⁸ “[NATO Summit Defence Industry Forum](#)”, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 14 July 2026.

⁹ “[The Ankara Summit Declaration](#)”, NATO, 8 July 2026.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, para 3.

¹¹ “[NATO: Issues for the July 2026 Ankara Summit | Congressional Research Service](#)”, *Small Wars Journal*, 6 July 2026.

Points of Contention

While the allies agreed on the majority of deliberations throughout the Summit, President Trump’s constant public criticism of allies clouded the event. Trump suggested he was unhappy with the allies as they did not support his efforts to take control of Greenland, along with not supporting the American military campaign against Iran.¹² He insisted that he had been “really testing” the allies. His repeated remarks on taking control of Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark, prompted Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen to remark that “Denmark was ready to defend every inch of NATO including our own territory”, and to call on allies to respect Greenlanders' right to self-determination.¹³ Furthermore, Trump singled out Spain, calling it a “terrible partner in NATO” for not increasing its defence spending, and ordered his Treasury secretary to halt all trade with the country.¹⁴

These outbursts and remarks brought back into question the American commitment to European defence and deepened anxiety about the future of collective security under NATO’s umbrella. These developments are also pronounced in the various decisions Washington has taken thus far, including the withdrawal of 5,000 troops from Germany. On 19 May, the department confirmed that the number of brigade combat teams assigned to Europe had fallen from four to three, returning the US footprint to roughly 2021 levels.

In addition, Ukraine’s path to becoming a NATO member remained unresolved. The Ankara summit, much like its predecessors, offered no timeline or roadmap for including Ukraine in the fold of NATO. While practical cooperation has deepened against the backdrop of war, there has been no discussion of membership.

The host country also embodied its own set of tensions. Türkiye is simultaneously essential and contested as it maintains working relations with Russia, which Erdogan defended as the “channel of cooperation with Russia to achieve peace”.¹⁵ It also has a longstanding dispute with fellow allies Greece and Cyprus. Trump signalled that he would sell F-35 fighter jets to Türkiye, overriding the restriction

¹² Peter D’Abrosca, [“Trump Says NATO Failed Two Key Tests During High-stakes Türkiye Summit: Not Happy”](#), *Fox News*, 8 July 2026.

¹³ Lorne Cook, [“Danish PM Says Greenland is 'Not for Sale' as Trump Joins NATO Leaders in Türkiye”](#), *ABC News*, 8 July 2026.

¹⁴ Lili Bayer et al., [“Trump Turns on Spain and Demands Greenland as NATO Summit Exposes Cracks”](#), *Defense News*, 8 July 2026.

¹⁵ Ali Mammadov, [“NATO’s Türkiye Paradox”](#), no. 6.

placed on it after it purchased the Russian S-400 air defence systems in 2019–2020, leading to numerous questions in the US Congress.¹⁶ The debate around burden-sharing also met odds as the Czech Republic declined to contribute to the collective Ukraine funding package.¹⁷

Outcomes

Despite the frictions, the Summit managed to produce a substantial set of agreed outcomes, the ‘Ankara Summit Declaration of 8 July 2026’. The first and most fundamental commitment was a reaffirmation of ‘collective defence’. The leaders declared their uncompromised support for Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. This clause states that an attack on one ally would be treated as an attack on all, and it also expressed an ironclad commitment to the transatlantic bond, describing unity and solidarity as the foundation of security for the alliance’s one billion citizens.¹⁸

The largest single financial pledge of the Declaration went to Ukraine, with all allies committing nearly 70 billion euros in military equipment, assistance and training. The Declaration welcomed the European Union’s commitment to give multi-year funding through the Ukraine Support Loan. Moreover, Ukraine signed drone co-production framework agreements with the Netherlands, Denmark and Estonia.¹⁹

Further, allies also announced 50 billion US dollars in new procurements, agreed alongside the Defence Industry Forum, together with commitments to increase collective manufacturing capacity, accelerate innovation with industry and continue removing trade barriers amongst allies. NATO’s summit wrap-up suggested that the deals included Northrop Grumman Triton surveillance drones and new early-warning aircraft from Saab.²⁰

It also launched two flagship initiatives. First was the ‘Drone Edge’, with allies investing 40 billion US dollars in uncrewed systems over the next five years, including counter-drone systems, drone production and training. Rutte announced

¹⁶ [“Trump’s Message About Turkiye Goes Beyond F-35s, Shows New Balance in Mediterranean – Analysis”](#), *The Jerusalem Post*, July 2026.

¹⁷ Nadiia Koval, [“The Ankara NATO Summit — A Reality Check on Words and Deeds”](#), *Kyiv Independent*, 11 July 2026.

¹⁸ [“The Ankara Summit Declaration”](#), no. 10, para 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, para 4.

²⁰ [“NATO Ankara Summit Pledges €70 Billion for Ukraine, \\$50 Billion in New Defense Procurements”](#), *Kyiv Independent*, 9 July 2026.

that countries would train five times more drone operations by the end of 2027, with NATO creating a procurement marketplace for counter-drone systems. The second initiative was an infrastructure commitment to fuel NATO’s supply chain, with a 27-billion-euro investment to modernise fuel storage and distribution infrastructure and support new facilities, including pipelines towards the eastern part of the alliance.²¹

Lastly, the Declaration reiterated the concerns of the larger security environment, stressing that Iran must not possess nuclear weapons while calling on it to respect the freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. Closing the summit, Rutte declared that the message from Ankara was clear: “NATO delivers”.²²

Where It Leads

The Ankara Summit points to an alliance in the middle of a deliberate rebalancing—a shift of responsibility for the conventional defence of Europe from the United States to European allies and Canada. Türkiye hosted a successful Summit while remaining on good terms with Russia. This attests to the strategic balance it continues to maintain. The Summit saw heavy funds committed to Ukraine as well as defence industrial initiatives. The reaffirmed commitment to Article 5 meanwhile upheld the founding logic of the alliance.

²¹ [“The Marketplace Problem: NATO’s \\$40 Billion Counter-Drone Bet and the Integration Gap It Cannot Buy”](#), *Drone Intelligence*, July 2026.

²² [“Secretary General on the Ankara Summit: NATO Delivers”](#), NATO, 8 July 2026.

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