



## The Weight of the Promise: NATO Meets in Ankara

The 2026 NATO summit in Ankara opened under a sky heavy with unresolved questions. For an alliance<sup>1</sup> that has endured for more than seventy years, the gathering at the Bestepe complex was never going to be a routine exercise in diplomacy. Delegations from thirty-two member states arrived aware that the decisions taken here would shape European security for a generation, and that the usual language of unity would have to be matched by something more concrete.

At the centre of the discussions stood the familiar but increasingly urgent problem of how much each country should spend on its own defence. Washington, under President Trump, has pressed its European partners with unusual bluntness, arguing that the burden<sup>2</sup> of protecting the continent has fallen too heavily on American shoulders. The proposal on the table, raising defence spending toward five percent of national output by 2035, would have seemed impossible only a few years ago. Now it is discussed as a serious, if painful, ambition.

Ukraine remained the moral and strategic<sup>3</sup> core of the summit. Allies moved to confirm a long-term package of military equipment and training worth roughly seventy billion euros for 2026, much of it drawn from a European credit facility. President Zelensky, seated among leaders rather than pleading from outside the room, embodied how far the war has reshaped the alliance. What began in 2022 as an emergency response has hardened into a sustained commitment, and few delegates spoke as though it might soon end.

Yet unity, however loudly proclaimed, is never guaranteed. Analysts have long warned that internal disagreements could

slowly erode<sup>4</sup> the collective resolve on which the alliance depends. Some governments remain anxious about the economic cost; others question how long American attention will hold as Washington looks increasingly toward the Pacific. Building genuine consensus<sup>5</sup> among thirty-two democracies, each answerable to its own voters, is a slower and more delicate process than the confident group photographs suggest.

For Turkey, the summit carried particular weight. As host, Ankara used the occasion to display the growing strength of its domestic defence industry and to press for the removal of trade restrictions among allies. President Erdogan was also expected to raise the question of American sanctions and access to the F-35 programme in his meeting with President Trump, matters that touch directly on Turkey's standing within the alliance.

Beyond the immediate agenda lay a larger and more difficult argument about what NATO is now for. The organisation was founded in 1949 to deter a Soviet threat that no longer exists in its original form, yet Russia's actions since 2014 have returned the alliance to something close to its founding purpose. To uphold<sup>6</sup> the principle of collective defence, members must persuade both their rivals and themselves that the promise still carries force.

The Ankara summit produced no single dramatic breakthrough, and perhaps none was possible. Its real test will unfold in the months ahead, in defence budgets, in factories, and in the quieter negotiations that rarely reach the cameras. Whether the alliance can turn its declarations into durable strength remains, as ever, an open question.

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## VOCABULARY — KEY WORDS FROM THE STORY

#	WORD	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE SENTENCE
1	<b>alliance</b> <i>noun</i>	A formal agreement between countries or groups to work together, especially for defence or a shared goal.	"The two nations formed a defensive alliance to protect their shared borders."
2	<b>burden</b> <i>noun</i>	A heavy load of duty, cost, or responsibility that is difficult to carry or bear.	"Rising fuel prices placed a heavy financial burden on ordinary families."
3	<b>strategic</b> <i>adjective</i>	Relating to a long-term plan designed to achieve an important overall aim, especially in politics, business, or the military.	"The company made a strategic decision to enter the Asian market first."
4	<b>erode</b> <i>verb</i>	To gradually destroy, weaken, or wear away something over a period of time.	"Repeated scandals slowly eroded public trust in the government."
5	<b>consensus</b> <i>noun</i>	General agreement reached by most members of a group after discussion.	"After hours of debate, the committee finally reached a consensus."
6	<b>uphold</b> <i>verb</i>	To support or maintain a principle, law, or decision, and prevent it from being weakened or ignored.	"Judges have a duty to uphold the law without personal bias."

## COMPREHENSION — ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

### QUESTION 1 — MULTIPLE CHOICE

What does the phrase 'the usual language of unity would have to be matched by something more concrete' suggest about the summit?

- A-) Delegates were expected to speak more clearly and loudly than usual.
- B-) Statements of solidarity alone were no longer considered sufficient, and real actions were needed.
- C-) The summit would focus mainly on translating documents into several languages.
- D-) Member states had already agreed on all major issues before arriving.

### QUESTION 2 — MULTIPLE CHOICE

According to the text, why does the United States argue that European partners should spend more on defence?

- A-) Because European weapons are considered technically superior to American ones.
- B-) Because the cost of protecting Europe has fallen too heavily on the United States.
- C-) Because NATO rules automatically require exactly five percent of output from every member.
- D-) Because European governments requested that the United States reduce its involvement.

### QUESTION 3 — SHORT ANSWER

The writer describes building consensus among thirty-two democracies as 'a slower and more delicate process than the confident group photographs suggest.' Explain what this contrast reveals about the gap between appearance and reality at such summits.

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## COMPREHENSION ANSWERS

My score today \_\_\_ / 3

**Q1** Statements of solidarity alone were no longer considered sufficient, and real actions were needed. ✓ Correct (B)

'Concrete' means real and practical, contrasted with mere words of unity, so the summit demanded action rather than reassurance.

**Q2** Because the cost of protecting Europe has fallen too heavily on the United States. ✓ Correct (B)

The text says the 'burden' has fallen 'too heavily on American shoulders', pointing to an unfair share of cost.

**Q3** **Answer:** It contrasts the staged image of unity with the difficult reality behind it. The photographs show easy agreement, but real negotiation is slow because each leader answers to its own voters, so visible solidarity can hide unresolved disagreement.

**Explanation:** A good answer contrasts image with process, notes that leaders answer to voters, and infers that outward unity can mask division.

## VOCABULARY — TRANSLATION & NOTES

### alliance

Common collocations: 'form/build an alliance', 'a military alliance', 'strengthen an alliance'.  
Note the phrase 'in alliance with' someone.

### burden

Frequent collocations: 'bear/carry the burden', 'a financial burden', 'the burden falls on someone'. It can be literal or, more often, figurative.

### strategic

Common collocations: 'a strategic decision/goal', 'strategic importance', 'strategically located'. The adverb form is 'strategically'.

### erode

Used both literally (wind erodes rock) and figuratively (erode confidence, support, or rights). Note the noun form 'erosion'.

### consensus

Key collocations: 'reach/build/achieve consensus', 'broad consensus', 'a consensus on something'. It is uncountable, so avoid 'a consensuses'.

### uphold

Common collocations: 'uphold the law/a principle/a tradition', 'uphold a decision'. It is an irregular verb: uphold, upheld, upheld.

### YOUR TURN — SENTENCE BUILDING

Mastery comes from practice. Write original sentences using today's target vocabulary.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

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