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## ***‘Blue Homeland’ architect warns:***

### ***NATO has failed, and the EU wants Turkiye on its knees***

Cem Gurdeniz, the strategist behind Turkiye’s Blue Homeland doctrine, warns that NATO is collapsing and the EU is seeking to exploit Turkiye’s strategic position as it faces internal decline and military irrelevance. He calls for a sovereign, Eurasian-aligned future – on Turkiye’s terms.



Photo Credit: The Cradle

In the second decade of the 21st century, seismic geopolitical shifts pushed global powers to reassess the importance of Turkiye’s position within Eurasia. This growing focus – from Washington to Moscow, Brussels to Beijing – has only intensified as the western bloc reels from a string of strategic defeats, particularly in Ukraine.

For over two decades, the geopolitical orientation of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government has remained the subject of heated debate, both domestically and abroad. Today, this debate has intensified.

Turkiye's foreign policy direction has taken on new urgency. With Trump back in the White House, NATO's military record in tatters, and the EU struggling to assert itself amid internal decay, Turkiye's strategic choices now carry weight far beyond its borders.

Recent signals from Brussels suggest a renewed push to revitalise the EU path for Turkiye after decades of delay, rebuff, and political manipulation. These overtures come at a time when Turkiye, the second-largest army in NATO, is being eyed by western capitals not as a partner but as a buffer zone against rising Eurasian powers and regional instability.

Retired Rear Admiral Cem Gurdeniz – architect of the “[Blue Homeland](#)” maritime doctrine and one of Turkiye's foremost geopolitical minds – remains deeply sceptical. Known for his sovereignist outlook, Kemalist stance, and fierce opposition to western neocolonial influence, Gurdeniz has long warned against Turkiye tying its future to a declining west.

His [experiences](#), including 3.5 years in prison on fabricated charges in the infamous “Sledgehammer” case led by the Gulenist network (FETO), have further entrenched his view that Turkiye must chart an independent, Eurasia-aligned course.

In this wide-ranging interview with *The Cradle*, Gurdeniz examines the realignment of global power, the failures of neocon policy in West Asia, the economic collapse of the US-led system, and the dangers of Turkiye's continued entanglement in transatlantic structures that no longer serve its national interests.

*(This interview has been edited for length and clarity)*

**The Cradle:** With US President Donald Trump back in office and the Ukraine war exposing NATO's weaknesses, how should we understand the rupture in the western-led world order?

**Gurdeniz:** We are witnessing the second great breakdown of a global security order since World War II. The first came after 1990, when the Soviet Union voluntarily dissolved, and Washington rapidly expanded its influence across Eastern Europe. But today, 80 years after the end of that war, the US is beginning its own retreat – shifting its strategic center of gravity from Europe to the Asia-Pacific.

The Trump administration recognises this. Its strategy is no longer about global control but about retrenchment and preparing for great power rivalry in the Pacific, particularly with China. This isn't a tactical adjustment – it's a systemic collapse. NATO's defeat in Ukraine was not just a battlefield loss – it was the end of an illusion.

**The Cradle:** What broke the neocon-led post-Cold War consensus?

**Gurdeniz:** The post-1990 order was built on the illusion of unipolarity. The US declared liberal capitalist democracy as the universal model. In this system, the west controlled finance, China was tasked with manufacturing, and resource-rich states were expected to supply energy and raw materials.

But this model encountered fatal contradictions. US military power failed in Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan. Instead of stability, it brought destruction. Russia reasserted itself militarily after 2008. China rose economically and technologically, challenging western hegemony.

And together, they built a Eurasian counterbalance. Most crucially, the Global South saw through the facade. Israel's genocide in Gaza, supported openly by Washington, shattered any remaining legitimacy. The western system now lies exposed – economically overleveraged, diplomatically isolated, and militarily vulnerable.

**The Cradle:** How do you interpret the Trump administration's posture toward this collapse?

**Gurdeniz:** Trump is not the architect of this collapse – he is the product of it. He and his team understand that the post-1945 model no longer serves the US. The manufacturing base is hollowed out. Debt has reached \$34 trillion.

The dollar is being bypassed in global trade. American power is contracting. What Trump offers is a retreat masked as strength. He wants to end America's entanglements and focus on restoring domestic industry. He knows NATO is a burden, not an asset. His challenge is not ideological – it's existential. He wants to keep the American empire alive by cutting it down to a sustainable size.

**The Cradle:** What's the fate of NATO in this equation?

**Gurdeniz:** NATO is now a zombie alliance. It exists more as a myth than a functional military bloc. Its expansion has been reckless. Its operations – from the Balkans to Libya to Ukraine – have destabilised entire regions, and its credibility is collapsing.

The EU, meanwhile, is pushing a €800 billion (approximately \$864 billion) military revamp under the name “[ReArm Europe](#).” But this requires massive austerity at home. European governments are preparing their populations for war, not peace. They need enemies to justify the spending.

But without US leadership, NATO cannot survive as a coherent structure. Trump's America will not fight for Estonia or send troops to Moldova. Europe will have to defend itself – and it is not ready.

**The Cradle:** Is the world truly shifting to a multipolar order – or is it still premature?

**Gurdeniz:** The shift is real and irreversible. BRICS is growing. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is expanding. Trade is moving away from the dollar. Regional powers like Iran,

India, Brazil, and Turkiye are asserting themselves. This is not a return to Cold War blocs. It's a rebalancing – a world where no single centre dominates.

Multipolarity is not about utopia. It is about sovereignty. It allows nations to align based on interest, not coercion. The challenge now is to build institutions that reflect this reality – new trade systems, security frameworks, and development banks that are not controlled by the west.

**The Cradle:** You've long championed the "Blue Homeland" maritime doctrine. How does this fit into Turkiye's future in Eurasia?

**Gurdeniz:** Blue Homeland is not a slogan – it's our geopolitical imperative. Turkiye is surrounded by contested waters: the Aegean, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Black Sea. If we surrender these spaces, we become landlocked and irrelevant.

Western powers, particularly through Greece and Cyprus, want to trap us in Anatolia. The Seville Map, backed by the EU, would reduce our maritime space by 90 percent. That is a geopolitical death sentence.

Blue Homeland asserts our legal rights, our naval presence, and our energy interests. Combined with the [Middle Corridor](#) – which links us to Central Asia and China – we form a continental-maritime axis. This is the backbone of Turkiye's 21<sup>st</sup>-century strategy.

**The Cradle:** What is your assessment of Turkiye's economic orientation in this new world order?

**Gurdeniz:** We must abandon the illusion that foreign direct investment and EU integration will save us. That model has failed. It brought debt, privatisation, and dependency. Our economy must be built on production, not speculation.

This means reindustrialisation, food and energy sovereignty, and regional trade in local currencies. We must protect strategic sectors from foreign ownership. Our Central Bank must be independent not just from the government, but from foreign influence.

Only then can we speak of economic sovereignty.

**The Cradle:** What about diplomacy? Should Turkiye align with a particular bloc – or pursue non-alignment?

**Gurdeniz:** We must pursue what I call "assertive non-alignment." That means refusing to be anyone's satellite. We keep our options open. We cooperate with Russia, China, and the Global South, but also engage with Europe and the US where our interests align.

But there are red lines. We will not join sanctions regimes against our neighbors. We will not host foreign bases targeting other states. And we will not be dragged into NATO's failing wars.

Our diplomacy must serve our geography – balanced, firm, and sovereign.

**The Cradle:** The EU claims to be a “values-based” project. How do you respond to this claim?

**Gurdeniz:** The EU’s values are selective. When it comes to Türkiye’s maritime rights, they back Greek maximalism. When it comes to Palestine, they say nothing. When it comes to Israel’s crimes, they call it “self-defense.”

This is not about values – it’s about power. The EU wants Türkiye as a buffer zone, a refugee warehouse, and a source of cheap labor. It will never accept us as equals. And we should not want to join such a club.

Our dignity is not for sale.

**The Cradle:** What role does the Turkic world play in your vision of Türkiye’s future?

**Gurdeniz:** The Turkic world is our natural sphere of cooperation. From Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan, we share language, culture, and strategic interests. The Organization of Turkic States is still in its infancy, but it has enormous potential.

We must invest in transport, energy, and digital connectivity across this area. We must create a common defence understanding – without external meddling. And we must develop shared narratives that break the monopoly of western historiography.

This is not nationalism. It is civilizational diplomacy.

**The Cradle:** In this context, Türkiye is being re-emphasised as the power with NATO's second-largest army. Ankara's EU route is being revitalised, and it wants to be more active in European security mechanisms and extend this to the south. What should Türkiye do?

**Gurdeniz:** For 67 years, Türkiye has waited outside the EU’s gates, with the illusion that one day we would be accepted as part of Europe. The truth is, we never were – and we never will be. The EU has never supported any of our core geopolitical interests.

It backed the Seville Map, which would lock us out of the Eastern Mediterranean. It sides with Greece on every maritime dispute. It refuses to recognize the TRNC [Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus]. It supports separatist groups along our borders, and it remains silent in the face of Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

Now, in its recent White Paper, the EU says: “Türkiye is a candidate for EU membership and a long-standing partner in the area of Common Security and Defense Policy. The EU will continue to work constructively to develop a mutually beneficial partnership in all areas of common interest.” This is diplomatic theater – designed to draw us into their crumbling security apparatus at a time when they fear abandonment by the US.

The question is: will Turkiye surrender its strategic autonomy, the blood of its soldiers, and the dignity of its nation to an entity that has always viewed it as a useful outpost – but never as an equal?

We must not look at Europe through the lens of Europhilia, or the old complexes of the Tanzimat period, or the Sèvres mentality. We must view it through the lens of history – of our sovereignty, of Atatürk's vision, and of the reality that Europe is in decline.

The way forward is not to chase illusions in Brussels. It is to return to Kemalist principles, integrate with the rising Asian century, and secure our geopolitical destiny in Eurasia – on our terms, not theirs.

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