

TÜRKİYE'S CONSTRUCTIVE VISION, EU'S DIVISIVE DIPLOMACY IN BLACK SEA AND CENTRAL ASIA

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1. Introduction: Competing Models of Regional Engagement

The evolving geopolitical dynamics of Eurasia in 2025 have brought into sharp relief two distinct approaches to regional security and cooperation. The **Ankara Black Sea Security Meeting** (April 15 □□□□ 2025), hosted by Türkiye, and the**EU** □□□□□□□ **Asia Summit** (April 3 □□□ 2025) in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, exemplify fundamentally divergent philosophies of engagement. The former, a Turkish-led multilateral initiative, prioritized post-ceasefire security planning in the Black Sea through inclusive dialogue among regional stakeholders, while the latter underscored the European Unions strategy of leveraging economic partnerships to advance political objectives, notably through implicit recognition of Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus.

Türkiyes Ankara meeting, convened at the Turkish Naval Forces Headquarters, brought together military representatives from 21 nations, including Ukraine, France, the UK, Bulgaria, Romania, and Georgia, to address maritime security, mine clearance, and stability mechanisms in anticipation of a potential Russia-Ukraine ceasefire.[1] This initiative aligned with Türkiyes long-standing emphasis on **constructive regionalism**, characterized by multilateralism, strategic autonomy, and a focus on practical cooperation over ideological posturing.

As highlighted by AVİM analysts, Türkiyes approach to Black Sea security has historically sought to balance regional ownership with NATO obligations, exemplified by initiatives like Operation Black Sea Harmony and the Black Sea Naval Force (BLACKSEAFOR). Ankara stressed its role as a mediator and stabilizer, ensuring that solutions emerge from regional consensus rather than external imposition.[2]

In contrast, the EUs Samarkand summit marked a shift toward **coercive conditionality** in Central Asia. While ostensibly focused on fostering connectivity and sustainable

development through a □□□□□ billion investment pledge, the summits joint declaration embedded clauses reaffirming territorial integrity and UN Security Council Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984) □□□□□□□□ tacitly endorsing Greek Administration Southern Cyprus sovereignty claims over the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). This linkage of economic incentives to political alignment, particularly on an issue peripheral to Central Asias immediate interests, underscored the EUs biased transactional diplomacy. AVİM critiqued this approach as a missed opportunity for genuine partnership, noting the exclusion of Türkiye □□ critical regional actor with deep cultural and historical ties to Central Asia—from the proceedings.[3]

These events illuminate a broader contest between Türkiyes model of **constructive regionalism**, rooted in equitable dialogue and shared agency, and the EUs **coercive conditionality**, which subordinates regional priorities to external normative agendas. The analysis that follows explores how these approaches shape stability, sovereignty, and long-term cooperation in Eurasia.

2. Türkiyes Black Sea Diplomacy: A Model of Constructive Regionalism

Multilateralism and Inclusivity

Türkiyes hosting of the **Ankara Black Sea Security Meeting** (April 15 □□□□ 2025) exemplifies its commitment to fostering regionally owned solutions through inclusive multilateralism. By convening 21 nations □□□□□□□□□ Ukraine, France, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Romania, and Georgia □□□□□□□ prioritized the participation of littoral states and regional stakeholders over external great powers. This approach aligns with the principles of **Constructive Eurasianism**, which advocates for collaborative frameworks that respect regional agency and avoid zero-sum geopolitical rivalries.[4] The meetings agenda, focused on post-ceasefire security planning, maritime safety, and mine clearance, underscored Türkiyes pragmatic emphasis on shared challenges rather than ideological divides.

This multilateralism reflects Türkiyes historical role as a stabilizer in the Black Sea, evident in initiatives like Operation Black Sea Harmony and the Black Sea Naval Force (BLACKSEAFOR). By excluding non-littoral powers such as the United States and Russia, Türkiye reinforced the principle of **regional ownership**, ensuring that solutions emerge from consensus among states directly affected by Black Sea security dynamics. As emphasized in AVİM analyses, Türkiyes diplomatic strategy in the region has consistently sought to balance institutional ties with NATO while safeguarding regional autonomy.[5]

Strategic Autonomy and Mediation

The exclusion of the U.S. and Russia from the Ankara talks was a deliberate choice to position Türkiye as a neutral mediator and regional player. This decision aligns with **Constructive Eurasianism**, which emphasizes strategic autonomy, dynamic adaptation

to geopolitical shifts, and mediation as tools to foster stability. By avoiding entanglement in great power competition, Türkiye has cultivated a unique role as a trusted interlocutor, capable of bridging divergent interests.

The meetings focus on practical cooperation □□□□ as mine clearance, shipping safety, and post-ceasefire monitoring □□□□□□□□□□ Türkiyes preference for actionable outcomes over symbolic gestures. This approach resonates with AVİMs assessment that Türkiyes foreign policy in Eurasia prioritizes stability through cooperation rather than ideological posturing. For instance, Türkiyes application of the Montreux Convention during the Russia-Ukraine conflict demonstrated its ability to balance legal obligations with regional security needs, earning recognition as a responsible stakeholder.

Outcomes

The Ankara meeting laid critical groundwork for a post-ceasefire security architecture in the Black Sea. Key outcomes included:

- **Coalition-Building**: A coalition of the willing emerged, comprising regional and European partners committed to ensuring maritime security and freedom of navigation.
- **Operational Frameworks**: Discussions advanced plans for multinational naval deployments to monitor ceasefire compliance, clear mines, and secure shipping lanes.
- **Reinforced Regional Partnerships**: Ukraines role in the talks underscored Türkiyes commitment to fostering equitable dialogue among littoral states, reinforcing trust and long-term collaboration.[6]

These outcomes reflect Türkiyes success in advancing a **constructive regionalism** model that avoids alienating stakeholders. By centering regional voices and prioritizing practical cooperation, Türkiye has positioned itself as an indispensable actor in shaping the Black Seas future security landscape.

3. EUs Central Asia Strategy: Coercion and Division

Economic Leverage as Diplomatic Weapon

The EUs engagement with Central Asia, epitomized by the **Samarkand Summit** (April 3 □□□ 2025), has revealed a strategy predicated on leveraging economic incentives to advance political objectives. The blocs pledge of □□□ **billion** for infrastructure, energy, and connectivity projects in Central Asia was explicitly tied to adherence to EU foreign policy priorities, including implicit recognition of Southern Cyprus through clauses reaffirming territorial integrity and UN Security Council Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984).[7]

By embedding these principles into the summits joint declaration, the EU effectively

pressured Central Asian states □□□□□□□□□□□ Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan □□□ align with its stance on Cyprus, despite their membership in the **Organization of Turkic States (OTS)** and historical ties to Türkiye. [8]

This approach undermines Türkiyes longstanding efforts to foster OTS solidarity, notably its advocacy for a two-state solution in Cyprus and observer status for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) within the OTS. As AVİM analysts have noted, such conditional diplomacy transforms economic partnerships into tools of political coercion, eroding the autonomy of Central Asian states and sidelining Türkiyes role as a regional stakeholder.

Destabilizing Regional Dynamics

The EUs strategy has forced Central Asian nations into an undesirable false choice between economic development and OTS unity, fracturing regional cohesion. By conditioning investments on alignment with EU norms □□□□□□□□□□□ regarding Cyprus □□□□□□□□ has prioritized unilateral geopolitical gains over sustainable, equitable partnerships. This contrasts sharply with Türkiyes **constructive regionalism** in the Black Sea, which emphasizes inclusive dialogue and shared ownership of security challenges without imposing external ideological conditions.[9]

Such moves risk drifting Central Asia to a theater of great power competition, rather than a space for collaborative development anchored in regional agency.[10]

Long-Term Risks

Central Asias alignment with the EU on Cyprus carries significant risks for regional stability and Türkiyes strategic interests. By alienating Türkiye □□ critical partner in energy, security, and cultural cooperation □□□□ EUs approach aims to destabilize the OTS and weaken Türkiyes capacity to mediate conflicts in Eurasia. AVİM has warned that such divisive tactics could fragment the Turkic world, leaving Central Asian states vulnerable to external manipulation by rival powers like China and Russia.[11]

Moreover, the EUs transactional diplomacy risks undermining its own long-term goals in Central Asia. By prioritizing short-term geopolitical victories over genuine partnership, Brussels risks fostering resentment among regional actors, who may increasingly view EU engagement as a vehicle for ideological imposition rather than mutual benefit.

5. Conclusion: Lessons for Eurasian Diplomacy

The contrasting outcomes of Türkiyes **Ankara Black Sea Security Meeting** and the EUs **Samarkand Summit** underscore fundamental divergences in approaches to regional engagement. Türkiyes model of **constructive regionalism**, *Constructive Eurasianism*,

prioritizes inclusive dialogue, strategic autonomy, and practical cooperation to address shared challenges. By convening regional stakeholders and excluding external great powers, Türkiye reinforced its role as a mediator and stabilizer, fostering trust through equitable participation and respect for sovereignty. In contrast, the EUs transactional diplomacy in Central Asia, exemplified by its □□□ billion investment pledge tied to political alignment on Cyprus, reflects a **zero-sum approach** that subordinates regional agency to external normative agendas.

Sovereignty and Stability

Türkiyes emphasis on **regional ownership** in the Black Sea ensured that solutions emerged from consensus among littoral states. This approach, aligned with the Montreux Conventions principles, balanced legal obligations with security needs, earning recognition as a responsible stakeholder. Conversely, the EUs imposition of territorial integrity clauses in Central Asia disregarded Turkic states cultural and political ties to Türkiye, fracturing regional cohesion and undermining the Organization of Turkic States (OTS).

Geopolitical Balancing

Türkiyes ability to engage NATO/EU partners while avoiding antagonism toward Russia exemplifies **Constructive Eurasianisms** core tenet of dynamic adaptation. The EU, however, exploited Central Asias economic vulnerabilities to counterbalance China and Russia, exacerbating great power competition and reducing the region to a geopolitical battleground.

Pathways Forward

The lessons for Eurasian diplomacy are clear:

- **Türkiyes Constructive Eurasianism** offers a blueprint for stabilizing conflicts through multilateralism and shared ownership, as demonstrated by the Ankara meetings operational frameworks for mine clearance and maritime security.
- The EUs **coercive conditionality** risks long-term instability by fostering dependency and resentment, as seen in Central Asias forced alignment on Cyprus.
- Regional actors must reject externally imposed conditions and embrace cooperative models that prioritize equitable partnerships over ideological or transactional gains.

As AVİM analysts emphasize, Türkiyes approach □□□□□□□□ in historical consciousness and pragmatic mediation □□□□□□□□ a sustainable alternative to great power rivalry. The future of Eurasian stability lies not in zero-sum diplomacy, but in frameworks that respect sovereignty, foster trust, and harness regional agency.

*Picture: Directorate of Communications

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