

Middle East in Crisis, NATO in Disarray: The Stakes for the Ankara Summit

by [Levent Gumrukcu \(/experts/levant-gumrukcu\)](/experts/levant-gumrukcu), [Julianne Smith \(/experts/julianne-smith\)](/experts/julianne-smith), [Soner Cagaptay \(/experts/soner-cagaptay\)](/experts/soner-cagaptay)

June 22, 2026, starting at 10:00 a.m. EDT (1400 GMT)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Levent Gumrukcu is Turkey's Deputy Foreign Minister, a post to which he was appointed in 2025. His distinguished four-decade career in government has included service as Turkey's Permanent Representative to NATO and Ambassador to Belgium and Georgia, along with varying posts representing Ankara in



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Julianne Smith is the former U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO and cofounder and president of the consulting firm Clarion Strategies. Previously, she served as Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State and Director of Europe/NATO Policy at the Pentagon, among other posts.



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Soner Cagaptay is the Beyer Family Senior Fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute.



Brief Analysis

Join us for an expert preview of next month's NATO summit in Ankara as the alliance deals with lingering tensions from Ukraine, Iran, and other crises. Watch live starting at 10:00 a.m. EDT (1400 GMT) on Monday, June 22, 2026.

With transatlantic tensions simmering over Trump's direct challenge to NATO, the Ukraine war, the Iran war, and other crises, Turkey is hoping that its good ties with the alliance's eastern and western flanks will help it broker progress when it hosts the next NATO summit on July 7-8. At the same time, Ankara's important geostrategic position near Ukraine, Syria, Gaza, and Iran may give it a foothold to help with U.S.-led efforts to mediate regional conflicts and rebuild war-ravaged societies.

Which issues in the Middle East and beyond are likely to receive consideration in talks leading up to the summit, and which areas will Ankara prioritize as officials strive to strengthen NATO's long-term solidarity? On the bilateral

front, how might the talks affect U.S.-Turkish decisions about F-35 sales, Russia-related sanctions, and a potential reset in military ties?

To discuss these questions, The Washington Institute is pleased to announce a virtual Policy Forum with Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Levent Gumrukcu, responsible for NATO and international security affairs; former U.S. Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith; and Institute Turkey expert Soner Cagaptay. Dana Stroul, the Institute's Director of Research and Kassen Senior Fellow, will moderate the forum.

Levent Gumrukcu's distinguished four-decade career in government has included service as Turkey's Permanent Representative to NATO and Ambassador to Belgium and Georgia, along with varying posts representing Ankara in New York, Washington, and Tehran. He was appointed Deputy Foreign Minister in 2025.

Julianne Smith is the former U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO and cofounder and president of the consulting firm Clarion Strategies. Previously, she served as Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State and Director of Europe/NATO Policy at the Pentagon, among other posts.

Soner Cagaptay is the Beyer Family Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute, director of its Turkish Research Program, and an adjunct professor with the Master of [Middle East Policy Studies Program](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/about/master-middle-east-policy-studies) (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/about/master-middle-east-policy-studies>), a landmark partnership between the Institute and Pepperdine University. His far-reaching media and scholarly commentary on Turkish policy issues includes the 2025 report *Building on Momentum in U.S.-Turkey Relations* (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/building-momentum-us-turkey-relations>).

The Policy Forum series is made possible through the generosity of the Winkler Lowy Foundation. ❖

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