

Nato Summit in Ankara: A Test For Unity?

Ankara hosted the heads of state and government of the 32 NATO member countries, as well as numerous invited leaders, nearly 100 ministers, numerous high-ranking diplomats, representatives of international organizations, and thousands of foreign guests. Türkiye hosted the 19th Nato Summit in 2004 in Istanbul. There were strict security measures in Istanbul throughout the summit since the Turkish government was afraid of a terrorist assault. The unexpected transfer of Iraqi sovereignty, which coincided with the first day of the NATO summit on June 28, blew the summit itself off the front pages of the international press. Meanwhile, protesters from all over the world gathered to demonstrate against the US foreign policy under the George W. Bush administration.

22 years later, Türkiye once again is the organiser and the level of security measures is at the top level. 2 months before the summit, roads were built, buildings close to airports and the presidential palace were painted freely by the government. Ankara saw the summit as a huge chance to show Türkiye as a major power inside NATO. The Turkish government utilized all security resources for the summit, and there were 56 thousand police and gendarme forces active in Ankara. Three airports in Ankara were actively operational for visitors within the scope of the summit.

What all the leaders were expected to talk about was NATO 3.0. As Pentagon policy chief Elbridge Colby puts it, the aim is a NATO 3.0 based not on dependency but partnership within the organization. This goal is even more complex after the Trump government's attempt to control Greenland, questions on the U.S-Iran war, and finally, the 5% defence investment commitment is going to be on the table. Diplomats and NATO officials say countries have been asked to hold off announcing major deals to create a bigger effect in Ankara.

Under Trump, the U.S. insists on Europe taking the lead in the region for defence and security spending, and the European leaders acknowledge that and try to step up the process. "Except for the fact that it was being held in Turkey by President Erdogan, I don't think I would have gone to it," Trump said. While Trump has frequently clashed with European leaders, his relationship with Erdoğan remains a distinct exception, and Türkiye's huge presidential palace is expected to be one of the main interests.

For President Erdoğan, one of the essential things to showcase is going to be Türkiye's fast-growing defence industry amid aspirations for stronger EU ties. Another topic that is going to be on the table is Ukraine. While European leaders recently secured a \$4 billion deal for Patriot interceptors and other US equipment this year, with the U.S-Iran conflict, it seems harder for Ukraine to get a bigger deal. NATO leaders know that they can't just ignore the Middle East; they must put it into their equation for Ukraine.

This year, NATO hosted the largest industrial forum in its history as part of the Ankara Summit. Türkiye, being the second biggest army in NATO, has been strengthening its military capabilities in recent years. Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) is increasing its personnel

numbers, also with its special commando units. At the same time, the production capacity of the Turkish defense industry is rising, and defense cooperation with NATO allies is developing faster since the last summit in the Hague. With the increasing capabilities, the Turkish defense sector has also recently become a major player in the European defense market. The growing number of contracts Turkish defense companies have secured with European allies is evidence of this trend.

After all these expectations, the summit exceeded the expectations of the head of states. In the summit the 5% goal was successfully underlined and once again persuaded for the next summit.

Right after the arrival into Ankara, US President Donald Trump's announcement that Washington intends to lift sanctions on Türkiye could mark a potential turning point in bilateral relations. Trump also said he is working with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to finalize the decision and it can lead to Türkiye's reassessment into the F-35 program.

Rutte revealed new multinational collaborations in surveillance, space, long-range fires, command and control, air platforms, submarines, and a vast drone and counter-drone marketplace, worth fifty billion dollars, in Ankara. Furthermore, he introduced NATO's new Front Door to Industry, a program for crucial supplies and supply chains, NATO Engine (a network of industries), and an additional \$217 billion in financial commitments from banking.

The expectations on the Middle East agenda were not so fulfilled, on the communique there was a message for Iran, regarding the peace process and it was forced by President Trump. There was a push from Putin to Trump 3 months before the summit to stop new aid packages. After the summit there was an opposite, warm moment between Zelenskiy and Trump and it was revealed that Ukraine pledged a robust €70 billion for 2026, with commitments extending into 2027.

As expected, Trump renewed his threats to annex Greenland, part of the Kingdom of Denmark, at the start of the NATO Ankara summit, and the answer from the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen was strong and holistic against Trump. At the same time with the Greenland problem, Trump once again tried to push Spain from the center because of their ongoing stance on the Iran war.

Consequently, under the Trump administration, the U.S. aims to turn NATO into more of a collective defense organization rather than the U.S. being the leading country of the alliance. The ongoing change is being described within U.S. administrative circles as a "return to factory settings". With this change in the scope, NATO 3.0 will become the NATO 1.0 that is adapted to the current multipolar world order. The NATO 3.0 will operate in a smaller scope and more of a hard power against the threats, and as the Trump administration says, "irrelevant or unnecessary" missions and cooperations will be stopped, and the Ankara summit was a test for the NATO 3.0