

The 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid: A New Strategic Outlook, Increased Cooperation with Asia-Pacific

The 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid, held on 29-30 June, seems to have all the chances to remain in history **as one of the most important summits of the Atlantic Alliance since the end of the Cold War**. The summit clearly swept away - provided the Russian non-provoked military aggression against Ukraine - the illusion of the "*End of history*", as Francis Fukuyama described it in the early '90; the previous global order has been disrupted and chances are that substantive amendments will consequently occur in the global architecture, including Asia-Pacific.

According to the official statements and the adopted documents by the Summit in Madrid, "**NATO leaders set to take key decisions to transform the Alliance based on a 360-degree approach**", which has successfully started.

It is so no coincidence that leaders from *Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea (AP4)* represented, for the first time, by their respective heads of government, have been invited to participate at such a historical event. **The active and fruitful participation of the AP4 leaders represents a significant development within NATO**. The target of finding the ways and new avenues towards encasing the cooperation between NATO and its four main/closest partners from Asia-Pacific region (*as it was stressed in several places in the official statements*) became a reality - **this will be an exclusive topic on Madrid Summit in the following analysis in this paper**.

It is more than important the fact that AP4 leaders, prior to the Summit, considered necessary to enter into debates **with a common view** on the most stringent targets of the Summit, as it is the situation in Ukraine as well as on their approach to NATO. In their 3 points communiqué it is emphasised that they "*exchanged their views on the situation in Ukraine and its impact on the international society from the view of the Indo-Pacific region* ".

Further, in the same document, it is stipulated that "*based on the recognition that the security of the Indo-Pacific and Europe is indivisible*, they also shared the view that they will closely

coordinate and promote their cooperation as NATO partners, making use of their respective advantages, **and take the lead** in deepening communication between the Indo-Pacific and NATO. The four leaders also affirmed that they will continue to communicate closely for the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region". The qualification of the security of the Indo-Pacific and Europe as being indivisible represents a new theory of exclusivity, which needs additional clarification in order to avoid speculations which have already been heard. **It is equally significant the role of taking the lead** in deepening communication between the Indo-Pacific and NATO.

While **there is no explicit sign on Washington's part to extend NATO to Asia**, certain analysts have speculated that the United States is reproducing the alliance strategy pursued during the Cold War against the USSR. AUKUS, Quad, IPEF could be considered acronyms that correspond to military, political or economic structures that concern Indo-Pacific. In this regard, **the invitation to the Madrid Summit of the AP4 might be considered an organic development of previous US initiatives focused on Indo-Pacific**.

According to John Kirby, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the White House, **the participation of AP4 at the NATO Summit is not a first step toward creating an "Asian version of NATO"**: "This isn't about an Asian version of NATO. NATO is a trans-Atlantic security alliance." According to the US official, the participation of the AP4 leaders at the summit represents "an indication of the linkage (a milder qualification and less stronger than the expression "indivisible") of the of global security between Europe and the Indo-Pacific", noting that "It's not one or the other anymore...The same kinds of assaults on territorial integrity and sovereignty that we're seeing in Europe can happen in the Indo Pacific."

The participation of AP4 and the official speeches and statements reveal also the essence of each country's respective national interest, besides the commitment to democratic values and the adherence to the rules-based international order, as all NATO member states. Naturally, each of the AP4 members share a set of common interests and features with NATO; besides, each of them - as every sovereign and independent state - follows its own national interest in relation with NATO, a platform which seems to currently promise ample opportunities both in the Euro-Atlantic region as well as in the Indo-Pacific.

According to the Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, "Ukraine today may be East Asia

tomorrow". In the view of the Japanese leader, the attendance of all AP4 leaders "is proof of NATO's stronger involvement with the Indo-Pacific region, which I welcome." In the light of the most recent developments and challenges, Prime Minister Kishida stated in a newspaper article published in Spain on the occasion of the NATO summit that "*Japan is determined to draw up a new National Security Strategy by the end of 2022 and fundamentally reinforce our defense capabilities within five years.*" The statements of the Japanese leader come as no surprise, particularly after having announced what came to be labeled the "*Kishida doctrine*", last month, June 2022, in his keynote speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. Essentially, according to Prime Minister Kishida, **Japan intends to double the current defense spending to 2 percent of the GDP and to play a more prominent role in the global economy, as well as global defense, security, and politics.**

The effectiveness of the "Kishida doctrine" will depend on the alignment of visions of all regional actors in East and Southeast Asia, not only at NATO level.

The first participation of the newly-elected **President of the Republic of Korea (RoK), Yoon Suk-yeol**, at the NATO summit, is also of historical relevance. According to the RoK leader, "*We value NATO's consistent support for us in North Korean issues.*" While stressing that "**North Korea's nuclear and missile programs are clear violations of the resolution of the United Nations Security Council, and pose a grave challenge to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and the international community**", the RoK President announced his country "**will play a bigger role with the international community and take full responsibility as a capable country.**" At the same time, the South Korean Foreign Minister, Park Jin, has reiterated that President Yoon Suk-yeol's participation in the NATO summit in Madrid is not evidence of Seoul's anti-Chinese stance; moreover, according to the Foreign Minister Park, if RoK "*joins the international order, it can also be useful to China*".

In the official statements one could identify in a more concrete way the content of the cooperation between NATO and AP4. It is underlined that it was agreed to step their practical and political cooperation in several areas, including cyber, new technology, and countering disinformation. They will also work more closely together in other areas such as maritime security, climate change, and resilience. The concept of such cooperation is explained to be based on the acknowledgment that "*global challenges demand global solutions*".

A post-summit reaction on behalf of Kremlin has not been so far identified. However, according to a May 2022 statement of the **Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov**, NATO officials “stated publicly that the alliance should have global responsibility, that NATO should be responsible for security in the Pacific region. Apparently, it means that next time, NATO’s ‘line of defense’ will be moved to the South China Sea”.

At the same time, China reacted strongly to NATO’s partnership with AP4. According to the spokesperson of **China's Foreign Ministry**, “NATO, a military organization in the North Atlantic, has in recent years come to the Asia-Pacific region to throw its weight around and stir up conflicts. (...) NATO has messed up Europe. Is it now trying to mess up the Asia-Pacific and even the world?” According to the **Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations, Zhang Jun**, “We [China] firmly oppose certain elements clamoring for NATO’s involvement in the Asia Pacific, or an Asia Pacific version of NATO on the back of military alliances.”

So far, no official reaction with regard to the NATO Summit has been recorded from India. While New Delhi is part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), along with Australia, Japan and the United States – participating countries at the 2022 NATO Summit, no views of New Delhi on the matter have been so far identified. Provided the complexity of the summit as well as its security ramifications for the entire Asia-Pacific region, an official viewpoint might be expressed in the near future.

Similarly, ASEAN – a decades long promoter of the ASEAN Centrality concept – has not yet manifested an official viewpoint with regard to the transformative effects of the NATO 2022 Summit in the Asia-Pacific. Indeed, it is yet to be established whether the dialogue within the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a security platform on Indo-Pacific established in 1994, is considered by ASEAN as the most viable instrument to enhance peace and security in the region. It is yet to be established if and whether the recent strengthening of the NATO-AP4 relations could create any effects on the “ASEAN Centrality” and the 2019 “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific”.

At a thorough analysis, one could say that the **United States might try to integrate parts of its Indo-Pacific strategy in the Euro-Atlantic Alliance**, particularly with regard to its competition with China.

Definitely, the 2022 Summit is also an expression of the ever tightening competition between the United States and China. Hopefully, the competition between the two powers will not turn into increased tensions in the Asia-Pacific.

The recent developments in the NATO-AP4 partnership could generate a more extensive military cooperation between the NATO members and the four Asia-Pacific partners, such as defensive military drills and so on.

G.S.

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