

**Asan Issue Brief Release:  
“Managing Decline?”  
NATO’s Uneasy Future After the 2025 Summit”**

**SEOUL**, June 30, 2025 – Dr. Kim Saeme of the Asan Institute’s Center for Foreign Policy and National Security (<http://en.asaninst.org/>) has published a new *Asan Issue Brief*, titled “Managing Decline? NATO’s Uneasy Future After the 2025 Summit”.

The *Issue Brief* examines what the 2025 NATO Summit reveals about the trajectory of the alliance as well as its implications for South Korea’s approach to alliance burden-sharing with the United States and its relationship with NATO more broadly.

The 2025 NATO Summit offered a carefully managed display of alliance unity but also revealed deepening uncertainties within NATO, with significant implications for South Korea’s security strategy.

The Summit marked the first NATO gathering since the start of President Trump’s second term. Against the backdrop of transatlantic tensions and multiple global crises, including the war in Ukraine and instability in the Middle East, expectations were high. While the Hague Summit Declaration were framed as a success, the outcomes reflect both progress and unresolved challenges.

A headline achievement was the agreement among NATO members to raise defense and security spending to 5% of GDP by 2035. This allowed President Trump to claim a political victory, but difficult questions remain over how European allies will meet this target. Domestic opposition among many NATO members is already evident, and debates over burden-sharing have increasingly become entangled with transatlantic trade tensions. These dynamics mirror challenges faced by Indo-Pacific allies, including South Korea.

For South Korea, the Summit underscores three key considerations. First, defense spending is no longer a purely military issue but a central factor in alliance management. Seoul, which already allocates around 2.3% of GDP to defense, is likely to face pressure to increase its contributions as part of a broader negotiating framework with Washington.

Second, the Summit highlights the need for South Korea to clarify its long-term approach to NATO. While cooperation has expanded through the ITPP and the IP4, the absence of a full IP4 Summit this year reflects the political complexities surrounding NATO’s evolving role in the Indo-Pacific.

Third, growing defense industry cooperation presents a strategic opportunity. As NATO members seek to boost capabilities, South Korea’s defense sector is well positioned to meet demand. Initiatives such as the NATO–South Korea Defense Industry Consultative Group can serve as platforms to deepen security ties while advancing South Korea’s economic interests.

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