NATO IN THE MULTIPOLAR WORLD – ENGAGING WITH ASIAN POWERS?

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Abstract: The strategic centre of gravity is shifting to Asia. What ambition might NATO develop regarding its own role in the continent’s security context? What role might be considered acceptable for NATO to play by the great Asian powers? The first question is complex. On the one hand it seems that NATO has no further ambition than to Western Asia. Several of NATO’s Pacific-Asian partners are, however, contributing to the ISAF-forces in Afghanistan and so are potential partners. They are, in other words, producing security for the benefit of NATO. On the other hand these partners might in the near future ask to be compensated. The Alliance can hardly refuse a request considering the impressive support the Asian-Pacific partners have provided to NATO over the years and hence forcing the Alliance to engage further east. The second question seems more easily answered; none. The engagement between NATO and each of the great Asian powers – Russia, China and India – has potential of becoming friendly and cooperative but also hostile. China might, for example, consider a deepened partnership between NATO and Japan and/or South Korea as an intrusion into its sphere of influence. Russians might even interpret such a step as the latest evidence of Western entrapment.

NEW STRATEGIC SETTINGS – SAME RAISON D’ÊTRE?

During the Cold War NATO’s raison d’être was shaped by the symmetric logic that underpinned the understanding of the international system. The key actors were all states. International relations were focused on a static relationship between the two superpowers. The superpowers balanced each other in important aspects of the system; societal influence and military capability. The logic of the international system is, however, changing and becoming increasingly asymmetric in at least three ways. First, the key actors include states as well as non-state actors. Regional integration and the impact of non-states actors decrease the importance of the state. Second, international relations are moving away from static relationships towards dynamic and ad hoc coalitions that have the potential to rapidly change the rules of the game. Third, the key actors do not have equal power in all important aspects of the system; political influence, military capability, economic strength and societal influence.

This paper is, however, focusing on a parallel key trend; Asia’s increasing influence on the global scene. The trend has been identified by the French government: “The world’s strategic centre of gravity is shifting to Asia. Any conflict in the region would have vast consequences for our own prosperity and security.” (Presidence de la Republique, 2008, p.5). The Obama administration has come up with similar conclusions. In the American case Asia in general has, however, been replaced with two great Asian powers:

The distribution of global political, economic, and military power is becoming more diffuse. The rise of China, the world’s most populous country, and India, the world’s largest democracy, will continue to shape an international system that is no longer easily defined […] (US Department of Defense, 2010, p. iii).

While the first three trends, in various degrees, are elaborated in NATO’s strategic concept presented in the fall of 2010, the Asian perspective seems to be missing. Hence the problem this paper is focusing on is what impact this Asian aspect of the new strategic settings is likely to have on the future raison d’être of NATO. The aim of the paper is to present an initial analysis and to shed light on NATO’s potential engagement with the Asian great powers. To this end the following key questions are addressed:

- What ambition might NATO develop regarding its own role in the Asian security context?
- What role might be considered acceptable for NATO to apply by the great Asian powers?
Edström and Gyllensporre (2012, forthcoming) examined the vertical interaction between the strategic and operational levels within a single organization: NATO. Focus in this paper is, however, on the horizontal interaction at the grand-strategic level between NATO and key actors Russia, China and India. In order to study NATO in a multipolar world we consider it necessary to present points of departure. We have chosen to use NATO in the bipolar world as both a background and reference for comparison. The next section will hence focus on the impact of polarity and ends with some methodological considerations. Since the term “relation” implies an analysis not only from NATO’s perspective but also from the perspective of the key actors, the three empirical sections will focus on the dynamics of the relation. When it comes to the section on NATO-Russian relations, the focus will be on the Asian context. The traditional Euro-Atlantic context will, in other words, not be analyzed. In the sixth and last section the findings are summarized and our conclusion is presented.

THE IMPACT OF POLARITY

At the end of WWII, the nuclear hegemony placed the United States in a position in the world system no state had previously experienced. The awareness of its military might helps to explain the relatively rapid US conventional demobilization immediately after the end of the war. The US military power was, however, not unchallenged. For Soviet Union the war never ended. Conceptually, its dogmatic leadership saw a struggle with the market-oriented democracies in the West as a natural and unavoidable part of its deterministic ideology. For the communists the struggle only shifted into another phase. Instead of demobilization the Soviet Union used its conventional military power to ensure and increase its sphere of influence. Although Winston Churchill mentioned the Iron Curtain in his Fulton-speech in March 1946, it can be argued that it was the evolution of the Truman-doctrine 1947-1948 that first expressed a political ambition to halt the Soviet expansionism. With the strategy of containment the West dedicated itself to minimize the Soviet’s influence in the world. The Truman-doctrine can be seen as the first step of the establishment of the new strategic framework that came to be known as the Cold War. This first step that was taken, is considered a geographical or horizontal dimension.

In the second dimension, which focuses on the intensity of the relation (level of conflict) between the main actors in the global system, the nuclear monopoly of the United States restrained the conceptual developments. It can be argued that the Soviet requisition of nuclear weapons in the late 1940s sped up the strategic thinking. As the United States had an overwhelming nuclear superiority the logic of the Dulles-doctrine from the early 1950s indicated that any Soviet intrusion in the American sphere of interest would be met with massive retaliation. The second, or vertical, dimension therefore had only two possible outcomes; the relation between the two superpowers was either dictated by the settings of a cold or a hot war. However, in the beginning of the 1960s, both superpowers gained second strike capability which eventual made it clear that the former logic was invalid. It came to be replaced by the logic of mutually assured destruction (MAD), formulated in the McNamara-doctrine. Since the new Western strategy put a gradual or flexible response into practice, the Soviets could no longer predict the consequences of any attempt from their side to interfere in the Western sphere of interest. The vertical dimension had, from this point on, several possible outcomes and a wide range of military options, both conventional and with WMD, was accessible for the political leadership. Since the United States and the Soviet Union were in possession of the largest arsenals of WMD, and since both arsenals consisted of a full spectrum including nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, the dimension was by far dominated by the two superpowers. At the same time, the logic of MAD made the horizontal dimension the only reasonable playground the two superpowers could act on. As a coincidence, it seems that this insight of the strategic evolution appeared simultaneously as a more extensive phase of the decolonization started in the end of the 1960s. The decolonization led almost to duplication in the number of states. In most cases the nearly 70 states that gained independence from former great powers in the 1960s and the 1970s were weak and vulnerable to penetration from the new superpowers.

When the Soviet Union collapsed so did the bipolarity of the global system. It is no exaggeration to argue that the United States held the strongest position within the system during the 1990s and in the beginning of the new millennium. Although the United States possessed an
unchallenged military power it can be questioned if the position was hegemonic and hence a unipolar system labeled as unipolar (Krauthammer, 1992). As the evolution of the system goes on the unique position of the United States seems to be only a short intermission. It appears obvious that the ideological struggle that affected the relations between the two superpowers during the Cold War is not enough do describe the phenomenon of polarity. More aspects have to be added before an adequate description can be made and a new definition given.

According to the discussion above, the United States has had a hegemonic position in the system, from the end of the Cold War until today. The position was (and still is) based on Americas unchallenged military, economic and societal capabilities, but what about the future? One possible evolution of the global system is towards non-polarity, or “a world dominated not by one or two or even several states but rather by dozens of actors possessing and exercising various kinds of power.” (Haas, 2008, p. 1). Another possible evolution of the system is towards multipolarity (Kissinger, 1984; Craig & George, 1995; Deutch & Singer, 1999). This paper focuses on the latter alternative.

Polarity – What Constitute a Centre of Power in the System?
According to the theories of Barry Buzan, aspects such as military, political, economic, societal and environmental power (or means of interaction) should be taken into account when a pole (or centre of power) in the global system is to be identified (Buzan, 1991). During the Cold War, military power was probably the most important means for the main opponents to exercise their influence. Naturally, it was the military aspect that determined if the actor was to be regarded as a superpower or just as an ordinary great power. Although the United Kingdom, France, and China were all in possession of WMD, none of them had global military capacity and therefore none of them was regarded as a superpower. In other words, none of them was a pole in the system according to the military aspect (neither are India, Pakistan or North Korea today). The United Kingdom, France, and China were (and still are) together with the United States and the Soviet Union the only permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations. All of them thereby had (and still have) a unique possibility to influence political aspects of the global system. It seems, however, that it was not the political but the societal aspect that, together with the military aspect, shaped the characteristics of the system during the Cold War. The United States and the Soviet Union respectively played the leading role in the capitalistic and the communistic societies that divided the World, the other permanent members only co-starred. A third, and more difficult aspect to interpret, is the economic dimension. Undoubtedly the United States had (and still has), by far, the strongest economy of the market-oriented world. The problem lies in the difficulties in comparing the strength of the American economy with the strength of the Marxist-Leninist economy of the Soviet Union.

According to political aspects, the necessary reformation of the United Nations will probably be accomplished during the upcoming decade. The results of the reformation might well have led up to an increasing number of permanent members in the Security Council. Regional great powers such as India, Japan and Germany are examples of conceivable new members. Even if such reformation takes place, it is not revolutionary enough to change the label of the system. What could lead to a change of the label is how the actors interact within the system. During the Cold War the relation between the two superpowers, more or less, was static. In the future the relations between the main actors may be much more dynamic. Coalitions may for instance, rapidly change the distribution of political influence.

According to the military aspects, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction will probably continue. An increasing number of states may be in possession of biological, chemical and/or nuclear weapons. In a worst case scenario the proliferation will not restrict itself to states, non-states actors such as terrorist networks and organized crime syndicates may be in possession of more advanced weapons than at present. Even if such dramatic evolution took place, it would probably not, in and of its own, imply an alteration of the polarity in the global system. The logic of the vertical dimension would, however, be fundamentally changed. An evolution that might alter the polarity of the system is the transformation of conventional military power. The transformation may lead up to an increasing number of states with global capacity with China, the United Kingdom and France as leading examples. Even if it is unlikely that the United Kingdom and France will surrender either their permanent membership in the Security Council or their control of their nuclear forces to the European
Union, one should not neglect the possibility of a joint conventional European expeditionary force with global capacity.

According to economic aspect, the consequences of the declining US share of the World’s GNP, from about 50 to 25 percent the last 30 years, naturally has enormous impact. China may pass the United States as the world’s leading national economy by 2040, and another growing Asian power, India, may climb to the position as the world’s third biggest national economy. Notwithstanding the evolution of the European Union, the integrated national economies of the West European states, with the G8-members France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom as the locomotives will most likely continue to constitute a significant economic pole. A third Asian state and another member of the G8-group, Japan, have to be taken into account when it comes to world’s economy. The increasing global quest for energy will gradually increase the importance of oil and gas producing countries in the global system. Depending on their ability to organize and co-operate, organizations like OPEC may be able to gain a new and more powerful position within the system in the future.

According to societal aspects, globalization most likely will continue as a mega trend. The impact of globalization on identity, culture and language may gradually lead to more homogeneous communities of values. Globalization does not, however, have to be westernized in the future. Since most of the world’s population already live in Asia, and since Asia is predicted to increases its share of the world’s total economy, it is not bold to assert that Asia also will increase its societal influence. Developments in regions that already have strong anti-western currents and existing embryos of alternative ideologies (Middle East is just one example) may lead to heterogeneous communities of values (Huntington, 1996). To be able to identify these potential regions, one should not preconceive that the causes are a feeling of being left outside (the westernized world) among the population in the region concerned. The causes may, on the contrary, be a feeling of being undesirably brought inside and regionalization, and result in expressions of anti-westernization, and even anti-globalization. As the events of September 11th 2001 showed, in the new millennium even the mightiest state can be challenged by non-state actors. The importance of terrorists, organized crime syndicates, multinational corporations, and other non-state actors will most likely increase. Especially weak or collapsing states are vulnerable to the penetration from these actors. During the 1990s another phenomenon occurred, increased regional integration. The phenomenon can be described of as a global trend. The trend is, however, not homogeneous. Local variances are common with Western Europe and the European Union as the most integrated example. NAFTA exemplifies that even the United States is affected by the phenomenon.

**Methodological Considerations**

As introduced above, the ambition of the paper is to be forward looking. It is not the bipolar or unipolar context that is the main interest, but the possible future multipolar world order and the Asian context. This aspiration does not preclude individual sections to draw on historical aspects as analytical points of departure. In order to reach the overarching ambition of the paper, each of the empirical sections will include a more speculative outlook based on its findings and conclusions.

The dependent variable of study in the paper and the empirical sections will furthermore, not be identical. While the paper as a whole focuses on NATO in the multipolar world, the individual sections focus on NATO’s relations with the identified key actors. At a minimum the empirical sections will analyze the relation by using Buzan’s military and political aspects of power. The, economic, societal and/or environmental aspects might, in addition, be included in the analysis.

When addressing this new logic and designing the strategy for the next decade, NATO has to take some important key catalysts into considerations. One cluster of key catalysts is related to external factors and the possible poles in the system. Henry Kissinger (1994) recognizes the United States, China, Europe, Japan and India as great powers. It might have been relevant to treat Japan as a great power some twenty years ago. We have, however, decided to exclude Japan. In addition, we focus on the core members of both the Alliance and the European Union instead of Europe as a whole.

When it comes to empirical material this initial paper will concentrate on strategic concepts and defense white papers. In addition to the concept of the Alliance, the white papers and strategic policies of the four key members will be analyzed. We are aware of the time gap. While the strategies of the Asian key actors have been explicitly expressed in white papers and other strategic documents presented in 2009 and 2010 we had, in three cases, to go further back to find similar material when it
comes to the strategy of NATO’s key members; the United States (twice in 2010), the United Kingdom (2008), France (2008) and Germany (2006). In order to reach the ambition of this paper we consider the gap of 3 years being acceptable. All strategies except the Russian are in English.

Russia adopted a national security strategy in May 2009. Due to our linguistically limitations in Russian, secondary sources in other languages have been used. We have chosen to study a research review provided by the research division of NATO Defense College, an article published by Russian Analytical Digest and a book on Russia’s security policy. The later explore, amongst other strategic documents, the new security strategy. China presented a defense white paper in January 2009. India has, in comparison with other global key actors, a slightly different tradition when it comes to long-term strategic documents. Instead of publishing strategies and white papers, India annually presents a defense report. Changes are, however, at hand and a draft version of a national security strategy has been prepared and is being evaluated. In addition a defense capability strategy is under preparation. We have, however, focused solely on the annual report of 2009-2010.

NATO’S RELATION WITH RUSSIA IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT

The US Department of Defense explicitly mentions Russia as a global key actor when it comes to combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Al Qaeda as well as other terrorist networks and the collapse of a WMD-armed state are both considered to be of mutual interest to the United States and Russia. Two Asian states seem to be in mind; Iran and North Korea (US Department of Defense, 2010, p. 7). Russia seems, however, not only to be a partner but also a challenge. Although not specifically connected to the Asian context Russia’s proliferation of modern weapon technology is considered to be a growing challenge for US military operations worldwide (US Department of Defense, 2010, pp. 31-2).

The White House also stresses the importance of the cooperation with Russia. The cooperation is considered to include more aspects than the limitations of America’s and Russia’s own deployed nuclear warheads and strategic delivery vehicles. The ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the commitment under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the creation of a new treaty aiming to end the production of fissile materials intended for use in nuclear weapons are all dependent of a close US-Russia cooperation (The White House, 2010, p. 23). The Obama administration seems, however, to be seeking a broader partnership with Russia. Russia is explicitly considered to be a vital partner not only in Europe but in Asia as well. Confronting violent extremism is mentioned as a key aspect of the cooperation. The administration is, however, concurrently stressing that it will support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia’s neighbors (The White House, 2010, p. 44).

The British Cabinet Office is committed to reduce the threats that come with proliferation. Its willingness to work with partners is not limited to other states but includes NGOs and the private sector as well. In contrast to the Obama administration, the Cabinet Office explicitly mentions Russia as an important British partner regarding the dissuasion of both Iran and North Korea from acquiring, developing, and contributing to the spread of not only WMD but related materials and expertise (UK Cabinet Office, 2008, pp. 29-30). At the same time the UK is worried that the increasing risk of energy shortages might spill over and also increase the potential for disputes and conflict. Since Russia is considered to prioritize the control of energy supply in its foreign policy the Cabinet Office also view Russia as a competitor. Whether the UK is specifically focusing on Asian energy sources is, however, unclear (UK Cabinet Office, 2008, pp. 19 & 51).

The German Bundesministerium goes one step further than its British colleagues and claims that Russia has a responsibility towards its European neighbors. This goes especially for the situation in South Caucasus and Central Asia and regarding Russia’s role as energy supplier and economic partner (Bundesministerium, 2006, p. 47).

France seems to have a more narrow perspective. Even if Russia’s political, strategic and economic role in Eurasia is recognized, the consequences and impacts of this role are only elaborated in the European context (Presidence de la Republique, 2008, p. 5).

When all these perspectives on Russia were aggregated into the context of NATO, not much was said. Enhancing the political consultations and practical cooperation regarding missile defense, some counter-activities (-terrorism, -narcotics and -piracy) and the promotion of wider international
security was mentioned (NATO, 2010: article 34), but only in the Euro-Atlantic context (NATO, 2010, article 19). Indirectly NATO’s approach might have consequences regarding Asia. The aim of NATO to seek a Russian relocation of its nuclear weapons in Europe away from the territory of Alliance members can lead to an increased number of Russian nukes in Asia instead (NATO, 2010, article 26).

According to Keir Giles Russia’s new strategy gives highest priority to bilateral arms reduction talks between Russia and the United States. Although nuclear deterrence and affordable parity with the US are fundamental for Russian government advances towards a nuclear free world are welcomed (Giles, 2009, p. 6. See also de Haas, 2010, p. 101). The new strategy also emphasizes a strategic partnership between Russia and the United States focusing on arms control, non-proliferation, counter-terrorism and the settlement of regional conflicts (Giles, 2009: 8). Any attempt to give NATO a global function is, however, is considered to be not only against Russian interests but also against the norms of international law (Giles, 2009: 7). Marcel de Haas conclude that Russia considers ‘NATO’s expansion near Russia’s borders and attempts to grant the military alliance a global role’ as a threat to its security (de Haas, 2010, p. 100). Along the same lines Henning Schröder argues ‘Threats to Russia’s national interests are seen as emanating from the unilateral use of force in international relations – an obvious reference to the US and NATO […]’. He raises, however, questions whether this perception is common within the Medvedev administration or only a sign of the military’s fear (Schröder, 2009, p. 8).

To summarize Russia’s roles as energy supplier and economic partner are crucial for the economy of NATO’s European key members. Since part of Russia’s economic base is located in Asia it seems relevant to follow the French example and mention Russia as a great power in Eurasia. In addition arms control, non-proliferation, counter-terrorism and the settlement of regional conflicts seem to be of mutual NATO-Russian concerns. While the two former topics seem to fit well with both Iran and North Korea, the two latter seem to be especially valid when it comes to South Caucasus and Central Asia. There is one problem though; bringing these topics into the NATO context seems to be totally out of bounds for Russia. The events in Georgia indicate that the NATO-Russian relations can be hostile.

NATO’S RELATION WITH CHINA

The US Department of Defense is worried regarding China’s long term intentions with its comprehensive military modernization. The worries are not only related to the pace and scope of China’s modernization programs but also to the increased long range capability in different areas such as missiles, submarines, air defense systems, electronic warfare and counter-space systems (US Department of Defense, 2010, p. 31). The capabilities are connected to the developments of new roles and missions for the Chinese Armed Forces in support of China’s growing regional and global interests. On the one hand the Department of Defense welcomes the potential benefits of these developments since they enable China to play a more constructive role in international conflict management within Asia and beyond. On the other hand the lack of transparency is said to raise legitimate questions about China’s future ambitions (US Department of Defense, 2010, p. 60).

The White House also elaborates on the two alternatives. On the one hand the Obama administration is striving to encourage China to contribute to international peace and security. On the other hand China’s military modernization programs are said to be monitored closely. Preparations in order to ensure that the developments do not negatively impact the interests of the United States or its allies are also mentioned. The preparations are noted as related to both the regional (Asian) and global contexts. Taiwan is, however, the only US-allied explicitly mentioned (The White House, 2010, p. 43).

As in the case of Russia, the British Cabinet Office points at China and its ambition making control of energy supply a foreign policy priority. In the Chinese case the policy is, however, connected to China’s increasing demand for energy (UK Cabinet Office, 2008, pp. 18-9). In contrast to the Obama administration, the Cabinet Office explicitly mentions examples of Chinese engagement in solving potential conflicts both in Asia (Burma, the Korean Peninsula) and beyond (Darfur). To complement the bilateral British-Chinese cooperation the Cabinet Office points at the European Union and not NATO. The reason for neglecting NATO might be the British focus on issues such as climate
change, energy competition, food and water pressures, and poverty and good governance (UK Cabinet Office, 2008, pp. 47-8).

In the French national strategy China is only mentioned once and then related to the nuclear disarmament action plan proposed by France. The French government seem to be disappointed that although both the United States and China claim to be striving for global disarmament none of them have yet ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty they signed in 1996 (Presidence de la Republique, 2008, p. 10).

The Bundesministerium points at China’s economic, political and military potential. The German government concludes that China will have a significant impact on the future of the Asian-Pacific area and international politics. As in the Russian case the Bundesministerium claims that China has a responsibility, in the Chinese case for safeguarding peace and stability worldwide (Bundesministerium, 2006, p. 48).

In spite of the concerns of the growing importance of China expressed in several of the strategies of NATO’s key members, China is not explicitly mentioned in the new strategic concept of the alliance.

China is giving priority to international cooperation in the field of arms control, non-proliferation and export control. When it comes to the two former, China has held regular arms consultations with a several individual states and the EU. When it comes to NATO, non-proliferation dialogue seems to be the only topic on the agenda (Information Office, 2009, p. 79). China considers the United States to be enhancing its strategic attention to the Asia-Pacific region. By consolidating its military alliances, adjusting its military deployment and increasing its military capabilities the United States is a source of concerns and worries for the Chinese government. That goes especially for the continuation of Taiwanese procurement of US military equipment (Information Office, 2009, pp. 5-6).

In its ambition to strengthen the international community’s efforts in counter-terrorism the Chinese government points at bilateral and multilateral consultations and exchanges with several individual NATO members including France and Germany. Neither the United States nor the United Kingdom seems, however, to have participated (Information Office, 2009, pp. 46-7). The Chinese government also points at the bilateral joint maritime training exercises the Chinese navy has conducted with the navies of, amongst a total of 14 states, the United Kingdom, France and the United States (Information Office, 2009, p. 74).

To summarize China’s roles as energy consumer and economic giant are crucial for not only the economy of NATO’s members but for the World as a whole. When it comes to the European key members the concerns regarding China’s growing influence and its increasing economic, political and military potential seem to be addressed through the EU-channels and not through the Alliance. This does not, however, prevent individual NATO-members to cooperate militarily with China. This approach seems to be preferred by the Chinese government as well. The increased military capability seems to be a source of mutual mistrust between China and the United States. While the US tend to view the Chinese military developments related to its own national interests in the Asian-Pacific region, European states tend to focus on China’s potential in international conflict management worldwide.

NATO’S RELATION WITH INDIA

As in the Chinese case the US Department of Defense recognizes the increasing economic power, cultural reach and political influence of India. The Department concludes that India’s democratic values opened political system and commitment to global peace and security will provide many options for bilateral India-US cooperation. India already has contributed to the international community’s efforts regarding counter-piracy, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The Department welcomes India’s improved military capacity and its increasing influential role in global affairs. The acquisitions of capabilities such long-range maritime surveillance, interdiction and patrolling, air interdiction and strategic airlift are considered to contribute to the security in the Indian Ocean and beyond (US Department of Defense, 2010, p. 60).

The White House stresses the shared interests and values between India and the United States and points to the fact that they are the world’s two largest democracies. Through the established
bilateral Strategic Dialogue the Obama administration seeks a broad bilateral partnership including topics such as counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, poverty reduction, education, health and sustainable agriculture. The administration is giving priority to India’s contribution to the promotion of stability in South Asia (The White House, 2010, pp. 43-4).

The British Cabinet Office stresses India’s growing political role in South Asia as well as internationally and is explicitly in favor of an expansion of the permanent membership of the UN Security Council to include India. The British Cabinet Office welcomes India’s contribution to global cooperation against terrorism and to international peacekeeping (UK Cabinet Office, 2008, p. 47). At the same time India’s increasing demand for energy seems to be troublesome for the UK (UK Cabinet Office, 2008, p. 18).

France also welcomes India as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. This endorsement however, is the only apparent interest in the country (Presidence de la Republique, 2008, p. 9).

The Bundesministerium identifies India as an important economic and political partner. The two countries are said to have common interests such as the promotion of democracy, the protection of human rights and combating international terrorism. The German government is striving for even closer bilateral cooperation in key areas ranging from energy security to science and research (Bundesministerium, 2006, p. 48).

In spite of the recognized potential of the growing importance of India expressed individually by NATO’s key members, India is not explicitly mentioned in the new strategic concept of the organization.

The implication of China’s military development on the regional strategic context is a major topic in the Indian defense report. India recognizes the importance of its spatial location adjacent to three regions of global interest – the Gulf, Central Asia and South-East Asia – and the vital sea lanes in the Indian Ocean stretching from the Suez Canal via the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca. To the west Iran’s nuclear program seem to be less of a concern compared to the terrorism directed against India originated from Pakistan. In Central Asia the situation in Afghanistan is considered to be critical to India’s security due to the connections among the Taliban, Al Qaeda and Pakistan (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2010, pp. 5-8). NATO is not mentioned at all in India’s defense report even if the United States, the European Union, individual NATO-members and even NATO activities are analyzed. ISAF is, for example mentioned as a US-led mission and is connected to the US strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The European Union is recognized as India’s major trading partner and the participation of “EU country forces” (notably NOT referred to as NATO country forces) in ISAF is viewed as an opportunity for “a consistent dialogue with EU partner countries on the evolving regional security situation” (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2010, pp. 4-5). India also recognizes the linkage between the situation in Africa and the safety of the sea lanes. Peacekeeping and combating piracy is considered to be appropriate response and a UN mandate (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2010, p.6).

India does, however, also analyze the security environment in its extended neighborhood. Ideology-linked terrorism, arms control, proliferation of WMD and the globalization of the economy are all topics that are considered to have brought about greater international convergence on security issues and challenges (Indian Ministry of Defence, 2010, p. 4).

**To summarize** India’s role as the world’s largest democracy seem to be attractive for NATO’s key members. The considerable trade between NATO-members and India is another aspect that presumably impacts the NATO-India strategic relations. As in the Chinese case these relation seem, however, to be addressed bilaterally through the EU-channels and the US-India partnership and not through the Alliance. This approach seems to be preferred by the governments of the NATO-members as well. Arms control, non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, the security of the sea lanes of communication in the Indian Ocean as well as monitoring the Chinese military buildup seem to be of mutual NATO-Indian concerns. The situations in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan might be a source of disagreement. The existing nuclear weapons in Pakistan seem, for example, to be of greater Indian concern than potential Iranian nuclear weapons in the future.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**
The United States considers its alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand as “the bedrock of security” in the Asia-Pacific region. The US has explicitly declared its ambition to deepen and update these alliances and its intention to maintain its military presence in the two former countries (The White House, 2010, p. 42). The need for peacekeeping, stability and reconstruction operations, non-proliferation activities, missile defense cooperation, energy security initiatives, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics and support to humanitarian assistance operations have, however, led to the conclusion that America has to develop new strategic relationships in Asia in order to protect and promote its national interests. Hence Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam are identified as key partners (US Department of Defense, 2010, p. 59). In the Asian-Pacific region Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand have received the status of US Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA). In Western Asia similar status has been given to Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait and Pakistan. Only three other states (Argentina, Egypt and Morocco) have received this recognition. Although the MNNA-status has nothing to do with NATO it is a sign of the importance of the bilateral relation between the United States and its various allies (Center for Defense Information, 2004). The objectives of these alliances and partnerships seem, from an American perspective, to assure access to every domain: sea, air, space and cyberspace (US Department of Defense, 2010, p. 66).

While the United States has applied a comprehensive approach to the Asian context, its European allies have a narrower outreach. Both the British and the French strategies stretch as far as the Indian Ocean or even South Asia but that is about it. It seems that the two former colonial powers realize their limits when it comes to playing an active role in conflict prevention and military intervention (UK Cabinet Office, 2008, pp. 19 & 54; Presidency de la Republique, 2008, pp. 6 & 10-11). On one hand, Germany seems to follow its tradition influenced by its land-locked position of paying most attention to the South Caucasus and Central Asia. They recognize, however, the value of partnerships with Japan and Australia. On the other hand, greater ambitions seem to supplement the traditional approach with similar arrangements with both China and India (Bundesministerium, 2006, pp. 47-8).

When it comes to NATO itself the organization is, through different partnership arrangements, involved with several Asian states. The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) includes both the South Caucasus states of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia as well as the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In the Middle East two arrangements are in progress. The Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) involves Israel and Jordan and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. In addition to these formal partnerships, NATO cooperates with other states which are not part of the formal partnership structures. This group is referred to as the Contact Countries (CC) and in contrast to most of the partners mentioned above these states – Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea – share similar strategic concerns and values as the NATO-members (Edström, Matlary & Petersson, 2011).

Moreover, in both the new Strategic Concept and the Partnership Policy, endorsed 15 April 2011, NATO’s ambition to establish even closer relations with old as well as new partners is explicitly stressed. The Alliance seeks a wider engagement, including political dialogue and practical cooperation, with likeminded nations that do not have a formal partnership arrangement to enhance regional security all across the globe. It is, however, too early to conclude how this increased focus on partnerships might impact NATO’s relations with the great Asian powers.

NATO is, furthermore, not only establishing political partnerships but also conducting military operations in Asia. In 2003, NATO assumed responsibilities over the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. It is a mission conducted far away from the NATO homeland and by most accounts the most demanding operation undertaken by the Alliance. In 2004 the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I) was established at the request of the Iraqi government. The objective is to provide assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces in order to reform Iraq’s security sector. In 2005 NATO reacted swiftly in response to a request from Pakistan, to assist in the urgent relief effort. The Alliance airlifted supplies and deployed engineers, medical units and specialist equipment to assist in relief operations. In addition NATO forces provide protection to the movements to supply life support to the Somali population. This operation is conducted close to the western shores of the Indian Ocean (Edström and Gyllensporre, 2012 - forthcoming).
So what are then the conclusions? Let us first return to the initial two key questions. The first question, regarding NATO’s potential ambition in the Asian security context, is paradoxical. On the one hand it seems clear that NATO, for the moment, has no further ambition than to Western Asia with the ongoing operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Gulf of Aden as focal points. Several of NATO’s Pacific-Asian partners are currently contributing to the ISAF-forces in Afghanistan – Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Jordan, New Zealand, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates – and so are potential partners; Malaysia, Mongolia and Singapore (ISAF, 2011). They are, in other words, producing security for the benefit of NATO. On the other hand, what about the other way around? What if these partners and potential partners in the near future ask for a pay back and instead would like to consume the security provided by NATO? Can NATO refuse a request of support from, for example, Australia considering the impressive support the country has provided to NATO over the years? What moral obligation does NATO have to provide not only political support but also military units?

The second question, regarding what role for NATO to play in the Asian context might be acceptable for Asian great powers, seems more easily answered; none. On the grand-strategic level all interaction with NATO-members are preferably addressed in bilateral forum with the United States and the European Union respectively.

The aim of the paper has been to present an initial analysis and to shed light on NATO’s potential engagement with the Asian great powers. When it comes to the first aim it seems obvious that the strategic documents that have been analyzed simple are not enough for the needs a more comprehensive study. A both broader and deeper methodological elaboration is hence essential.

When it comes to shedding light the overarching conclusion (or rather recommendation) is that NATO has a moral obligation to support and assist its partners both politically and militarily. This goes especially for those partners that share NATO’s immaterial values; freedom, the principles of democracy, the rule of law, stability, well-being, peace and security. Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea should, in other words, be assured of the support not only from the Americans through the MNNA-arrangements but also from the Europeans through NATO’s CC-partnership. A clear NATO policy in these regards is highly welcomed and would probably not cause any trouble in the NATO-India relations, quite the opposite. As the World’s biggest democracy India shares the core values of NATO and would presumably include “NATO” in its future strategic reports. China, on the other hand, would probably consider a NATO initiative in this direction as an intrusion into its sphere of influence. The case of Taiwan seems to be troublesome enough and it solely include the United States. Russia, finally, would probably interpret such a step by NATO as the last evidence of Western entrapment.

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