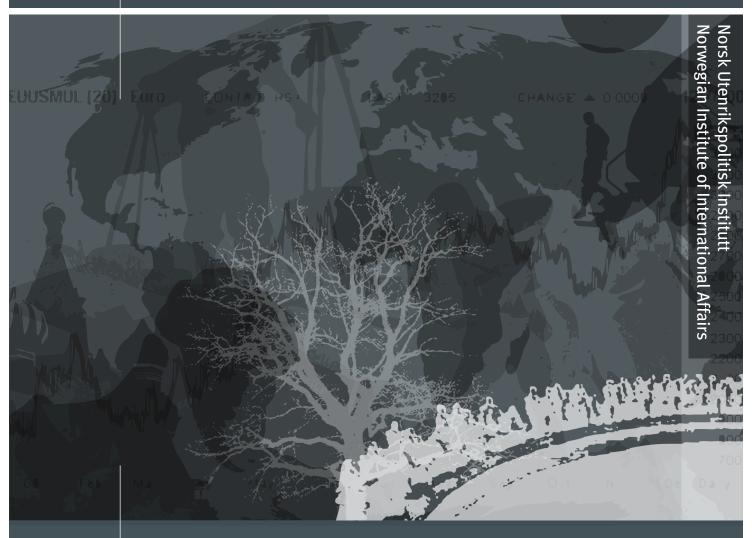# Towards a NATO à la Carte?

Assessing the alliance's adaptation to
new tasks and changing relationships

Jakub M. Godzimirski, Nina Græger and Kristin M. Haugevik

NUPI Report

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Summary

The adoption of NATO's new strategic concept marks the beginning of a new era for the alliance. The new concept, and the debates leading up to it, reflects different positions and practices among member states both concerning what NATO's key tasks should be and how relational structures inside and outside the alliance should be organised. Against this backdrop, this policy paper examines the timely question of whether NATO is developing into a security organisation "à la carte", engaging in security tasks on a case-by-case basis and alternately serving the interests of different member states, constellations and external partners. We observe that both in terms of tasks and relationships, NATO and its member states are faced with challenges that in the long run could lead to increased internal fragmentation as well as à la carte solutions. First, when it comes to tasks, the debate on whether NATO should return to its traditional responsibilities and core areas or focus more on its evolving global role is likely to continue. Second, when it comes to relationships, cluster formations, bilateralism and ad hoc coalitions of the willing challenge the unity within NATO. At the same time, significant external partners, among them Russia, often challenge it from the outside. Actors like the EU and the United States, who operate partly within and partly outside NATO, complicate relational structures further. For Norway, an increased tendency of à la carte solutions in NATO could raise challenges. Above all, Norway's geopolitical location and status as a non-EU member make the country particularly reliant on a well-functioning and unified NATO, committed to its traditional defence tasks as formulated in NATO's Article 5.

1. Introduction

At the summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010, NATO adopted a new strategic concept. In the eleven years separating the new strategic concept (2010) and the previous one (1999), NATO has gone through one of the most challenging periods in its history and had to adapt to a new situation (Aybet & Moore 2010; NATO Group of Experts 2010). New security challenges and changing relational structures inside and outside the alliance have put the unity of NATO under pressure.

In this policy paper, we ask *whether NATO is turning into a security organisation à la carte,* engaging in security tasks on a case-by-case basis and alternately serving the interests of different member states, constellations and external partners. We observe that both in terms of its tasks and relationships, NATO has gone through changes in rhetoric and action that alter its traditional role. On the basis of our discussion, we note that further development towards NATO à la carte could have several implications for the alliance in the coming years. First, increased use of à la carte solutions could very well *enhance NATO's efficiency as a security organisation*, allowing flexibility among member states both in terms of tasks and internal and external cooperation structures. At the same time, however, a flexible "menu" could also *increase the need for coalition building and alliance making inside NATO*, putting increased pressure on already scarce diplomatic and political resources. In the long run, a NATO à la carte that reflects long-term internal incoherence concerning future role and functions could *mean the end of NATO as a mature, value-based security community.* Finally, to small and medium sized member states, a NATO à la carte where every member could choose from a menu of cooperation activities according to its own security needs, could be particularly challenging. Many of these countries depend on the "automatic" provision of security as specified in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. This includes Norway, where allied assistance in the case of military pressures or an armed attack constitutes the backbone of its security policy.

Sticking to our dining metaphor, the remainder of this policy paper is structured as follows: Section two offers a brief overview of NATO's new security environment. In section three, we define the à la carte metaphor and explore indications of such a development. At the level of *tasks*, a key question is whether NATO should retain a set menu or open for increased use of à la carte solutions. At the level of *internal relations*, we observe that tendencies of sub-grouping, cluster forma-

tion and bilateralism around NATO's "dinner table" challenge its ability to perform collectively. When it comes to NATO's *external relations*, we look at the tendency of NATO countries to establish individual relations with guests at adjacent tables at NATO's "dinner party" or guests standing at the gate. The fourth section explores how the tension between these different future paths comes to expression in NATO's new strategic concept, and the fifth section offers some reflections on the implications of a NATO à la carte for Norway's security and defence politics. We conclude with some thoughts concerning the way ahead for NATO.

2. A changing security environment for NATO

When NATO adopted its previous strategic concept in 1999, the Kosovo war was still ongoing and NATO had only just begun its process of eastern enlargement. Both the war and enlargement challenged NATO's already strained relations with Russia. Reflective of this security landscape, the strategic concept adopted in Washington in April 1999 made it clear that the alliance was to extend the scope of tasks on its operational "menu", and operate not only in its core area but also "out of area" (NATO 1999).

Since then, other landmark events have challenged NATO's role further. The most important ones include 11 September 2001 and the Bush administration's launch of the "war on terror", the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the terrorist attacks on Madrid and London, the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, the international financial crisis, and the emergence of new global powers. In the past years, we have also witnessed the emergence of new great powers and the return of certain old ones. NATO's strategic environment has become multipolar, thus increasingly demanding a multi-dimensional response (Akker & Rühle 2007). In this environment, new influential players look for ways of impacting on the security architecture both in Europe and in a broader international context. In 2008, Russia proposed a new, binding security treaty for Europe, which is a good illustration of this trend. If implemented, this security system would replace the OSCE and NATO (Monaghan 2008).

In an increasingly multi-polar world where the relative power balance is shifting, Western countries could benefit from uniting forces to balance or step up to the new powerful actors. Here, NATO undoubtedly has a potential to play a key role. Increased political will behind it could make the alliance better prepared to meet the global challenges in a situation where the alliance itself has decided to go out of area and has therefore had to interact with an increasing number of actors. In addition, the members of the alliance presume that instability and conflicts beyond NATO's borders may threaten the security of the core area by fostering extremism, terrorism or transnational illegal activities. This means that what NATO does for the rest of the world – its global engagement – is likely to remain important also if the alliance were to return to its traditional "core tasks", as signalled in the new strategic concept. Hence, the changing international security en-

vironment may result not only in NATO redefining its relations with key actors *outside of the alliance,* but also the way of doing business *within* NATO.

Parallel to the changes in its security environment, NATO has also changed as an organisation. Twelve new member states have joined the alliance since the end of the Cold War. These countries have brought new perceptions and concerns into the alliance, changing NATO's organisational culture, and sometimes putting strains on both the inner life of the alliance and its relations with key external partners like Russia. At the same time, the fact that NATO now covers nearly all non-neutral or non-aligned countries in Europe[1] has also empowered the alliance, strengthening the likelihood of NATO remaining a key forum for transatlantic security cooperation and dialogue.

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[1]   With the exception of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Macedonia/ FYROM, Kosovo and Serbia which do not want to join the alliance or do not yet meet the membership criteria

3. Towards a NATO *à la carte*?

NATO has often been described as a unique, value-based Euro-Atlantic security community. In Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett's definition, a security community is a group of states within which a large-scale use of violence is unthinkable due to the strong sense of collective identification and established structures for cooperation. NATO can best be described as a mature pluralistic security community with collective security mechanisms and some supranational or transnational elements (Adler & Barnett 1998). Its security is indivisible and has to be defended on the basis of solidarity, shared purpose and fair burden sharing. Increased tendencies towards à la carte solutions, we argue, challenge the unity of the transatlantic security community.

The idea of a "multi-tier NATO" or NATO à la carte is not new. According to this view, to avoid further disintegration, a NATO à la carte or as an alliance guided by the principle of "variable geometry" should be introduced (Schreer & Noetzel 2009; Dörfer 1986). In such a NATO, consensus is no longer an absolute demand. Countries may engage in closer cooperation if they so wish, unless it conflicts with NATO objectives or decisions or established practices. The à la carte model is precisely reflecting an organisation where the members participate according to their own interests and abilities or resources. Such à la carte or "variable geometry" solutions have been proposed in response to the institutional challenges of the EU following enlargement. Other models that have been put forward to reduce intra-organisational pressures or incoherence include "multi-speed Europe" or "two-speed Europe", where all EU countries were expected to reach the same level of integration but with different speeds, that is, at different points in time. Instead the EU chose an "opt-out" model where EU members unwilling or unable to participate in new areas of EU cooperation may opt out from these articles in the treaties and the common decisions made under them. For instance, Denmark and Britain and the non-aligned and neutrals (Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden) do not participate in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP, formerly ESDP), and some of these opted out from the Euro, too (Denmark, Britain, Sweden). But the à la carte model has also been used to describe individual countries' foreign policy. For example, the Bush administration's choice of coalitions of the willing in the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and unilateralist approach to the International Criminal Court and climate issues have been referred to as a form of "multilateralism à la carte" (Foot et al. 2003).

3.1 New tasks on NATO's menu: set menu or selection à la carte?

The new strategic concept has been presented as an "action plan" and stresses NATO's role as an *agenda setter*. The concept assesses the current security environment and outlines key tasks, challenges and priorities for the alliance in the coming years and also summarises NATO's experiences and lessons learned from the last decade. The concept echoes the collective commitment to safeguard the territorial freedom and security of all member states, as spelled out in Article 5 of the Treaty. At the same time, it acknowledges that the threat of conventional military attacks against NATO territory is currently low, and that new types of security challenges are emerging, among them threats related to international terrorism, cyber attacks and energy security.

In order to achieve its security goals, the alliance will be committed to the three core tasks – collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security (par. 4). How NATO in the end will address these challenges and core tasks will depend not only on the alliance's defence and deterrence potential, but also on other factors. They include NATO's *ability to prevent and manage crises beyond its borders*, *develop a comprehensive approach in dealing with crises* and *learn from its recent operations*, especially in the Western Balkans and Afghanistan. In addition, its strategic choices in the areas of nuclear disarmament (Andreasen, Chalmers, Williams 2010), arms control and nonproliferation will have both direct and indirect bearing on the security of its members and cooperation with partners.

NATO's core task has been and remains the collective defence of the member states. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the question of what should be NATO's core tasks and long-term purpose was high on the agenda in the discussions leading up to the Lisbon Summit. Here, different positions and viewpoints persist among the member states (Górka-Winter & Madej 2010). In response to the situation developing in Afghanistan, many members started voicing concern that the alliance faced a "strategic overstretch" and that failure in that most important out of area mission could have negative impact on the future of the alliance as a reliable security provider (Hoehn & Harting 2010). This was an especially important question in relation to the situation developing in NATO's own near abroad where Russian excessive use of military power in Georgia in 2008 and massive military exercises with clear anti-NATO undertones have upset several new NATO members as well as old ones.

In view of this, one of the key questions on the agenda for the strategic concept discussions thus was whether NATO should reorient itself

in the direction of "Article 5" tasks – i.e. collective defence of the NATO member states – or rather aim to develop its new global engagement further. Norway was among the countries pushing for the former position and went in 2008 in the forefront of this with its so-called "near abroad" initiative. Norway was supported by several Eastern European and Baltic countries that feared, especially after the Georgia war in 2008, that Russia again could pose a threat to their security. On the other hand, the United States, Britain and Denmark advocated a stronger global role for NATO (Goldgeier 2010).

Since the probability of a conventional attack against NATO territory in Europe is considered low and the naming of concrete countries as a source of strategic threat to the alliance would be both unwise and politically incorrect, those advocating NATO's return to core tasks may face a practical problem of how to convince other members that the alliance should focus more on Article 5-related challenges. On the other hand, the alliance faces several global and asymmetric security challenges such as terrorism, cyber attacks, threats related to critical infrastructure, thereof to energy security, and new technological threats, such as the threat posed by proliferation of various types of weapons and technologies of mass destruction, including ballistic missiles. In addition there is a fear that instability and conflicts beyond NATO's borders may threaten the security of the alliance members by fostering extremism, terrorism or transnational illegal activities. Ignoring this type of challenges and limiting the alliance's out of area engagement could therefore have negative consequences for its core area.

A good illustration of how remote as well as core area-related security challenges are linked together is the issue of the missile defence. Although the missile shield was to provide an additional security to the core area against threats stemming from other parts of the globe caused by expected proliferation of ballistic missile technology, the project was originally met with some scepticism both within the alliance and from key partners such as Russia. The concern was that the shield's realisation would harm their own security interests. However, after multiple rounds of discussions and the United States' decision to modify its plans, the alliance decided to develop the shield in close cooperation with Russia and other Euro-Atlantic partners.

The fact that NATO officials and members again talk about deterrence and core tasks, and not only about NATO's global role, especially in Afghanistan, reflects that the discourse has changed. However, NATO will continue to be a global provider of global security, through modern capacities for crisis management and through its partnerships and

partners. The title of the new strategic concept may illustrate this: "Active Engagement, Modern Defence".

3.2 Changing dynamics around the NATO dinner table: group conversation or tête-à-têtes?

The issue of the missile defence illustrates another important challenge for NATO, namely the tendency towards fragmentation into bi-, tri- and multilateral constellations, groups and camps inside the alliance (Locatelli & Testoni 2010). From the very outset, some member states were enthusiastic supporters of the missile defence shield, while others voiced concerns of both technical and political character. Some member states, among them Poland and the Czech Republic, seemed to consider the original plan as a good opportunity to strengthen their bilateral security cooperation with the United States. Both the internal coalition building and bilateralisation of security cooperation could be seen as a challenge to the internal cohesion of the alliance and its ability to reach collective agreement when faced with grave security challenges.

A good example of a stable constellation inside NATO is the "Atlanticists," traditionally made up of member states bordering the Atlantic and with strong security ties to the United States. Notable examples include Britain, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Canada. In recent years, new member countries such as Poland have been added to the Atlanticist camp. Other examples of such long-lasting constellations or clubs are "Core Europe" (referring to countries like France, Belgium and Germany) and "Club Med" (Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy) (see Græger & Haugevik 2009).

Bi- and trilateral relations among NATO countries also remain important. The US-British "special relationship", encompassing close cooperation and information sharing in the fields of security, defence and intelligence, is perhaps the best known of these influential bilateral partnerships. However, other member states too – among them Norway – have sought to establish and maintain solid bilateral links with the United States. France's return as a full-fledged member of NATO's military structures (for more on the French expectations see Maulny 2010) might also strengthen the French-German and British-French partnerships that have been pivotal in driving the European integration process. The French-German coalition has often been referred to as the "engine" of European integration, whereas bilateral French-British initiatives have been crucial in the emergence of a European security and defence policy. The recent signing of a historic French-British agreement on strategic security and defence cooperation should make this bilateral constellation no less interesting in the

years to come (Taylor 2010). On the trilateral side, the so-called Weimar Triangle, consisting of Germany, France and Poland, is a notable example. The triangle's stated aim is to strengthen cooperation between these three countries "at all levels and in all areas".

The relational structures of NATO are further complicated by actors operating partly on the inside of the alliance and partly outside. The EU and the United States (for more on the US perspective see Chivvis 2009; Cuccia 2010) are probably the foremost examples of this type of actors. While the French return to NATO's structures and the change of government in Washington have contributed to improving cooperation between the United States and its European allies in NATO, it remains a concern in European capitals that the United States will refocus its interests away from Europe – now considered a safe area – towards the Pacific area where new challenges are emerging. The Obama administration's reset in its relations with Russia has also made some NATO members worry that their security interests could be sacrificed on the altar of great power politics and made them consider building new informal coalitions within the alliance (Górka-Winter & Madej 2010).

The EU, in turn, is both an institutional partner/rival to NATO and an actor within it. While as many as 21 countries are members of both NATO and the EU, the two organisations have so far had difficulties shaping their cooperation in an efficient manner (Vasconcelos et al. 2010; Græger & Haugevik forthcoming). Despite efforts by both NATO and EU leaders, the long-standing Greek-Turkish conflict over Cyprus continues to hamper cooperation and dialogue between the two organisations. Together with the traditional differences among EU member states concerning what security role the EU should play vis-à-vis NATO, the Cyprus conflict also hinder the EU 21's surfacing as a collective bloc or caucus inside NATO. On the NATO part there is, however, an understanding that the EU, viewed as a unique and essential partner for NATO sharing the same values, plays a positive part in shaping the security of the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO also recognises the importance of a stronger and more capable European defence and welcomes the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty strengthening the EU's capacities to address security challenges faced by both organisations.

3.3 Extending the dinner party? Adjacent tables and new guests at the gate

Due to its recent global engagement and the way its tasks are defined, NATO also has relations with a number of external countries and organisations. The importance of these partners is evident in the new

strategic concept, where the terms "partner", "partners" and "partnership" are mentioned almost twice as often as in the 1999 version.

NATO's cooperation with external actors has been an important element of the strategy of the alliance since its very inception, not least through the policy of open doors that still remains one of the principles of the alliance. The fact that the number of members of the alliance has increased from the original 12 to the current 28 is the best proof of the importance of partnerships in shaping NATO as all the new members were at different stages partners of the alliance and joined it only after meeting certain formal – and during the Cold War, strategic geopolitical – criteria.

The importance of partnerships has increased in the post-Cold War setting, especially due to the alliance's increased global engagement. The alliance has had to relate to different and a growing number of actors. The cooperation with them has been organised within formalised and non-formalised settings. Relations with some of these countries, such as Russia, Ukraine and Georgia, are based on special bilateral arrangements. The most important formal arenas for NATO's cooperation with other countries have, however, been multilateral arrangements, such as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC including all NATO members and 22 partner countries). NATO is also engaged in the Mediterranean Dialogue framework (with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (with Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates). In addition, NATO maintains close informal cooperation with five contact countries, Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and the only recently added Pakistan.

NATO's relations with external actors are based on the principle of reciprocity, mutual benefit and mutual respect, and are organised to help NATO and partners address challenges such as the fight against terrorism, building of democratic environment, modernisation of armed forces or sharing of expertise. The alliance has also embarked on practical cooperation with external partners on issues like defence policy and planning, civil-military relations, education and training, organisation of air defence, communications and information systems, crisis management, and civil emergency planning. These partnerships are also to help extend the zone of security in the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond. Some of the partner countries share their expertise with NATO and contribute capabilities to its activities, for instance by supporting NATO operations in Afghanistan.

The alliance's partnership with Russia is in a category of its own, which is illustrated by the fact that Russia is mentioned nine times in the new strategic concept. Russia is, of course, the successor state of the Soviet Union, which was a key reason for NATO's formation in 1949. Russia is also a major European power with global interests and ambitions that partly overlap, partly are in conflict with those of NATO. In Russia, both the elites and large sections of society look at NATO with certain, if decreasing, suspicion (Krastev, Leonard & Wilson 2009). The Russian military doctrine of February 2010 describes NATO as an instrument for American policy and a security challenge. The Russian expert community, on the other hand, openly claims that NATO has clearly outlived itself, that the alliance has no new goals on the horizon, that it has not become the world's police officer, and that its only remaining problem in Europe is unsettled relations with Russia (Lukyanov 2010). In response to this perception, NATO's new strategic concept explicitly states that "NATO poses no military threat to Russia", but instead wishes to develop a true strategic partnership with it.

This, however, does not change the fact that Russia is still seen by many, especially new NATO members, as a potential security policy challenge because it has a democratic deficit and has demonstrated both willingness and ability to use military force to solve its problems (two wars in Chechnya and the war with Georgia). Many of those new NATO members – but also some old – have chosen NATO membership as a guarantee against an unstable and unpredictable Russia. Although Russia has gone through a difficult transformation, the country has not yet been able – or willing – to build a political system based on liberal Western values shared by the NATO members and making a military conflict between them normatively impossible.

Yet, Russia and NATO also share many common challenges and interests. This was probably an important reason why Russian President Dmitry Medvedev decided to attend the Lisbon Summit and the question of closer cooperation between those two is widely discussed, with some even advocating to offer Russia a full-fledged membership in the alliance (Kupchan 2010; Lukyanov 2010; ICD-INSOR & IISS 2010). NATO and Russia have been working on a common threat assessment and the new strategic concept says that they are to cooperate closely on a number of security-related issues, such as missile defence, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, counter-piracy and the promotion of wider international security. Both Russia and NATO seem also to be interested in stabilising the situation in Afghanistan. In Lisbon, NATO reached an agreement with Russia allowing the alliance to transport equipment to and from Afghanistan through Russian

territory. Medvedev also signalled that the country would cooperate with NATO in the development of a joint missile defence.

An alliance encompassing the United States, the sole remaining superpower, as a member is arguably bound to be an important factor in the global system. In addition, NATO is itself an important multilateral actor in the global institutional landscape, building partnerships with both individual countries and other international organisations. The new strategic concept reflects the alliance's interest in cooperating with the UN and the EU. At the same time, and unlike the 1999 version, the new concept does not mention the OSCE at all. The practical implications of this omission remain to be seen, but to the extent that it is interpreted as a political downgrading of the OSCE, it could have a negative impact on relations between the two.

4. Strategic concept 2010: more food for thought?

A changing international environment and inner challenges compelled the alliance to present a new and sober assessment of the situation and to outline the potential tasks faced by NATO in the next decade (Goldgeier 2009, Alcarro 2010). The new strategic concept adopted in Lisbon on 19 November 2010 (NATO 2010), a relatively short, 4000-word document, is a clear statement on these challenges and tasks and ways of addressing them. In the preface to the strategic concept, the heads of state and government reconfirm their commitment to the alliance and its importance in today's turbulent world. In the second part, they outline the core tasks and principles of the alliance, followed by a concise though realistic description of the alliance's security environment. The new concept was presented as historic and as a clear manifestation of NATO's willingness and ability to adapt to new strategic circumstances. At the same time it signalled, however, the return to traditional tasks of the alliance.

According to the first reading, the good old NATO is to be "filled" with new content and transformed into something qualitatively new. The new Emerging Security Challenges Division in the NATO HQ[2] that is to deal with such non-traditional security threats as cyber war or energy security may exemplify this new approach (ISIS Europe 2010). On the other hand, the new concept signals NATO's willingness to breathe new life into its old, traditional role, with a renewed focus on the core area and core tasks. This probably also reflects the alliance's acknowledgment of strategic overstretch (e.g. in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan) and how these and other constraints have impacted on NATO's ability to address core security concerns of its members. In spite of the fact that the new strategic concept seems to be pouring both new and old wine into NATO's bottles, it will hardly put an end to discussions about NATO's purpose but rather open a new chapter in this debate.

The strategic concept also provides some clues on the alliance's open door policy, which will remain one of the cornerstones of the alliance as the best way of improving security in the Euro-Atlantic area (par. 27). As many as eight paragraphs (par. 28–35) are devoted to the discussion of the role of partnerships in the alliance's policy, with a focus

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2   http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_65107.htm?selectedLocale=en

on NATO relations with the United Nations, the European Union and with Russia.

In the last three paragraphs of the concept document (36–38), the heads of state and government underline their determination to continue to reform and renew NATO, which they describe as the globe's most successful political-military alliance. This is the result, they argue, of common values such as individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The purpose of the alliance as outlined in the last paragraph of the strategic concept is to "safeguard the freedom and security of its members" and in order to achieve this goal the members are to defend these values through unity, solidarity, strength and resolve.

To achieve those goals, the alliance will need not only sufficient financial, military and human resources (par. 37) but should also use those resources in the most efficient and effective way. The new strategic concept underlines that preserving and strengthening the common capabilities, standards, structures and funding will remain one of the alliance's priorities. In addition, it also calls for the alliance to "engage in a process of continual reform, to streamline structures, improve working methods and maximise efficiency". The goal of strengthening common capabilities, standards and structures could be interpreted as a move towards increasing standardisation of the alliance. This would narrow the possibility for members to cooperate on a case to case basis like in coalitions of the willing. By implication, imposed common standards could be seen as a reversal or weakening of the trend towards a NATO à la carte principle.

However, in an organisation with 28 members and even more cooperation partners, a standardised response to all conceivable situations may cause conflicts and serious challenges. To respond effectively, NATO will have to act in a flexible manner and adapt to new changing environments. The newly adopted strategic concept may solve certain issues, but many others remain open. Addressing them will require more discussion and action and here the new concept gives some answers but also brings new questions to the table.

Finally, the adoption of NATO's new strategic concept could in some respects be seen as marking a formal end to the alliance's long period of reflection on its recent past. The concept gives no final conclusion as to what role NATO should play in the years to come. On the contrary, it is rather laconic in addressing this particular issue. New debates about how the concept is to be interpreted, specified and translated into political action are all the more likely.

Differing views within the alliance on what tasks NATO should take on and how it should organise its internal and external relational structures to address them could in the longer run promote a NATO à la carte. For the smaller member states, like Norway, the practical implication might be an even greater need for coalition building and diplomatic efforts than is the case today.

5. What are the implications for Norway in NATO?

For Norway, a NATO à la carte is likely to imply challenges and difficulties, and possibly fewer opportunities. Norway is one of NATO's founders and NATO membership has been a cornerstone of Norwegian security and defence policy since 1949. Being a loyal ally to the United States in particular, Norway is an insider in NATO. Norway's close bilateral relationship with the United States during the Cold War period and in the first three years of the "global war on terror" in particular, also contributed to ensuring the Norwegian position as an insider in the alliance (Græger 2007). There are at least two key reasons for Norway's interest in NATO. The first is that Norway is not a member of the EU, although in many ways a *de facto* member in economic and some other policy areas (through the Schengen and the EEA agreement). Norway is, however, an "outsider" when it comes to the EU dimension of European security, despite its participation in the ESDP and EU-led operations. Norway has no access to the political discussions in various EU fora discussing security and defence, for instance prior to NATO summits and ministerial meetings. The evolution of the EU's foreign and security policy caused by the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty results in Norway having even less influence on the EU decision and policy making in that area. At the same time, the Berlin Plus framework, which is the only formal security cooperation involving both EU and non-EU NATO countries, has been in a stalemate for a long time, because of the Cyprus issue. This has reduced the relevance of Berlin Plus as a channel for accessing EU policy and strategic thinking for Norway, too (see Græger 2007b).

All of this may not be a serious challenge today, when NATO seems to be in good shape and President Barack Obama claims that he values NATO as an arena for consultation with allies in security matters. However, if the United States is re-investing in NATO, it probably means that it is also re-investing in other alliances and relations that are perhaps viewed as even more important for US global interests. For instance, the bilateral relations between the United States and the EU are in the making, and at least American think tanks regard the prospects for closer cooperation as high (Hamilton et al. 2009). Changes in international relational structures in which the EU plays a part and especially in EU–US relations may also affect NATO's role and influence in European security. Arguably, a stronger bilateral EU–US relationship may also potentially reduce non-EU members' influ-

ence, because issues of relevance to European or transatlantic security might be sorted out before they reach NATO. As EU membership is currently not on the political agenda in the Norwegian domestic political debate, Norway's formal association with the EU is likely to remain unchanged in the foreseeable future.

A second reason why Norway has become one of the strongest advocates of NATO's return to its core tasks is the emerging international order and the changing distribution of power influencing also Norway's strategic environment. The decision to become a NATO member in 1949 was caused by the reading of the strategic situation developing around Norway. The emerging multipolar world and especially Russia's return to the international scene seem to have re-activated a similar reading of Norway's strategic situation, at least in Norway (see e.g. Ministry of Defence 2007-08; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008-2009; Godzimirski 2010; Græger 2011). Russia is an important, returning great power in this new order. NATO's future role and function are of key importance to Norway's security and action space within security matters – as a subject and not only as an object in the international power game. Norway's place on the Russian strategic radar screen and strategic position vis-à-vis Russia are likely to remain a function of Norway's connection to Western security institutions, and especially to NATO, in the years to come. The tighter the link between Norway and these institutions, the more disinclination Russia is likely to show when Norwegian interests in areas of potential conflict or tension are challenged.

Norway's proximity to Russia is no longer seen as a security threat but may pose some security challenges, mainly due to the lack of democratisation and differences in the demographic, economic and military potentials of the two countries. Norway's expressed concern that NATO has forgotten its "near abroad" is a reflection of this reading of the situation. Hence, ability to retain a sufficient deterrence potential will also be a key to ensuring good relations with Russia. In the NATO debates about the strategic concept, Norwegian government representatives apparently managed to build an intra-alliance coalition that was strong enough to imprint the concept and push its views through the NATO decision-making machinery. The fact that the concept (in the first paragraphs) focuses on issues vital to Norway's interests is hopefully going to have a positive impact on the country's security situation as well as its position within the alliance.

Precisely due to its long-standing experience with Russia as a neighbour, Norway can possibly also act as an enabler in improving the alliance's relationship with its most important neighbour in the east. However, this role also depends on Russia's future development and

Russian-NATO/Western relations at the international level. Norway belongs to a category of small states, which Russia sees as objects rather than subjects of international relations. In Russian thinking, a re-establishment of the European concert of powers would give Russia – together with its strategic partners such as France and Germany (Leonard & Popescu 2007) – a decisive say over European security issues. In such a system, American influence in Europe could be curbed (Shapiro & Witney 2009; Naumann 2009), and so would the influence of the NATO members, whose future would be decided not within the multilateral, but rather within a new multi*polar* framework.

A possible closer cooperation between the EU and Russia, between Russia and NATO and between EU and NATO will definitely increase stability and predictability in Norway's strategic environment and should therefore be seen as a positive development. Increased cooperation between the EU and NATO and especially between Russia and NATO may make it easier for Norway to share its special and mostly positive experience from cooperation with Russia with other alliance members who are more sceptical towards Russia. Changing the negative attitudes towards Russia within the alliance could in itself also have a beneficial impact on the overall security situation in Europe. It could also improve the alliance's internal coherence by removing one of the current intra-alliance bones of contention, i.e. different views on possible closer cooperation with Russia. This could also promote a standardised and unified NATO approach towards Russia, facilitating an efficient and coherent policy towards Russia. Consequently, Russia's scepticism towards the alliance may appear as less founded, preventing Russia from strengthening bilateral relations with some core powers (Germany and France).

Finally, how will a possible development towards a NATO à la carte affect NATO's ability to remain the main provider of security for Norway in the current international order? According to some analysts, the Scandinavian NATO members chose the à la carte model from the very beginning, with Norway's self-imposed restrictions on the pre-stocking of certain US military material on Norwegian soil and Denmark's so-called footnote policy in NATO during the Cold War as the ultimate examples (Dörfer 1986). Arguably, then, Norway can be said to be an experienced à la carte player. However, it should be emphasised that this policy took place at a time when security threats were less complex and multi-faceted and NATO's organisation more heterogeneous than today. A future NATO à la carte based on "variable geometry" or "variable membership" would therefore put more strains on its members, demanding an even stronger focus on coalition building and diplomacy than is the case today. Not only is this time and resource consuming but it could, arguably, reduce Norway's secu-

rity policy room of manoeuvre. Indeed, NATO's role as the primary guarantor of the security of its member states is not entirely embodied in Article 5 but in its role as a forum for security consultations. Should NATO's role and function in this capacity be diminished as a result of shifting groupings (bilateralism, clusters), coalitions and conflicting views on vital issues, then so would its relevance as a security organisation. In addition, a NATO à la carte could further emphasise the considerable disadvantages of being outside the EU. In relation to European security, Norway would be an insider and an outsider at the same time.

6. Conclusion

The increased tendency of ad hoc coalitions of the willing, national caveats on the use of forces in NATO missions and closer bilateral and trilateral cooperation inside NATO are among the factors indicating that a two-third NATO or a NATO à la carte is emerging. As noted above, conflicts of interest between one or more groups of states have manifested themselves and these constellations of states seem to play out in increasingly more important issues for NATO. Over time, "opt-outs" or reservations from common decisions – be it in the form of coalitions of the willing or national caveats – may appear as long-lasting. This may undermine the transatlantic political community or "the unique community of values", as stated in the strategic concept (par. 2), which is the glue of the alliance. Bilateralism, trilateralism, issue specific coalitions and controversy over key issues may generally also reduce the *de facto* influence of smaller member countries. Militarily and technologically superior NATO members may to a great degree define, through their operative leadership, the preconditions for missions conducted by a coalition of the willing. Increased use of such coalitions may therefore confirm the power of these states. Powerful NATO members may also – though this needs to be empirically "tested" from case to case – have the upper hand inside clusters, and especially in ad hoc coalitions, mainly due to their size and military resources. Hence, a development towards a NATO à la carte may arguably water out the principle that all members have equal weight in alliance decision-making, if not formally, then at least in practice.

The new strategic concept describes NATO as "the unique and essential transatlantic forum for consultations" (par. 5). However, this role could be weakened should the alliance become a "force pool" for members who wish to make use of NATO's efficient military machinery, while at the same time bypassing NATO as a consensus organisation. At least several countries, among them Norway, have warned against a NATO that "develops into a forum that confirms agreement reached in other and more closed fora" (Ministry of Defence 2000-01: 22). Such fora include coalitions of the willing or permanent clusters of members inside NATO. In addition, fora outside NATO, such as G8 and G20, are becoming increasingly more important in addressing regional and global politics and security.

Other important factors that may push the alliance towards developing an à la carte strategic culture are:

- the impact of the economic crisis resulting in, especially, European budget cuts. This may affect investments in traditional security, undermine the principle of fair burden sharing, weaken the internal coherence and external unity of the alliance and, in the longer run, its military power;

- lack of a common, existential threat consolidating the alliance in the same way as the Soviet threat did during the Cold War;

- the growing realisation that the main engagement of the alliance over the last decade, the fight against international terrorism, can only be solved through a combination of military and non-military means, revealing that NATO is partly irrelevant;

- diverging interests of alliance members across regions and sectors (specific issue areas), challenging the prospects for intra-alliance cooperation, consensus-building and coherent partnerships with external partners.

Are there, then, no positive aspects of a NATO developing into a security organization à la carte? To avoid further disintegration and enable strategic decision-making, some have voiced that the alliance should allow members to select from a menu of cooperation, suggesting that a NATO à la carte might be part of the solution and not only part of the problem. Indeed, although common visions and a community of values remain vital for NATO's strength as an organisation, a NATO à la carte may actually allow the alliance to act in situations of internal political disagreement or stalemate. This may, in turn, ensure a place for the alliance on an international arena increasingly dominated by G's, such as the G8 and G20, emerging great powers (the BRICs) but also non-state actors (e.g. private military companies, NGOs).

Furthermore, the à la carte model would add a certain flexibility to the alliance, ensuring that it remains a practical security tool for the international community (and for its members). Such an alliance would probably also be better prepared to address challenges that do not require the military force of the entire alliance. For many of NATO's current and potential future members the à la carte option may nevertheless seem less tempting than the partly mythologised automaticity inherent in the "one for all and all for one" principle stated in Article 5. But all current and future members would probably agree that a NATO à la carte is preferable to a NATO that is unable to act, because of internal rift, over time potentially leading to an alliance in complete collapse.

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