



## EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

India and North Korea have been attracting a great deal of world attention over the last month by carrying out missile tests. India, the world's largest democracy, successfully launched a first intercontinental missile that is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Meanwhile, the North Korean regime under dictator Kim Jong Un defied warnings from the international community by testing a long-range missile – a launch that was a spectacular failure. Although the two countries could not be more different, these events still show that the Asia-Pacific region is a hub of power politics and uncertainty. For years, there have been tensions due to the ongoing rivalry between India and Pakistan, and the rise of China has also been unnerving for other countries in the region. All this has led to a build-up of conventional and nuclear weapons, with the resulting threat of an arms race.

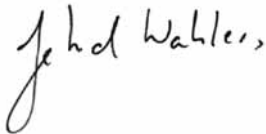
This situation combined with major economic interests has led the USA to focus more attention on the Asia-Pacific region. This shift was announced by President Obama in January as part of the country's new defence strategy. Any strategic shifts by the USA also inevitably affect NATO, as was demonstrated at the Chicago Summit at the end of May. Two of the main discussion points on the Summit's agenda reflected – at least indirectly – the growing importance of the Asia-Pacific region: the issue of strengthening NATO's partnerships and Smart Defence, a strategy for increasing efficiency that encourages Allies to cooperate in acquiring, maintaining and deploying military capabilities.

Shrinking defence budgets on both sides of the Atlantic and the operations in Afghanistan and Libya have shown that it is increasingly necessary for NATO to build further and stronger partnerships in order to share the burden and provide political legitimacy. As a result, certain countries of Southeast Asia that are looking to develop – or already have – ties with NATO will play an important role. Myanmar

is an unusual example of this, and we will be taking a closer look at the country's political turnaround in this issue. By continuing to aid and abet the reform process, the West has a chance to turn Myanmar into a valuable partner and into an anchor for stability in the region.

The second issue on the agenda in Chicago that was influenced by the USA's focus on Asia is the concept of "smart defence". This concept is largely a mechanism to encourage European NATO partners to increase their cooperation on defence issues in times of limited financial resources. It also takes into account the fact that people in the West are likely to become ever more reticent to see their limited financial resources being spent on defence capabilities.

The USA's new geopolitical priorities mean that Europe has to assume more responsibility for its own security, particularly in its own back yard. This does not only pertain to North Africa and the Middle East, but also the ongoing territorial conflicts in Georgia and between Kosovo and Serbia. The European NATO countries in particular need to muster the political will and resources to create peace in these regions. At the end of the day, the stabilisation of these countries is in Europe's own best interest.



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