The Science for Peace and Security Programme Project:
NATO Global Perceptions – Views from Asia-Pacific Region

Executive Summary

Being funded and implemented under the framework of NATO SPS Programme and in cooperation with NATO Public Diplomacy Division and Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia), this Project provided a comprehensive comparative academic research of **media images and elite perceptions** of NATO. The aim was to identify, measure and raise awareness, as well as to extend knowledge of NATO among its five Global Partners in Asia-Pacific, namely Australia, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, and Republic of Korea.

1. **Findings: communication (the media images segment)**

This segment has been featured by a comparative analysis of NATO-related images found in the media sources across the five countries under study. A comprehensive set of focus-driven NATO-related variables ('Local Resonance', 'Visibility', 'Capability', and 'Evaluation') was developed.

Commencing with the cluster of 'Local Resonance', almost all Japanese and Korean articles use local sources that generate the news. The majority of New Zealand and Australian sources are, however, international.

The highest NATO visibility was detected in Japanese media (all types), while the Korean centre-fight media source showed the lowest level of the Alliance's visibility. None of the military media mentioned NATO in the headline and none had premium placement (except Mongolia). In addition, the majority of the articles gave NATO minor centrality. Almost all NZ and Mongolian articles were accompanied by a photo or cartoon of NATO. A remarkable finding was that NATO was not mentioned in the Korean military media source during the period of monitoring (6 months). All Australian articles where NATO was mentioned were medium/long, while the majority of Mongolian articles were short. The highest degree of centrality for NATO was detected in Japanese non-military media.

The highest degree of NATO's portrayed capability was noted in Mongolian media (all types and sources), whilst its lowest level was detected in the Korean centre-right media source. NATO had a strong adversary, especially in centre-right media, in almost all Australian and NZ articles. In almost all Australian and New Zealand articles NATO was framed as legally involved in international affairs. At the same time, in all Australian non-military media, NATO was associated with 'issue unresolved' or 'no solution proposed'. From the Mongolian media perspective NATO was framed as effective and beneficial. Overall, all media types and text sources across the five countries portrayed the Alliance's capability as 'moderate-to-strong'.

2. **Findings: reception (the elite perceptions segment)**

The following four segmental blocks were developed under the study: 'NATO's Role in the World', 'Perceptions of Security Threats', 'NATO's Partnerships', and 'NATO's Public Diplomacy'.

2.1.   NATO's Role in the World

Australia: NATO's role during the Cold War was perceived in a positive way. However, the perception that the Alliance has lost a sense of its global mission existed, too.

New Zealand: A distinct division of opinion between a global role of NATO and its role in the European/North Atlantic area was noted during the interviewing process with New Zealand elites. In addition, the respondents showed little 'appetite' for NATO's political or military presence in the Asia Pacific. At the same time, New Zealand was perceived as ready to cooperate with the Alliance on transnational/emerging issues.

Mongolia: NATO's role as a global actor was overall recognised. To some extent one could have a feeling that the respondents 'encourage' NATO to be more active globally. Moreover, NATO's distinct linkage with Afghanistan was underlined and the success of the Alliance was acknowledged.

Republic of Korea: On the positive side, the respondents generally underlined NATO's achievements in the process of stabilising 'Eurasia' and Europe. However, a number of interviewees perceived NATO as an old-fashioned organisation.

Japan: Underscoring the importance of sharing democratic values, the Japanese elites perceived NATO as a 'natural partner' for the country. A 'normative power NATO' theme was also detected. In addition, perceived ineffectiveness of NATO's response to the Ukraine crisis was revealed. Overall, the data shows Japan's strong sense of NATO as embodiment and guarantor of global norms/international law.

2.2.   Perceptions of Security Threats

Australia: Managing Australia-US-China relations in a changing regional order emerged clearly as the main security threat facing Australia today; after that opinion diverged – with terrorism having greater salience for media elites than for the policy community.

New Zealand: The data showed no direct geographical threat to New Zealand perceived by the local elites; there was some concern about threat from ISIS to the country but fairly minor.

Mongolia: All security threats were perceived as having a distinct intra-orientation: challenges related to economic security, governance stability, and the problem of the country's environmental degradation.

Republic of Korea: Undisputedly, the factor of North Korea's nuclear weapons holdings was perceived as the Republic of Korea's biggest security threat, while some of the respondents were also specifying regional instability in general as well as non-traditional security threats.

Japan: This cluster of the research was featured by remarks on China (maritime security, island disputes), North Korea (nuclear threat, high level of general instability), and Russia (Kurils and energy).

2.3.   NATO's Global Partnership

Australia: Although not seen as directly relevant to Australia's security, NATO and the Global Partnership was seen as a potentially useful, but underutilised, asset in areas of non-traditional security cooperation.

New Zealand: In general, the focus was on maintaining interoperability so the country could work with NATO in the future. A perceived benefit to New Zealand was seen in maintaining a broader and diverse set of security linkages, including those with NATO.

Mongolia: NATO has little to none relevance to current security challenges that Mongolia is currently facing. However, the country's partnership with NATO makes a positive impact on Mongolia's security. On top of

that, there was equal opinion division between political and military relationship with NATO. As a general theme – Mongolia's cooperation with NATO has been seen as beneficial for its relations with the US.

Republic of Korea: A confusion between cooperation with NATO and cooperation with NATO Member States was noted. On a more concrete note, Korea's strong partnership with the US could help in developing a potentially great partnership with NATO (especially, on solving non-traditional security issues).

Japan: Nearly all interviewees stated that partnership with NATO has been valuable. This opinion was based on a number of factors mentioned: NATO as a significant multilateral partner, as a protector of global norms as well as a very important ally of Japan. NATO was described as a provider of a framework that could become a model/vehicle for enhancing interoperability. According to the findings, NATO framework enhances intelligence-sharing and increases possibilities for operational cooperation in regards of piracy.

2.4.   NATO's Public Diplomacy

Australia: Overall, respondents were underwhelmed by NATO's media and people-to-people activities in Australia. However, they indicated they would be happy to activate the Global Partnership through less passive means than press releases and websites.

New Zealand: The data underscored that people-to-people links were perceived by the elites as important, in particular the high-level visits. However, NATO was generally characterised as an organisation that is lacking its visibility in New Zealand.

Mongolia: The elites indicated that not many NATO channels are used to receive information on the organisation – most of the interested use web-sites and TV. In addition, the respondents confirmed that NATO simply does not exist in the local media.

Republic of Korea: Overall, the existing communication channels with NATO were perceived as 'limited'.

Japan: The Japanese elites' representatives acknowledged the importance of high-level visits of senior officials. They noted the positive role of German CPE in Tokyo and Japanese Ambassador to NATO in Brussels. What is more, a dedicated NATO representative in Japan was perceived as a necessity for the future. This could provide the audience with more Japanese-language materials on NATO as well as more study visits/scholarships for Japanese opinion-shapers.

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'NATO Global Perceptions – Views from Asia-Pacific Region' is an academic study of highly innovative character, featured by a comparative theory-based multinational design. It is a *nouvelle* subject in the scholarship on NATO and its external outreach/public diplomacy. The Project undertaken within the framework of NATO SPS Programme has involved close collaboration between Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia), the University of Canterbury (New Zealand), and the University of Toledo (OH, United States). They have greatly benefited from involvement of high-profile partners – the European Union Institute in Japan (Waseda University, Japan), the Centre for European Integration Studies (University of Bonn, Germany), the Institute for Strategic Studies (National Security Council, Mongolia), National Centre for Research on Europe (New Zealand), KU-KIEP-SBS EU Centre (Republic of Korea), School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand), The University of Suwon (Republic of Korea), RMIT, Monash University, and Australian National University (the latter three from Australia).