

## The debate about Article 5 and its credibility What is it all about?

by Pål JONSON<sup>1</sup>

### Contents

Introduction	1
The scope and credibility of Article 5	2
Views on the credibility of Article 5 within NATO	3
The Collective Defenders	3
The Expeditionaries	6
The Russia Firsters	8
Conclusions – the conflict of different agendas	10



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NATO Defense College

Research Division

Via Giorgio Pelosi, 1

00143 Rome – Italy

web site: [www.ndc.nato.int](http://www.ndc.nato.int)

e-mail: [research@ndc.nato.int](mailto:research@ndc.nato.int)

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Article 5 of the Washington Treaty stipulates that an armed attack on one is an attack on all - and that the parties will take such action as deemed necessary to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic Area. It has been reiterated time and again that this commitment to collective defence is the bedrock of NATO. For some time it was taken for granted without substantive discussions about the actual role and content of Article 5 within the Alliance. However, as the Alliance is in the process of adopting its third new Strategic Concept since the end of the cold war, Article 5 will, for the first time in almost two decades, be at the very top of the agenda of the difficult issues to address in reference to both its scope and its credibility.

This report analyses why Article 5 has re-emerged at the forefront of NATO's agenda and assesses the core arguments put forward by the Allies for whether or not it needs to be made more credible in case of an armed attack by another state. This analysis intentionally leaves out the debate about non-state threats or non-armed attacks, like a cut-off of energy supplies, in order to

<sup>1</sup> Pål Jonson, Ph.D. is a foreign policy adviser at the Swedish parliament. This paper was written while he was a Partnership for Peace Fellow at the Research Division of NATO Defense College. The views expressed in it are the responsibility of the author and should not be attributed to the NATO Defense College or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The report is based on first and secondary sources such as speeches, statements and communiqués, as well as articles and reports. It also draws heavily on interviews conducted with policy makers and diplomats based at NATO Headquarters in Brussels during the autumn of 2009.

focus the discussion. More specifically, the report addresses three main questions. Firstly, what key political-military issues are at stake in this debate – or, more specifically, which practical measures are (or should be, according to some) on NATO's negotiation table for strengthening the credibility of Article 5? Secondly, where are the key fault lines in the debate, or – who says what and why? Thirdly, why has this debate emerged and is it really a problem for the Alliance that there seem to be diverging views on the need to strengthen the credibility of article 5?

#### THE SCOPE AND CREDIBILITY OF ARTICLE 5

The debate about the scope of article 5 and what actually constitutes an armed attack and a subsequent article 5 response had a rather dormant existence until the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States.<sup>2</sup> The Allies then formulated the interpretation that the concept of an armed attack was sufficiently elastic to generate mutual assistance on the basis of article 5 in response to a large scale international terrorist attack on NATO territory. Since then the debate about the scope of article 5 has expanded further and entailed new dimensions such as, for

example, ballistic missile defence and protective measures against the risk of deliberate release of hazardous materials in population centres. In the deliberations concerning the new Strategic Concept it is now being discussed whether the scope of an armed attack could be stretched even further to include an article 5 response to new non-kinetic threats such as cyber attacks, and possibly even to different forms of energy cuts directed at the Allies. While such threats will require solidarity and common action, most Allies seem to think that the basis of such collective responses will rather be within the framework of article 4 of the Washington Treaty (security consultations). Yet the exact scope of what it is that will trigger an article 5 response will, even after the adoption of the new Strategic Concept, most likely be left open to interpretation to ensure that the Allies do not impose unnecessary constraints on their freedom of action.

In reference to the more traditional concept of the credibility of article 5 in the case of an armed attack by another state, it is probably no exaggeration to claim that, until recently, a “benign neglect” for article 5 has prevailed within both the political and military establishments of the Alliance.<sup>3</sup> This is of course hardly surprising, given the absen-

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Article 5, in a strict interpretation, is not per se a mutual defence clause, since there are no absolute guarantees of mutual military assistance in the case of an armed attack on a signatory to the Washington Treaty. Each signatory is free to undertake whatever action it deems necessary. However, the use of the word ‘deems’, which is inspired by Article 51 of the UN Charter, underlines the fact that passivity or complete inaction would not be an adequate response to the treaty obligations. Article 6 sets the geographical boundaries and the operational reach of the commitment to Article 5 and states that it includes ‘forces, vessels or aircraft of any of the parties, when in or over these territories or any area in Europe in which occupation forces of any of the Parties were stationed on the date when the Treaty entered into force or the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.’

<sup>3</sup> The credibility of Article 5 is dependent on both the political commitment by the Allies to collective defence within the framework of the Washington Treaty and the military capability to ensure this commitment. The Allies that request a higher degree of credibility for Article 5 tend to focus on the latter part i.e. concrete military measures undertaken to assure a higher degree of automaticity and capacity to reassure the territorial integrity and political independence of NATO's member states.

ce of a direct military threat to NATO territory, its military superiority to other actors and the need to address urgent operational requirements for the exceptionally challenging ISAF mission in Afghanistan. However, Russia's military action against Georgia (which still leaves some questions open) in August 2008 proved that interstate wars in Europe are not necessarily a thing of the past, since a partner country and official applicant for NATO membership was indeed exposed to an armed attack and the loss of a significant part of its territory. Such a development seemed almost inconceivable a few years ago and it has led some of the Allies to assume that this is a new geopolitical reality which must shape NATO's defence and operational planning much more vividly in order to muster confidence in the commitment to collective defence and deter any potential aggressor.

## **VIEWS ON THE CREDIBILITY OF ARTICLE 5 WITHIN NATO**

The centre of gravity in the recent debate on Article 5 rests on whether and how to make it more credible, especially for those north-eastern Allies who perceive a degree of strategic exposure vis-à-vis Russia. At the risk of making generalisations and missing nuances, it seems possible to identify at least three groups of Allies with shifting priorities and agendas in this debate within NATO. There are those who want more focus on strengthening the credibility of Article 5; those who would rather devote additional efforts to out-of-area operations; and those who instead are more

concerned with establishing better relations with Russia. The challenge is that these three different agendas are to a certain degree perceived to be in conflict with one other. The quest for strengthening Article 5 is carefully weighed by the reluctant Allies against any possible opportunity costs that it could generate for ongoing or future crisis response operations, and what unintended consequences it could have for NATO's relations with Russia.

The three groups then seem to differ on at least two separable but interconnected issues. Firstly, there are diverging views on the extent of NATO presence in terms of troops and infrastructure in those countries that are feeling a degree of strategic exposure. This entails defence planning aspects such as pre-positioning of forces, investments in Host Nation Support capabilities and the location of NATO commands. Secondly, and most profoundly, there have been rather sharp disagreements within the Alliance about operational planning aspects such as whether to have contingency plans and land-component exercises for Article 5 operations in these countries.

## **THE COLLECTIVE DEFENDERS**

Conventional wisdom often states that the 12 new members of the Alliance who broke free from half a century of Soviet domination have been the driving force for raising the role of Article 5 on NATO's agenda. Yet closer analysis reveals that it is more specifically the Allies who share borders with Russia – Poland and the three Baltic States,

together with Norway – who have most fervently invested political capital and energy in this issue.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that these states, the “Collective Defenders”, have fought an uphill battle for several years within NATO to draw more attention to their cause. Nevertheless it was only after the war in Georgia that they began to make substantial progress on this issue.<sup>5</sup>

And yet, while the Collective Defenders do share security concerns concerning Russia and a desire to strengthen the credibility of Article 5, it should be noted that they do not quite see eye to eye on NATO’s policy vis-à-vis Russia.<sup>6</sup> While Norway has been inclined to take a rather accommodating approach, the Baltic States and Poland tend to advocate a policy of “principled engagement” where Russia’s disproportionate use of force against Georgia, violation of international agreements and energy pressure must be factors that more clearly shape NATO’s relations with Russia.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, some of the Collective Defenders have ge-

nerated a lingering tension within the Alliance by voicing rather severe criticism in the media of what they perceive to be dissatisfactory military arrangements within NATO to protect effectively all of its member states in the event of an armed attack (implicitly by Russia).<sup>8</sup> Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk did, for example, state during the launching of the US-Polish Agreement on Ballistic Missile Defense that “NATO would take days, weeks to start its machinery....Poland and the Poles do not want to be in alliances in which assistance would come at some point later – it is no good if assistance comes to dead people”. On a similar note, President Barack Obama received an open letter, published in Polish Gazete, signed by a number of former heads of state from Poland and the Baltic States, among other countries, which claimed that NATO today seems weaker than before and is perceived as decreasingly relevant. According to the authors of the letter, “There is a need for credible commitments and strategic reassurance including contingency planning, pre-positioning of forces, equipment and supplies for reinforcement in case of an emergency”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Collective Defenders also have sympathisers from other like-minded but not quite as active allies such as Iceland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Occasionally Greece and Turkey have also been supportive of raising the role of Article 5 since they too, for self-explanatory reasons, have security concerns related to territorial defence.

<sup>5</sup> There are several examples of these efforts by the Collective Defenders. Norway issued a carefully worded non-paper “Strengthening NATO – Raising its profile and ensuring its relevance” back in April 2008 which aimed to give the Alliance a stronger regional focus. The Baltic States introduced paragraph 48 of the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit Declaration, which they perceived to be a landmark, since it ensured that the commitment to Article 5 would also imply the practical requirement to strengthen collective defence. The article states: “We will continue to improve and demonstrate more clearly our ability to meet emerging challenges on and beyond Alliance territory, including on its periphery, inter alia by ensuring adequate planning, exercises and training.” All of the Collective Defenders also invested considerable political capital in ensuring that the revised concept for the NATO Response Force, which was launched in June 2009, had a more explicit focus on Article 5 missions.

<sup>6</sup> This can, for example, be traced to different views among the Collective Defenders on how the Alliance should have responded to Russia’s invasion of Georgia, and shifting views on issues that are sensitive to Russia such as Membership Action Plan Status for Georgia and Ukraine and the Ballistic Missile Defence programme.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Rasa Juknevičienė, Minister of Defense for Lithuania, “Latest Development in European Security: A Baltic Perspective”, Chatham House, London, 20 October 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Associated Press, 14 August 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Eastern-Central Europe to Barack Obama: an open letter, 24 July 2009. [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net)

### **Core arguments**

Strengthening the credibility of Article 5, by increasing NATO's presence in their vicinity and the establishment of politically approved contingency plans, remains at the core of the Collective Defenders' desires. The Collective Defenders advance three main arguments in support of their cause. Firstly, they claim that the emphasis on a credible commitment to Article 5 and a more visible NATO presence in their countries strengthens public support for NATO. This is, of course, particularly important when their soldiers are sent to the ISAF mission, where they frequently suffer casualties.<sup>10</sup> In essence they claim that in order to galvanise support for dangerous and challenging out-of-area operations they need to prove to their public that NATO is doing what it can to preserve their security and territorial integrity. In other words, if NATO is visible in expeditionary missions but invisible when it comes to protecting its own societies, support for the Alliance will wane.

Secondly, all of the Collective Defenders recognise, in line with NATO's current commonly agreed threat assessment, that they do not perceive Russia as an immediate threat to their security. Yet they tend to note several worrying tendencies in Russia's long-term development, which creates a need "to keep NATO's gunpowder dry". The Baltic States, in particular, have expressed worries

over the authoritarian tendencies in Russian foreign policy, its increased military activities and its propensity to view Eastern Europe as its own sphere of influence.<sup>11</sup> The Russian-Belarus exercises Zapad-09 and Ladogo-09 conducted along their borders in September 2009 are often mentioned as a case in point.<sup>12</sup>

Similar concerns have been voiced by Norway. Norwegian State Secretary for Defence Espen Bart Eide neatly encapsulated the prevalent mood among the Collective Defenders when he stated that recently Russia has shown an increased willingness to engage in political rhetoric and even use of military force. The "zero-sum" approaches in Russian security thinking are a challenge for the West, including the increased tendency on the part of Russia to think in terms of geopolitical spheres of influence."<sup>13</sup> While Russia is unlikely to have the intent to pose a serious threat to western or southern Europe, in the future it could still pose a serious challenge to its neighbouring states. A credible commitment to Article 5 is therefore very much perceived as an existential need for some Allies and, according to the Collective Defenders, it is pivotal to the political cohesion of NATO.

Thirdly, the Collective Defenders, and in particular Poland and the Baltic States, argue that all states, on the basis of

<sup>10</sup> Speech by State Secretary for Defense Espen Bart Eide, "Collective Defense in Today's Security Environment", Luxembourg, October 16 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Rasa Juknevičienė, Minister of Defense for Lithuania, Latest Development in European Security: A Baltic Perspective, Chatham House, London, 20 October 2009.

<sup>12</sup> In September 2009 Russia, together with Belarus, conducted two large-scale exercises on the periphery of NATO's borders which were the largest exercises that Russia ever has conducted. According to open sources, the scenario did include, among other things, the use of tactical nuclear weapons, at a relatively early stage, against NATO territory. The Economist, 29 October 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Speech by State Secretary for Defense Espen Bart Eide, "Collective Defense in Today's Security Environment", Luxembourg, 16 October 2009.

the principle of indivisibility of Allied security, should have the same right to receive arrangements for contingency plans, exercises and investments in Host Nation Support capabilities. This should be seen as a perfectly normal activity within NATO regardless of the geopolitical location or historical background of the member states. There can be no first or second class membership inside the Alliance, according to the Collective Defenders.

## THE EXPEDITIONARIES

A second group of likeminded Allies within this debate consists of the "Expeditionaries", i.e. the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada and Denmark. These Allies, who have been the driving force for the transformation agenda and an increased focus within NATO on out-of-area operations, were, at least before the war in Georgia, sceptical of the arguments of the Collective Defenders for devoting efforts to reinforce the credibility of Article 5 and increasing NATO's presence on its periphery.

This scepticism does not seem to derive from any major sensitivity that such initiatives would distort NATO's relations with Russia. On the contrary, several of the Expeditionaries have advocated a rather hard headed approach to NATO's Russia policy that is primarily related to different priorities for resource allocation in the balance between territorial defence and out-of-area operations. More fundamentally, the Expeditionaries tend to raise three major

concerns about the cause of the Collective Defenders.

First, there is a concern among the Expeditionaries that initiatives such as drafting contingency plans and increasing NATO's exercise activities in the High North or in the Baltic Sea might remove effort and focus from the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. It should be noted that there has also been similar apprehension within the military establishment at SHAPE along the same lines, given the limited military personnel with the right competence available at NATO headquarters these days for tasks such as drafting contingency plans and planning large scale Article 5 exercises.

Second, there also prevails a suspicion among the Expeditionaries that some of the arguments advanced by the Collective Defenders occasionally are used as excuses for not wholeheartedly signing up to the transformation agenda toward more available and deployable forces. An example that is often used in this context is Poland's resistance to transforming and downsizing its large army, despite repeated criticism from NATO's Defence Review Committee, based on claims that it is maintained intact for territorial defence requirements. This is seen as little else than transformation inertia and job creation policies by some of the Expeditionaries. Thus, there is a concern that, by accommodating the agenda of the Collective Defenders, the sense of urgency regarding the transformation process might be reduced.

Third, some of the claims that the Collective Defenders

have made in reference to strengthening the credibility of Article 5 that are associated with additional investments in Host Nation Support capabilities, such as airfields and de-embarkment ports, are seen by the Expeditionaries as mere attempts to obtain a larger share of the NATO Security Investment Programme (NSIP) rather than legitimate security concerns. Such investments of course generate economic activities and a certain degree of prestige and public support in the recipient country but would, according to the Expeditionaries, not bring any real added value to the security of the Alliance. "It would be a waste of money that NATO doesn't have on things that it does not need," according to one source. The conflict of interests is accentuated by the fact that the Expeditionaries would like to use this programme differently since it also helps fund several of NATO's transformation programmes and local headquarters as well as infrastructure for the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

However, despite the concerns stated above, the Expeditionaries seem to recognise that the Collective Defenders do have a need to explain and legitimise their participation in out-of-area operations to their publics by receiving support for their concerns when it comes to reassurance under Article 5. Thus, the Expeditionaries, helped by the leadership of the United States, have increasingly been willing to support some of the requests of the Collective Defenders as far as contingency plans and exercises are

concerned. This shift in policy came as a result of the war in Georgia. It should be noted that, in his speech in Prague in April 2009, President Barack Obama vigorously made the point that "NATO's Article 5 states it clearly: an attack on one is an attack on all. That is a promise for our time and for all time." Furthermore, he went on to say in the same speech: "We must work together as NATO members so that we have contingency plans in place to deal with new threats, wherever they may come from."<sup>14</sup> The United States Ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder, has also stated: "If there is a contingency plan for the defence of the Netherlands, why not for the Baltic states or Poland? Now some allies don't agree, they think it would be provocative. Let me tell you: those allies hear from me every day. I think this is totally fundamental."<sup>15</sup>

Even the United Kingdom, which initially was one of the most outspoken critics of the agenda of the Collective Defenders, seemed considerably more willing to accommodate its concerns after the war in Georgia, at least in order to assure its continued commitment to out-of-area operations.<sup>16</sup> In February 2009 the United Kingdom launched the so-called Allied Solidarity Force (which was later merged into the revised concept for the NATO Response Force by a Norwegian initiative) intended only for collective defence missions as a means to reinforce the credibility of Article 5. However, it is symptomatic of the British position that former State Secretary for Defence Johan Hutton

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<sup>14</sup> Remarks by President Barack Obama, Prague, Czech Republic, 5 April 2009.

<sup>15</sup> NRC Handelsblatt, 6 July 2009.

<sup>16</sup> The United Kingdom has, for example, been one of the Allies who are most reluctant to support the continuation of NATO's air policing mission over the Baltic States.



made no secret in his press comments of the fact that the proposal was launched primarily to ensure that the Allies that do have concerns about their territorial integrity would be more committed to contributing to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup>

In essence the Expeditionaries view the Collective Defenders cause for strengthening the credibility of Article 5 with some reluctance, since they are concerned that there might be hidden agendas associated with this cause. Consequently, they remain lukewarm about requests by the Collective Defenders for substantial investments in Host Nation Support capabilities, the pre-positioning of NATO forces on their territory, or the establishment of new NATO headquarters in these countries. According to the Expeditionaries, the security of the Collective Defenders is sufficiently assured by flexible and rapidly available over-the-horizon capabilities such as the NATO Response Forces. However, they seem to be willing to support the Collective Defenders' request for contingency plans and slightly increased exercise activities on NATO's periphery as long as it does not imply substantial resource allocation or political distortion away from current or future out-of-area operations. Yet it should be noted that this support only remains valid as long as the Collective Defenders are showing a continued commitment to make substantial contributions to out-of-area operations in general and the ISAF mission in particular.

## THE RUSSIA FIRSTERS

The main opponents of the Collective Defenders' cause have in particular been Germany, Italy and, to a lesser degree, France. This group, the so-called "Russia Firsters", also has the implicit support for its positions on this matter from, for example, Belgium, Portugal and Spain. The unifying factor for the Russia Firsters is that they put more premiums on nurturing NATO's relations with Russia than the rest of the Alliance and they tend to be more sensitive to how Russia perceives NATO's deeds.

Yet it should be noted that this is an issue of degrees rather than any major principled disagreement about the fact that Article 5 is the bedrock of the Alliance and that all Allies should receive adequate protection from NATO to assure their territorial integrity. Germany, which arguably is the most receptive within NATO to Russian reactions, has for example been a major contributor to NATO's air policing mission over the Baltic States and regularly conducts naval exercises together with these states. That said, it still remains clear that the Russia Firsters, more than most Allies, do take Russian perceptions into consideration when they shape their preferences for whether and how to strengthen the credibility of Article 5.

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<sup>17</sup> "Britain proposes standing NATO force for Europe", Reuters, 19 February 2009.



### **Core arguments**

The Russia Firsters share some of the concerns that the Expeditionaries have expressed in the debate about whether and how to strengthen Article 5, but also tend to make more explicit arguments based on their own preferences regarding how NATO's relationship with Russia develops. More particularly, there are three main arguments that the Russia Firsters tend to use to counter the claims of the Collective Defenders. Firstly, the group argues that there is no real need to increase the credibility of Article 5 for the north-eastern Allies, since NATO's collective threat assessment does not support this view. Any kind of conventional armed attack on NATO territory is extremely unlikely. Efforts to raise NATO's profile on its periphery would, according to the group, also have the unintended consequences of actually provoking tension with Russia and would therefore be self-defeating. In its extension it could lead to a militarisation along NATO's borders: a turn of events that neither the Alliance nor Russia would like to see. Thus, an increased military presence including the pre-positioning of NATO forces in response to a non-threat would just strengthen the revisionist elements in Russia, according to the Russia Firsters. This group also tends to be the most inclined within the Alliance to reiterate that NATO in the NATO-Russia Founding Act stated that it intended to avoid stationing pre-positioned forces (or nuclear weapons) on the territory of new member states. Aban-

doing this commitment could indeed cause unnecessary complications for NATO's relations with Russia.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, the Russia Firsters sometimes also cast doubts on the authenticity of the Collective Defenders' concerns about the credibility of Article 5. Given the Collective Defenders' propensity to take harsh policy lines on Russia, it is assumed that their statements regarding the need to increase the credibility of Article 5 are actually intended for domestic consumption rather than based on any real threat perception. In addition, Germany especially recently stated that some of the Collective Defenders have chosen to take what should be an internal debate on contingency planning to the public and drawn the Alliance into a "media war". Thus Germany's willingness to accommodate the request from these states for contingency plans so that they "could get a piece of paper that they would use to wave in the face of the Russians" is, to put it mildly, very limited. Consequently it has been Germany above all that has resisted repeated requests from the Baltic States in particular, but also increasingly from the United States, that the North Atlantic Council should approve the establishment of contingency plans for the Baltic States. According to news sources, this issue now seems to be moving toward reconciliation in so far that the Allies have agreed that the Baltic States will be included in an annex of the contingency plans that currently are under its five-year review for Poland.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> In the NATO-Russia Funding Act, established in 1997, NATO stated that it had no intentions, plans or reasons to store nuclear weapons or pre-position troops on the territory of the new member states. Furthermore NATO has refrained from establishing contingency plans and conducting land component exercises in the Baltic States, in part in order to accommodate Russia's concern about the enlargement of the Alliance, and in part because it was perceived as unnecessary. See Ronald Asmus, "NATO's Hour", Wall Street Journal Europe, 18 August 2008.

<sup>19</sup> The Economist, 14 January 2010.

Thirdly, the Russia Firsters sometimes argue that if political solidarity is strong within NATO, it is actually unnecessary to undertake measures such as contingency plans and exercises for Article 5 operations. Initiating such steps will only undermine the political solidarity and split the Alliance. It will be seen as a sign of lack of confidence within the Alliance and thereby runs the risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In essence, the sharpest division in the debate within the Alliance in reference to the quest to strengthen the credibility of Article 5 has been between some of the Collective Defenders and the Russia Firsters. The basic fault lines in this sub-debate seem to be whether NATO's primary focus should be to cooperate with Russia or to protect itself against Russia, and the degree of military vulnerability to which some Allies should be exposed to. The Russia Firsters tend to claim that NATO membership in itself is sufficient to deter aggression, while the Collective Defenders state that this has to be backed up with contingency plans and a higher military presence by NATO in their vicinity. Sometimes this debate is caught in a negative trajectory. The Collective Defenders claim that the Russia Firsters' objection to the establishment of contingency plans for the Baltic States undermines their security. The Russia Firsters, on the other hand, claim that the Collective Defenders' hostility toward Russia is undermining efforts to create a working relationship with a key strategic partner, which they assume would be conducive to the security interests of the Collective Defenders.

## CONCLUSIONS

### THE CONFLICT OF DIFFERENT AGENDAS

The overarching aim of this report has been to assess the main issues and key fault lines in the debate about whether and how to strengthen the credibility of Article 5 in case of an armed attack by another state. The debate has been split between those who want reassurance under Article 5, those who prefer to focus more on out-of-area operations, and those who are more concerned about NATO's relations with Russia. The primary driver for the Allies' different views has thus depended on their agendas for the future orientation of the Alliance's role and purpose. These different agendas and the debate that they have generated are the symptoms of the strategic diversification that began after the end of the cold war and the demise of the Soviet Union and has become accentuated within the Alliance over the last decade. As NATO has taken on additional members, as well as more challenging missions, it has been exposed to greater differences among its members in terms of threat perceptions, strategic priorities and foreign policy approaches. As a result of this diversification, the Alliance has to a certain degree lacked cohesion in its view of the credibility of Article 5.

However, it should be noted that these divisions have decreased over time, since the members today are closer to finding consensus on aspects such as contingency plans and land component exercises for the Collective Defenders than they were immediately after the war in Georgia when the divisions were at a peak. NATO has since then

taken a number of initiatives to reinforce the credibility of Article 5. In this reference the war in Georgia certainly strengthened the cause of the Collective Defenders and it has been non-member states' actions that have been the running engine for this turn of events. But the road to consensus has been bumpy and filled with friction and resentment, and some of the issues are not entirely resolved yet.

However, does it really matter in today's day and age that there have been disagreements about whether and how to reinforce the credibility of Article 5, given the fact that NATO is not exposed to any major threat within the foreseeable future in this respect? Yes: it should be a cause of concern because of some of the consequences it has engendered. Actions such as blocking initiatives to establish contingency plans for Allies whose neighbour has just attacked a NATO partner country, using the media as a battle ground to obtain these classified plans, or stating in public that NATO's forces will only be able to come to dead people, indicate the need for increased Alliance discipline and a higher degree of commitment to finding reconciliation on this matter.<sup>20</sup>

It is noticeable that there seems to be a certain anxiety about NATO's ability to effectively provide for its core function among some of the states that share borders with

Russia. Talk of, for example, the Baltic States being the new West Berlin of the Alliance is a gross exaggeration, yet these states increasingly seem to perceive a challenge to their territorial integrity and political independence.<sup>21</sup> This constitutes a problem for NATO, regardless of how legitimate anxiety might, or might not really be, for at least two reasons. Firstly, it undermines the cohesion of the Alliance, since it has led to practical consequences such as Poland and the Baltic States requesting and in part receiving bilateral security arrangements from the United States. There have even been discussions about a two-tier Alliance for those that have direct access to Washington through special bilateral agreements and those that do not enjoy the same privilege.<sup>22</sup> This could potentially create conflicting priorities and arrangements for the Alliance as a whole and create a certain re-nationalisation of defence policy away from the multinational framework provided for by NATO.

Secondly, as noted, the convulsions in the debate about the credibility of Article 5 have led to unfortunate public statements by some Allies and references to first and second class membership in which doubts have been cast on the credibility of Article 5. Such outspoken criticism, especially from within, accentuates uncertainties and further undermines Article 5's credibility, since perception, communication and predictability are the cornerstones of

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<sup>20</sup> "US and Poland Agree to Missile Defense Deal", Associate Press, 14 August 2008.

<sup>21</sup> The Economist, 26 November 2009.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion on a multi-tier Alliance, see Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Scheer, "Does a multi-tier NATO matter? The Atlantic alliance and the process of strategic change", International Affairs, Vol. 85, No. 2, 2009.

deterrence, which is the very foundation of NATO's collective defence strategy.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, to avoid such misgivings in the future, NATO would be well advised to find an agreement in order to assure the establishment of contingency plans and exercises for these purposes for the Baltic States and in particular assure the cohesion of the Alliance. Actively blocking such arrangements with the intention to reprimand some of the Collective Defenders for what are perceived to be reckless statements about Russia indicates that members of an Alliance which claims that Article 5 is its bedrock have the wrong set of priorities. At the same time, the Collective Defenders would be wise not to link their requirements for contingency plans and exercises for this purpose with any major additional NATO investments in their military infrastructure, since this would only undermine the legitimacy of their case.<sup>24</sup> Neither will they, at this stage, be helped by demanding any sizeable pre-deployment of NATO forces in their countries. This is perceived by the other Allies as neither necessary nor desirable under current conditions, and it would put strains on resources that currently are needed elsewhere.

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<sup>23</sup> For the role of military deterrence within NATO, see for instance the Declaration on Alliance Security which states that "Deterrence, based on an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities, remains a core element of our overall strategy."

<sup>24</sup> According to interviews conducted with defence planners at NATO HQ, such investments in Host-Nation Support capabilities might somewhat facilitate the defence of these countries but are not indispensable for this purpose. There have already been substantial inventories of- and investments in -these capabilities during the last couple of years, according to these sources. Interview NATO Headquarters, autumn 2009.