

CONTENTS

- 02 Introduction
- 04 **UK and NATO today**
- 06 NATO: The enduring Alliance
- 08 **Russia and the challenge to NATO's northern and eastern borders**
- 11 Russian challenges to NATO's southern flank
- 14 **Terrorism: Future trends**
- 16 Cyber threats to NATO
- 19 **Cohesion and shared culture: NATO's key assets in response to the new strategic environment**
- 21 Strengthening C2 and relationships in the High North and Baltic Sea regions



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INTRODUCTION

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NATO, we are repeatedly told by politicians and the denizens of both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence, sits at the heart of British Defence strategy. It's a cornerstone. It's our foundation. At the same time the ARRC is held up as an exemplar of the very best of the multinational Corps headquarters on the NATO organisation chart.

But how often does the British military talk about NATO? Is it front and centre of the agenda for the practitioners of Defence in the same way that it is for the policy writers? Does the British Army put the ARRC at the head of every order of battle – or does it start the march with its divisions?

Importantly, membership of this alliance (indeed of

any alliance) brings as many obligations as it does benefits. Those who count the cost of Defence and look for efficiency are often tempted to substitute the capabilities of others within an alliance for their own, reassuring themselves that 'while we have decided to do without such-and-such a capability we remain able to access it because our friends have retained it'. But this is, of course, an unrealistic, irresponsible and dangerous assumption to make. Alliance members can depend upon contributions from members only as far as they themselves are prepared to commit and contribute: inter-dependability only works if everyone involved is dependable!

And NATO, that great bulwark of Europe-Atlantic security, has its issues and weaknesses that require addressing with real commitment and interest. Britain's two principal allies within NATO, the US and France, have Presidents that have both, over the last few years, made a string of pronouncements that suggest that they may not see NATO's foundational qualities quite as Britain does. Should

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that worry us? Turkey, a key member of NATO, is looking increasingly close to Russia. Should that worry us? Russia has repeatedly demonstrated that the clarity of Article V ties NATO to inaction below a clearly articulated threshold, and thus frees her up to operate in a grey zone below that threshold, staying ahead of her NATO competitors in a 'constant competition'. Should that worry us?

Put simply, we cannot know whether all of these things should worry us or not unless we ponder them, talk about them,

and share our considerations with others. That was the function of the recent CHACR workshop on NATO, some of the results of which are laid out in this issue of *Ares & Athena*. The views expressed in the articles are of their authors, not CHACR, nor the Army and wider MOD. Our mandate is to provide a platform for such discussions to take place. Be you policy maker, practitioner, academic or simply interested party, we hope that you find them at the very least to be interesting and, hopefully, at best, to be of considerable utility.

