

## Collective defense, NATO & the 2% military spending guideline: Evidencing why allies must 'transcend 2%' to understand burden sharing

By Anessa L. Kimball\*

This research examines collective defence and security burden sharing empirically and conceptually using NATO as an institutional example. Despite closing in on the timeline for delivering on defense spending commitments to the 2%, i.e. a decade from the 2014 Wales Summit, this particular metric dates back to the 1980s (i.e. Spain's accession negotiations). It became localized as a norm, promoted particularly by the United States, around during the post-cold war enlargement negotiations. The US was concerned the end of the cold war would result in a disinvestment by European partners in defense and it needed to signal to potential NATO partners 'what would be a credible level of spending' to meet the provision of Article III of the Washington Treaty. This project traces the origin, norm emergence, and public formal commitment to the 2% military spending (political) target – in particular it fulfills the nuances of the text the aforementioned article. This project then offers multiple arguments for why said metric is pragmatically limited when it comes to functionally understanding and predicting how states share burdens. This research project bridges both quantitative and qualitative approaches in offering both statistical analysis of military spending since 1950 and partner participation in new alliance operations since 1994 alongside textual analysis of the agreements from 2004 managing NATO Centres of Excellence. This approach joins different ways of understanding how allies have divided various burdens historically while accounting for how enlargement exposed partners to distinct threats and risks directly affecting their individual contributions to NATO operations. Moreover, this research takes seriously how Centres of Excellence manage rational strategic problems associated with transforming the alliance to the future. Finally, this research argues for a reconceptualization of understanding what constitutes contributing to the collective burdens and offers some alternatives.

\*Full professor, political science & director, Centre sur la sécurité internationale, Université Laval, Québec City, Canada & Co-director, Canadian Defence and Security Network

Correspondance: [anessa.kimball@pol.ulaval.ca](mailto:anessa.kimball@pol.ulaval.ca)