

NATO needs to become a Global Organisation of Liberal Democracies.

A paper outlining some challenges and ideas for NATO's future

NATO Member	Estimated 2021 defence expenditure in millions of Dollars	..expressed as a % of GDP..	..but expenditure should be 2% of GDP, expressed here in millions of Dollars...	...leaving a defence expenditure shortfall in millions of Dollars of...
Albania	239	1.44	332	93
Belgium	6,503	1.12	11,613	5,110
Bulgaria	1,253	1.56	1,606	353
Canada	26,253	1.39	37,774	11,521
Croatia	1,846	2.79	Over 2%	No shortfall
Czech Rep	4,013	1.42	5,652	1,639
Denmark	5,522	1.41	7,633	2,111
Estonia	787	2.28	Over 2%	No shortfall
France	58,729	2.01	Over 2%	No shortfall
Germany	64,785	1.53	84,686	19,901
Greece	8,014	3.82	Over 2%	No shortfall
Hungary	2,907	1.60	3,634	727
Iceland	No military!	0.00	470	470
Italy	29,763	1.41	42,217	12,454
Latvia	851	2.27	Over 2%	No shortfall
Lithuania	1,278	2.03	Over 2%	No shortfall
Luxembourg	474	0.57	1,663	1,189
Montenegro	97	1.74	111	14
Netherlands	14,378	1.45	19,832	5,454
N Macedonia	219	1.61	272	53
Norway	8,292	1.85	8,964	666
Poland	13,369	2.10	Over 2%	No shortfall
Portugal	3,975	1.54	5,162	1,187
Romania	5,785	2.02	Over 2%	No shortfall
Slovakia	2,043	1.73	2,362	319
Slovenia	760	1.28	1,187	427
Spain	14,875	1.02	29,167	14,292
Turkey	13,057	1.57	16,633	3,576
UK	72,765	2.29	Over 2%	No shortfall
USA	811,140	3.52	Over 2%	No shortfall
			Total shortfall:	81,556

Above: One of NATO's challenges: A table listing estimated 2021 defence expenditure by NATO members using figures obtained from NATO's website. Only 10 of the 30 members spend the minimum of 2% of GDP on defence that had been agreed at the 2014 NATO Summit. The shortfall of spending by the remaining 20 members totals 81.5 billion dollars, a sum greater than the UK's entire defence expenditure.

Now seems hardly the right time to be considering changes to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation but it could be argued that Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine has concentrated minds in what remains of the free world and that an overhaul of the only institution that can effectively protect liberal democracy would be timely.

In contrast with many other global organisations, NATO has managed to do the job it was created for back in 1949. Maybe this has been due to the sharp focus of its aims and objectives as contained in the Preamble and the Articles which brought the organisation into being and which sustain it: A simple statement of intent is followed by 14 articles. You could get it all onto 3 sides of A4. I believe that it's this 70-year-old simplicity of purpose which makes mapping out the future of global security relatively simple. Some tweaks and a new narrative are all that is needed.

The following is the Preamble to the Treaty which makes an ideal starting point for addressing challenges and formulating solutions:

"The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments. They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law."

Challenge # 1: The admirable declaration set out above describes NATO's raison d'être but the text very rarely sees the light of day, with the consequence that NATO is portrayed by its adversaries as simply and exclusively a malevolent military alliance, with the USA at its heart. Moreover, it is routinely accused of expansionism as if this was something to be deprecated, when in fact an increase in NATO's membership should be welcomed by all who value liberty, evidencing as it does an increase in the number of peoples who have embraced liberal democracy and who have chosen to join like-minded nations simply to protect their new-found freedoms.

Challenge # 2: Before it can portray itself as the defender of liberal democracy, NATO needs to coax the majority of its existing members into improving their own governance because the recently published 2021 edition of the Economist Democracy Index reveals there is much work to be done. While NATO members Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway and the UK are listed in the Economist's global league table of liberal democracies as being in the Premier Division of "Full Democracies", the rest of NATO's membership is languishing in the second division of "Flawed Democracies", with the exception of Turkey which is in the third division, euphemistically described as "hybrid". (Interestingly, Ukraine is also listed as a "hybrid" but is ranked above Turkey)

Challenge # 3 Since it was founded in 1949, NATO has been far too reliant on the USA to provide the bulk of the Alliance's resources, even to the extent that many member nations have failed to observe the commitment they entered into at the 2014 Wales NATO Summit to spend at least 2% of their GDP on defence. **The table at the beginning of this paper evidences by my calculation a net annual underspend by recalcitrant member nations of a staggering 81.5 billion dollars, a sum which far exceeds the UK's entire annual defence expenditure.**

Challenge # 4: The Preamble and Article 5 restrict the Alliance's area of operations to "*the North Atlantic Area*" and crucially, Article 10 implies that recruitment of new member states is restricted to Europe, as was evidenced by an abortive approach by Qatar in 2018. The World stage is much smaller than it was in 1949 when NATO was founded and there are many countries outside Europe that aspire to "*democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law*" and who would make a valuable contribution to the collective security that NATO affords. I have in mind nations such as South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, all currently outside NATO's bailiwick.

Challenge # 5: NATO needs to address the circumstances that led up to the invasion of Ukraine, a country which has been knocking on NATO's door since 1992. Notwithstanding 30 years of conferences, action plans and joint military exercises, Ukraine has been left outside on NATO's doorstep, and as a consequence is now suffering the disadvantages of being closely associated with the Alliance, without enjoying the advantages of full membership. Russia is using Ukraine as a whipping boy and Ukraine is arguably fighting NATO's war.

Here are some ideas to address the above challenges:-

Idea # 1 NATO needs a global reach, with membership open to any nation which is, or has plans in place to be, a liberal democracy, and which is prepared to spend sufficient on defence.

Idea # 2 To reflect its new global status, the Alliance needs to change its name; a "Global Alliance of Liberal Democracies", G.O.L.D. for short, is suggested.

Idea # 3 Defence for its own sake is meaningless; there has to be a goal and a cause. NATO has both, but at the moment they are well-hidden. The Preamble and Articles, duly amended to reflect the above changes, need to take centre stage and be accompanied by a new narrative for the organisation. To this end, some part of the Alliance's administration needs to be tasked with promoting the newly defined cause, perhaps the existing North Atlantic Council or a new additional pillar created within the Alliance's structure, tasked with promotion of NATO's aims and with overseeing and assisting each member nation to achieve individual freedom, rights and democratic governance.

Idea # 4 Ironically, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has achieved in a matter of days what decades of cajoling by US Presidents failed to bring about, namely a realization by freeloading NATO members that freedom has a price and that they need to spend more on defence. Even so, a new Article is needed which would make membership conditional on member nations spending a minimum percentage of their gross domestic product on defence, either on their own account or by payment of any shortfall to those nations in the Alliance spending above the minimum.

Idea # 5 If Ukraine had been admitted to NATO - even as recently as a few months ago when the massing of Russian troops on Ukraine's border became evident, would Russia have invaded? People far more powerful and knowledgeable than myself think not. It seems incredible that 30 signatures on a scrap of paper is all it would have taken to have prevented all this death, destruction and dislocation on both sides, not to mention the global economic upheaval being suffered by the rest of us. There needs to be some sort of halfway house or provisional membership which affords a level of protection against an aggressor, pending full membership.

GOLD's new narrative

"GOLD's members reaffirm their determination to safeguard the freedom and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law."

"There is no compulsion on any nation to join us or to stay with us if they do not wish to do so."

"Our alliance is for defence, not offence; we counter aggression, rather than initiate it."

"Ours is not a rich nation's club: any country, rich or poor, can apply for membership provided they commit to liberal democracy, to spending an agreed proportion of their annual GDP on defence, and to contributing to GOLD's collective security."

"We believe there is no future in the past and that the aspirations of ordinary people trump outdated obsessions over spheres of influence. Specifically, the USSR is ancient history and, for all the sense Russia's attempts to turn the clock back in Ukraine makes, they might as well be demanding the return of Alaska by the USA."

"We believe that, in their own time, all the world's peoples will eventually wish to live in a liberal democracy, that in the meantime even those of us who proclaim to be liberal democracies still have much work to do to improve our own governance and that we realise that we are on the same road, but perhaps a little further ahead, than, say, China, thanks to nothing more than accidents in history."

"Accordingly, GOLD's quest is to create the conditions for security and peace to allow individual liberty and democratic governance to prevail in an increasing number of nations worldwide over future decades."

And what of Taiwan?

To return to the 2021 edition of the Economist Democracy Index, of the 21 nations listed in the Premier Division of "Full Democracies", we find Taiwan, ranked 8th, *ten places above the UK*. This is a phenomenal achievement for a community that was a military dictatorship not all that long ago but it seems that this glowing example of liberal democracy has not received the credit it is due by the free world because it is an embarrassment to the international community who, in their endeavours to kowtow to Communist China, have treated Taiwan "ambiguously" over decades.

If Communist China had any nous, it would leave Taiwan alone and observe how a Chinese community can prosper using democracy and individual freedom, a possible model for mainland China's future use when its people tire of the restraints of Communism.

But it seems that Beijing sees the very existence of tiny Taiwan as some sort of threat and defence analysts agree that a similar "special military operation" to that of Russia's could be conducted against Taiwan by Communist China within 3 years.

Perhaps Taiwan's timely membership of G.O.L.D. might prevent the carnage we are witnessing in Eastern Europe. While we might not have acted in time to prevent Slav from butchering Slav, might we yet do something to prevent a similar outrage from happening in the Far East?