

Sixteen Principles for NATO Reform

By Dr Ian Davis, NATO Watch

This article is a response to [Ten Theses on NATO in a Changed World](#) by Karsten Voigt

Mr. Voigt makes a number of compelling suggestions and recommendations in his article. Two in particular stand out: the potential to draw on the Obama administration's change agenda in developing a new Strategic Concept and the inclusion of Russia as a real and meaningful partner in shaping NATO's new vision and mission. These were also key themes for civil society groups meeting at a [Shadow NATO Summit](#) in Brussels at the end of March, where two new initiatives were launched.

First, a [Citizens Declaration of Alliance Security](#) set out sixteen principles for reforming NATO to meet the different and diverse challenges of this 21st century. These core principles include achieving security without weapons of mass destruction and at lower levels of armaments, adopting a 'responsibility to protect' agenda as well as reconnecting with citizens by creating a more open, transparent and accountable Alliance. The Declaration is being used to start a NATO-wide, civil society-led public consultation on a new Strategic Concept.

Second, a new project—[NATO Watch](#)—has been established to facilitate this civil society consultation process and to provide independent monitoring, information and analysis of policy-making and operational activities within NATO. This includes a NATO policy network (which we hope will eventually include at least one 'NATO Watcher' in each member state) and an annual 'shadow' NATO summit. The aim is to increase transparency, stimulate parliamentary engagement and broaden public awareness and participation in NATO policy-making.

NATO is not only the sum of its intergovernmental political and military parts, but also of the 898 million citizens living in its 28 Member States – and the more than 532 million additional citizens in states with partnership or contact agreements with the Alliance. Over 20% of the global population is therefore directly associated in some way with NATO. These citizens, rather than military forces, police and other means of law enforcement, are at the heart of Alliance security.

In order to deepen and extend this shared values-base within the Alliance, NATO needs to become closer to its citizens. This means an updated, more open, transparent and accountable Alliance, appropriate to 21st century expectations. Parliamentary accountability within NATO requires clear and adequate mechanisms, and a relaxation of secrecy rules.

NATO in conjunction with other instruments of euroatlantic power will be needed to protect our security for the foreseeable future. What NATO and the political leaders of the Alliance must do is engage its citizens in a discussion about the circumstances for its use. What is the proper balance between NATO's collective defence at home and expeditionary missions abroad? How should the Alliance deter and defeat aggression, halt genocide and share in peacekeeping? NATO needs to be more agile and flexible, creative and smart about how it analyses the new threats and how it deploys its assets against them.

With the world on the verge of the worst recession in a hundred years and global problems like climate change requiring huge preventive investments, a smarter

approach to defence budgeting and procurement in the Alliance is also required. The debate in NATO has been too narrowly focused on burden sharing with accusations that Europe spends too little on defence. But the United States spends seven times as much on military force as on international affairs and homeland security combined, and its military budget is larger than the next 14 countries put together, accounting for at least 45% of the global total. Overall, therefore, the United States needs to spend less on defence—a cut of 25% in the US defence budget over the next five years, for example, would produce a significant peace dividend—while some European states may need to raise their spending or allocate their existing defence budgets more wisely.

Smarter procurement would include a progressive shrinking and eventual elimination of nuclear arsenals, the cancellation of missile defence and several Cold War era, 'big-ticket' high-tech weapon systems. NATO military power has a job to do, but it is time to consider whether it really needs military operations that cost double what the rest of the world spends on its various military functions. The current and future security and fiscal environments facing NATO demand bold action.

Dr Ian Davis is the founding director of NATO Watch (www.natowatch.org) and is a Senior Advisor to ISIS Europe. He is also an independent human security and arms control consultant, writer and activist.