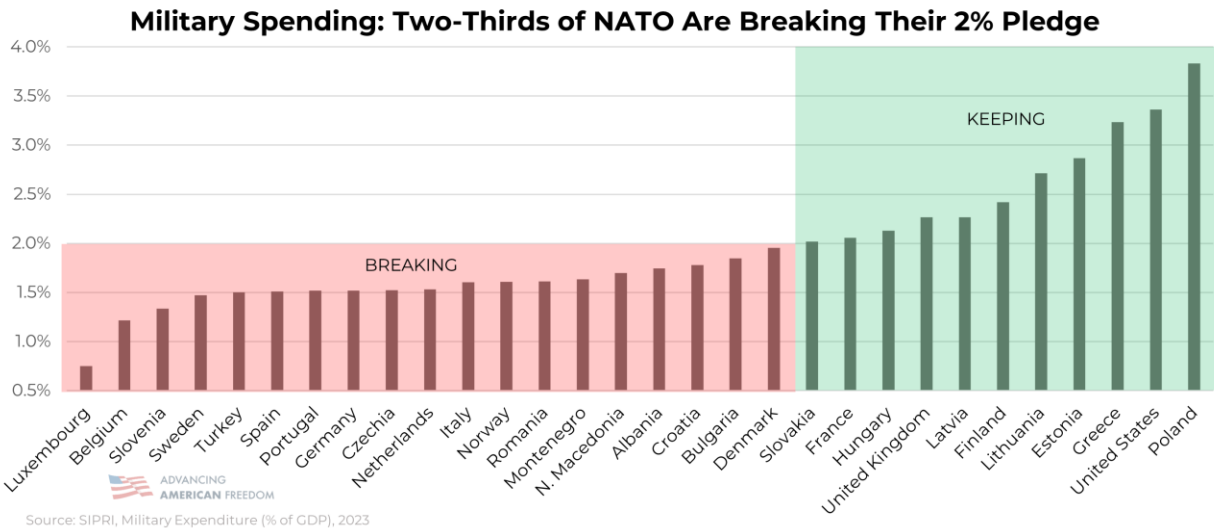




## Four Percent For Freedom: A NATO Allied-Burden Sharing Report Card

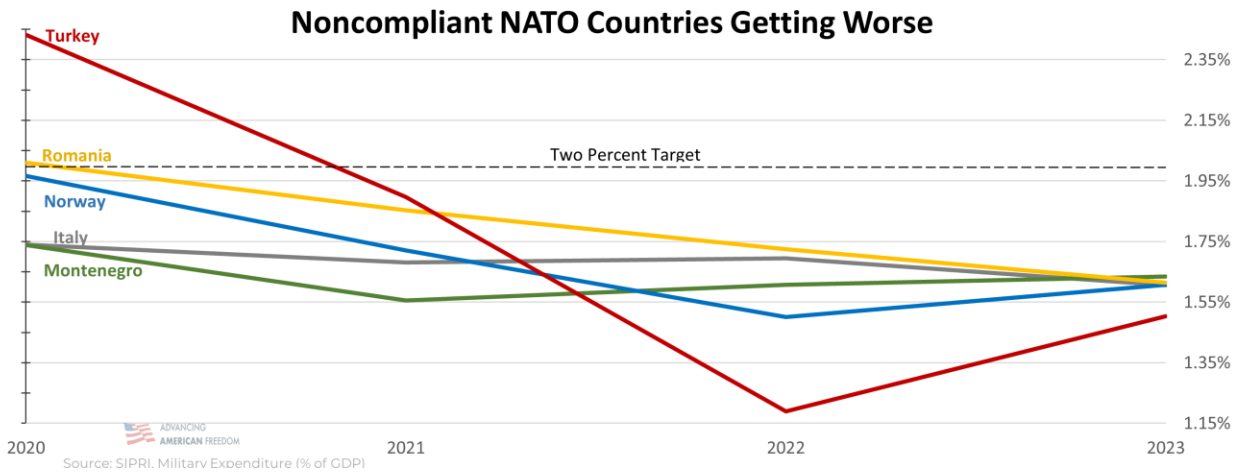
**Topline:** If the United States is to successfully deter Russian aggression and prevent our military from being drawn directly into the war in Ukraine, our NATO allies, and especially those in the surrounding region, must ramp up their own military spending in keeping with their NATO treaty promises.



**Background:** The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded in 1949 by the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and nine other countries in Europe. Since then, it has grown to include 31 countries to deter Russian aggression. NATO countries must treat an attack against any one of its members as an “attack against them all,” (Article 5) and “maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack” (Article 3). Over time, NATO obligations under Article 3 have been formalized to require that every country spend at least two percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on military readiness. Dutiful observation of these articles is essential to NATO’s strategy of deterrence.

Concerningly, many countries have failed to honor their NATO commitments. In 2014, the year Russia invaded the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, the only countries upholding their obligations under Article 3 were the United States, the United Kingdom, and Greece. That year, the average defense spending among non-compliant countries was 1.3 percent of GDP. By contrast, the Trump-Pence Administration made improving allied-burden sharing a major priority for foreign policy to significant effect. By 2020, the last full year of their administration, ten countries were now meeting their commitments, and even non-compliant countries’ military spending had increased to 1.6 percent of GDP.

Sadly, many countries have fallen further away from their allied-burden sharing commitments during the Biden administration. While spending has still grown on the whole, noncompliant countries such as Turkey, Norway, and Italy have reversed course, slipping back towards 2014 levels as a group.



This trend is especially alarming to observe in countries bordering Russia and Ukraine. As the Heritage Foundation and other organizations have argued, the countries closest to the conflict ought to be carrying the lion’s share of the burden.

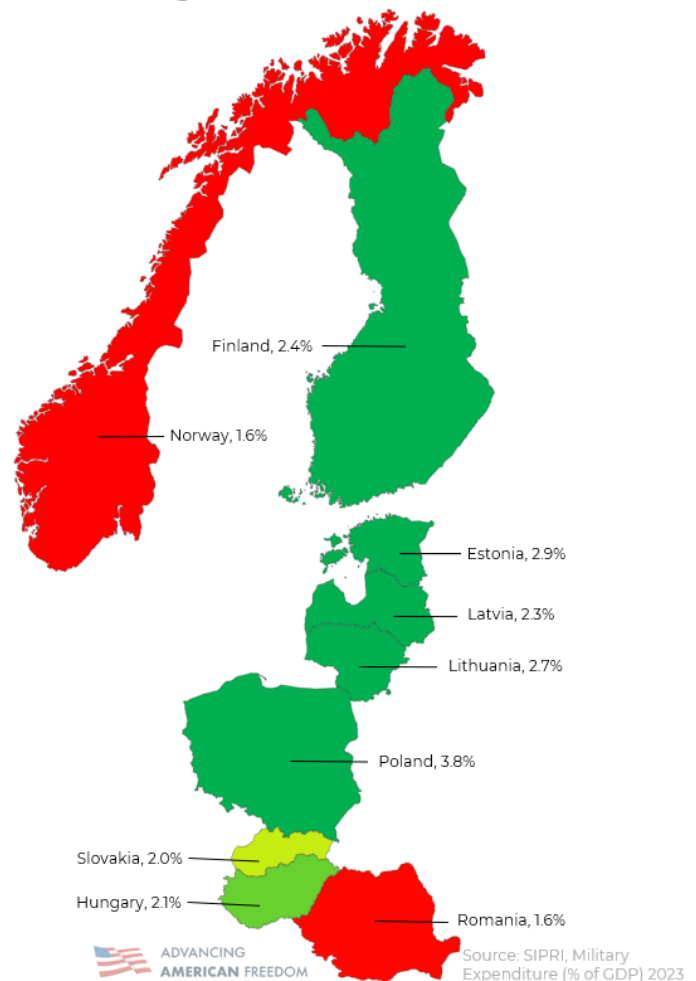
However, of the nine NATO countries that border Russia or Ukraine, two continue to fall short of their basic two percent commitment. Poland is the only country bordering the conflict that is outspending the United States on a percentage basis (though by raw totals, the United States continues to account for more than two-thirds of all NATO spending combined).

While every NATO country in the region increased its defense spending in the wake of the Russian invasion of Crimea, Norway and Romania have let their military expenditures decrease during the Biden years, even with Russian build up in 2021 and the full-scale invasion early in 2022.

The U.S. must find ways to encourage and, if necessary, pressure its allies to uphold their Article 3 burden sharing commitments.

Unless these trends are reversed, our deterrence strategy will fail, Russia will likely invade a NATO ally, and the U.S. will be required to send troops overseas to honor our Article 5 mutual defense pledge.

### Allied-Burden Sharing of NATO Countries Bordering the Russia-Ukraine Conflict



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