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CARLETON MODEL  
**NATO**

# 2024 MNATO

NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL  
BACKGROUND GUIDE

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- Adapting to climate change and climate security
  - Integrating responses to emerging threats and cybersecurity
  - Developing new frameworks for humanitarian aid and crisis response



## **Introduction to the North Atlantic Council**

The North Atlantic Council (NAC) is the political decision-making body of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The NAC is comprised of Permanent Representatives from all NATO member states. It is established under Article 9 of the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO's founding document) and it is currently the only NATO committee that explicitly draws its authority from the Treaty. The North Atlantic Treaty gives the NAC the power to set up subsidiary bodies for various policy functions, including the other committees present at this conference. Any policy, decision, or action that NATO undertakes is discussed and approved by the NAC on a unanimous basis. The meetings of the NAC are chaired by the Secretary General of NATO. Each Member State represented at the NAC or on any of its subordinate committees retains complete sovereignty and responsibility for its own decisions.

At Carleton Model NATO, the NAC retains the role as the principal decision-making body of the Alliance. Any communiques passed by the other committees during the weekend will be reviewed by the NAC during the final plenary session of the conference, and either approved unanimously and rejected. During this session, delegates from other committees will be present at the NAC and will have the opportunity to consult with and advise their NAC delegates. This provides a great deal of emphasis on achieving consensus in the subordinate committees, even though it is not explicitly required, as a delegate who is opposed can simply request that their NAC colleague vote down the communique when it is reviewed in plenary.

## Topic A: Adapting to climate change and climate security

### Climate change and security in the international context

Climate change is a most relevant topic which impacts the entirety of the world population, from increase in the frequency of natural disasters to population movements from areas which are becoming less habitable. Most developed governments now include initiatives to address climate change as part of their political agendas, and the UN has taken a very active approach on the topic with the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework *Convention on Climate Change* (COP) series of conferences. The latest of those events, COP 28, which took place in December 2023, concluded with a recognition from all participants that there is a need to transition away from the use of fossil fuels.<sup>1</sup>

### The role of NATO in climate change and security

Within this context, NATO is equally impacted by climate change and its effects on geopolitics through the lens of climate security. It recognizes that future conflicts will be affected by climate change through where and how conflict will be conducted. During an opening address at the COP 28 conference, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated:

“It is important to really try to understand better the link between climate change and security and for all of us, it's obvious that climate change, global warming is one of the most important challenges we face. Climate change is a crisis multiplier. It forces people to move. Migratory flows are increasing because of climate change already. But it also increases competition for scarce resources. And in that way climate change is actually fuelling conflict”.<sup>2</sup>

NATO has also taken some active steps towards reducing the impact it has on climate and adapting its operations to new environments using four major steps: increase allied awareness, adapt to climate change, contribute to the mitigation of climate change, and enhance outreach.<sup>3</sup> It has further published numerous strategy documents, action plans and best practices to guide the alliance members through these important steps to take.<sup>4</sup>

In the summer of 2023, NATO opened the NATO Climate Change and Security Center of Excellence in Montreal. Part of the NATO Center of Excellence network across the Alliance, its objective is to:

“...be a platform through which both military actors and civilians will develop, enhance, and share knowledge on climate change security impacts. It will also allow participants to work together to build required capabilities and best practices and contribute to NATO's goal of

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Climate Action. “COP28 signals beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era”, United Nations. 2023. <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop28>

<sup>2</sup> Stoltenberg, Jens. “Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai”. NATO. 01 December 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_220990.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_220990.htm)

<sup>3</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “NATO Climate Change and Security Action Plan”. NATO. 14 June 2021. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_185174.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_185174.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Links to these documents are found at the end of this section.

reducing the climate impact of our military activities.”<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, at the opening ceremony for the center, the NATO Deputy Secretary provided some more concrete examples of actions to be taken by the alliance by stating that:

“First, we must understand the problem. Changing weather patterns will mean we have to fight differently. We have to know what changes are coming. Second, we must mitigate from NATO Mission Iraq where our soldiers and trainers need to cope with temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius, to changing the way we build our bases to protect against climate change. And third, we must adapt and adaptation is in the gene of this Alliance. And this is what makes this Alliance so successful over time, over and over again.”

The alliance has also taken steps to reduce its impact on the environment where its permanent installations and bases are located. Through various initiatives, such as reducing the use of non-renewable energy to power its infrastructures and conducting environmental assessments on land used for exercises, NATO is able to actively reduce its environmental footprint.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, NATO is also actively engaged in optimizing its efficiencies while maintaining its superiority through various innovation programs and challenges, notably with the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) initiative, designed to “develop technologies to keep NATO populations safe and secure.”<sup>7</sup> These initiatives, coupled with the ones put in place by the Climate Change and Security Center of Excellence, ensure that operational excellence will be maintained while fulfilling environmental obligations.

### Next steps for the Alliance

NATO may look at developing a transition timeline aligned with UN and the most recent COP declarations. This would signal a clear commitment from the organization and its members towards minimizing impacts on climate and demonstrate good stewardship of its resources. NATO should also consider accelerating the development of equipment and techniques to maintain operational excellency in theaters affected by climate change. This would allow the alliance to maintain its tactical, operational, and strategic superiority over its adversaries while increasing the force protection of its members on the ground.

### Guiding Questions:

- What should be some of the initial areas of interest of the NATO center of excellence in climate upon opening?
- Do current efforts accomplish the alliance’s goals in tackling climate change and climate security?
- What concrete steps can the alliance take to continue operating within zones affected by

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<sup>5</sup> Government of Canada. “NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence”. Government of Canada. 24 July 2023. [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international\\_relations-relations\\_internationales/nato-otan/centre-excellence.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/nato-otan/centre-excellence.aspx?lang=eng)

<sup>6</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “Environment, climate change and security”. NATO. 24 July 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_91048.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91048.htm)

<sup>7</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA)”. NATO. 26 September 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_216199.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_216199.htm)

climate change?

- How can the Alliance balance the requirements to remain at the edge of operational excellence and efficiency while reducing its impact on climate?

## Further reading

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Herberg, R. (2022). "NATO and the Securitisation of climate change." [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Robin-Herberg/publication/362685239\\_NATO\\_and\\_the\\_Securitisation\\_of\\_climate\\_change/links/62f8a43952130a3cd71d6c1b/NATO-and-the-Securitisation-of-climate-change.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Robin-Herberg/publication/362685239_NATO_and_the_Securitisation_of_climate_change/links/62f8a43952130a3cd71d6c1b/NATO-and-the-Securitisation-of-climate-change.pdf)

North Atlantic Treaty Organization Emerging Security Challenge Division. (2023). "The NATO Greenhouse Gases Emission Mapping and Analytical Methodology." [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230710-NATO-GHG-Methodology.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230710-NATO-GHG-Methodology.pdf)

North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (10 July 2023). "NATO Climate Change and Security Action Plan: Compendium of Best Practices." [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230710-climate-change-best-practices.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/7/pdf/230710-climate-change-best-practices.pdf)

Porter, V., & Vaklinova, G. (2021). "Climate Change and Security: Emerging Challenges and the Role of NATO." *Chief Editor*, 157. [https://cmdrcoe.org/fls/pubs/2021\\_Proceedings-15-02-22.pdf](https://cmdrcoe.org/fls/pubs/2021_Proceedings-15-02-22.pdf)

Shea, J. (2022). "NATO and Climate Change: Better Late Than Never." *The German Marshall Fund of the United States*, 11. <https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Shea%20-%20NATO%20climate%20-%20brief.pdf>

## Topic B: Integrating responses to emerging threats and cybersecurity

### Technology in a modern world

Technological innovation has been progressing at an exponential pace in the last few years. Advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI), quantum computing and increases in the number of cyber-attacks are driving innovation and progress not only in society, but for governments and military forces as well, who must not only integrate novel technologies into their capabilities, but also be equipped to defend against them. Emerging threats can provide an element of surprise to an opponent and therefore defenses against them have to remain adaptable to ensure efficiency.

Much of the innovation stated above happens in or is connected to other systems through cyberspace, highlighting its ever-increasing importance in our lives. But cyberspace also presents some vulnerabilities by having no physical boundaries (thus leveling the playing field) and allowing states and non state actors to interact directly without control mechanisms. It creates situations where disruptive actions can be done remotely by smaller entities and at scale, creating the need for robust cybersecurity measures.

### Threats to the Alliance

Cyber attacks are a clear and present threat to NATO, and although they do not occur in the physical space, they can certainly affect day to day operations of the Alliance. Their potential effects can be serious: NATO even considers that a series of cyber attacks could meet the threshold to invoke Article 5 of the treaty and result in an armed response, on a case-by-case basis.<sup>8</sup> In this context, cybersecurity matters for the organization itself and for its members, not only during military operations but also for protecting its critical infrastructure and support mechanisms. A robust and adequately protected Information Technology (IT) architecture is crucial to ensure the coordination, communication, command and control functions are efficiently carried out.

NATO is already equipped with organic institutions which monitor its various networks and provide assistance to its members in responding to cyberattacks by adversaries. The NATO Cyber Security Center protects NATO's networks by providing 24/7 cyber defence support to the organization. The Cyberspace Operations Center also exists to provide situational awareness and support military operations. NATO also possesses physical Cyber Rapid Reaction Teams and has further created a new entity in 2023, the Virtual Cyber Incident Support Capability, both designed to assist its members efforts responding to and mitigating malicious cyber attacks on their territory.<sup>9</sup>

On their side, new technologies can provide a tactical advantage on the battlefield and increase force protection. They can also facilitate all of the enabling functions required to sustain the alliance as a whole. However, those same technologies are often available to adversaries, and protection against them need to be taken into consideration. NATO is assisted in this endeavor

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<sup>8</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "Cyber defence". NATO. 14 September 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_78170.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_78170.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

by its Advisory Group on Emerging and Disruptive Technologies<sup>10</sup> as well as its framework document “Science and Technology Trends 2020-2040” which states that upcoming technology will be “Intelligent, Interconnected, Distributed and Digital”.<sup>11</sup>

NATO has already actively taken the initiative in addressing those topics more concretely through the DIANA program, which:

“exists to harness the opportunities presented by emerging and disruptive technologies, boosting NATO’s competitive edge in collective defence and security. Developing new capabilities will improve the Alliance’s ability to respond to conventional threats – and to the threats posed via these technologies themselves.”<sup>12</sup>

Launched in 2021, its structure is built around presenting challenges to the industry based on critical defence and security problems. The Alliance provides the interested participants with funding and access to test centers as well as subject matter experts to assist in resolving the issues presented. Assisted by the various NATO centers of excellence across Europe and North America, its main focuses include AI, quantum technologies, biotechnologies and human enhancement, novel materials, and next generation communications networks.<sup>13</sup>

## Looking ahead for NATO

On the cybersecurity side, NATO should continue to protect its IT infrastructure and networks, ensuring more particularly that its accessibility through its member’s networks is controlled. It should also consider the development of offensive cyber capabilities to enhance its response to cyber attacks and increase deterrence.

On the emerging threats side, NATO should continually monitor the successes of its innovation programs and its efficiency to optimize its outputs. Data collection and transparency will likely be important considerations for the member states to track efficiency. This will once again ensure that the Alliance maintains its competitive advantage against adversaries and that the processes and organizational functions are optimized and safeguarded against external threats. But most importantly, the alliance needs to ensure interoperability is maintained between all of its members, ensuring operational effectiveness from the tactical to the strategic level in multidomain and combined environments.

## Guiding Questions

- What additional steps should the alliance take to strengthen its cybersecurity measures for the organization as a whole?

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<sup>10</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “Emerging and disruptive technologies”. NATO. 22 June 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_184303.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_184303.htm)

<sup>11</sup> NATO Science and Technology Organization. “ Science & Technology Trends 2020-2040”. NATO. 2020. [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/4/pdf/190422-ST\\_Tech\\_Trends\\_Report\\_2020-2040.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/4/pdf/190422-ST_Tech_Trends_Report_2020-2040.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA)”. NATO. 26 September 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_216199.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_216199.htm)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

- What should the Alliance focus on in terms of further development of and protection against new and emerging technological threats?
- What policies should NATO adopt to ensure interoperability in the long term?
- Should the current NATO innovation environment be improved to further accelerate development and technological progress.

## Further Reading

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## Topic C: Development of New Frameworks for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response

### NAC and crisis response

NATO, through its North Atlantic Council (NAC), actively engages in crisis management as a fundamental security task. This involves employing a comprehensive mix of political and military tools to address the full spectrum of crises—before, during, and after conflicts. NATO's crisis management capabilities, rooted in experience and a robust command structure, extend beyond military interventions to include disaster relief and humanitarian efforts. The Alliance, recognizing the evolving security landscape, emphasizes crisis prevention and adopts a comprehensive approach in its Strategic Concepts. NATO's involvement in crisis response operations, such as those in the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, showcases its adaptability and commitment to a holistic, multi-faceted approach to crisis management. Additionally, NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) facilitates coordinated assistance in disaster-stricken areas, reflecting the Alliance's dedication to protecting populations and fostering international cooperation.<sup>14</sup>

### NATO intervention and humanitarian aid

NATO's approach to humanitarian aid has evolved over the years, as seen in its interventions in Kosovo (1999) and Libya (2011). In Kosovo, NATO initiated Operation Allied Force (OAF) primarily using airpower to halt an ethnic-cleansing campaign. However, the operation initially failed to protect civilians, leading to extensive violence. Eventually, NATO compelled Slobodan Milosevic to cease the ethnic-cleansing campaign, and conventional ground forces were deployed as peacekeepers, resulting in improved security for Kosovo's civilians.<sup>15</sup>

In the Libya intervention, NATO forces employed airpower during Operation Odyssey Dawn and Unified Protector in 2011 to protect civilians from Muammar Qadhafi's regime. Despite initial success in achieving primary objectives, such as establishing a no-fly zone and protecting Benghazi, the intervention failed to adequately protect civilians overall. Notably, NATO leaders did not deploy conventional ground forces for peacekeeping in Libya, leading to a violent and unstable environment after the intervention. The absence of international peacekeepers allowed the well-armed Libyan state to disintegrate, contributing to ongoing violence.<sup>16</sup>

Doctrine and decision-making played a crucial role in these interventions. NATO's understanding of employing military power, including airpower, for humanitarian purposes has evolved. Notably, doctrinal guidance has become more insightful over time. However, deviations from this doctrine in Libya, along with aggressive statements and support for rebels, hindered diplomatic solutions and likely prolonged the conflict. In both cases, the effectiveness of NATO's humanitarian efforts was

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<sup>14</sup> NATO, 2022, "Crisis Management", [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49192.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49192.htm)

<sup>15</sup> NATO, 2001, "NATO's role in disaster assistance". <https://www.nato.int/eadrcc/mcda-e.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Clark, M. Jorgensen, E., Schriver, G., 2021, "Reversing the trends of failure in NATO humanitarian interventions with airpower", <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2809576/read-the-manual-reversing-the-trends-of-failure-in-nato-humanitarian-interventi/>

influenced not only by military doctrine but also by perceptions of the use of force and domestic political concerns.<sup>3</sup>

NATO's current stance on humanitarian aid, as reflected in doctrinal publications, emphasizes the evolving understanding that military means are only one aspect of contributing to lasting peace. The updated NATO Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Peace Support (AJP 3.4.1) acknowledges the limited effectiveness of enforcing no-fly zones in isolation during peace enforcement operations (PEOs) and stresses the need for a comprehensive strategy. Lessons from past interventions, particularly Operation Allied Force (OAF) and the Libya intervention, have influenced this doctrinal evolution.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of protecting civilians during peace support operations (PSOs), the doctrine emphasizes that military activities should not have worse consequences than inaction. While OAF demonstrated the potential positive outcomes of military action, the Libya intervention raised questions about the impact on civilian lives in the absence of intervention. NATO leaders, in the case of Libya, knowingly expanded the mission to include regime change, leading to a lack of meaningful influence on post-regime events due to the absence of peacekeepers.<sup>2</sup>

NATO's current stance on humanitarian aid emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive strategy, considering the limitations of specific military measures such as no-fly zones. It also highlights the need to weigh potential consequences of military actions against the outcomes of inaction. The incorporation of lessons learned from previous interventions, such as OAF and the Libya intervention, aims to enhance NATO's effectiveness in protecting civilians and contributing to lasting peace.<sup>17</sup>

Over the past fifty years, NATO's commitment to protecting populations has been evident, with a particular focus on safeguarding civilian communities. Through the Partnership for Peace, NATO has successfully collaborated with its partner nations, both in preparing for and responding to disasters. This cooperative effort extends to Partner Countries as well as within NATO member states. Notably, the ongoing improvement of Civil Emergency Planning and the establishment of the EADRCC (Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre) along with the development of the EADRU (Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Unit) mark significant progress in the joint endeavors of EAPC (Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) countries. This collective initiative demonstrates the dedication of EAPC nations to practical collaboration in a crucial domain, addressing the shared concern of aiding populations affected by major disasters while enhancing operational capabilities within the EAPC community.<sup>3</sup>

## Moving forward

NATO should continue emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive strategy in humanitarian aid efforts, considering the limitations of specific military measures, and incorporating diplomatic, economic, and political components.

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<sup>17</sup> NATO, 2023, "Operations and missions: past and present", [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52060.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52060.htm)

There is an opportunity for NATO to further develop robust strategic planning for future interventions, considering the geopolitical landscape and potential challenges, to ensure a well-coordinated and effective response in protecting populations and contributing to lasting peace.

NATO can also consider enhancing operational capabilities within the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) community, building on the progress made with the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) and the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Unit (EADRU).

### Guiding Questions:

- How can NATO acknowledge evolving interests with allies to support humanitarian relief efforts?
- In what areas is NATO lacking to support crises of allies and improve upon to increase their legitimacy as a global actor?
- What criteria should NATO use to determine collaboration with external partners relating to humanitarian relief and crises, and what should be the extent of this collaboration?
- In what ways can NATO maintain credibility and responsiveness amid the ever-evolving dynamics of the international landscape?

### Further Reading:

Demeuse, R., 2022. Acting to preserve the humanitarian space: What role for the allies and for NATO?. NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

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