



CARLETON MODEL  
**NATO**

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**MNATO**

BACKGROUND GUIDE  
NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL

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- Influence of Hostile Non-State Actors on Domestic and International Affairs
  - Expanding Frontiers and Adjusting NATO Priorities
  - Defence Expenditure Challenges and NATO

## Introduction: The North Atlantic Council

“The Parties hereby establish a Council, on which each of them shall be represented, to consider matters concerning the implementation of this Treaty. The Council shall be so organized as to be able to meet promptly at any time. The Council shall set up such subsidiary bodies as may be necessary” -- the North Atlantic Treaty, Article 9

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 or 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, though is strongly encouraged.

## Topic A: Influence of Hostile Non-State Actors on Domestic and International Affairs

### *Introduction*

Of all priorities identified within the 2019 London Declaration, key among them were the threats posed by “terrorism in all its forms and manifestations” and “state and non-state actors challenge [to] the rules-based international order.”<sup>1</sup> Terrorism, in the eyes of NATO, is the “unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence, instilling fear and terror, against individuals or property [...] to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, or to gain control over a population, to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives.”<sup>2</sup> Given the understanding of the state being the sole arbiter of legal violence, any actor acting without state-sanctioned authority then falls under this definition.

As NATO seeks to develop and strengthen its capabilities to respond to the growing threats posed by non-state actors, the rise of the hostile non-state actor has caused a dramatic shift in the ways we understand conflict, use of force, and proportionate responses in both domestic and international affairs. These actors, commonly referenced in discussions of terrorism, are becoming increasingly visible and numerous, forcing states to alter the way they respond at a rapid pace. While terrorism has been a focus of the Alliance for years, and while the Military Committee and other NATO bodies are actively seized in the tactical and strategic planning to combat hostile non-state actors and the roots of radicalization, the NAC is vital in providing overarching guidance and vision to these committees, and in leading the Alliance towards broader goals and ends. As Counter-Terrorism (CT) operations are ongoing in Iraq and Syria, both under the banner of NATO and individual states independently, the Alliance needs to be careful of the complex internal politics of these operations, and the friction they can cause between Allies.

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<sup>1</sup> London Declaration. NATO, 4 Dec. 2019, London

<sup>2</sup> NATO. (2016, August 19). NATO's military concept for defence against terrorism.

## **NATO's Role**

The consequences of terrorism, as posited by NATO, are twofold: “instability in a number of weak states; and the prolific use by terrorist organizations of the Internet and social media to inspire fighters and supporters as well as to maintain a global terrorist network .”<sup>3</sup> These consequences, while distinct, are intimately connected. State instability is exacerbated by terrorism and the need to address both internal and external threats to the civilian population or government, which leads these states to be especially vulnerable to attacks in theatres of operations that are new or unfamiliar. Moreover, states that are continually under attack (especially in the form of cyber and hybrid attacks) are at a greater risk of destabilization. These states are also then unable to participate as effectively in the international community, and can pose a security risk to allies and alliances.

As terrorist acts become more violent, spread to new theaters of operations, and threaten stability of both domestic and international regimes, the need for cohesive action and clear guidance becomes increasingly important. To this end, NATO agreed to Policy Guidelines on Counter-Terrorism in 2012. These Guidelines “provide strategic direction for NATO’s CT activities and identify key areas within which the Alliance should implement initiatives to enhance the prevention of and resilience to acts of terrorism”, with key pillars of awareness, capabilities and engagement with partners.<sup>4</sup> Building on this, the 2019 London Declaration affirmed the Alliance’s commitment to addressing threats from “state and non-state actors” which “challenge the rules-based international order,” along with rising cyber and hybrid threats.<sup>5</sup> It is now up to the NAC, and thus NATO as an institution, to set a clear directive on the way forward.

## **Next Steps**

The North Atlantic Council is not being tasked to redefine hostile state-actors or terrorism as a whole, nor to begin again on understandings of the roots of radicalization

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<sup>3</sup> NATO. (2016, August 19). NATO's military concept for defence against terrorism.

<sup>4</sup> NATO. (2016, August 19). NATO's military concept for defence against terrorism.

<sup>5</sup> London Declaration. NATO, 4 Dec. 2019, London

or terrorist ideologies. As the actions of non-state actors grow increasingly prevalent in international security, the Council's guidance and continued attention to avenues that have been previously left uncovered by the existing policies and doctrine remains critical. Attention to the role of terrorism in domestic and international destabilization mean that the Alliance must stand firm and united on discussions of communal defence and collaboration and look to areas where existing guidance needs to be updated to reflect new and emerging realities.

When preparing for the NAC, some questions for delegates to keep in mind are:

1. While the Council has elected to not define a proportional response to attacks in the cyber and hybrid theaters, what elements of the policies and guidance currently in place need more consideration to ensure that these avenues are well-supported in the broader Counter-Terrorism strategy?
2. In reviewing the 2012 policy, what new developments have taken place that highlight areas to be strengthened or reinforce existing guidance that can be modified to support a modern reality?
3. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for international cooperation has been highlighted as states grapple with the needs of their most vulnerable populations in new ways. While engagement with partners is a long-standing priority in Counter-Terrorism, what new strengths and opportunities can the Alliance seize to better support its members?

### **Further Reading**

- [London Declaration. NATO, 4 Dec. 2019, London](#)
- [Williams, P. \(n.d.\). Violent non-state Actors And National and international security. International Relations and Security Network](#)
- [NATO. \(2016, August 19\). NATO's military concept for defence against terrorism.](#)
- [NATO. \(2012, May 21\). NATO's policy guidelines on counter-terrorism.](#)

## Topic B: Expanding Frontiers and Adjusting NATO Priorities

### *Introduction*

The 2019 London Declaration made clear that “we, as an Alliance, are facing distinct threats and challenges emanating from all strategic directions.”<sup>6</sup> From Russian aggression, to terrorism, to cyber and hybrid threats, and broader threats to the international order, it is clear that the role which NATO plays is and cannot be the same as it was in its inception. The rise in global uncertainty in each of these domains, and the ever-changing nature of international peace and security has brought to the forefront the need for NATO as an alliance and an institution to remain conscious of its guiding principles and role in the international security apparatus. At the same time, NATO must also keep an eye to those it considers allies, not only on a member-by-member basis, but Allies in membership. With the inclusion of North Macedonia, NATO has set a precedent for those states it will consider for membership, as well as the circumstances and requirements for consideration.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, the new roles the Alliance is forced to take on in some cases highlight, and in others cause, tensions between Alliance members, and uncover new and persistent threats to the safety of those within and outside the Alliance. As conflicts rise in different parts of the world, and across new theatres of operations, the Alliance is forced to shift and become more agile and able to respond to new and changing priorities and pressures. With these new priorities and pressures, however, come internal struggles, as NATO operations have, at times, been the primary source of tension between allies and the impetus for applications for membership from a series of states. In a move to what some refer to as a ‘responsive posture’,<sup>8</sup> NATO must now balance not only the inner politics of such a complex and multifaceted alliance, but its

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<sup>6</sup> London Declaration. NATO, 4 Dec. 2019, London

<sup>7</sup> NATO. (2020, September 17). Relations with the Republic of North Macedonia.

<sup>8</sup> Paulauskas, Kęstutis. "The Alliance's evolving posture: towards a theory of everything." NATO Review, 6 July 2018

own reinvention and the challenges posed by new and emerging threats. While a broad and nebulous task, it is the role of the NAC to provide clear leadership and guidance to the Alliance, and within itself seek to create a clear, unanimous vision of the future and priorities of the Alliance and its members.

### ***NATO's Role***

The NAC is the body that provides NATO with its guidance and as a unanimous decision-making body, it is vital that all parties are on the same page and share a unified vision of the goals and purpose of the Alliance. Gone are the days of NATO situated in a context of clear bipolarity and the Cold War; the Alliance arguably faces more threats to its stability and members now than ever before. The London Declaration provides clear guidance on the goals of the Alliance over the coming years, and the priorities identified highlight some of the most pressing threats. However, the tensions between members in these domains are high, and as NATO looks to increase its operational capacity in these areas, the need for clear guidance and consensus is vital to the creation and implementation of the strategies meant to address them.

With North Macedonia around the table for the first time as an Ally, an eye to the membership of the Alliance is also crucial. The support of states facing the brunt of the threats from Russian aggression, Chinese influence, and state and non-state terrorist actions, is key to ensuring their safety, with many seeking entrance into the Alliance. However, membership can be a delicate balancing act. Disagreements within NATO Allies is not unheard of, and crises have been weathered by the Alliance before, and “despite crises, disagreements and the very deliberate attempts by some potential adversaries to undermine Alliance unity and cohesion, since 2014 the resolve and solidarity of Allies has strengthened.”<sup>9</sup> It is by no means an easy task to manage competing viewpoints, priorities, and the needs of so many. Yet, it is the underlying

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<sup>9</sup> Paulauskas, Kęstutis. "The Alliance's evolving posture: towards a theory of everything." NATO Review, 6 July 2018

principle of the Alliance that what we do, we do together, through consensus, negotiation, and compromise.

### **Next Steps**

While NATO's priorities are clear, there is a need for further guidance and direction in how to address them. Russian aggression, terrorism, cyber and hybrid threats, and broader threats to the international order posed by non-state actors are all clear and pressing concerns for Allies, and with a myriad of different policies, guidelines, and frameworks, the Alliance has done considerable work in building capacities to respond to them. However, a clear and unifying form of guidance to bring together states which find themselves at risk, either from external threats or internal conflicts, would go a long way to providing the strategic outlook necessary to guide the Alliance as a whole.

When preparing for the NAC, some questions for delegates to keep in mind are:

1. What are the primary threats facing NATO? Should members be primarily concerned with traditional threats like Russian aggression, or should more attention be paid to cyber and non-state threats?
2. Are current NATO frameworks, including those outlined as part of its 'responsive posture', sufficient to address the challenges facing NATO? What, if any, new approaches, resources, or strategies should be employed to secure NATO's future efficacy?
3. Given the tensions between some member states, how should NATO define itself? What are the values the alliance should espouse, and how should they be promoted? What steps should be taken to remedy tensions between members, and how might such tensions impact NATO's future?
4. Is the Alliance open to considering new applications for membership? Are there any additional considerations to be given to applications for membership, outside of what is formally considered?



### ***Further Reading***

- [London Declaration. NATO, 4 Dec. 2019, London](#)
- [Paulauskas, Kęstutis. "The Alliance's evolving posture: towards a theory of everything." NATO Review, 6 July 2018](#)
- [NATO. \(2020, May 5\). Enlargement.](#)
- [NATO. \(2020, Mar. 23\). Membership Action Plan \(MAP\).](#)
- [NATO. \(2020, September 17\). Relations with the Republic of North Macedonia.](#)
- [NATO. \(2016, August 19\). NATO's military concept for defence against terrorism.](#)
- [NATO. \(2012, May 21\). NATO's policy guidelines on counter-terrorism.](#)
- [NATO. \(2020, October 9\). Relations with Russia.](#)

## Topic C: Defence Expenditure Challenges and NATO Capacity

### *Introduction*

NATO has a well-known Defence Investment Pledge which originated in the 2014 Wales Declaration and was reiterated in the 2019 London Declaration. The Pledge involves oft-cited guidelines that encourage members to commit 2% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to defence and 20% of those defence budgets on major equipment.<sup>10</sup> While some states uphold this as the threshold that all Alliance members must meet, others question the viability of setting arbitrary financial targets in place of more meaningful and qualitative measures. Specifically, the Alliance measures progress in defence investments as “progress in meeting the percentage objectives regardless of whether this is the right priority for a given country or if it will strengthen the Alliance.”<sup>11</sup>

While the Pledge, like all NAC communiqués, was passed unanimously, it has rarely been upheld. In 2014, 3 member states were spending 2% of their GDP on defence; this increased to 4 member states in 2017 and to 7 in 2019,<sup>12</sup> and two thirds of members are committed to reaching the 2% target by 2024.<sup>13</sup> NATO is committed to helping Allies move towards this target through a variety of initiatives, including the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative. Offering “strategic advice on defence and security sector reform and institution-building, to development of local forces through education and training, or advice and assistance in specialised areas such as logistics or cyber defence”, the program is designed to help Allies determine their security and defence needs and strengths to be able to address inequalities in burden-sharing. The Initiative is also open to other NATO partners and non-members, to ensure the Alliance is well-placed to share responsibilities in areas of interest.

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<sup>10</sup> Wales Declaration. NATO, 5 Sept. 2014, Wales

<sup>11</sup> Cordesman, A. H. (2019, June 26). NATO: Going From the 2% Non-Solution to Meaningful Planning (Rep.).

<sup>12</sup> NATO. (2020, Oct. 22). Information on defence expenditures.

<sup>13</sup> Brussels Declaration. NATO, 11 July 2018, Brussels.

An often overlooked but nonetheless key part of the Wales Declaration is the promise to commit 20% of defence expenditure on Major Equipment. While the commitment, much like the 2% commitment is well meaning, only 16 nations currently meet the Pledge. For some member states, the Pledge is functionally impossible, noting the extreme difficulty of balancing pension and payroll commitments.

### **NATO's Role**

NATO's Pledge to defense expenditure must be understood as being as ironclad as the alliance, yet few Nations are actively engaged in meeting their commitments. The fundamental role underpinning the NAC is to acknowledge the reality in which the Pledge is both fundamental and yet not achieved.

NATO projects are funded through both the above direct investments, and indirect investments (ex: equipment or troops) from member states, and can be jointly funded by NATO as a whole and by individual states with particular expertise or ability.<sup>14</sup> This funding process is overseen by the NAC and most expenditures are managed by NATO itself. However, there is significant ongoing discussion regarding funding priority and NATO capacity in a variety of areas. As the 2% target serves primarily as a financial target for direct investment, it falls to members to also find ways to contribute indirect capacities for a variety of operations and ongoing investments. This can take the form of providing cyber security experts as well as hosting of databases and centers for research, which while can financially figure into the 2% and 20% targets, can also provide additional value and expertise not measurable by pure finances. While the NAC is responsible for coordinating the available capacities and resources to allocate to different committees and manage the broader level of defence investment and expenditure, a limited scope in understanding of investments and contributions can hinder broader visions of Alliance capacity.

This is why consideration of the supports available to members, and prospective members, of the Alliance are critical. As some Allies call for stronger commitments from

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<sup>14</sup> NATO. (2020, May 05). Funding NATO.

existing members regarding their financial capabilities and encourage more firm commitments from prospective new members, any NATO infrastructure to support states increasing their capacity for a variety of forms of burden sharing, both within and outside the Alliance, would go a long way towards appeasing certain states. The Membership Action Plan (MAP) is a process by which feedback can be provided to aspiring Allies in the NATO application process. One part of this process involves assessment of defence and security strategies and the needs of the state in question, along with what it can bring to the Alliance.<sup>15</sup> These topics can be difficult and can often pose barriers to entry for certain states, which suggests that occasional confirmation that the standards, guidelines, and processes for joining the Alliance still best serve the institution as a whole.

### **Next Steps**

While the goal is not to do away with the 2% and 20% guidelines, the NAC needs to keep in mind the wide range of contributions provided by members when discussing defence expenditures. With a limited range of supports offered to members and non-members, NATO must consider if its guideline of devoting 2% of GDP to security and defence is a reasonable target, and the only acceptable measure of burden-sharing. Within this discussion, attention should be paid to the demands not only of states which already meet or exceed the 2% threshold, but those who refuse this metric. While this is a frequent dispute, and often can lead to increased tensions on other issues, it is important to note that the NAC is, in all things, unanimous, and a look to past declarations, programs, and agreements will be useful in shaping a way forward on this discussion.

When preparing for the NAC, some questions for delegates to keep in mind are:

1. Outside of the 2% commitment, what else should member states consider as offerable contributions? Are there other measures that can be considered, or other targets?

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<sup>15</sup> NATO. (2020, Mar. 23). Membership Action Plan (MAP).

2. What value do these targets hold? What is their goal, and are they still necessary? Knowing that some states may never reach these thresholds, or that the targets may serve as barriers to entry in the alliance, are they necessary?
3. In considering membership requests and the Membership Action Plan, are any changes necessary to reflect the needs and desires of the Alliance in considering the financial and capacity requirements of prospective Allies?

### ***Further Reading***

- [Wales Declaration. NATO, 5 Sept. 2014, Wales](#)
- [Brussels Declaration. NATO, 11 July 2018, Brussels.](#)
- [Cordesman, A. H. \(2019, June 26\). NATO: Going From the 2% Non-Solution to Meaningful Planning \(Rep.\).](#)
- [NATO. \(2020, May 05\). Funding NATO.](#)
- [NATO, \(2020, Mar. 23\). Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative.](#)
- [NATO. \(2020, Oct. 22\). Information on defence expenditures.](#)
- [NATO. \(2020, Mar. 23\). Membership Action Plan \(MAP\).](#)