

StamfordMUN I

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CHAIR REPORT

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

Terrorist Threats in The Middle East and North Africa

Prepared by: Head Chair Sara, Deputy Chair Aarav Kaul, Deputy Chair Gergana Vergova

1. Letter from the Chair(s)

Dear Delegates,

As your chairs, we share a variety of experiences and personalities that we hope will make this conference an excellent one for you.

Your Head Chair, Sara, is a 9th Grader in UWCSEA East who has delegated and chaired more than ten conferences and, by the end of this academic year, will have chaired 5 conferences. This topic excites her because of how it has multiple countries involved and has a diverse geopolitical spectrum to debate on.

Your first Deputy Chair is Aarav Kaul, a 9th Grader from Tanglin Trust who has a rich experience of ten conferences. This topic excites him because it reveals how different factors, such as extremist ideologies and evolving technology, shape regional conflict and security.

Your second Deputy Chair is Gergana Vergova, an 11th Grader from Canadian International School. This is her tenth conference, and she is deeply passionate about this topic due to how it highlights the need to learn about factors such as terrorism in conflict.

This topic is one that targets deeply rooted issues and is complex yet fascinating. It explains the vulnerability of citizens and the preventative measures we can possibly take. In MUN, it is vital that we discuss complicated issues yet find a middle ground as part of the core tenet of diplomacy.

We sincerely understand that this being the first conference for many delegates can be intimidating and confusing. However, as your chairs with a fruitful background of experience under our belts, we firmly believe that conferences are an excellent way to develop skills and passion for MUN. We hope to facilitate you in committee by being both supportive and the fuel to your passion. We will ensure that the committee is accommodating for all levels, and is truly a space to exemplify the key value of MUN: discourse.

We look forward to seeing you in committee!

Sincerely,

Sara, Aarav Kaul, Gergana Veroga

Head Chair and Deputy Chairs, North Atlantic Treaty Organization

2. Committee Overview

2.1 Committee History and Purpose

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was established in April 4, 1949, in Washington, DC. The signing of the NATO Treaty (known as the Washington Treaty) was founded by 12 members from North America to Europe. It was created to establish collective defense pacts against the

Soviet Union due to the aftermath of World War 2. However, as history has shown, it has become a key stakeholder in establishing world peace and protecting member states' security and engaging in international stability efforts. Furthermore, it is no longer solely about military strength; although that is its main purpose, it has gradually evolved to also being about providing aid and support for nations in crisis.

2.2 Powers and Limitations

NATO's main power lies in the fact that it has immense military power and strength. For instance, in 2025, NATO had a force of approximately 3.44 million combined active personnel, a large navy, and a nuclear force.

Furthermore, NATO's Article 5 states that one attack on a member nation is considered an attack on all and each member nation decides how they will respond, this highlights the importance of unification within NATO.

Another key area of NATO's power lies within its adaptability to modern threats using technology, cyber defense, etc. NATO frequently conducts joint military drills highlighting the intersectionality of countries' military forces and the potential strength within.

The first primary limitation is difficulty in consensus-making for action within NATO, as in NATO, all decisions must be made unanimously; countries with differing political views often struggle to make decisions that follow such a path.

The second primary limitation is that NATO attacks are normally limited to the North Atlantic area, Europe, and North America, hence limiting its scope. However in exceptional circumstances it can conduct operations outside the region such as in Afghanistan.

2.3 Voting Procedures

In NATO, the decisions must be a consensus, meaning all decisions must be unanimous and all members have to agree.

3. Topic Introduction

3.1 Topic Overview

Security in the MENA region is significant both for the region itself and for international actors, including NATO. Terrorist groups in MENA have direct strong incentives to plan terrorist attacks in Europe and other members of NATO due to political, strategic, and symbolic motivations, including the involvement of NATO member states in the region. Furthermore, migration flows related to job opportunities and safety, also connect the regions socially and economically, increasing the relevance of stability in MENA for NATO member states. Finally, MENA regions are some of the biggest producers of oil and energy, which are vital for industries in NATO.

There has been a surge of terrorism in the MENA regions, and terrorism has emerged from the Iraq conflict, controlled territory in Syria, etc. The more concerning factor is how such terrorist groups are growing in numbers due to their heavy presence online on social media. On social media, such groups have begun to radicalize both the youth and their groups of social media users, especially within European nations, presenting an ongoing security concern due to the growth of these terrorist groups. Additionally, these groups are now developing more structured and organised networks and are not just focused on gaining territories but also on long-term insurgencies, presenting a threat to the lives of citizens in such nations.

The root causes of these rises in terrorism are due to a variety of factors, and may be attributed to a combination of political instability, socio-economic challenges, ideological factors, and the impact of regional and international conflicts. NATO recognises the importance of the MENA regions to the treaty and, furthermore, the risk of such groups rising in number; hence, NATO is already relatively involved in this issue through focusing on repressing these insurgencies and increasing security in nations such as Iraq.

3.2 Key Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
MENA	Refers to the Middle East and North Africa
Terrorism	The employment of violence in order to achieve political or religious beliefs
ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)	A militant extremist group that aimed to create a global Islamic caliphate using violence and strict interpretations of Islamic law.
Al Qaeda	An international terrorist organization founded by Osama bin Laden that seeks to wage global jihad against Western influence.

Hezbollah	A Shia Islamist political and militant group based in Lebanon that opposes Israel and has both military and political roles.
Jihadism	An ideology that promotes the use of armed struggle in the name of Islam, often in an extremist or militant context.
Wahhabism	A conservative Sunni Islamic movement originating in Saudi Arabia that advocates a strict, literal interpretation of Islam.
Takfiri	A belief used by some extremists to declare other Muslims as non-believers, often to justify violence against them.
Radicalization	When an individual or group begins to support extreme ideas, often leading to violence
Insurgency	Armed rebellion against a government
Intelligence Sharing	When countries share data and information to stop threats
Counterterrorism	Action taken by governments or groups to stop terrorism

4. Historical Background

4.1 Origins of the Issue

The origin of the issue is a blend of historical, ideological, political and socio-economic factors. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, European powers like the United Kingdom and France drew borders that did not always reflect existing ethnic and religious distribution through the Sykes-Picot Agreement. These borders grouped together ethnic and religious groups that often-had tensions, creating long term instability. Many states later fell under authoritarian rulers, where political repression and limited freedoms increased public frustration. Foreign interventions and wars, including the Iraq War and the Syrian Civil War, further weakened the region and created power vacuums that allowed extremist groups such as ISIS to expand. High youth unemployment and economic inequality also made recruitment easier for such groups.

In the 1950s–1970s, militant nationalist groups began using hijackings and attacks to draw international attention to political causes, marking one of the first waves of modern terrorism in the region. A major turning point came after the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet-Afghan War, which helped contribute to the spread of militant extremist networks and trained foreign fighters. During the 1990s and early 2000s, groups like Al-Qaeda expanded their operations, especially after the 2003 Iraq War weakened Iraq. This instability contributed to conditions that later enabled ISIS to emerge during the Syrian Civil War.

4.2 Key Historical Events

- 1916 – Sykes Picot Agreement. The secret agreement between the United Kingdom and France divided former Ottoman Empire territories into artificial states, laying foundations for long-term instability and tension.
- 1948 – Arab-Israeli War. The creation of Israel and the later war radicalised parts of the region and contributed to the emergence of militant groups
- 1979 – The Iranian Revolution. This replaced the Shah with an Islamic government, which inspired Islamic movements across the country and region as a whole.
- 1979-1989 – The Soviet-Afghan war. This attracted foreign fighters and helped form militant networks, including what later became Al-Qaeda.
- 2001 – September 11 Attacks. These attacks by Al-Qaeda were a major global turning point. This triggered the US -led ‘war on terror’ and direct military involvement in Afghanistan and then later in Iraq, significantly changing security dynamics.
- 2003 – Iraq War. The Iraq War removed Saddam Hussain from power, but created a power vacuum.
- 2011 – Arab Spring. This led to regime changes and civil war, particularly in Libya and Syria, weakening state control and enabling militant groups to expand.
- 2014 – ISIS declares a caliphate. ISIS took land from Syria and Iraq, declaring a caliphate, where a caliph ruled their land. This marked the peak of their influence.
- 2015-2017 – ISIS carries out major terrorist attacks in Tunisia, Egypt and Turkey, demonstrating the regional spread of terrorist threats beyond active war zones.
- 2019-2026 – ISIS lost its territorial control in 2019 but continues frequent attacks in Syria, Iraq and parts of North Africa.

4.3 Evolution of International Response

International efforts to address terrorist threats in the MENA region have increased significantly after the early 2000s. After the 9/11 attacks, the focus was mainly military with operations in Afghanistan, and then other extremist groups in the Sahel, though NATO operations are usually training, advising or coalition based. These interventions had mixed results, weakening some groups but not always achieving long-term stability, especially when the government was weak.

Over time, efforts shifted towards greater regional cooperation, including financial monitoring through the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), which works to prevent terrorist financing, and UN – led legal and capacity building initiatives. While these measures improved intelligence sharing, border security and legal coordination, their effectiveness has varied due to inconsistent political will and limited institutional capacity.

5. Current Situation

5.1 Present-Day Overview

As of early 2026, terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa is no longer about groups controlling territories, but it is still affecting everyday lives. The Islamic State is no longer a caliphate, yet its fighters stay active in parts of northeastern Syria, carrying out attacks on checkpoints and people while spreading new propaganda online.

A bombing at a church in Damascus killed at least 30 people and injured many others in June 2025, highlighting the continued impact of extremist violence on civilians. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2025, Syria remained among the countries most affected by terrorism in 2024, with numerous IS-linked incidents recorded, although overall violence is lower than a decade ago.

At the same time, wider regional tensions, including heightened confrontation involving Iran and Israel in early 2026, have added to instability. Across the region, millions of people remain displaced due to prolonged conflict.

While major terrorist organisations have weakened structurally, the threat has not disappeared; instead, it has shifted toward smaller-scale, less predictable attacks that continue to challenge long-term stability.

5.2 Key Stakeholders

1. The United Nations – Through bodies such as the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre, it provides training, coordination, and legal guidance to member states.
2. NATO – Offers security cooperation, intelligence sharing, and training missions, including counter-terrorism workshops supported by programmes such as Science for Peace and Security.
3. Arab League – Promotes regional cooperation by coordinating intelligence sharing, supporting joint security strategies, and strengthening border control among member states.
4. The United States and European states – Provide military, intelligence, and training support, often focusing on counter-terrorism and regional stability.
5. Regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey – Influence regional security dynamics through political, military, and strategic involvement.
6. NGOs – Organisations such as the International Rescue Committee and Médecins Sans Frontières provide humanitarian aid to displaced populations and affected communities.

7. Financial institutions – Banks and financial technology companies monitor and prevent terrorist financing through regulatory compliance measures such as Know Your Customer (KYC) and Anti-Money Laundering (AML) procedures.
8. Syria – Continues to face challenges from extremist groups while attempting to re-establish territorial control and stability.
9. Iraq – Continues counter-terrorism operations and focuses on maintaining political and security stability.

5.3 Current Challenges

1. Political instability and weak governance – Many countries in the MENA region face governance challenges, including corruption and limited institutional capacity. This can create gaps in law enforcement and security, allowing extremist groups to operate and recruit members.
2. Regional conflicts and civil wars – Ongoing conflicts create ungoverned or weakly governed spaces where terrorist groups can plan, train, and expand their influence. These conflicts also contribute to large-scale displacement.
3. Ideological and sectarian divides – Social and political divisions are sometimes exploited by extremist organisations to gain support and justify violence, making coordinated responses more difficult.
4. Cross-border movement and limited border control – Terrorist networks often operate across national borders, using gaps in border management to move funds, weapons, and fighters. Limited coordination between states can hinder effective responses.
5. Economic hardship – High unemployment, poverty, and limited access to education can increase vulnerability to recruitment by extremist groups, highlighting the importance of addressing underlying socio-economic factors alongside security measures.

6. Past International Actions

6.1 UN Resolutions and Declarations

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001)

Called for all UN member states to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorism, improve international cooperation, and strengthen domestic laws to combat terrorist activities.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004)

Defined acts of terrorism and called for international cooperation in prosecuting terrorists and addressing threats while emphasising respect for human rights.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/288 – The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006)

Established a comprehensive framework for preventing terrorism, addressing conditions conducive to terrorism, improving states' capacity, and ensuring human rights in counterterrorism measures.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014)

Focused on preventing the travel and recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters, urging member states to strengthen border controls and share information while upholding human rights obligations.

6.2 International Treaties and Agreements

1. International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999)
 - a. Significance: Criminalises providing or collecting funds for terrorist acts and requires states to freeze funds and prosecute offenders. Strengthens international cooperation in cutting off financial support to terrorists.
 - b. Major non-parties: Libya (initially delayed ratification) and Mali (ratification limited)
2. International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997)
 - a. Significance: Defines terrorist bombings as criminal acts under international law and obliges states to prosecute or extradite offenders. Helps harmonise legal frameworks globally for handling terrorist attacks.
 - b. Major non-parties: Libya (initially delayed ratification) and Mali
3. International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2005)
 - a. Significance: Criminalises the use or threat of radioactive materials for terrorist purposes and promotes international cooperation in preventing nuclear terrorism.
 - b. Major non-parties: Mali
4. International Convention for the Suppression of Maritime Terrorism (1988) (related to the 1988 SUA Convention)
 - a. Significance: Addresses attacks against ships and ports, obliging states to prosecute offenders and strengthen maritime security.
 - b. Major non-parties: Libya (initially delayed ratification) and Mali
5. NATO Status Of Forces Agreement (SOFA) (1951)
 - a. Significance: this allows NATO forces to operate legally in other member states and supports joint missions and counter terrorism operations.
 - b. Major non-parties: Non-NATO states (e.g. China and Russia)

6.3 Assessment: What Has Worked and What Hasn't

Past counter-terrorism efforts in the MENA region, including military strikes, intelligence sharing, and security measures, have weakened groups like ISIS but have not fully addressed underlying causes such as political instability, poverty, and social exclusion. Poor tactics and poor regional coordination sometimes fuel resentment and radicalisation. To improve, states could focus more on community programs, economic development, and transparent governance while balancing security with human rights.

7. Bloc Positions and National Perspectives

7.1 Western Core Nations (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America)

General stance: Support an active NATO role in counterterrorism beyond alliance borders, including training missions, limited deployments, and robust intelligence-sharing. They generally view terrorism in MENA and the Sahel as a security concern due to risks such as attacks, foreign fighters, and irregular migration.

Priorities and Concerns:

- Prevent attacks on their own soil and dismantle transnational terrorist networks
- Use a mix of military tools (airstrikes, special forces, trainers) and non-military tools (capacity-building, development, policing).
- Maintain alliance unity and promote fair burden sharing, with larger economies often contributing more resources, including troops and funding.

Individual country positions:

- **United States, United Kingdom, France:** Often take leading roles in military coalitions and strategic planning, but also face domestic and international debate regarding the scale and impact of their interventions.
- **Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, Spain, Portugal:** Often emphasize training, stabilization, and rule-of-law approaches; cautious about large combat deployments.
- **Italy:** Particularly focused on North Africa and the central Mediterranean, linking terrorism with migration and maritime security.

7.2 Eastern and Central European Nations (Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania)

General stance: Strongly support NATO as their main security guarantee and back counter-terrorism operations, but their primary focus is often territorial defence and deterrence

(particularly in relation to security concerns in Eastern Europe). They typically favour NATO missions that are clearly limited, well-defined, and that reinforce Alliance cohesion.

Priorities and Concerns:

- Ensure that operations in MENA do not weaken NATO's core mission of defending member territory.
- Gain operational experience and political capital by contributing forces, even in smaller numbers, to Alliance missions.
- Avoid overstretching limited defence budgets and personnel on far-away, open-ended commitments.

Individual country positions:

- **Poland, Estonia, Romania:** Very focused on the eastern flank; support counter-terrorism but argue resources must not come at the expense of deterrence in Europe.
- **Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania:** Supportive of NATO missions as a way to demonstrate reliability; may be more cautious about casualties and long-term deployments.

7.3 Southern European Nations (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain)

General stance: View instability and terrorism in the Eastern and Central Mediterranean and North Africa as immediate threats to their maritime borders, islands, and trade routes. Push for NATO to devote more attention and resources to the “southern flank.”

Priorities and Concerns:

- Protect sea lanes and coastal areas from terrorism, smuggling, and irregular migration.
- Support search-and-rescue, border management, and cooperation with nearby North African and Middle Eastern partners.
- Ensure that NATO decisions on MENA do not undermine their national and regional security interests in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean.
- Argue that NATO should balance attention between eastern deterrence and southern instability.

Individual country positions:

- **Greece:** Emphasizes maritime security and airspace control in the Eastern Mediterranean; sensitive to how NATO deployments and partnerships affect regional disputes.
- **Italy, Spain, Portugal:** Link terrorism, trafficking, and migration; often push for strong EU–NATO coordination and stress humanitarian and civilian-protection concerns.

7.4 Conflict-Affected and Partner States(Afghanistan, Libya, Mali,Türkiye)

General stance: Directly affected by terrorism and/or bordering major conflict zones, they seek international support but are cautious about foreign troops and loss of control. In your committee, Afghanistan, Libya, and Mali are non-voting; Türkiye is a full NATO member but shares the “frontline” perspective of living next to major crises.

Priorities and Concerns:

- Rebuild or protect national institutions (armed forces, police, justice, border control) to manage threats themselves.
- Avoid becoming arenas for great-power competition or purely military approaches that ignore local politics.
- Secure long-term funding, training, and development support, not just short, high-intensity operations.
- Ensure that NATO counter-terrorism strategies take local threat perceptions and border realities seriously.

Individual country positions:

- **Afghanistan:** Extremely sensitive to large foreign deployments; likely to stress civilian protection and call for training, intelligence support, and economic recovery.
- **Libya:** Fragmented political control; may welcome technical and coastal security assistance but wary of missions that appear to favour one faction.
- **Mali:** Struggles with jihadist insurgencies and regional insecurity; may advocate African-led solutions, with NATO in a supporting role (training, intelligence, logistics).
- **Türkiye:** Prioritises certain security threats, including armed groups it designates as terrorist organisations, and seeks alignment of NATO actions with its regional security concerns.

8. Key Questions for Debate

1. How can NATO share intelligence with partner states like Jordan and Egypt while respecting the sovereignty of partner nations?
2. What methods can NATO use to ensure any resolutions implemented are actually followed through and effective at promoting peace in the MENA region, and how can these solutions ensure both peace in the region and safety for civilians?
3. How can NATO balance economic investments and interests of member states into MENA nations while still maintaining peace and stability in the region?
4. How can NATO find a solution which benefits all nations involved in the conflicts in the MENA region, including those which may be seen as perpetrators?
5. What responsibilities should non-NATO countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE have in supporting NATO efforts?
6. How should NATO divide its budget between issues in the MENA region and other threats of terrorism, such as those in Europe experienced in the Russia-Ukraine conflict?
7. How much budget and resources should each nation provide, and will the funding be different based on the total wealth of the nation, NATO vs Non-NATO nations or involvement in the conflicts themselves?

8. To what extent should NATO be focused on creating solutions which benefit and support nations in preventing terrorism in the long term, even following the resolving of the issue, as opposed to immediate military action?

9. Country List

- Afghanistan (Non-Voting)
- Albania
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Czech Republic
- Estonia
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Italy
- Libya (Non-Voting)
- Mali (Non-Voting)
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Spain
- Türkiye
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- United States of America

10. Resources for Further Research

10.1 Official UN Resources

- [Countering terrorism | NATO Topic]- [\[Link to source\]](#)- [A resource which highlights NATO in particular work towards counterterrorism and strategies they have implemented over the years.]
- [United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy]- [\[Link to source\]](#) -[A really short description of the UN's global counter-terrorism strategy, including links to past published resolutions(useful for draft clauses)]

10.2 News and Current Events

- [Middle East Eye] - [[Link to source](#)] - [Gives an overview of multiple MENA conflicts, and how other nations have been involved, including the USA under the Trump Administration]
- [Reuters] - [[Link to Source](#)] - [Explains tensions between nations, notable the US and Iran amid conflict in Gaza]

10.3 Accessible Explainers

- [CrisisWatch Conflict Tracker] - [[Link to Source](#)] - [A map which shows all conflicts going on in the world, each nation can be clicked on for an explanation of the situation and past developments in peacemaking]
- [Ten Things to Watch in the Middle East and North Africa in 2026] - [[Link to source](#)] - [A longer article that has a very clear summary of all the issues in the middle east, and investments made by other nations and how those are affecting the situation(notably the USA, UAE, Qatar). The article is about 14 pages as a PDF but you can skip sections to find just the introduction and anything else that may be helpful to your own nation.]

10.4 Country Research Resources

- CIA World Factbook (for basic country information): cia.gov/the-world-factbook/
- UN Member States Portal: un.org/en/about-us/member-states
- US Department of State portal(has news on different affairs for all countries): <https://www.state.gov/countries-and-areas-list/>
- European Union External Action(Shows the EU relations with different MENA states, useful if you are an EU nation OR one of the MENA nations): https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/middle-east-and-north-africa-mena_en