

North American Treaty Organization

TOPIC BRIEF

Involvement in the Levant



An Introduction to NATO

NATO, or North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is a military and political alliance between 29 member countries in North America and Europe. The purpose of NATO is to keep maintain peace and security within its member countries, through political and if needed, military action. This includes a policy of collective defense, where the member countries mutually agree to protect each other in the event of an attack and an attack against one is considered an attack against all. NATO aims to accomplish three broad tasks to achieve their goal of security and stability. The first is the aforementioned collective defense. The collective defense of all NATO members is certainly a hefty military force, with most of the developed world in its ranks. Also as of the Wales Declaration on the Transatlantic Bond in 2014, NATO members agreed to up their individual military spending to at least 2% of their GDP by 2024.

The next task of NATO is Crisis Management, which is separated into three sections based on the level of crisis. NATO countries should use their vast military and political sway to address crises before they escalate into conflicts, stop conflicts that threaten the security of the alliance, and then consolidate security in places destabilized by conflict. The final task of NATO is Cooperative Security. NATO will work with countries and organizations outside of their borders to ensure peace and wellbeing. This is for the goal of international security, and focuses on disarmament and non-proliferation. NATO also pledges to accept all European democracies into their ranks should they desire to join and meet the necessary standards.

An Introduction to the Levant

The Levant is a geographical term referring to the area of the Middle East by the East Mediterranean. It is comprised of the countries Israel, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Cyprus, Jordan and Lebanon.

For the past 70 years, the Levant has had one of the largest centers of conflict in the world. The high density of different cultures, the historical significance of the region, and the borders fabricated by imperialist powers are some of the factors that brought the Levant to the state that it is in now. It has been faced with widespread terrorism, mass killings, infighting within countries between revolutionaries and the local government, and much more.

NATO has dealt with the regional conflict in a variety of ways, such as by training local forces in nearby countries to help control and quash threats both in their own countries as well as the Levant as a whole. In Afghanistan alone, NATO has deployed more than 13,000 troops to train and expand the local military. In addition to this, NATO has also directly deployed troops to conflict ridden/warring regions, not just to fight but to aid the local peoples in any and all ways possible. NATO operates almost entirely in this region in cooperation with the governments and other organizations in place, to ensure optimal, efficient, and long lasting solutions to problems. This includes political and military training, to boost stability within a region, as well as encouraging productive dialogue to create specific goals for a region, and to accomplish what really needs to be done. NATO also works to provide training and resources to regular citizens in addition to military and government workers, so the country as a whole can be more adaptive and responsive to any issues at hand.

Context of the Issue

NATO and ISIS

The Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) is a multinational terrorist organization that actively fights for control of the Levant, while influencing smaller attacks around the world. This terrorist organization seized many cities in and around the Levant. In fact, ISIS is also referred to as ISIL, The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. NATO and ISIS have been in conflict since the formation and rise of the group in 2013 when the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) merged with the Taliban. NATO has had a strong stance on terrorism for a long time, and counter-terrorism is one of the five priorities of the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Program.

NATO has joined in many coalitions and has taken action numerous times against ISIS. For instance, NATO is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Since joining this organizations, NATO has had multiple ongoing programs dedicated to countering terrorism by ISIS. They have led many counter-terrorist operations and have assisted many other world organizations through their sharing of data. From 2003 to 2014 NATO led the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), an organization dedicated to countering terrorism in Afghanistan through cooperation with the government. While the organization was initially formed to combat the Taliban, its efforts grew to include ISIS. This organization led to the Resolute Support Mission, a nonviolent NATO campaign in Afghanistan where NATO troops trained and equipped many Afghan regiments. This is part of the much larger NATO-Afghanistan enduring partnership.

NATO's many members have pledged support to the fight against ISIS through NATO. NATO has worked closely with a number of organizations, such as the UN, the EU, and the

OSCE. In the United Nations, NATO has worked with the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate. NATO works with and shares with the EU to prevent major terrorist attacks in and around Europe. They focus mainly on preventing chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) attacks. A key part of these exchanges is information sharing among these organizations. NATO also has many facilities within their allies' borders that allow them to both educate and support their allies. These facilities consist of the NATO school in Germany, multiple mobile training courses, and the Centers of Excellence, which support the NATO command structure.

Milestones

In July of 2016 many nations pledged their support to NATO. NATO also agreed to use AWACS Aircraft to gather information about ISIL operations, and agreed to share this information with the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. AWACS stands for Airborne Warning and Control System, and these compose a fleet of modified Boeing jets, equipped with powerful radar and other sensors. This allows them to gather close data and imagery of targets on the ground, as well as communicate with others as needed. NATO also agreed to increase its work with Jordan in countering cyber-attacks and roadside bombings. This summit also began NATO's training of troops in Afghanistan.

October 2016: The Sea Guardian was successfully implemented in the Mediterranean. The Sea Guardian is capable of performing the full range of maritime defense actions, if activated. February 5, 2017: A NATO operation is launched in Iraq, teaching their troops to counter IEDs, or improved explosive devices.

March 31, 2017: Foreign members decide to increase action in Iraq. This increase in action leads to a training program for military field paramedics.

May 25, 2017: After a meeting in Brussels the allies in NATO agreed to an increase in counter terrorism efforts. They add more AWACS flight time, increase information sharing, and implement air-to-air refueling. A new counter-terrorism unit was added to the NATO headquarters.

December 5-6, 2017: Foreign ministers agree to give more support to NATO's southern allies, to help them increase their counter-terrorism efforts. NATO and the EU agreed to increase their support of the fight against terrorism.

February 15, 2018: Defense Ministers agreed to start planning their NATO training program in Iraq.

Brussels Summit: NATO allies agreed to establish a training program in Iraq and increase their support of the Afghan military.

The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS

NATO is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS which use the Five Lines of Effort to help defeat ISIS and help improve living conditions and promote overall safety in the Levant. These lines of effort according to the U.S. Department of State include providing military support to our partners, impeding the flow of foreign fighters, stopping financing and funding to the Islamic State, addressing humanitarian crises in the region, and exposing the true nature of the Islamic State to the world. On top of these guidelines, NATO actively supports the coalition and the fight against terrorism by promoting information sharing, and gaining superior surveillance and intel through the use of NATO AWACS surveillance aircraft. NATO has also done some work to train and assist forces in Iraq and Jordan, but at the NATO summit in Brussels in 2018, they agreed to further this campaign and develop a NATO

Training and Capacity Building Mission in Iraq, for development of more complete and sustainable solution making and most importantly, proper crisis management.

This committee should find a way to fully address the continued threat of ISIS, both to the Levant, as well as within the territories of the alliance. Terrorist organizations and organized terror are some of the biggest present threats to Western freedom and the ideologies of NATO. NATO also has a precedent of dealing with terror threats with extreme severity. In fact the only time that Article 5 of the Washington Treaty was invoked was after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Article 5 reads:

“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security. (North Atlantic Treaty)”

The Mediterranean Dialogue

The Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) is a partnership program between NATO and several countries adjacent to the Mediterranean sea, including Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. NATO views the security of the Mediterranean region as an imperative part of maintaining security in Europe and the North Atlantic. Now more than ever, with threats of terrorism, and the vast levels of migration and even human trafficking present, a healthy and productive relationship between NATO and the nations of the MD is essential. The MD has greatly changed and evolved since its formation in 1994, and the path it takes and will continue to take is dependent on both the wishes of NATO countries,

but also the wishes of the non-NATO members in the MD, which focus on counterterrorism, border security, intelligence sharing, and cybersecurity among other things.

For this topic, only Israel and Jordan of the MD are in the Levant, and so while the topics do have a lot of crossover, it will be more important to focus on them. The conflict between Palestinians and Arabs against the Israelis has long been a driving force of crises in the region, and destabilizes the Levant as a whole. Also, while the great focus and concern about weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) has died down a little since the origination of the MD, the circulation of these WMDs in the Levant in countries such as Syria and Lebanon still pose a great threat and are of great importance to Israel and also NATO member Turkey. One thing NATO is doing to address this threat is focusing defense investment on naval based, ballistic missile defense architecture. Meanwhile a large issue faced by Jordan is a surplus of migrants and refugees. These are mostly people trying to flee to Europe and pose as both a security and humanitarian crisis.

NATO-Israeli Relations

As previously mentioned, conflicts surrounding the Israeli state have been a constant sort of crisis in the Levant. While Israel is not a member country of NATO, they are partners and work together to try to achieve their mutual goals. In February of 2018, Israel signed onto the “Agreement between the Government of the State of Israel and the NATO Support and Procurement Organisation on Support Cooperation”. This allows Israel to work more closely with NATO and their allies. As such, Israeli military has participated in NATO training drills such as Saber Strike drills, led by the U.S. but involving also 19 other NATO member countries. However, Israel is still not a member state of NATO, and the secretary general of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, has made it clear that the security guarantee that applies to NATO

members does not extend to Israel. Thus if Israel faces an attack, the countries of NATO are not obligated to defend Israel.

NATO-Iraqi Relations

Another key aspect in maintaining peace and security within the Levant and NATO countries is maintaining a peaceful setting and relationship with Iraq. The main work that NATO and Iraq do in their partnership is building up Iraqi defense and security systems internally. This has proven to be successful, as such cooperation led to the defeating of ISIL in Iraq and restoring control of all territories to the Iraqi government in November of 2017. Now, at the request of the Iraqi government, NATO is working to provide further training and capacity building within the country, to stabilize Iraq and help the country in its fight against terrorism.

NATO and Syria

The relationship between the NATO countries and the Syrian regime has been strained for the past several years for many reasons. Mainly however, NATO members and the international community as a whole has been appalled by Bashar al Assad's repeated use of chemical weapons against his own citizens. The most recent occurrence of this was on April 7, 2018 when the Syrian regime conducted a strike with a chemical agent on the city of Douma killing over 70 civilians. A week later, the U.S., U.K., and France conducted an air raid on chemical weapons storage and production facilities within Syria, which was met with full approval by NATO. This is an important precedent as it demonstrates that NATO is willing to support military action in circumstances such as this one. NATO also sees that the Syrian regime has international support, and they call out Iran and Russia to allow greater

and easier flow of humanitarian aid and resources to the parts of Syria that are so devastated and damaged, as these countries have long-sought a more closed door foreign policy from Syria. NATO has further emphasized the role Russia plays in the politics of Syria, by asking them to “ensure that the Syrian regime participates constructively in the UN-led Geneva process”. Jens Stoltenberg further justified the military strike against Syria by arguing that any other diplomatic options were unattainable due to Russia vetoing every option in the UN Security Council.

Raqqa, Syria

In 2013, the Islamic State took over the northern Syrian City of Raqqa. The Islamic State kept control of the city for about 4 years, until July 2017 when the NATO backed Syrian Army finally took back control of the City. However, this victory didn't come without a price. The months of fierce battle destroyed the once vibrant city. Once a city of over 300,000 people, only 61,000 remain in the city. 270,000 people are now displaced because of the fighting. Even though the city is free from the rule of ISIS, the city still feels its many influences. On their way out, the Islamic State laced the destroyed city with mines, bombs, and many booby traps. People who live in the city are still feeling the wrath of the Islamic State control over a year after they fell from power. What is left is a shell of a city. The fall of Raqqa also creates new issues within the region.

To fight the Islamic state, the USA and NATO led a coalition with the Kurds and the Arabs. This fragile alliance held because of their common goal. Now that their common goal is coming completion, new disputes are starting to form over territory control. The Kurds and the Arabs may start another conflict if they cannot come to a diplomatic solution. Every action that Western Powers have taken in the Middle East have been very carefully considered to make sure that they don't cause any new conflicts in the region. With tensions

very high, the right balance of power is crucial to maintaining any form of peace in Raqqa, and anywhere else in the Middle East.

Possible Solutions

There are many ways in which a resolution might be achieved however some solutions are obviously more viable than others. It would be preferable for a conclusion to be reached peacefully rather than through violent means. Although this may seem to be a very simplistic solution it could actually be achieved in myriad different ways; for example, there might be a single treaty agreed on unanimously, or a stalemate might be reached between two or more opposing camps of thought that ends in an impasse. In addition, there is always the potential for a more violent solution whereby member countries with radically differing perspectives might turn on each other, although this seems highly unlikely. The most probable solution would be a hotly debated treaty or treaties being agreed to, with the more militarily active countries taking a more proactive (and potentially violent) position while the more neutral/peace inclined countries taking a position of inaction. No matter what resolution is reached, there will surely be a fierce debate between delegates and we hope to see you there.

For this committee, it is mostly important to create a solution with which acknowledges and addresses the complexity of the situation in the Levant. A resolution all about just counter terrorism or trade laws does not do justice to this topic, this committee, or your fellow delegates.

With every country's unique opinion and the multitude of topics to be debated and resolved, I believe this can be an incredible complex, entertaining, and challenging committee.

Questions to Consider

1. What position does your country hold regarding NATO involvement in the Levant, and why?
2. Which other countries might hold the same position as your country?
3. Out of the list of countries with the same stance as yours, which do you think would be best suited to ally with, and why?
4. Which countries are you allied with militarily but not politically, i.e. countries that normally have similar views to yours but have differing opinions about what to do about NATO in the Levant, and what do you plan to do about these countries?
5. In what ways is the potential solution similar to the course of action your country would take, and in what ways is it different?

Works Cited

<https://www.globalresearch.ca/syria-and-lebanon-the-pentagons-phase-iii-natos-war-in-the-mid-east/5313858>

<http://time.com/4030714/isis-timeline-islamic-state/>

<https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/126169.htm>

<https://www.state.gov/s/seci/>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/jens-stoltenberg-nato-troops-staying-iraq-180305190735108.html>

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_153667.htm?selectedLocale=en

https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept2010-eng.pdf

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-takes-part-in-natos-saber-strike-drill-for-first-time/>

https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_07/20180720_180713-GM_F-future-med-dialog.pdf

<http://www.nsp.nato.int/en/news/news-20180209-5.htm>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/17/world/middleeast/isis-syria-raqqa.html>