

**GRUNNMUN 2021**

The background of the cover features a silhouette of a line of soldiers standing in a field at sunset. The soldiers are wearing helmets and carrying gear, and their figures are reflected in the water in the foreground. The sky is a warm orange and yellow color, and a large, dark, curved shape, possibly a part of an aircraft, is visible in the upper right.

**NORTH ATLANTIC  
TREATY  
ORGANISATION  
AFGHANISTAN AND REGIONAL  
SECURITY**

## Welcome Letter

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has always had a special place in my heart, being the first advanced committee, I have ever chaired. I am Youri Moes, a 24 year old Master Student at Leiden University, and I will be one of your chairs for the upcoming GrunnMUN. My co-chair is Sarah Oey, she is 21 and has graduated from the IRIO program at Groningen University. Together we will be chairing the NATO committee, and we want to wholeheartedly welcome you to that experience.

As we move towards a post pandemic world, with 2020 behind us, and a new decade beginning, it is time to look back and reflect on the past and apply its lessons to the challenges ahead. While this is very true on a personal level, it is also applicable to the future of NATO and the international world order. The actions of this organization and others like it will shape the way we live our lives, who we consider as allies and create the conditions for peace and prosperity in an increasingly uncertain world. The political and the personal have never been as intertwined as they are now; so a thorough understanding of how these organizations function and conduct themselves, has never been more important.

NATO committees as a whole are a horse of a different color in my opinion and can really offer a great opportunity for learning and developing one's skills. As a consensus committee it embodies a type of diplomacy that you do not find in other committees. You cannot simply look for a bloc of friendly countries or work towards a majority. NATO is a test of compromise, wide ranging solution building, inclusion, and discussion. This combined with a comprehensive knowledge of the subject of discussion, turns NATO into a very challenging and fun committee that is able to provide new fresh insights to your own personal point of view.

That is why simulations like GrunnMUN are so essential. Being able to step into the shoes of foreign dignitaries, ministers and world leaders gives an insight that cannot be achieved simply through research. Through the simulation we, your chairing team are hoping to inform you about topics that are important to understand, and that might strike a personal chord with your own political views. However throughout this simulation we will expect you to step away from your own preconceptions and look at an issue from a new angle, with a view that is not necessarily your own.

Kind Regards,  
Your Chairs; Youri Moes and Sarah Oey

## Introduction

When discussing humanitarian and military action in Afghanistan, history tells us the story as to why the latter is also known as the "Graveyard of Empires" (Fenvel, 2020). Going back to the British occupation of the country at the height of its colonial era, we see the resistance that can be put up by unwavering local communities (ibid). But to understand NATO's current intervention we must first comprehend the modern history of the region as well as the forces that have invaded, intervened, and influenced the people and country of Afghanistan.

The story of modern Afghanistan can be traced back to the Soviet Afghan War. Starting in 1978, the Soviet Union sponsored a communist coup of the government and in response, the United States began to sponsor their own militias (Fenvel 2020). Starting with sanctions and an Olympic embargo of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, the USA ramped up direct contributions to Sunni militias, providing weapons, ammunition, vehicles, and other military equipment. These militias would be known as a collective, "the mujahideen." (Fenvel, 2020). The funding by the US and other countries, led to a drawn-out military campaign for the USSR, a cost its economy could not afford to maintain. Through guerrilla tactics, ambush attacks in the Afghan mountains, and local homefront advantage, combined with superior firepower provided by the international communities, the Soviet Union withdrew (Fenvel, 2020). Known as "The Soviet's Vietnam" this was a decisive loss for the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War (Fenvel, 2020).

After the war, the United States began to become increasingly dissociated from Afghanistan. This happened for several reasons. Firstly, US Pakistani relations were at an all time low, due to the country's new nuclear program which diverted US attention elsewhere. In addition, Pakistan was a staunch ally of the new Afghan government so this breakdown in relations did not help it build a relationship (Sperling & Webber, 2012). Secondly, the US did not invest in the rebuilding of Afghanistan after the War. The war had destroyed close to all infrastructure, public sanitation, and other essentials to a functioning nation. The US simply did not assist as much as it could have. In fact, in Bill Clinton's first term as US president, all aid to Afghanistan ended (Sperling & Webber, 2012).

With the Afghan civil war raging on and a gaping power vacuum existing in Afghanistan, the Mujahideen came to power, ousting the communist government (Sperling Webber, 2012). The civil war has given huge power to local warlords and among these warlords was a new organization, Al Qaeda, led by Osama Bin Laden. Ironically, despite being the beneficiary of previously acquired US weapons and training, a new transition towards anti-imperialism commenced (Sperling & Webber, 2012). This would later come back to haunt the United States, organizing the largest terrorist attack on US soil in history. The September 11 attacks marked a change in US and world politics (Auserwald, 2014). The US would invade Afghanistan as a direct result of the attacks, overthrowing the government to ensure that Afghanistan is no longer an Al-Qaeda safe haven (ibid.). The cities were taken quickly and effectively. But the rural, mountainous areas would show that the largest military in the world could be resisted (ibid.). To this day there are areas of Afghanistan still firmly in Al-Qaeda hands. The war is technically still ongoing, as there is no ceasefire between the US and Al-Qaeda forces. (ibid.). The War transitioned, and became a full NATO military intervention, as well as a humanitarian mission. The goals changed, no longer was al-Qaeda the only concern, but bad governance, poverty, and inequality were new challenges that NATO's mission would have to address (Auserwald, 2014).

## Problem Specification

This section addresses this committee's problem and provides an illustrative background to specify the issues at stake. As has become clear, NATO has been present in Afghanistan for over twenty years. Several agreements have specified the importance of its presence and the manner in which NATO allies along with the Afghani government , cooperate together.

Former president of the United States of America, Donald Trump, announced that the USA is to withdraw 2500 troops from both Afghanistan and Iraq in mid-January (BBC, 2020). Senior Republicans and US allies have voiced alarm at the announcement (BBC, 2020). However, the former president called for troops to come home and has been criticizing US interventions abroad in general (BBC, 2020). As was mentioned before, the US has been present in Afghanistan for roughly twenty years. Together with the Afghani government, the US troops have been crucial with regard to the improvement of security, governance, institutions and the economy. In their fight against terrorism, the United States of America and Afghanistan have become important partners and this was firmly grounded on the Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement that was agreed upon between the two parties as well as the Bilateral Security Agreement (US embassy, n.d.).

Although the Strategic Partnership agreement does not commit the United States to any specific troop levels, the announcement made by the former president, Donald Trump, to withdraw 2500 troops is problematic because "the price of leaving too soon or in an uncoordinated way could be very high", according to NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (as cited in Herszenhorn, 2020). In addition, Stoltenberg highlights the difficult decision that NATO is facing at the moment. (Herszenhorn, 2020). This is because Afghanistan risks becoming once again a platform for international terrorists and a site to plan and organize attacks against the international community. In fact, "ISIS could rebuild in Afghanistan the terror caliphate it lost in Syria and Iraq" (as cited in Herszenhorn, 2020). Thus, it has become an international responsibility to ensure security and stability in Afghanistan.

Next to the threat of terrorism, the withdrawal of US troops can damage the security of (young) girls and women. This year's GrunnMUN wants to shed light on the importance of protecting girls and women in warzones, with special reference to Afghanistan. NATO's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) policy has been crucial and of relevant importance. Consequently, the three principles of NATO's WPS policy are focussed on integration, inclusiveness, and integrity of women across NATO and in national forces (NATO, 2020). Are these principles now placed in jeopardy after the US unilateral decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan? Does this necessitate a unified response from NATO? These are questions that are thematically addressed throughout this background paper and that need special attention by you as delegates.

In 2021, gender perspectives have become more necessary than ever. By including gender perspective and shedding light on the roles of (young) girls and women, the NATO Council needs to address the problem from multiple dimensions in order to ensure security and stability in Afghanistan. Although fighting terrorism is an important goal, it is important to look in other directions too. The local population has been dependent on a Western presence in the region, and this year's committee should closely analyze how a regional problem can quickly escalate and cause global ramifications . NATO, NATO's allies, the Afghani

government, terrorist groups, and the local population are likely to face problems by a premature decision to withdraw troops.

To effectively address the problem delegates will be expected to answer 3 questions in a written resolution.

- A. How can NATO bring women into the Peace Process in Afghanistan?
- B. How can NATO ensure protection and equality for women and girls in Afghanistan?
- C. How can NATO's anti-terrorism strategy better integrate the role that women play as both victims, perpetrators, and combatants of terrorism?

## **QARMA 1: How can NATO bring women into the Peace Process in Afghanistan?**

### **History/Background of the Problem**

Women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution can improve outcomes before, during, and after conflict. But women are often excluded from formal peace processes. Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13 percent of negotiators, 6 percent of mediators, and 6 percent of signatories in major peace processes around the world (NATO, 2020). While there has been some progress in women's participation, about seven out of every ten peace processes still did not include women mediators or women signatories—the latter indicating that few women participated in leadership roles as negotiators, guarantors, or witnesses. (NATO, 2020)

In mid-June of 2019, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing to discuss the importance of women in peace and security, a follow-up to the Women, Peace, and Security Act (WPS) passed in 2017. This particular hearing responds to the recently published White House Strategy 2019 that sets various objectives and goals to diversify the roles women play in the peace process and increase women's leadership by providing them with the resources, skills, and support needed to secure successful peace agreements. (NPR, 2019)

The members of the committee, as well as the testimonies, emphasized the opportunity to put these plans into immediate action in Afghanistan. The U.S. has committed to peace negotiations with the Taliban but each agreement has failed due to miscommunication, stalemates, or other political reasons. Palwasha Kakar, Senior Program Officer for the U.S. Institute of Peace, stated that including Afghan women in peace and security negotiations is essential to the success and sustainability of peace and recovery in Afghanistan. (NATO, 2012). Despite discrimination, Afghan women have found ways to participate at a local level. Women have brokered local deals by negotiating directly with Taliban leaders; for example, Afghan women's communication with the wives of the Taliban helped facilitate the release of hostages several times. Second, Afghan women use their access to information to act as informants for the U.S. and its partners. Third, Afghan women mobilize the public by increasing public awareness and support for the peace process. Fourth, Afghan women have mobilized support across various ethnic lines to push for a unified commitment to equal rights for all Afghan citizens (Whitehouse, 2012).



## **Recent Developments**

Peace efforts in 2020 have similarly struggled to include women. For example, women represented only around 10 percent of negotiators in the Afghan talks, just 20 percent of negotiators in Libya's political discussions, and 0 percent of negotiators in Libya's military talks and Yemen's recent process (ACCC, 2020). One current peace process is led by a woman chief mediator (Stephanie Williams, acting head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya)—marking the first time in six years that a woman holds this role. (Peace Operations, 2020).

The importance of Women's role in effective peace making is recognised in UN Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security, which was passed in the year 2000. However, not only in the UN has there been significant progress in including women in peace making and peace keeping. Peace making as part of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali saw significantly more effective discussion when local women in communities were brought in to be heard. (Peace Operations, 2020). This occurred despite the fact that women were not formally involved when Mali's peace process began. This is quite surprising given that women were actively participating on all sides of the conflict, including in armed groups. Nonetheless, among other things, they informed women on the peace process, developed unified positions, lobbied and met with the Malian Government, African Union (AU) representatives, the UN Secretary-General and UN Security Council members. Women were then invited to undertake formal mediation training ahead of the peace negotiations in Algiers in 2015 (Peace Operations, 2020). Of the 12 women trained, four were supported by the Malian Government to be part of the negotiations. MINUSMA supported an additional 14 women to attend. Overall, the case of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali can serve as an important template for the current peace talks that have started in Afghanistan.

On a local level, Afghan women in peace and security positions have made significant achievements for Afghanistan and its cities (Peace Operations, 2020). However, on a global level, women were only included in two out of 23 rounds of negotiations with the Taliban between 2005 and 2014. Yet research shows that women are a necessary asset at the negotiation table. When women are involved in peace agreements, they are 64 percent less likely to fail and 35 percent more likely to last more than 15 years (Department of Peacekeeping, 2020). In her testimonial, Jamille Bigio argues that women in peace and security negotiations are more likely to de-escalate tensions and stabilize their communities. Therefore, closing the gender gap could improve the country's conditions.

## **Relevant Actors/Institutions**

### **The Afghani Government**

Collaborating with the people of Afghanistan can be a solid strategy, to do this local government and parliaments can provide local insight that cannot be given by NATO intelligence or international humanitarian organizations. Communicating with the Afghani government and including women in the conversation in positions of power has shown to be a good strategy towards attaining long term peace deals.

## **Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)**

The EAPC has been integral to NATO's work on WPS from the start. They play a key role in shaping policy and practice. The policy itself is agreed by the EAPC – today involving all 30 Allies and 19 partners. In addition, eight partners beyond the EAPC framework have associated themselves with the policy: Afghanistan, Australia, Israel, Japan, Jordan, New Zealand, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates (NTI, 2011). Through their cooperation programmes with NATO, members of the EAPC are encouraged to adopt specific goals that reflect the principles and support implementation of the WPS agenda. Some contribute to the development of education and training activities on WPS, from which they also benefit, and they help ensure that a gender perspective is included in the curriculum of NATO Training Centres and Centres of Excellence as well as in pre-deployment training (NTI, 2011).

## **QARMA 2: How can NATO ensure protection and equality for women and girls in Afghanistan?**

### **History/Background of the Problem**

The Taliban government of Afghanistan held power from 1996 to 2001, during which Afghan women were stripped of their natural rights since they were prevented from obtaining an education and a job, from showing skin in public and leaving the house without a male chaperone. (Bastick & Megan, 2018) Rape and violence against women were widespread until U.S. military action overthrew the regime (USI, 2009). Despite the tremendous gains women have achieved in political, economic and social life since 2001, women still struggle to have a seat at the peace talk table. (NATO, 2020)

While intra-Afghan peace talks started in September 2020, there are concerns that they will jeopardize fragile gains made for women's rights over the past two decades. Systematic challenges and weak cooperation persist, and civil servants have limited awareness and knowledge on the implementation of policies and practices on gender equality (NATO, 2020). The women who participated were mostly members of parliament, in high government positions or well-known civil society leaders. While the peace process could change Afghanistan's political system, laws and policies around women's rights, equality and protection are currently quite strong and the key challenge relates to their implementation. (NATO, 2020). Women peacekeepers receive more trust from their communities and therefore have more power to increase participation among other women. Further, research shows that women are more likely to address social issues during negotiations, which helps communities recover. Women's participation increases the likelihood of reaching a sustainable agreement. (Bastick & Megan, 2018)

### **Recent Developments**

Women are considered assets in NATO-led operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo because of their supposedly inherent empathy and communication skills (Karim & Beardsley, 2016). The percentage of women in NATO Armed Forces is more than 10.6%, a figure which, though low, is markedly higher than in non-NATO troops (ACCC, 2020). Unfortunately, this data also shows that while women in NATO Armed Forces are relatively well represented in subordinate positions, they are far less likely than their male counterparts to rise to

prominence as officers (NATO, 2020). Interestingly, the lack of women in senior positions appears to be contained within the military, with civilian women in diplomatic and political positions achieving great heights in their careers (NATO, 2020). If female soldiers are to engage with and inspire women in Afghanistan (and other NATO missions) and to dedicate themselves to a difficult and dangerous career in military service, it can only be surmised that their enthusiasm could be curtailed if potential for career advancement is lacking (NATO 2020).

A continually growing research base has now recognized the importance of women's involvement in peace and security issues to achieving long lasting stability. This acknowledgment stems from the efforts by international organizations, national governments and civil society around the world to establish what we now know as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda through the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. In October 2020, the international community marked the twentieth anniversary of U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and its two decades of efforts to integrate women and their perspectives in peace and security (NATO, 2020). In 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) formally acknowledged through the creation of Resolution 1325 the changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly targeted, and women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes (ibid). The resolution specifically addresses how women and girls are disproportionately impacted by violent conflict and war and recognizes the critical role that women can and already do play in peacebuilding efforts. UNSCR 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace.

## **Relevant Actors/Institutions**

### **UNICEF**

When it comes to the protection of children in conflict zones, the United Nations Children's Fund is an essential resource. UNICEF has thousands of people on the ground, distributing medicine, sanitary products and managing many of the refugee facilities found throughout the country. It is essential that children have access to sanitation, especially girls (UNICEF, 2019). UNICEF could be a useful partner in ensuring safety for children in both the long and short term. UNICEF also partners with local women's organizations to provide much needed two way-communications support to women and girls, particularly around menstrual health, gender-based violence and their access to health services (UNICEF, 2019). As a result, UNICEF partnered with two organizations: Voice of Women and the Women Activities & Social Services Association. These are organizations that can be very useful.

## **QARMA 3: How can NATO's anti-terrorism strategy better integrate the role women play as both victims, perpetrators, and combatants of terrorism?**

### **History/Background of the Problem and the International Approach**

As has become clear, NATO enforced strategic plans and trainings mainly to counter terrorism in the field. Terrorism forms a direct threat to the international security and harms



international stability and prosperity (NATO, 2019). With that in mind, the NATO countries want to invest in a common strategy that must put the challenges with regard to the international community aside (NATO, 2019).

In this regard, NATO undertook action to fulfil this goal. For instance, NATO invoked its collective defense clause (article 5) with reference to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York, the United States of America (NATO, 2019). Moreover, NATO set up a Counter Terrorism Policy Guide that focuses on the Alliance and its allies to enlarge awareness, capabilities and enlargement (NATO, 2019). Moreover, this Counter Terrorism Policy Guide aims to “provide strategic and risk-informed direction to the counter-terrorism activities ongoing across the Alliance as part of the NATO’s core tasks of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security” (NATO, 2012). In accordance with this, NATO focuses on “identifying the principles to which the Alliance adheres and key areas in which the Alliance will undertake initiatives to enhance the prevention of and resilience to acts of terrorism with a focus on improved awareness of threat, adequate capabilities to address it and engagement with partner countries and other international actors” (NATO, 2012). To complement this, an Action Plan is being implemented to enhance and enlarge NATO’s role in the battle against terrorism and to protect the international community from any harm (NATO, 2019). It is important to note that NATO established all these frameworks and structurally invested in anti-terrorism projects since the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001. From that moment onwards, the international community sharpened its policies against terrorism and threats.

As we know, the conflict in Afghanistan stems back to a civil conflict which led to a Taliban government of Afghanistan in 1994 (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). This Taliban government ruled from 1996 to 2001 because it was overthrown in 2001 by a U.S.- led military campaign (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). “The Taliban has since waged an insurgency against the internationally backed Afghan government that has resulted in widespread displacement and destruction, including significant physical threats and restrictions for Afghan Women” (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). The Islamic State has made the situation at hand more complex and has also launched devastating attacks on civilians and state institutions (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). The Afghan government has started numerous peace talks and reached some agreements with the Taliban. However, for many reasons the peace talks did not succeed (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). Women participated in only fifteen of sixty-seven rounds of talks between 2005 and 2020 (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). Thus, the female civil society is misrepresented and has not voiced its opinion enough. The female civil society in the Afghan High Peace Council has mobilized public support for the peace process and worked significantly hard to bring awareness to social and humanitarian concerns (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). “Women have used their few roles on provincial peace councils to broker local deals supporting the reintegration of former combatants, facilitate hostage releases, and counter extremist narratives” (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.).

## **Recent Developments**

As stated before, peace talks started but were often broken down due to political reasons or miscommunication (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). However, 2020 has shown some progress and led to an increase in efficiency. “After nine rounds of negotiations, the Taliban

and the United States signed an agreement on February 29, 2020, which paved the way for intra-Afghan talks” (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). Although some negotiations are delayed because of increased violence and disagreements over prisoner exchanges, the official peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban began last September in Qatar (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.).

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, women and girls have made significant progress. The Taliban adheres a fundamentalist interpretation of the Islam which makes women and girls second-class citizens (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). However, due its fall and the peace talks, women and girls have more room to follow their own path and to increase their participation in political activities. Despite this, women and girls remain vulnerable. “Afghan women have long feared that negotiators for a peace agreement with the Taliban would trade away women’s rights for the chance to end the war (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). However, the role of women and girls changed and they gained more opportunities to develop themselves.

### **Relevant Actors/Institutions**

The international community is important here since it sets its goal on improving the situation in Afghanistan in order to fulfil their principles to fight terrorism. Important to note is that the terrorist groups form the threat to the international community as a whole. Because the terrorist threat is still ongoing, it is crucial to discuss the role of women and girls. Large institutions and countries, such as the United States and NATO, can keep trying to fight terrorism in the region but is important to include the civil population as well, especially women. Therefore, the QARMA highlights a developing piece to the anti-terrorism strategy of NATO. How can NATO better integrate women and girls?

## **Sources for Further Reading**

Women, Peace and Transforming Security:

[201110-wps-essay-transforming-security-e.pdf \(nato.int\)](#)

This report, written by the Special Representative for Women Peace and Security, is a great collection of standpoints on the WPS from NATO’s perspective. It lays out a general worldwide framework and could provide interesting solutions for the situation in Afghanistan. Taking into account sexual exploitation by NATO personnel for example could be a key insight into maintaining the relations NATO needs in order to accomplish their goals.

Afghanistan’s National Action Plan On Unscr 1325-Women, Peace, And Security:

[Microsoft Word - English NAP 6 \(peacewomen.org\)](#)

This action plan comes from the Afghani government and highlights the plan to ensure the peace for women between 2015 – 2022. Looking at what Afghanistan’s plan is and what their expected outcomes are could make for better facilitation between the parties.

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