



**Study Guide**  
**for the**  
**North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

**Topic Area:**  
**Redefining NATO's Role in the Fight Against Terrorism**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>1. Welcoming Letter.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Introduction to the Committee.....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.....	6
2.2. The North Atlantic Council.....	7
<b>3. Introduction to the Topic Area.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4. Glossary.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5. Legal and Policy Framework.....</b>	<b>12</b>
5.1. North Atlantic Treaty Articles IV & V.....	12
5.2. NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counterterrorism.....	12
5.3. NATO's Cyber Defence Policy.....	13
5.4. The Biological Weapons Convention.....	13
<b>6. Main discussion of the Topic.....</b>	<b>15</b>
6.1. The Evolution of Terrorism.....	15
6.1.1. 20th Century.....	15
6.1.2. Post 9/11 Terrorism.....	16
6.1.3. Terrorism in a New Era.....	16
6.2. Emerging Threats.....	18
6.2.1. Lone actors.....	18
6.2.2. Cyberwarfare.....	19
6.2.3. Bioterrorism.....	21
6.3. NATO's counterterrorism strategy and mechanisms.....	22
6.3.1 Conventional terrorism.....	22
6.3.2. Hybrid Terrorism.....	24
6.3.2.1. Cyberwarfare.....	24
6.3.2.2. Bioterrorism.....	25
6.4. Key Strategic and Operational Challenges in NATO's Counter-Terrorism Strategy.....	25
6.5. NATO's Partnerships in counter-terrorism.....	27

6.6. Key Stakeholders.....	30
6.6.1. Member states.....	30
6.6.1.1. USA.....	30
6.6.1.2. France.....	31
6.6.1.3. Finland.....	32
6.6.2. International Organisations.....	33
6.6.2.1. United Nations.....	33
6.6.2.2. European Union.....	34
<b>7. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>8. Points to be addressed.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>9. Bibliography.....</b>	<b>39</b>
9.1. Primary Sources.....	39
9.2. Secondary Sources.....	44
9.3. Legal Texts.....	46
9.4 Books.....	47
9.5. Articles.....	47
9.6. Websites.....	48
<b>10. Further reading.....</b>	<b>49</b>

## **1. Welcoming Letter**

Distinguished Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to NATO's North Atlantic Council (NAC) of RhodesMRC 2025. We feel both honoured and excited to serve as the Board of this iconic committee! This year's topic, 'Redefining NATO's role in the Fight against Terrorism', revolves around the complex and multi-faceted role of NATO as a counter-terrorism actor in the face of evolving threats. The topic addresses the Alliance's counter-terrorism strategy, the emerging threats that need to be addressed by the allies, the challenges that arise in the fight against terrorism, both due to its multidimensional nature and because of NATO's specific character as a military alliance, as well as the importance of counter-terrorism cooperation between nations and organizations. Terrorism has been a topic of discussion among states, alliances, and international organizations, as it concerns the security of our societies and their well-being. Even though the international community has implemented important counter-terrorism efforts, the current technological advancements, such as Artificial Intelligence, new methods of dispersing chemical and biological substances, and the complex nature of capital markets, which facilitate funding for terrorist organizations, demonstrate that there is still much work to be done.

In this study guide, we aim to provide you with all the relevant background information necessary to understand the topic in depth. Additionally, we strived to incentivise you to conduct your own research as well, which is always required to fully grasp every aspect of a complex international issue. The bibliography and further reading sections at the end of the guide can be great starting points for that research. On a special note, we kindly want to ask all of you to not only carefully read this study guide, but also the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of NATO's NAC. As familiar as we make ourselves with the topic of the committee, we can never fully shine as delegates without a firm grasp of the rules of the game.

We are really looking forward to meeting each and every one of you in person. Should any questions arise concerning the conference, the committee, the topic, or the procedure, feel free to ask for our help, and we'll be happy to assist you. On behalf of the Organizing Team and the Secretariat, we welcome you to RhodesMRC 2025 and the beautiful island of Rhodes!

Best regards,

**Ioakeim DELIMITROU**, *NATO Secretary-General*

**Margarita-Theodora VASILEIADOU**, *NATO Deputy Secretary-General*

**Evelina KARAGEORGI**, *Dean of the North Atlantic Council*

## 2. Introduction to the Committee

### 2.1. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was established on April 4th, 1949, following the end of World War II. Its main goals were to deter the Soviet Union's expansionism at the time, prevent the revival of nationalist militarism in Europe, and encourage European political integration. Its history can be subdivided into four main periods: the post-World War II period, the Cold War period, the post-Cold War period, and, lastly, the period after 9/11.

Soon after the end of World War II, it became evident to the European countries that transatlantic security cooperation and agreement were the only solutions against Soviet aggression, preventing the revival of European chauvinism and laying the foundations for European political integration. As a result, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed on 4 April 1949.

The Cold War period shaped the character, practices, and policies of NATO for several decades. During this period, the primary ideological, political, and military opponent of NATO was the Warsaw Pact, leading NATO to adopt a doctrine of deterrence against its member states. Moreover, NATO expanded its membership and took several steps in developing its political, military, and even scientific roles. The Alliance shifted several times between an aggressive and distancing approach towards the Eastern bloc and a policy of enhancing contacts and dialogue, and vice versa.

The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Cold War and ushered in a new era of open markets, democracy, peace, and human rights. However, an existential question about NATO's role arose.<sup>1</sup> The Alliance's mandate was then shaped differently: to deter the nationalist militarism in Europe and to promote European political integration.

NATO reforms were prompted by the 9/11 attacks, which demonstrated the devastating power that non-state actors, even those located in remote regions of the world, might wield over the Western world. In response to the attacks, Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty was invoked for the first time in the organization's history. NATO assumed leadership and

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<sup>1</sup> NATO (2022). 'A short history of NATO'. [online] Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified\\_139339.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_139339.htm) [Accessed 28 June 2024]

coordination of military operations against terrorist groups and peacekeeping missions while carrying out phases of partnership development and enlargement. Finally, several crises, including the Syrian Civil War, the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea in 2014,<sup>2</sup> and most recently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine,<sup>3</sup> demonstrated the critical role NATO plays in defending not only the West but also its way of life.

## 2.2. The North Atlantic Council

The North Atlantic Council (NAC) is NATO's primary political decision-making body and the authority responsible for a network of committees. It oversees the political and military processes related to security concerns affecting the entire Alliance. It brings together representatives of each member state to address policy or operational problems that require collective decision-making, offering a venue for wide-ranging engagement among members on all issues impacting their peace and security. Policies decided in the NAC express the collective will of all member states, as the decision-making process is based on **consensus** and common accord. This means that for a decision to be adopted, it is required that all member states do not disagree. The Secretary-General of the Alliance chairs the NAC, providing direct support to the Council and making sure that the Council's mandates are executed.

Finally, the North Atlantic Council's meetings often result in declarations and communiques. These are public documents that reflect NATO's choices and strategies on multiple international issues and challenges that affect and concern the Alliance.

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<sup>2</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica. 'The crisis in Crimea and eastern Ukraine: Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea'. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-crisis-in-Crimea-and-eastern-Ukraine> [Accessed 28 June 2024]

<sup>3</sup> BBC (2022). 'Ukraine war in maps: Tracking the Russian invasion' [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60506682> [Accessed 28 June 2024]

### 3. Introduction to the Topic Area

The September 11, 2001, attacks marked a turning point for the Alliance, resulting in the invocation of Article 5 for the first time in its history and the deployment of significant military operations such as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF<sup>4</sup>) in Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> These operations provided valuable feedback for the Alliance, demonstrating NATO's ability to respond to collective threats, such as collective terrorism, while also highlighting the limitations of traditional military operations against hybrid and technologically advanced threats. Today, twenty-four years after the 9/11 attacks, the international environment and the challenges for global security have changed dramatically. Terrorist groups are exploiting new ways of financing, recruiting, and launching attacks, new tactics of terrorism, with the most significant of them being lone-wolf attackers, cyber-attacks, and biological and chemical weapons. All these changes pose a considerable challenge for NATO's conventional counter-terrorism framework and demand innovative responses that stretch beyond NATO's historical focus on military solutions.

As a collective Alliance, NATO should utilize its capabilities in coordinating intelligence sharing, cyber defense, and rapid response. Still, at the same time, it should expand its toolkit, strengthen its capacity for proactive measures in cybersecurity, counter disinformation, and prevent the proliferation of biological and chemical weapons. In addition to the above, the Alliance must also consider that terrorism is a multifaceted phenomenon with profound economic and social roots, which require a comprehensive approach by the international community. Several state actors use intricate capital market networks, including investment funds, charities, and collective fundraising platforms, to support terrorist organizations. These organizations, which frequently function outside of global oversight frameworks, make it easier for money to be directed toward extremist and violent causes.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, poverty, marginalization, and social and economic inequality are key factors that fuel radicalization, particularly in areas with weak institutions and limited opportunities for social advancement. Additionally, a lack of social cohesiveness and an

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<sup>4</sup> NATO. "ISAF's mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014)." Last updated May 30, 2022. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_69366.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_69366.htm). Accessed May 03, 2025

<sup>5</sup> NATO. "A Short History of NATO." Last updated June 22, 2022. [https://www.nato.int/cps/ge/natohq/declassified\\_139339.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ge/natohq/declassified_139339.htm). Accessed April 07, 2025

<sup>6</sup> FATF. "Crowdfunding for Terrorism Financing." Published October 2023. [https://www.fatf-gafi.org/content/dam/fatf-gafi/reports/Crowdfunding-Terrorism-Financing.pdf.coredownload.inlinen.pdf?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.fatf-gafi.org/content/dam/fatf-gafi/reports/Crowdfunding-Terrorism-Financing.pdf.coredownload.inlinen.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com). Retrieved May 08, 2025



increasing sense of injustice encourage support for extremist ideas, which frequently give disenfranchised people a sense of identity and direction.<sup>7</sup>

For NATO to effectively address the challenges posed by terrorism to global security, it needs to focus on improving financial flow transparency, encouraging social inclusion, reducing social inequality, and employing a combination of preventive and repressive tactics. This new, redefined approach to counter-terrorism should be combined with close collaboration with partner-states and international organisations, such as the United Nations and the European Union. However, NATO, in its efforts to adopt a new stance on terrorism, will need to face several intra-allied political, operational, and strategic challenges that must be addressed for the adoption of a new NATO role against terrorism.

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<sup>7</sup> UNODC. “Drivers of violent extremism”. Published July 2018.  
[https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/terrorism/module-2/key-issues/drivers-of-violent-extremism.html?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/terrorism/module-2/key-issues/drivers-of-violent-extremism.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com). Retrieved May 08, 2025



**Cyber Attacks:** Any intentional effort to steal, expose, alter, disable, or destroy data, applications, or other assets through unauthorized access to a network, computer system, or digital device.<sup>15</sup>

**Cyberterrorism:** Terrorist attacks on computer systems to cause panic or disruption. It includes hacking, data theft, and system sabotage for ideological or political motives, targeting critical infrastructure, financial systems, or military networks.<sup>16</sup>

**Bioterrorism:** The intentional release of biological agents such as viruses, bacteria, or toxins with the goal of harming or killing humans, animals, or plants, while trying to intimidate or coerce a government or civilian population to further political or social objectives.<sup>17</sup>

**Violent Extremism:** Supporting or carrying out ideologically motivated violence to achieve political, social, and religious goals.<sup>18</sup>

**State-Sponsored Terrorism:** Direct or indirect support provided by a state to terrorist organizations or individuals, including financial assistance, training, or logistical support.<sup>19</sup>

**Lone Actor Terrorism:** Terrorist actions committed by individuals who operate independently of any external command structure, while planning and executing their attacks, driven mainly through personal ideologies or grievances.<sup>20</sup>

**Terrorist Safe Havens:** Geographic areas where terrorist groups can operate freely due to weak governance, lack of law enforcement, or state sponsorship.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> IBM. "What is a Cyberattack?" 202. <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/cyber-attack>. Retrieved March 31, 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Wigan Council. "Cyber Terrorism." n.d. <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Crime-Emergencies/Counter-terrorism/Cyber-terrorism.aspx>. Retrieved March 31, 2025.

<sup>17</sup> INTERPOL. "Bioterrorism." n.d. <https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Terrorism/Bioterrorism>. Retrieved March 31, 2025.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations. *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*. 2015. [https://www.un.org/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism/files/plan\\_action.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism/files/plan_action.pdf). Retrieved March 31, 2025.

<sup>19</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). "Terrorism." n.d. <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism>. Retrieved March 31, 2025.

<sup>20</sup> International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT). "Lone Actor Terrorism Database." n.d. <https://icct.nl/project/lone-actor-terrorism-database>. Retrieved March 31, 2025.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of State. "Terrorist Safe Havens." 2015. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2015/257522.htm>. Retrieved March 31, 2025.

## **5. Legal and Policy Framework**

### **5.1. North Atlantic Treaty Articles IV & V**

The North Atlantic Treaty, also known as the Washington Treaty, is the foundational treaty of NATO, signed on April 4, 1949, and defines the framework of the Alliance. This Treaty comprises 14 articles that outline the primary objectives of the Organization, including the prioritization of collective defense and the preservation of peace and stability. However, the most important Articles are IV and V because they highlight the core purpose and strength of the Alliance, which are mutual defense and solidarity. Insofar as, according to Article IV, “The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened”. Subsequently, Article V emphasizes the activation of collective defense in the event of an attack on one of the allies, while also underlining NATO's functional framework as a defensive alliance.<sup>22</sup>

### **5.2. NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counterterrorism**

NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counterterrorism are an overarching document that demonstrates the Alliance's approach in the area of Counterterrorism (CT). The main objective of this policy is to provide strategic direction to the CT activities ongoing across the Alliance as part of NATO's core tasks of deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. In addition, these Guidelines on CT not only re-state the principles to which the Alliance adheres in the fight against terrorism but also identify key areas in which the Allies will undertake initiatives to enhance the prevention of, responsiveness to, and resilience against acts of terrorism. Regarding the key areas of NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counterterrorism, attention is drawn to three parameters: awareness, capabilities-preparedness, and engagement-cooperation. The aforementioned

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<sup>22</sup> NATO. “North Atlantic Treaty, April 4, 1949.” Last modified April 4, 1949.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm). Retrieved on April 1, 2025.

concepts underline the importance of strengthening the resilience and coordinating global efforts for CT strategies <sup>23</sup>.

### **5.3. NATO's Cyber Defence Policy**

The Alliance made a declaration for NATO's Cyber Defence Policy at the 2016 Warsaw Summit with the primary purpose of solidifying its stance on cybersecurity. As a consequence, cyberspace was recognized as an operational domain alongside land, air, sea, and (since November 2019) space. Since one of NATO's main institutional objectives is to coordinate and conduct cyber defense actions, this policy document was characterized as a cornerstone for NATO's cybersecurity policy. The most crucial point of the policy was that cyber defense would be treated with the same seriousness and urgency as other military operations, following the admission of cyberspace as an operational domain. NATO's Enhanced Cyber Defense Policy also enabled the Allies to develop cyber warfare strategies, integrate cyber defense into military planning, and conduct exercises that simulate responses to cyberattacks. This framework emphasized the need for continuous adaptation to new cyber threats by sharing intelligence and best practices in real-time, ensuring a coordinated and effective response in the event of a cyber-attack incident. NATO's Cyber Defence Policy was endorsed at the 2021 NATO Summit in Brussels. The policy's primary objective is to support a comprehensive and coordinated approach that Allies have adopted to deter, defend against, and respond to a wide range of cyber threats. <sup>24</sup>

### **5.4. The Biological Weapons Convention**

The Biological Weapons Convention is the cornerstone of the multilateral disarmament regime aimed at ridding the world of biological and toxin weapons, which was signed in

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<sup>23</sup> NATO. "NATO's Policy Guidelines on Counter-Terrorism." Last modified July 10, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_228154.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_228154.htm). Retrieved on April 1, 2025.

<sup>24</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "NATO Cyber Defence." Last modified July 2016. [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_07/20160627\\_1607-factsheet-cyber-defence-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160627_1607-factsheet-cyber-defence-en.pdf). Retrieved on April 1, 2025.

1972 and entered into force in 1975 with 188 Member Parties.<sup>25</sup> Respecting Article 1 of the Convention, all the signatories commit to refrain from any development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, or retention of biological weapons.<sup>26</sup> The significance of the treaty lies in the need to avoid any use of biological weapons, as they can be deadly and highly contagious. However, since there is no formal verification regime for monitoring the compliance of States with their treaty obligations, they are encouraged to comply with several confidence-building measures (CBMs) defined by States Parties at various review conferences<sup>27</sup>. Furthermore, since the BWC supplements the 1925 Geneva Protocol, States Parties must ensure the integrity of the Convention's content to remain relevant and practical, despite changes in science, technology, policy, and security since its entry into force.

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<sup>25</sup>United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. "Biological Weapons." Last modified n.d. <https://disarmament.unoda.org/biological-weapons/>. Retrieved on April 1, 2025

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. "An Introduction to the Biological Weapons Convention." Last modified 2024. <https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/BWC-Brochure-2024-Edition-English-web.pdf>. Retrieved on April 1, 2025.

<sup>27</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)," Accessed April 1, 2025, <https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/convention-prohibition-development-production-and-stockpiling-bacteriological-biological-and-toxin-weapons-btwc/>

## 6. Main discussion of the Topic

### 6.1. The Evolution of Terrorism

#### 6.1.1. 20th Century

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, terrorism evolved in nature, motives, and its impact, increasingly affecting NATO member states. This change was driven by geopolitical conflicts, especially during the Cold War,<sup>28</sup> the rise of ideological extremism, and the rapid advancement of technology in the field of weaponry and communication, factors that directly shaped NATO's security environment. In the 1970s and 1980s, for example, many NATO countries like Italy, Germany, Northern Ireland, and Spain faced internal threats due to terrorist groups from different ideological backgrounds<sup>29 30</sup> attempting to destabilize their democratic institutions.

Moreover, state-sponsored terrorism became a growing concern, particularly from the 70s to the 90s, when NATO's countries accused Iran, Syria, and Libya -among others- of supporting military groups to advance their geopolitical goals<sup>31</sup>. However, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, their alleged involvement in direct international terrorist attacks dropped significantly due to diplomatic pressure and changing regional dynamics.<sup>32</sup>

The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had lasting implications for NATO security, since the United States and regional allies supported the Mujahideen, a rebellion movement which later contributed to the rise of Al-Qaeda in 1988<sup>33</sup>, a future global threat to the

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<sup>28</sup> NATO. "A Short History of NATO". 2022. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified\\_139339.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_139339.htm). Retrieved May 6th, 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Britannica. "Types of Terrorism." 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/terrorism/Types-of-terrorism>. Retrieved April 1st, 2025.

<sup>30</sup> See footnote n.32

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. "Terrorism in the United States: 1995." National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 1995. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/152248NCJRS.pdf>. Retrieved April 1st, 2025.

<sup>32</sup> University of Houston, Digital History. "Terrorism." 2025. [https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/topic\\_display.cfm?tcid=94](https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/topic_display.cfm?tcid=94). Retrieved April 1st, 2025.

<sup>33</sup> Lumen Learning. "The United States and the Mujahideen." n.d. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldhistory2/chapter/the-united-states-and-the-mujahideen/>. Retrieved April 1st, 2025.

Alliance. This period also marked the start of religiously motivated terrorism, which would become the dominant global security challenge in the coming decades.

### **6.1.2. Post 9/11 Terrorism**

The 9/11 terrorist attacks fundamentally reshaped the way the international community views and addresses terrorism. This historic event was unprecedented both in terms of the scale and the nature of the attacks, as it combined symbolic targets, mass casualties, and the utter psychological collapse of American citizens. Al-Qaeda's ability to carry out such coordinated attacks on foreign soil can only highlight the level of expertise and operational sophistication of its members.<sup>34</sup>

The US response to the 9/11 attacks was the initiation of "the War on Terror", adopting an aggressive counterterrorism stance that essentially prioritized national security and the elimination of Islamist extremist threats.<sup>35</sup> The US response was so decisive at that point that it led to the first and only invocation of NATO's Article 5 until now, a historic moment of collective defense in response to an attack on one of the Alliance's members.<sup>36</sup>

These terrorist attacks cost thousands of lives, exposing vulnerabilities and problems even the most powerful states face, especially when it comes to non-state actors<sup>37</sup>. They also set an example for the evolving nature of terrorism, which has since taken massive dimensions aimed at causing global terror.

### **6.1.3. Terrorism in a New Era**

Since 9/11, both terrorism and the manner in which states respond to it have transformed drastically. It has shifted from structured terror operations to mostly decentralized and

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<sup>34</sup> The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, "The 9/11 Commission Report: Executive Summary," 2004. Available at: [https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report\\_Exec.pdf](https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report_Exec.pdf). Retrieved April 2nd, 2025

<sup>35</sup> George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, "Global War on Terror," National Archives and Records Administration. 2003. Available at: <https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/research/topic-guides/global-war-terror>. Retrieved April 2nd, 2025.

<sup>36</sup> NATO, "Collective Defence and Article 5," North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 2023. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/topics\\_110496.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/topics_110496.htm?selectedLocale=en). Retrieved April 2nd, 2025.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid



unpredictable threats, often carried out by lone actors directed at soft targets.<sup>38</sup> The aforementioned invocation of Article 5 triggered this drastic change. By recognizing terrorism as a collective threat, the Alliance made a significant shift in its counterterrorism strategy, leading to coordinated international reaction and the beginning of the adoption of standard protection measures, which include enhanced information exchange, the formation of new security doctrines and the expansion of domestic defence capabilities, decisively contributing to the radical transformation of both the threat landscape and the way member states respond to it.<sup>39</sup> Despite global counterterrorism efforts being able to severely disrupt major terrorist networks like Al-Qaeda<sup>40</sup> and ISIL (Da'esh), terrorism remains a significant security concern, with attacks continuing around the globe.<sup>41</sup> Europe, for example, has seen a very high number of deadly attacks, such as the 2015 Paris attacks, the 2016 Brussels attacks, the 2017 London Bridge attack, the Manchester bombing, and the 2023 Brussels shooting, emphasizing the constant threat of extremism. In addition, Hamas' October 7<sup>th</sup> attack on Israel marked one of the deadliest operations in recent history,<sup>42</sup> while the Houthi Movement intensified maritime assaults in the Red Sea, disrupting global trade since 2023.<sup>43</sup>

Lastly, the emergence of cyberterrorism and bioterrorism has further complicated counterterrorism efforts, as these new forms of attacks are more complex to detect and defend against, since they operate in new "realms" such as the digital and biological ones. These new factors highlight the complexity of terrorism in recent years and the difficulty of keeping up with counterterrorism strategies.

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<sup>38</sup> United Nations Digital Library. "Terrorism." 2014. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1327675/?v=pdf&ln=en>. Retrieved April 4th, 2025.

<sup>39</sup> See footnote No.39

<sup>40</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence. "Al-Qa'ida." Available at: [https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/al\\_qaida\\_fto.html](https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/al_qaida_fto.html). Retrieved April 4th, 2025.

<sup>41</sup> UN Security Council Report. "Counter-Terrorism Briefing on the Secretary-General's Strategic-Level Report on ISIL (Da'esh)." February 2025. Available at: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2025/02/counter-terrorism-briefing-on-the-secretary-general-s-strategic-level-report-on-isil-daesh-8.php>. Retrieved April 4th, 2025.

<sup>42</sup> BBC News. "Israel-Gaza War: Houthis Say They Targeted Two Ships in Red Sea." October 9, 2023. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67039975>. Retrieved April 4th, 2025.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations Digital Library. "Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts: Report of the Secretary-General." 2023. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4033392?v=pdf>. Retrieved April 4th, 2025.

## 6.2. Emerging Threats

### 6.2.1. Lone actors

Observing the evolution of terrorism from the 20th century to the present, terrorist attacks carried out by lone actors are a type of terrorism that concerns both NATO members and the global community in general, even though it is not a very common phenomenon in this context, “a lone actor, or lone wolf, is someone who individually prepares or commits violent acts in support of an ideology, group or movement, but who is acting outside of the command structure and without the assistance of any group”.<sup>44</sup> Although these individuals are ideologically aligned with broader extremist networks, they do not operate under any formal command structure and do not receive direct support. In addition, when focusing on lone-actor violence, it is essential to note that the countries most affected by this phenomenon are France, the UK, Belgium, and Germany.

The peculiarity of this group lies in the difficulty of detecting and preventing their actions due to their operational independence and unpredictable behavior. In contrast with the terrorist organisations, lone actors prefer to operate in isolation without any direct communication or external support, and consequently, they reduce the danger of interception by intelligence services. Besides, lone actors are usually self-radicalized in comparison with terrorist groups, which share a common ideology, strategy, and action plan. As a brief remark, radicalisation is “a process in which an individual or a group embraces a radical ideology or belief that accepts, uses, or condones violence, including acts of terrorism [...] to reach a specific political or ideological purpose”.<sup>45</sup> The advantage of their independence from groups and organizations lies in the fact that they can integrate seamlessly into society without suspicion and without showing overt signs of extremism. Furthermore, another factor that hinders their detection is the fact that they use low-tech and straightforward operational equipment, such as knives or improvised explosive devices that are beyond the

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<sup>44</sup> Gill, P., Horgan, J. and Deckert, P. (2014) ‘Scattered attacks: The collective dynamics of lone-actor terrorism’, *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(1), pp. 99–113. Available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/scattered-attacks-the-collective-dynamics-of-loneactor-terrorism/E23D2CF67BAA5E55CBDD7DA08539EBB1> Retrieved on April 7, 2025.

<sup>45</sup> European Commission, "Prevention of Radicalisation," *Migration and Home Affairs*, last modified January 27, 2025, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/counter-terrorism-and-radicalisation/prevention-radicalisation\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/counter-terrorism-and-radicalisation/prevention-radicalisation_en)

scope of counter-terrorism measures.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, opposing views have also been expressed since, in some cases, lone actors who choose to interact with wider pressure groups and movements either face-to-face or virtually are easily detectable and thus traditional counter-terrorism measures can be implicated.<sup>47</sup>

However, it is essential to shed light on online radicalization as it often serves as the principal catalyst for operational action by lone actors. In particular, cyberspace, through the interconnected virtual environment, provides abundant information that actively promotes extremist ideologies in online forums or passively through algorithm-driven content exposure.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, radicalization of lone-actor terrorists is not limited only to online sources, since they operate based on other external factors closely associated with their social background and psychological environment as well.

### 6.2.2. Cyberwarfare

Over the last decades, the evolution of cyberwarfare has rapidly altered the nature of conflict and war strategies by infusing complexity into the hostile missions. First and foremost, cyberwarfare refers to the actions taken by state and non-state actors to damage or disrupt the information network of the targeted nation.<sup>49</sup> In contrast to conventional methods of conflict, cyberwarfare has become an emerging threat for the Alliance due to its invisibility and the borderless nature, which render it difficult to detect, trace, and respond to such actions.

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<sup>46</sup> Gill, Paul, and Emily Corner. "Who Commits Terrorism Alone? Comparing the Biographical Characteristics and Behaviors of Lone-Actor and Group-Based Terrorists." *Crime & Delinquency* 69, no. 4 (2023): 567–588. Retrieved on April 7, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.12312>

<sup>47</sup> Gill, Paul, John Horgan, and Paige Deckert. "Lone Actor Terrorists: A Behavioural Analysis." *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 59, no. 2 (2014): 425–435. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.12312>. Retrieved on April 7, 2025.

<sup>48</sup> Binder, Jens F., and Jonathan Kenyon. "Terrorism and the Internet: How Dangerous Is Online Radicalization?" *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (October 13, 2022): 997390. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.997390>. Retrieved on April 7, 2025.

<sup>49</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica (n.d.) *Cyberwar*. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/cyberwar>. Retrieved on April 7, 2025.

The most common types of cyberwarfare are cyberattacks and cyber espionage, as they are capable of causing significant destruction to critical infrastructure, national security, and economic systems. To begin with, a cyberattack “is a deliberate attempt designed to compromise data, applications, or other assets by gaining unauthorized access to computer systems, networks, or digital devices”.<sup>50</sup> The primary objective of a cyberattack is to disrupt critical infrastructure, confuse military systems, and render financial systems inoperable. When discussing cyberattack methods, there is a concerning variety, ranging from malware and ransomware attacks to distributed denial of service (DDoS) and man-in-the-middle attacks (MitM).<sup>51</sup> Therefore, cyberattacks are considered one of the most significant forms of cyberterrorism, posing a substantial threat to the Alliance’s security.

On the other hand, cyber espionage refers to “a threat actor or unauthorized cybercriminal who steals, damages, or exposes classified data with the intent to harm an individual or organization, causing reputational destruction”. Cyber espionage is associated with spear phishing emails designed to escalate the attacker's network privileges, and supply chain attacks that target the primary target's partners. Therefore, both methods are examined alongside cyberwarfare, as they share common ground in intelligence gathering, security destructiveness, and access to sensitive national data.<sup>52</sup> It is essential to note that the first known state-sponsored cyberattack occurred in 2007 against Estonia, where a series of events involving Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks disrupted private and public websites, marking a significant shift in the dynamics of global security.<sup>53</sup> This episode has shown how cyberattacks can be used to impose punishment, coercion, and panic without resorting to traditional armed confrontation. To tackle this crisis, NATO’s Cooperative Cyber

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<sup>50</sup>Ericom Software. “What Is a Cyberattack? Understanding Common Types and Prevention.” <https://www.ericom.com/glossary/what-is-a-cyberattack/>. Retrieved on April 9, 2025.

<sup>51</sup>CrowdStrike. “12 Most Common Types of Cyberattacks.” Last modified May 12, 2024. <https://www.crowdstrike.com/en-us/cybersecurity-101/cyberattacks/common-cyberattacks/>. Retrieved on April 9, 2025.

<sup>52</sup> CISA (2021) *Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency: Supply Chain Attacks and Spear Phishing*. Available at: <https://www.cisa.gov/news-events/news/supply-chain-attacks-and-spear-phishing> Retrieved on April 9, 2025.

<sup>53</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. “Overview of the 2007 Estonia Cyberattacks.” Last modified 2007. <https://www.cfr.org/cyber-operations/estonian-denial-service-incident>. Retrieved on April 9, 2025.

Defence Centre of Excellence conducted the Tallinn Manual, a non-legally binding document that provides guidelines on cyber conflicts and cyberwarfare in general.<sup>54</sup>

### 6.2.3. Bioterrorism

An additional manifestation of terrorism that concerns the global community is bioterrorism, which primarily refers to the *“international release of biological agents or toxins for the purpose of harming or killing humans, animals, or plants with the intent to intimidate or coerce a government or civilian population to further political or social objectives”*.<sup>55</sup> Rooted in religious ideologies and political beliefs, the main objective of bioterrorism is to create casualties, instill terror, trigger socio-political disruption, and cause economic loss.<sup>56</sup> Bioterrorism, as a form of unconventional and often invisible warfare, is of great concern to the global community, primarily due to the difficulty of early detection, delayed symptoms, and limited preparedness in many regions.<sup>57</sup>

According to the classification made by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), biological weapons are categorized into three categories based on various factors, such as morbidity and mortality caused by the disease in humans.

The systematic development and threat of the use of Biological Weapons is a matter of concern since World War I, which escalated in the post-Cold War era and especially with the 2001 anthrax attacks in the United States of America.<sup>58</sup> More specifically, soon after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, letters laced with anthrax began appearing in the U.S. mail, and consequently, five Americans were killed and 17 were sickened.<sup>59</sup> After this dramatic

<sup>54</sup> Schmitt, M. N. (ed.) (2017) *Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>55</sup> INTERPOL. “Bioterrorism.” Last modified 2025. <https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Terrorism/Bioterrorism>. Retrieved on April 9, 2025.

<sup>56</sup> Rotz, Lisa D., Ann Marie Khan, Stephen S. Lillibridge, Ali S. Ostroff, and James M. Hughes. “Public Health Assessment of Potential Biological Terrorism Agents.” *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 8, no. 2 (2002): 225–230. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid0802.010164>. Retrieved on April 9, 2025.

<sup>57</sup> Rathish, Balram, Roshni Pillay, Arun Wilson, and Vijay Vasudev Pillay. “Comprehensive Review of Bioterrorism.” Last modified March 27, 2023. In *StatPearls*, edited by Balram Rathish, Roshni Pillay, Arun Wilson, and Vijay Vasudev Pillay. Treasure Island, FL: StatPearls Publishing, 2025. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK570614/>. Retrieved on April 9, 2025.

<sup>58</sup> EBSCO. “Anthrax letter attacks” <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/science/anthrax-letter-attacks>. Retrieved on April 9, 2025.

<sup>59</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. “Amerithrax or Anthrax Investigation.” Last modified August 6, 2008. <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/amerithrax-or-anthrax-investigation>. Retrieved on April 9, 2025.

incident, the aspect of the global community has changed, and bioterrorism has become one of the most intensive emerging threats that calls for drastic measures in order to prevent another such large-scale tragedy from occurring again in the future. Therefore, it is essential to highlight that anthrax attacks followed the 9/11 terrorist attack, and thus on October 4, NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time to protect the USA from a further crisis escalation.<sup>60</sup>

### 6.3. NATO's counterterrorism strategy and mechanisms

NATO's counter terrorism strategy is focused on improving awareness regarding the threat, developing preparedness and response capabilities, and enhancing engagement with the international community.<sup>61</sup>

#### 6.3.1 Conventional terrorism

Even though there is no universally accepted term for Conventional Terrorism, a conventional terrorist attack can be characterized as a premeditated, politically motivated violence against civilian populations by subnational, but not limited to, groups. Often, these violent activities are sponsored by state actors. These attacks use conventional methods such as planting bombs at critical infrastructure, suicide bombers, armed attacks by militia, and hijacking of airplanes.<sup>62</sup> Even though the Western World has long seen conventional terrorist attacks, such as an airplane hijacking, they are still present in Africa and the Middle East, where terrorist groups target the fragile state entities of these regions (e.g. Sub-Saharan Region).<sup>63</sup> These attacks have an impact on domestic and global security as

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<sup>60</sup>NATO. "Shape History: Invoking Art.5"

<https://shape.nato.int/history/information/podcasts/episodes/invoking-article-5#:~:text=Article%20is%20the%20cornerstone,attacks%20on%20the%20United%20States>. Retrieved on April 9, 2025.

<sup>61</sup> read more about NATO's engagement with the international community on chapter 6.5

<sup>62</sup> Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. "Conventional Terrorism - Terrorist Groups and State Links to Terrorism." Published 1999.

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep11849.8.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3Ac791c1bd5c210d57c5fa058a9ea44112&ab\\_segments=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep11849.8.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3Ac791c1bd5c210d57c5fa058a9ea44112&ab_segments=&initiator=&acceptTC=1). Retrieved May 08, 2025

<sup>63</sup> Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. "Conventional Terrorism -The Role of the Middle East in Global Terrorism." Published 1999.

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep11849.8.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3Ac791c1bd5c210d57c5fa058a9ea44112&ab\\_segments=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep11849.8.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3Ac791c1bd5c210d57c5fa058a9ea44112&ab_segments=&initiator=&acceptTC=1). Retrieved May 08, 2025



they destabilise governments, economies, trade routes, create further conflict in the societies by destroying cultural and religious sites, and exploit the vulnerabilities of the modern information, response, and crisis management systems.<sup>64</sup>

In this way, NATO supports the national authorities of its member states by providing consultations, enhanced intelligence sharing, and strategic analysis, aiming to address vulnerabilities in information collection and crisis management. The **Joint Intelligence and Security Division** is one of the most essential NATO mechanisms, providing member states with critical intelligence and strategic analytical reports. Moreover, NATO has established strong intelligence-sharing channels with its partner states through its **Intelligence Liaison Unit** and the **Intelligence Cell** at NATO headquarters.<sup>65</sup>

Additionally, to address the threats posed by terrorism in NATO's southern neighborhood, South Africa, and the Middle East, the Alliance has established the **Hub for the South**,<sup>66</sup> which collects and analyzes information and potential threats through cooperation with partner states and organizations. NATO focuses its counter-terrorism efforts on developing capabilities to effectively prevent, protect against, and respond to terrorist attacks. For that reason, the **Defence against Terrorism Programme of Work (DAT POW)** plays a crucial role.<sup>67</sup> It develops capabilities to protect NATO forces, civilians, and territory against terrorism through exercises, trials, development of prototypes, concepts, training, policies, and equipment demonstrations. The DAT POW pays particular attention to protecting allied harbours and ports from terrorist attacks, countering CBRN threats, managing explosive ordnance disposal, and countering improvised explosive devices and unmanned aircraft systems. Through the DAT POW, NATO is consulting key stakeholders in industry, military, and academia.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> NATO. "Countering terrorism." Last updated July 25, 2025.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_77646.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm). Retrieved March 28, 2025.

<sup>65</sup> NATO. "Countering terrorism - Awareness." Last updated July 25, 2025.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_77646.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm). Retrieved March 28, 2025.

<sup>66</sup> NATO. "What is the NATO Hub for the South?" Last updated August 09, 2019.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_168383.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_168383.htm). Retrieved May 08, 2025

<sup>67</sup> NATO. "Countering terrorism - Defence against Terrorism Programme of Work (DAT POW)." Last updated July 25, 2025.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_77646.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm). Retrieved March 28, 2025

<sup>68</sup> NATO. "Countering terrorism - Capabilities." Last updated July 25, 2025.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_77646.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm). Retrieved March 28, 2025.

### 6.3.2. Hybrid Terrorism

#### 6.3.2.1. Cyberwarfare

NATO's strategy to counter cyberterrorism is embedded within its broader cyber defense framework, emphasizing deterrence, resilience, and collective response. While the term "cyber terrorism" isn't explicitly defined in NATO's public documents, the Alliance addresses such threats under the umbrella of malicious cyber activities that could impact national and collective security.

The strategic approach of NATO to cyber-terrorism is structured around the recognition of cyberspace as a field of operation, allowing the Alliance to implement collective security principles in response to cyber incidents. The Comprehensive Cyber Defence Policy (2021) assists NATO's efforts on deterrence, defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security and acts as a commitment for the member states<sup>69</sup>, alongside the Cyber Defence Pledge<sup>70</sup> initiated in 2016, to strengthen their national cyber defences protecting critical infrastructure and enhancing resilience. NATO has developed several mechanisms to address the terrorist threats originating from cyberspace. The **NATO Cyber Security Centre**<sup>71</sup> defends allied networks from cyber attacks, provides centralized cyber defence support and situational awareness (knowledge about the nature, location, and perpetrator of an attack) to the member states. The **Cyberspace Operations Centre**<sup>72</sup> supports military forces with situational awareness and coordinates NATO's operations in cyberspace. In addition to the above, in the field of assistance and capacity building, the **Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE)**,<sup>73</sup> based in Tallinn, Estonia, conducts research, training, and exercises across technology, strategy, operations, and law, contributing to the development of comprehensive cyber defence capabilities. On the other hand, in the field of response and crisis management, NATO has established Cyber Rapid Reaction Teams, which are on standby to provide rapid support to Allies upon

<sup>69</sup>NATO. "NATO Cyber Defence." April 2021.

[https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/4/pdf/2104-factsheet-cyber-defence-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/4/pdf/2104-factsheet-cyber-defence-en.pdf). Retrieved March 28, 2025

<sup>70</sup> NATO. "Cyber Defence Pledge." Last updated July 08, 2025.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/em/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133177.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/em/natohq/official_texts_133177.htm). Retrieved March 28, 2025

<sup>71</sup> NCI. "NATO Cyber Security Centre." n.d.

<https://www.ncia.nato.int/about-us/service-portfolio/nato-cyber-security-centre>. Retrieved March 28, 2025.

<sup>72</sup> NRDC-Italy. "NATO Cyberspace Centre." n.d.

<https://nrdc-ita.nato.int/operations/allied-reaction-force/nato-cyber-operation-centre>. Retrieved March 28, 2025.

<sup>73</sup> CCDCOE. "About us." n.d. <https://ccdcOE.org/about-us/>. Retrieved March 28, 2025.



request, helping to manage and mitigate cyber attacks. Lastly, the **Virtual Cyber Incident Support Capability** launched in 2023 aids national mitigation efforts in response to significant malicious cyber activities, enhancing collective response capabilities.<sup>74</sup>

#### 6.3.2.2. Bioterrorism

Bioterrorism poses a persistent threat to global health and security due to the accessibility of weaponized biological agents, which can be obtained directly or with the assistance of scientists collaborating with terrorist organizations. Consequently, the scientific community must collaborate on efforts aimed at preventing biological attacks, regulating the use of biological agents, and establishing robust biodefense systems. For that reason, NATO has created the **Combined Joint CBRN Defence Task Force**. The Task Force is a multinational, multifunctional military asset with the leading role to support and enhance the Alliance's efforts to prevent, protect against, and recover from CBRN attacks, and it falls under the authority of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe. The Task Force has to its disposal separate but complementary components such as the Joint Assessment Team, with the central role of advising and supporting, the Deployable CBRN Analytical Laboratories, providing operational and forensic sampling, explosive ordnance disposal teams, identification of CBRN materials and scientific support to operational commanders, the CBRN Multirole Exploitation and Reconnaissance Team providing CBRN support to Special Operations Forces and the Aerial Radiological Survey, which can detect radiological materials and radiological contamination. Lastly, the Task Force has a close relationship with the NATO Response Team (NRT), functioning independently while also complementing it.<sup>75</sup>

### **6.4. Key Strategic and Operational Challenges in NATO's Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

The efforts of NATO to address effectively all the aspects of terrorism, including the new emerging fields of "operation" of terrorism, such as cyberwarfare, and the latest tactics of

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<sup>74</sup> NATO. "Cyber defence". Last updated July 30, 2024.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_78170.htm#defence](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_78170.htm#defence). Retrieved, April 17, 2025.

<sup>75</sup> NATO. "Combined Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defence Task Force". Last updated April 13, 2022. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49156.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49156.htm). Accessed April 16, 2025.

dispersing chemical and biological weapons, constitute an urgent redefinition of NATO's counter-terrorism strategy. However, this process will result in the Alliance facing several strategic and operational challenges, which will test NATO's ability to form a collective approach against terrorism.

To begin with, NATO will face the challenge of establishing a standard definition of terrorism due to varying perceptions and scopes regarding the nature of the threat among member states. This can result in complications in the development of a unified and holistic strategy against terrorism.<sup>76</sup> Another challenge that may arise is the difficulty in integrating civilian and military counter-terrorism efforts. While counter-terrorism primarily involves civilian law enforcement and judicial authorities, NATO's current military-focused approach to terrorism may pose challenges to its efforts to establish a comprehensive strategy. As a result, NATO needs to find a balanced solution that integrates civilian-led initiatives on counter-terrorism into its policy, while still preserving the military character of the Alliance.<sup>77</sup>

Regarding the operational challenges that may arise if NATO decides to adopt a broader stance on counter-terrorism, a crucial issue that needs to be addressed is the lack of a Homeland Security constituency. The Alliance lacks a clear connection to national homeland security authorities, which are critical for counter-terrorism efforts. This gap complicates the coordination between national civil authorities of the Allies and limits NATO's ability to support its members. Furthermore, the existing NATO mechanisms for counter-terrorism and the Policy Guidelines do not clarify a command and control structure for counter-terrorism. It is essential to note that the Terrorism Task Force lacks executive authority, resulting in counter-terrorism activities being fragmented across various divisions.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, centralized oversight is required.

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<sup>76</sup> INSS. "The New NATO Policy Guidelines on Counterterrorism: Analysis, Assessments, and Actions - The Bad news." Published February, 2013.  
<https://inss.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/693544/the-new-nato-policy-guidelines-on-counterterrorism-analysis-assessments-and-act/>. Accessed March 28, 2025.

<sup>77</sup> INSS. "The New NATO Policy Guidelines on Counterterrorism: Analysis, Assessments, and Actions - The Bad news." Published February, 2013.  
<https://inss.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/693544/the-new-nato-policy-guidelines-on-counterterrorism-analysis-assessments-and-act/>. Accessed March 28, 2025.

<sup>78</sup> INSS. "The New NATO Policy Guidelines on Counterterrorism: Analysis, Assessments, and Actions - Connecting to the Homeland Constituency." Published February, 2013.  
<https://inss.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/693544/the-new-nato-policy-guidelines-on-counterterrorism-analysis-assessments-and-act/>. Accessed March 28, 2025.

Lastly, NATO's approach to terrorism is criticized regarding its focus only on the military response to it. For NATO to tackle terrorism effectively, it will need to focus its efforts on the multi-sectoral character of terrorism, tackling its ability to be funded, and addressing the socio-economic disparities that cause the rise of violent extremism and radicalization. However, an approach like this raises questions about the character of the Alliance as a collective military organisation<sup>79</sup>. In addition to the above, such a strategic turn creates operational challenges, with the most significant concern being the danger of overstressing NATO's mandate, operational capabilities, and available resources, which could be perceived as a potential weakness of the Alliance in other areas of action by its rivals.<sup>80</sup>

In conclusion, these challenges underscore the complexity of NATO's counterterrorism efforts and emphasize the need for strategic reforms, enhanced coordination, and innovative approaches to address the evolving threat landscape.

## 6.5. NATO's Partnerships in counter-terrorism

NATO collaborates with 40 non-member states and various international organizations, referred to as NATO partners, under multiple and distinct partnership frameworks and programs that promote global security and countering terrorism. The main partnerships are the **Partnership for Peace, the Mediterranean Dialogue, and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative**.<sup>81</sup>

### The Partnership for Peace (PfP)

It was established in 1994 with the primary goal of increasing stability, addressing threats to peace, and establishing strong, rooted security relations between the Allies and countries in the Euro-Atlantic Area. Currently, 18 countries participate in the PfP.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> INSS. "The New NATO Policy Guidelines on Counterterrorism: Analysis, Assessments, and Actions - The Bad news." Published February, 2013.  
<https://inss.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/693544/the-new-nato-policy-guidelines-on-counterterrorism-analysis-assessments-and-act/>. Accessed March 28, 2025.

<sup>80</sup> Bird, Juliette. "NATO's Role in Counter-Terrorism." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 2 (2015): 61–70.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/26297360>. Accessed March 28, 2025

<sup>81</sup> NATO. "NATO's Partnerships." Last updated August 06, 2024.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics\\_84336.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics_84336.htm). Retrieved April 1, 2025

<sup>82</sup> see here the participated countries: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_82584.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_82584.htm)

The PfP programme is operated through Individually Tailored Partnership Programmes. They are developed and agreed upon by NATO and each individual partner state. In this way, partners can choose from over 1,400 activities of cooperation with NATO, which are available on the Partnership Cooperation Menu. These activities expand to every possible field of cooperation, such as defence-related work, defense policy-planning, civil-military relations, military-to-military cooperation and exercises, civil emergency response, education and training on every issue of concern (counter-terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons, border control, and cyber warfare).<sup>83</sup> It is essential to mention that through the PfP framework, NATO established its first standardized curriculum on counter-terrorism in 2020. The primary objective is to support the Allies and their partners in counter-terrorism efforts by providing educational materials and capacity-building activities to law enforcement authorities of the Allies and their partners. In 2021, NATO provided this curriculum to the Odessa Military Academy and the National Defence University in Kyiv, Ukraine. Since 2023, the curriculum has been available on NATO's website to any Ally and partner.<sup>84</sup>

### **Mediterranean Dialogue (MD)**

The primary objective of the Mediterranean Dialogue partnership, established in 1994, is to contribute to the regional security and stability of the Euro-Mediterranean area and foster mutual understanding among the participating partners. Currently, seven partner states participate in it: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. The structure of the partnership is divided into the political dialogue and the practical cooperation.

Regarding the political dialogue, bilateral and multilateral annual meetings take place at different levels, providing an opportunity to enhance cooperation and develop strategies on several issues concerning the Mediterranean Region, such as defence against terrorist groups, conflicts created by terrorism proliferation of weapons, CBRN, and cyber threats. From this perspective, in 2024, NATO adopted an action plan promoting a greater strategic

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<sup>83</sup> NATO. "Partnership for Peace programme." Last updated June 28, 2024.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50349.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50349.htm). Retrieved April 01, 2025

<sup>84</sup> NATO. "Countering terrorism." Last updated July 25, 2024.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_77646.htm#engagement](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm#engagement). Retrieved April 01, 2025

and results-oriented approach for the Alliance with its southern partners, and a Special Representative for the Southern Neighborhood was appointed as the focal point in the region.<sup>85</sup>

On the other side, the MD partners form Individually Tailored Partnership Programs<sup>86</sup> with a duration of 4 years with NATO, sharing experience, best practices, and acting on countering violent extremism, terrorist groups, and cybersecurity. Military training and cooperation play a pivotal role in the practical cooperation pillar. The activities are selected by the MD countries creating the Individually Tailored Partnership Program.<sup>87</sup> Lastly, MD countries participate and host NATO military exercises and Missions, in several fields, such as peace-keeping missions, search and rescue, and counter-terrorism activities.<sup>88</sup>

### **Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI)**

The 2004 NATO Summit in Istanbul established the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative with the aim of promoting bilateral security cooperation with partner states from the Middle East. Currently, 4 Middle East countries participate in the Initiative: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE, while Oman and Saudi Arabia participate in selected activities of the ICI. The Initiative is open to any Middle East country that shares the Alliance's principles and the ICI goals.

The ICI provides a space for political cooperation and dialogue between the Allies and the participating countries. In this way, NATO and the ICI-partners can address security issues, enhance their trust and cooperation, and share best practices. Furthermore, the Initiative provides the opportunity to the partner states to practically cooperate with the Allies and to participate in NATO missions and operations on a variety of topics, under the framework of the Partnership Cooperation Menu (PCM). The activities provided by the PCM range from defense planning and budgeting to counter-terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons of mass

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<sup>85</sup> NATO. "Mediterranean Dialogue - A political dialogue." Last updated December 06, 2024.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52927.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52927.htm). Retrieved April 01, 2025.

<sup>86</sup> NATO. "Individually Tailored Partnership Programs." Last updated October 21, 2024.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_225037.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_225037.htm). Retrieved April 01, 2025

<sup>87</sup> NATO. "Mediterranean Dialogue - Practical Cooperation." Last updated December 06, 2024.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52927.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52927.htm). Retrieved April 01, 2025.

<sup>88</sup> NATO. "Mediterranean Dialogue." Last updated December 06, 2024.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52927.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52927.htm). Retrieved April 01, 2025.

destruction (WMDs), and civil preparedness. Lastly, in 2017, the NATO-ICI Regional Centre was established in Kuwait to strengthen the practical cooperation between NATO and ICI partners and deepen relations among them. The Centre promotes cooperation on strategic analysis, civil preparedness, military-to-military cooperation, and public diplomacy.<sup>89</sup>

Additionally, NATO provides educational and scientific assistance to its partners through the **Defence Educational Enhancement Programme (DEEP)** and the **Science for Peace and Security Programme (SPS)**. DEEP assists the partners in order to redevelop and enhance their military educational institutions (military academies), training them with expertise and ensuring the quality of their educational services.<sup>90</sup> The SPS program acts as a hub of collaboration between the member-states and partner-states on scientific research and technological innovation. The program offers funding, expert advice, and tailored-made support and civil-security activities.<sup>91</sup>

## 6.6. Key Stakeholders

### 6.6.1. Member states

#### 6.6.1.1. USA

The partnership between the United States and NATO in combating terrorism is a cornerstone of transatlantic security, exemplifying a shared commitment to global peace and stability. Following the September 11, 2001, attacks, NATO invoked Article 5 of its founding treaty for the first time in history, marking a collective defense against terrorism and reinforcing the strategic bond between the Alliance and the United States.

This collaboration operates through coordinated intelligence sharing, joint military operations, and innovative initiatives. USA's participation and assistance on a variety of NATO entities such as the NATO Defence Against Terrorism Programme of Work (DAT

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<sup>89</sup> NATO. "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative." Last updated October 03, 2024.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52956.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52956.htm). Retrieved April 01, 2025.

<sup>90</sup> NATO. "Defence Educational Enhancement Programme (DEEP)." Last updated February 28, 2025.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_139182.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_139182.htm). Retrieved April 01, 2025.

<sup>91</sup> NATO. "Science for Peace and Security Programme." Last updated April 17, 2023.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_85373.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_85373.htm). Retrieved April 01, 2025.



POW),<sup>92</sup> the Joint Intelligence and Security Division, the NATO Cyber - Security Centre and the leadership of US on several NATO Partnerships<sup>93</sup> (Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, Mediterranean Dialogue) provides to the Alliance advanced technologies, significant funding, and strategic leadership<sup>94</sup>. Through its extensive and efficient Armed Forces and Intelligence Sharing Community, the US contribution to counter-terrorism is crucial for NATO in order to adapt to evolving threats, maintain its operational edge, and remain a vital force for peace and security in an increasingly complex world. The U.S. expertise and resources play a critical role in enhancing NATO's capabilities in areas such as counterterrorism training, technology deployment, and threat assessment. Several initiatives and programs of the USA are assisting NATO and its Member-States individually in enhancing their counter-terrorism efforts and being more efficient, as the USA provides programs for training exercises and capacity building projects for its Allies.<sup>95</sup>

#### 6.6.1.2. France

It is generally acknowledged that the history of the French Republic is deeply stigmatized from terrorist attacks carried out by a variety of groups from the extreme right, extreme left, extreme Basque, Breton, and Corsican nationalists, Algerian insurgent groups, and Islamist extremists<sup>96</sup>. Since the 1970s, France has experienced 2,654 terrorist incidents that have highly affected national security and led to the reconfiguration of French priorities in the fields of counter terrorism measures<sup>97</sup>. However, it is essential to clarify that apart from the national strategy and measures, France, as a cornerstone of the Alliance, collaborates closely with NATO in counterterrorism efforts. For instance, France contributes to the implementation of Confidence Building Measures and intelligence-sharing mechanisms.

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<sup>92</sup> NATO. "Countering terrorism - Defence against Terrorism Programme of Work (DAT POW)." Last updated July 25, 2025. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_77646.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm) Retrieved March 28, 2025

<sup>93</sup> NATO. "NATO's Partnerships." Last updated August 06, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics\\_84336.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics_84336.htm). Retrieved April 1, 2025

<sup>94</sup> U.S. Department of State. "Countering Terrorism." Last modified January 11, 2025. <https://www.state.gov/policy-issues/countering-terrorism/>. Retrieved on March 30, 2025

<sup>95</sup> U.S. Department of State. "Initiatives and Programs." Last modified January 11, 2025. <https://www.state.gov/policy-issues/countering-terrorism/>. Retrieved on March 30, 2025

<sup>96</sup> Pech, Marie-Estelle. "L'attentat le plus meurtrier depuis Vitry-Le-François en 1961." *Le Figaro*. Last modified January 7, 2015. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2015/01/07/01016-20150107ARTFIG00345-l-attentat-le-plus-meurtrier-depuis-vitry-le-francois-en-1961.php>. Retrieved on January 7, 2015.

<sup>97</sup> Carli, Pierre, Caroline Telion, and David Baker. "Terrorism in France." *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* 18, no. 2 (2003): 92–99. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X00000820>. Retrieved on April 11, 2025.

Additionally, France actively participates in NATO's counter-terrorism missions, including the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, Operation Active Endeavour, and the Sea Guardian Operation.<sup>98</sup>

#### 6.6.1.3. Finland

Finland has consistently prioritized international security and the development of a robust national counterterrorism framework.<sup>99</sup> Even before becoming a NATO member state, it signed a Political Framework Arrangement with NATO in 2017 for cooperation on cyber defense.<sup>100</sup> Since its ascension to the Alliance, it has significantly increased its role in the organization's and the world's counterterrorism efforts.

Finland stands as a valuable and strategic contributor to NATO's counterterrorism efforts, bringing both operational strength and unique regional expertise<sup>101</sup>. Its concise National Counter-Terrorism Strategy, emphasizing prevention, early intervention, and multi-agency cooperation, closely aligns with NATO's focus on bold counter-terrorism measures.<sup>102</sup> The Finnish Intelligence Service (Supo) plays a pivotal role in both national and international threat assessment, by providing timely intelligence that further enhances NATO's situational awareness and response capabilities<sup>103</sup>.

Moreover, its advanced military capabilities and operational proficiency make it a strategic asset for NATO-led counterterrorism missions. With its secure borders, the integrity of NATO's external frontiers is significantly reinforced<sup>104</sup>, while its exceptional expertise in safeguarding critical infrastructure addresses a domain increasingly targeted by terrorist and hybrid threats, and thus one of the most pressing vulnerabilities in the face of cyber

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<sup>98</sup>NATO. "Countering Terrorism." Last modified July 25, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_77646.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm). Retrieved on April 11, 2025.

<sup>99</sup> Ministry of the Interior of Finland. "Counter-terrorism." n.d. Available at: <https://intermin.fi/en/police/counter-terrorism>. Retrieved April 5, 2025.

<sup>100</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). "Relations with Finland." 2024. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/topics\\_49594.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/topics_49594.htm?selectedLocale=en). Retrieved April 5, 2025.

<sup>101</sup> See footnote n.88

<sup>102</sup> Ministry of the Interior of Finland. "Counter-terrorism focuses on effective prevention." 2023. Available at: <https://intermin.fi/en/police/counter-terrorism/counter-terrorism-measures-in-finland>. Retrieved April 5, 2025.

<sup>103</sup> Ministry of the Interior of Finland. "NATO membership and Finland's resilience." 2023. Available at: <https://intermin.fi/en/current-issues/finland-and-nato>. Retrieved April 5, 2025.

<sup>104</sup> Finnish Border Guard. "Restrictions at the Border Crossing Points on the Eastern Border of Finland." 2023. Available at: <https://raja.fi/en/restrictions-at-the-border-crossing-points-on-the-eastern-border-of-finland>. Retrieved April 5, 2025.



terrorist threats. As an active participant in NATO's Resilience Committee, Finland also continues to collaborate closely with allied states to enhance the protection of essential services, reinforcing the Alliance's collective defense posture.<sup>105</sup>

Particularly significant is Finland's geographical location and its experience in dealing with hybrid threats, especially from the Russian Federation, since it brings valuable insights to counter the complex and evolving nature of terrorism<sup>106</sup>. For example, it participates in the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, as well as in cyber defense exercises and the "Smart Defense" projects. Also, under the Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme, Finland has contributed to counterterrorism and cyber defense initiatives, notably in the DEXTER Programme, which developed a system to detect explosives and firearms in public spaces.<sup>107</sup> In conclusion, Finland's unique expertise and strategic contributions solidify its position as a vital partner in NATO's counter-terrorism efforts, reinforcing the alliance's ability to address modern security challenges.

## **6.6.2. International Organisations**

### **6.6.2.1. United Nations**

NATO has established a long-lasting cooperation with the United Nations, as since 2008, these two organisations have established a common framework, an expanded collaboration, with regular political and operational meetings.<sup>108</sup> For NATO, the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the international conventions and protocols against terrorism, and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions form the foundation of the Alliance's counter-terrorism efforts, fully aligning with its own counter-terrorism policy and goals.<sup>109</sup>

The Alliance collaborates with several UN entities on counter-terrorism, such as the UN Counter - Terrorism Committee and the Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force.

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<sup>105</sup> See footnote n.88

<sup>106</sup> Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington. "Analyzing Finland's and NATO's Cybersecurity Strategies." 2023. Available at: <https://jsis.washington.edu/news/analyzing-finlands-and-natos-cybersecurity-strategies/>. Retrieved April 5, 2025.

<sup>107</sup> See footnote n.88

<sup>108</sup> NATO. "Relations with the United Nations - Framework for Cooperation." Last updated July 25, 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50321.htm#Key](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50321.htm#Key). Accessed April 08, 2025

<sup>109</sup> NATO. "Relations with the United Nations - Counter - Terrorism." Last updated July 25, 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50321.htm#Key](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50321.htm#Key). Accessed April 08, 2025

Moreover, in 2015, NATO decided to enhance its support to UN peacekeepers, especially in countering improvised explosive devices, a standard method of delivering terrorist attacks. Lastly, it is crucial to mention the collaboration between the UN and NATO in countering piracy, another form of maritime terrorism. In 2008, following the request of the UN Secretary General, NATO deployed military vessels in Somalia, in order to protect the sea trade routes.<sup>110</sup> Lastly, these two organizations collaborate in other relevant areas, including the control of small arms and light weapons, information sharing, and enhancing operational effectiveness collaboration.<sup>111</sup>

#### 6.6.2.2. European Union

The European Union, as a unique supranational entity with both political and legislative functions, plays a crucial role in shaping counter-terrorism policies within Europe, and thus directly affects most of the NATO member states. Its close collaboration with NATO also influences joint operations and strategic frameworks. NATO's leadership in counterterrorism, crisis response and collective defense, has made cooperation necessary between the two institutions; mainly through the Berlin Plus Agreements and the following Joint Declarations of 2016, 2018 and 2023,<sup>112</sup> but also through the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP),<sup>113</sup> which has enabled the EU to take on autonomous operations; for example the EUFOR Concordia in North Macedonia,<sup>114</sup> complementing NATO's role and enhancing its overall strategic reach.

The EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy, first adopted in 2005, remains focused on "prevention, protection, pursuit and response" objectives that still form the foundation of today's efforts.<sup>115</sup> These priorities are closely aligned with NATO's focus, especially regarding

<sup>110</sup> NATO. "Relations with the United Nations - Deterring Piracy." Last updated July 25, 2023.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50321.htm#Key](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50321.htm#Key). Accessed April 08, 2025

<sup>111</sup> NATO. "Relations with the United Nations - Small Arms and Light Weapons." Last updated July 25, 2023.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50321.htm#Key](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50321.htm#Key). Accessed April 08, 2025

<sup>112</sup> European Council. "Milestones in EU-NATO cooperation". n.d.  
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-nato-cooperation/milestones-in-eu-nato-cooperation/>. Retrieved May 3rd, 2025

<sup>113</sup> NATO. "EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP". 2002.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_19544.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_19544.htm). Retrieved May 3rd, 2025.

<sup>114</sup> EEAS. "EUFOR Concordia Mission Description". 2015.  
[https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/concordia/mission-description/index\\_en.htm](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/concordia/mission-description/index_en.htm). Retrieved May 3rd, 2025.

<sup>115</sup> European Commission. "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the EU Security Union

cybersecurity and critical infrastructure, where the Alliance provides key strategic leadership.<sup>116</sup> NATO's advanced threat assessments and military readiness inform the EU's regulatory and civilian tools,<sup>117</sup> enabling a shared goal: preventing terrorism and protecting citizens and institutions.

Following the Madrid terrorist attacks on 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2004, the European Council created the position of the EU Counter- Terrorism Coordinator (CTC) to improve coherence among EU bodies, member states, and international partners.<sup>118</sup> Thus, CTC evaluates the coordination of the EU's efforts with NATO's counterterrorism strategies, ensuring effective information exchange and joint actions.

Operational coordination is further enhanced through specialized EU agencies. The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), for example, hosts the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC), supporting member states with expertise, tools, and its coordination platforms.<sup>119</sup> These EU-led mechanisms function most effectively when integrated into the threat landscape maintained by NATO.

Beyond its borders, the EU External Action in Counter-Terrorism - formalized and updated after the 9/11 and 2015 Paris Attacks- is aiding in combating global terrorism, through diplomatic efforts, and Security Sector Reforms (SSR).<sup>120</sup> To facilitate the coordination among EU member states, the EEAS conducts strategic dialogues and actions through key bodies like the Council Working Body on Terrorism (COTER).<sup>121</sup> These mechanisms enhance coherence and enable the EU to make valuable contributions to NATO's counterterrorism objectives.<sup>122</sup> Lastly, NATO also guides the EU's evolving role in cyber

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<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0795&qid=1631885972581>.  
Retrieved April 10, 2025.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> NATO. “Relations with the European Union”. 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49217.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49217.htm).  
Retrieved May 3rd, 2025.

<sup>118</sup> Council of the European Union. “Counter-Terrorism Coordinator.” n.d.  
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/counter-terrorism-coordinator/>. Retrieved April 10, 2025.

<sup>119</sup> Europol. “European Counter-Terrorism Centre (ECTC).” n.d.  
<https://www.europol.europa.eu/about-europol/european-counter-terrorism-centre-ectc>. Retrieved April 10, 2025.

<sup>120</sup> European External Action Service. “Counter-Terrorism.” 2023.  
[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/counter-terrorism\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/counter-terrorism_en). Retrieved April 10, 2025.

<sup>121</sup> Council of the European Union. “Working Party on Terrorism – International Aspects.” n.d.  
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/working-party-terrorism-international-aspects/>. Retrieved April 10, 2025.

<sup>122</sup> NATO. “Joint Declaration”. 2016. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133163.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm). Retrieved May 3rd, 2025.

defense, hybrid threat management, and threat response,<sup>123</sup> with initiatives like PESCO aligned with NATO's strategic planning and collective defense priorities.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> European Union. "Joint Declaration of Warsaw". 2016. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/24293/signed-copy-nato-eu-declaration-8-july-en.pdf>. Retrieved May 3rd, 2025.

<sup>124</sup> European Union. "Notification on Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)". n.d. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31511/171113-pesco-notification.pdf>. Retrieved May 3rd, 2025.

## **7. Conclusion**

NATO was founded in 1949 to become a collective security actor for the West and the democratic world of Europe and North America. The 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in the USA resulted in the redefinition of terrorism and NATO's strategy in response to it. The changes that occurred established a more decentralised terrorism, with new tools and tactics of delivering attacks, such as cyberterrorism, bioterrorism, and lone wolf actors. These emerging threats create new challenges for the international community to address. As a result of the above, NATO's approach against terrorism needs to be redefined and modernized, adapting to the new characteristics and tactics, by reshaping its interpretation and methods of implementation of collective security, extending its view on terrorism beyond the military approach and addressing the root causes which radicalise people and increase extremism. To this effort, NATO will face several political, operational, and strategic challenges regarding its mandate, its collective strategy, as well as its member states' policies. NATO's mechanisms on counter-terrorism focus on capacity building activities (training courses, military exercises, and international meetings) between the member-states, partner-states, international and regional organisations, and on developing technological and scientific innovation which can assist the law enforcement authorities in their CT efforts. In conclusion, an effective response to terrorism requires a multi-layered strategic approach that combines prevention, collaboration, and innovation, as well as the adaptation of NATO to emerging threats, overcoming internal and existential challenges, in order to remain effective in this new era of global security challenges.

## **8. Points to be addressed**

1. Is the current counter-terrorism strategy of NATO effective? What should be changed?
2. What solutions can NATO provide to the strategic and operational challenges that may arise from a broader approach to terrorism, without changing its military mandate?
3. How can NATO efficiently address the terrorist threats emerging in its Southern Neighborhood?
4. How can NATO enhance its collaboration with other international organisations and partners in order to be more effective, and what should be done?
5. How can NATO improve coordination between the military and civilian sectors to counter bioterrorism?
6. How can NATO effectively address the threat to its collective security from cyber-terrorism and prepare for the integration of AI in terrorist operations, including autonomous weaponry and cyber-attacks?

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