

North Atlantic Treaty  
Organization

**NATO**



**MUNUC 36**

Model United Nations at the University of Chicago

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EST. 1989

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## CHAIR LETTERS

Dear delegates,

I'm Irene Qi, and I am so incredibly thrilled to welcome you all to MUNUC 36! Along with Katie and Zoe, I'll be serving as one of your co-chairs for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). During the conference, we'll dive into some of the most pressing global security issues of the current political state. I can't wait to hear your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions as we explore the needs of our international community.

Originally from the Washington D.C. area, I'm currently a third-year in the College majoring in Political Science and Law, Letters, and Society, with a minor in Art History. I was involved in Model UN all throughout high school, and at UChicago, I chaired the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and was an Assistant Chair for a continuous crisis committee—Senate and Advisors of West Berlin, 1949. Outside of MUNUC, I edit for the opinion section of The Chicago Maroon and am involved in civic engagement at the Institute of Politics. In my free time, I enjoy art, scuba diving, and exploring the vast Chicago food scene with my best friends.

In this committee, we'll be delving into two topics that have emerged under NATO's responsibilities: Intelligence Sharing Among Member States and Addressing The Migrant Crisis in the Aegean Sea. Maintaining international peace and security becomes of paramount importance in this ever-evolving political climate, and I'm so excited to see your creative solutions. As you debate possible ways to solve the conflicts, it's important for us to remember to treat such issues with empathy, sensitivity, and respect. Through this committee, I hope you'll gain a deeper understanding of pressing global security issues, collaborate with your peers, and most importantly, have fun! I can't wait to see everyone in February, and in the meantime, please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions regarding MUNUC or UChicago in general.

Sincerely,

Irene Qi

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Dear delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 36! I'm Katie Fraser, and I am so excited to be serving as one of your co-chairs for The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, also known as NATO. This committee will open up a discussion of the preservation of peace and well-being of NATO's 30 member countries while combating other impactful issues. Understanding the changing relations of this alliance with neighboring regions is crucial to the establishment of a fruitful and stabilizing global discourse.

A little bit about me: I'm a third-year in the College studying Public Policy and Sociology! I grew up in Dallas, TX so I'm not great with cold weather, but I've gotten used to wearing a coat over my past chilly years in Chicago. Last year, I was a co-chair for the MUNUC 35 UNHRC, and the year before that I was a chair for MUNUC Asia's UNESCO, so I'm so excited to now have the chance to chair a different style of committee! In addition to MUNUC, I also research policy solutions with the Paul Douglas Institute, conduct voter outreach with UChiVotes, and help teach 1st-grade students. I am so excited to be your chair for this committee and I can't wait to hear all of your great ideas!

Through this committee, I hope you will start creating innovative and unique solutions to problems like intelligence sharing among member states and the migrant crisis in the Aegean Sea. With the collaborative nature of these topics and this committee, I believe this discussion is incredibly relevant and will apply broadly to many other current issues the world is facing. More than anything, I hope everyone in the committee is given the opportunity to learn more about the world around us while still having fun! I really look forward to getting to know all of you throughout the conference! Please reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Katie Fraser

[kjoyfraser@uchicago.edu](mailto:kjoyfraser@uchicago.edu)

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Dear delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 36! My name is Zoe Zhu and I'm honored to be serving as one of your co-chairs for NATO this year! This year, we'll be focusing on two topics that are of the utmost importance to the security of the international community -- one which dictates the future functioning of NATO, and the other being one that impacts thousands of vulnerable individuals. Both topics will require in-depth discussions regarding technical matters, so this committee will be defined by your individual creativity, diplomatic finesse, and intellectual curiosity.

A bit about me now! I'm a second year here at UChicago where I'm majoring in Political Science and Philosophy. This will be my second year with MUNUC -- I was an assistant chair for the Cabinet of Manmohan Singh crisis committee last year! I'm also involved with organizing the admin side of our UChicago Collegiate conference, ChoMUN, and I compete with our MUN travel team here! Outside of Model UN, I'm also a part of the Chicago Debate Society, and I conduct democracy research at a lab on campus.

Throughout this committee, you will be tasked with handling issues that are as sensitive as they are pertinent, and I expect the committee to treat them as such. I also hope that you use the topics discussed within this committee as opportunities to consider these issues more broadly post-MUNUC 36, looking at them through a consistent lens of empathy and humanity.

With that being said, I'll leave you to conduct your research and write your position papers. But I do hope you'll have fun with the process, above all else.

See you soon!

Zoe Zhu

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## HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded in the aftermath of World War II in response to the expansion of the Soviet Union in central and eastern Europe. The original members of the alliance included Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States; other sigNATORies joined through the years. Signed on April 4, 1949, the Treaty declared in its infamous Article 5 that “an armed attack against one or more of [the allies]... shall be considered an attack against them all” and that each ally would take “such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force” in response.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, articles 2 and 3 discuss cooperation in military preparedness, as well as the ability to engage in non-military cooperation. As a result of the treaty, the sigNATORies were obligated “to [strengthen] their democratic institutions, to [build] their collective military capability, to [consult] each other, and to [remain] open to inviting other European states to join.”<sup>2</sup>

The destruction resulting from World War II was catastrophic. With the deaths of over 36.5 million Europeans, including significant civilian casualties, as well as a proliferation of refugee camps and homelessness—western Europe was left both militarily weak and economically unstable.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the West’s tentative alliance with the Soviet Union had fractured in the aftermath of the war, as Communist governments backed by the Soviet Union spread across Europe and threatened democratically-elected governments. Germany, in particular, was split into two parts: the East and the West. Soviets blockaded the democratic, Allied-controlled West Berlin to consolidate their control over the communist Eastern side.

In 1948, the United States implemented the Marshall Plan, providing aid to Western and Southern European countries. The plan aimed to stabilize the economy and foster cooperation among nations in order to promote a mutual recovery.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, military cooperation to advance security was just as crucial as economic and political recovery. Several Western European

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<sup>1</sup> “North Atlantic Treaty.” North Atlantic Treaty Organization. April 4, 1949. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOlive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOlive/official_texts_17120.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Haglund, D. G.. “North Atlantic Treaty Organization.” Encyclopedia Britannica. September 16, 2023.

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<https://www.britannica.com/topic/North-Atlantic-Treaty-Organization>.

<sup>3</sup> “A Short History of NATO.” North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 2022. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/declassified\\_139339.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/declassified_139339.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Haglund, “North Atlantic Treaty Organization.”

countries—the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—created the Western Union (later, the Western European Union in 1954) under the Brussels Treaty of 1948. Meanwhile, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom had privately discussed transatlantic security agreements that could deter Soviet expansion and promote democratic ideals. Countries of the Western Union and other European states eventually joined these talks, culminating in the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949, creating the basis of NATO.

Throughout the Cold War, NATO acted as a counter to the Warsaw Pact, formed by the Soviet Union and its Eastern European states in 1955. The strategy of “massive retaliation” indicated that NATO would respond to any Soviet attacks with nuclear warfare—intending to deter either side from acting.<sup>5</sup> Détente, or a relaxation of such tensions, then characterized Cold War relations in the 1960s. United States President John F. Kennedy introduced “flexible response” to replace “massive retaliation”: NATO could act militarily without invoking a full nuclear response in case of conflict.

The end of the Cold War brought about a shift in NATO’s political and military role. With the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, NATO’s goals transitioned from mere static

deterrence to a focus on maintaining democratization and international security in Europe. Promoting dialogue and cooperation with former members of the Warsaw Pact became important, and in 1991, NATO established the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (later, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997) to bring the newly-liberated Central and Eastern European and Central Asian states into the international dialogue.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the 1994 Partnership for Peace (PfP) program allowed non-NATO states to share information and develop their militaries with NATO allies. Besides international cooperation, NATO’s post-Cold War approach also took into account the power vacuum and political instability left behind by a dissolved Soviet Union. NATO began intervening with military force in response to the spreading ethnic violence, entering the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Yugoslavia, in the mid-1990s and launching airstrikes in Kosovo in 1998.<sup>7</sup> A few years later, NATO invoked Article 5, its collective defense clause, for the first time in its history following the September 11 attacks in the United States in 2001.

NATO has continuously committed itself to adding new members and forming partnerships

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<sup>5</sup> “A Short History of NATO.”

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Masters, J. “What is NATO?” Council on Foreign Relations. July 7, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-NATO>

over the past decade. Most recently, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022,

Finland became the 31st member of NATO in April 2023.

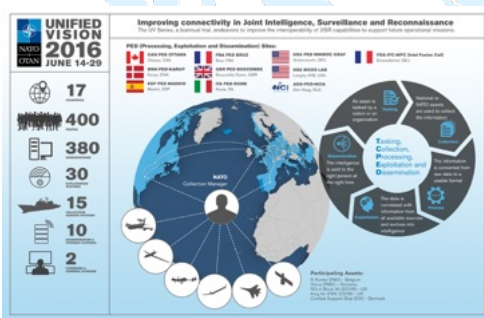




## TOPIC A: INTELLIGENCE SHARING AMONG MEMBER STATES

### Statement Of The Problem

One of the most complex goals of NATO is to have the enhanced ability to share and process complex intelligence amongst member states. Through this, NATO will be able to better run multinational operations, respond to hybrid warfare, and leverage the Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) capability which provides commanders with a comprehensive picture of the situation on the ground. However, this critical goal also poses significant challenges. While the effective exchange of intelligence is crucial for promoting collective security, counterterrorism efforts, and addressing emerging threats, several key issues hinder efficient intelligence sharing and cooperation among member states.



NATO Unified Vision 2016 – Joint Intelligence

Strategy<sup>8</sup>

### Fragmented Intelligence Networks

The presence of fragmented intelligence systems and the lack of a unified intelligence network impede efficient information sharing. Member states often possess varying technological capabilities, data management systems, and classification protocols, hindering both the effectiveness and timeliness of information sharing, which is a huge barrier in the case of critical intelligence as it is needed within a specific time frame. These disparities can compromise the overall ability of countries to share intelligence in the first place and cause greater confusion and misunderstanding.

For example, one member state may possess advanced surveillance technologies and comprehensive databases, while another might rely on outdated systems with limited information integration capabilities. This disparity in capabilities not only hinders real-time information sharing but also undermines the ability to collectively assess threats, respond effectively, and allocate resources efficiently.

### Trust And Reluctance To Share

A lack of trust between member states is another potential obstacle to intelligence sharing among member states. National interests and protection of sovereignty may influence countries to restrict

<sup>8</sup> "NATO Facebook." Facebook, June 30, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/NATO/photos/a.249265298430142/1116600315029965/?type=3>.

certain areas of information and intelligence that are critical to the interest of NATO as a whole. Moreover, past instances of intelligence leaks can create a culture of secrecy and restrict possible cooperation. One example of this in recent years is the 2022–2023 U.S. Pentagon document leaks. In April 2023, “two sets of leaked classified foreign intelligence documents of the United States began circulating on Twitter, Telegram, and 4chan,” including a document that reveals “attempts by Wagner Group to acquire weapons in Turkey, a NATO member”.<sup>9</sup> This leak “spurred a diplomatic crisis between the United States and the Five Eyes”.<sup>10</sup>

Another example may be the case in which member states are reluctant to share sensitive intelligence on domestic terrorist groups operating within their borders due to concerns about potential leaks or a need to protect the personal interests of their nation. While such reluctance may greatly limit the ability of each nation to effectively deal with shared security threats, countries could feel a need to confine this information solely to their own security operations.

## Legal And Regulatory Challenges

Legal and regulatory frameworks surrounding intelligence sharing among member states often differ, creating large obstacles to establishing common ground for collaboration. Differences in privacy laws, regulations on data protection, and the systems in place for oversight can often make it challenging to share intelligence.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, balancing the imperative of sharing intelligence for collective security with the need to respect individual member states' legal frameworks and sovereignty presents complex challenges.

In the case of a member state having strict data protection laws, they may be hesitant to share intelligence containing personal information due to concerns about violating privacy regulations. However, this reluctance can impede timely and effective information sharing, hindering the collective response to evolving threats. In the case of the U.K., “It is not always clear how far legal obligations extend. Court challenges are currently pending or have very recently been resolved in relation to bulk collection, intelligence sharing, data retention, CNE, protection of journalists' sources, and legal professional privilege.” Due to

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<sup>9</sup> “2022–2023 Pentagon Document Leaks.” Wikipedia, September 11, 2023. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022%E2%80%9323\\_Pentagon\\_document\\_leaks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022%E2%80%9323_Pentagon_document_leaks).

<sup>10</sup> See Footnote 2.

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<sup>11</sup> Wenjing, Liu. “Government Information Sharing: Principles, Practice, and Problems — An International Perspective.” *Government Information Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (July 2011): 363–73. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2010.10.003>.

this, it is not always possible to predict the ultimate outcome of such challenges.<sup>12</sup>

## Cultural And Linguistic Barriers

The diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds among member states can pose challenges to effective communication and interpretation of intelligence. Language barriers, cultural nuances, and differences in communication styles can lead to misinterpretations, delays, and miscommunication in sharing critical information. Overcoming these barriers and fostering a shared understanding is crucial for enhancing the accuracy and effectiveness of intelligence collaboration.

For instance, during a joint intelligence operation, misinterpretation of a particular term or phrase due to cultural differences or language nuances might lead to a misunderstanding of the threat's nature or potential implications. Such miscommunications can significantly impact the accuracy of intelligence analysis and impede timely decision-making. One prominent example of such a situation comes from an experiment performed by James Kajdasz, a USA member of SAS-114, presented in "Interpretation of NATO Standards by Non-Native English Speakers." In his presentation, Kajdasz outlines that while

"verbal expressions ('it is likely X will occur') are generally preferred by analysts and used in intelligence products," the use of these "verbal expressions of probability [increase] the opportunity for miscommunication between analysts and decision makers".<sup>13</sup>

## Information Overload And Analysis

The exponential growth of data and information poses challenges in terms of processing, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence effectively. The sheer volume, velocity, and variety of data requires advanced analytical tools, techniques, and methodologies to extract actionable insights promptly. Member states would need to enhance their analytical capacities, adopt cutting-edge technologies, and promote collaboration in intelligence analysis to overcome information overload and derive meaningful intelligence from vast datasets.

For example, with the proliferation of social media platforms and the internet, intelligence agencies are inundated with a vast amount of

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<sup>12</sup> Anderson, David. A Question of Trust: Report of the Investigatory Powers Review, June 2015. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1027511/Vaccine-surveillance-report-week-42.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1027511/Vaccine-surveillance-report-week-42.pdf).

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<sup>13</sup> "Communicating Uncertainty, Assessing Information Quality and Risk, and Using Structured Techniques in Intelligence Analysis." NATO, n.d.

publicly available information.<sup>14</sup> Effectively harnessing this information and transforming it into actionable intelligence requires advanced data analytics capabilities, including artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques. Collaborative efforts among member states can enable the pooling of resources, expertise, and technologies necessary to tackle the challenges of information overload and enhance intelligence analysis capabilities.

Addressing these challenges and promoting effective intelligence sharing among member states is of paramount importance to strengthen collective security, counter emerging threats, and ensure the overall success of NATO's mission. Collaborative efforts should focus on streamlining intelligence networks, building trust through enhanced cooperation and information-sharing protocols, harmonizing legal frameworks, overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers through training and cultural exchanges, and enhancing analytical capabilities through the adoption of advanced technologies and joint research initiatives. By addressing these challenges head-on, member states can foster a proactive and efficient intelligence-sharing environment within

NATO, resulting in a stronger and more secure alliance.

## History Of The Problem

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### Introduction

NATO has long included information sharing as one of its many defensive and offensive mechanisms, and its approach to information and intelligence sharing has steadily evolved to accommodate for changing times. To this end, there are three time periods of note. The first is during the end of WW2 and the Cold War, during which NATO lacked its own information sharing programs, and was hence heavily reliant upon the information from external Agreements (e.g. the UKUSA Agreement and FVEY). Following the Cold War, however, there was a noticeable shift from viewing intelligence as a facilitator of hard power to a mechanism of signaling and incentive to ensure global collaboration. This philosophy then evolved once again at the turn of the century. Building upon past revelations, NATO combined modern technology with decades-long alliances to leverage information and intelligence sharing to combat global cyberattacks and terrorist activity.

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<sup>14</sup> Panduranga, Harsha, and Emil Mella Pablo. "Federal Government Social Media Surveillance, Explained." Brennan Center for Justice, February 9, 2022. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/federal-government-social-media-surveillance-explained>.

### Information Sharing At A Glance

Information sharing is the exchange of security-related information between international intelligence bodies and primarily occurs between the intelligence organizations of

countries. The incentive for information sharing is that of mutual benefit – one country may gain information pertinent to transnational issues that affect the others.<sup>15</sup> Today, information is often shared to combat terrorism, cyberattacks, and drugs and weapons trafficking,<sup>16</sup> but intelligence sharing itself is a highly volatile topic. Indeed, due to a lack of the prerequisite trust expected of international collaborators, countries have become increasingly hesitant about sharing sensitive information with international organizations – NATO being no exception to this rule.<sup>17</sup> This is why, in peacetime, intelligence sharing is commonly done between only a handful of nations, on a “case by case” basis.<sup>18</sup> As Jan Ballast writes, “Intelligence is shared only when there is a common threat perception, mutual trust, a demonstrable added value, the right type of diplomatic relationships or a combination of incentives.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “INTEL Collaboration,” *INTEL.gov*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.intelligence.gov/mission/our-values/344-collaboration>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Judy Dempsey, “NATO’s Intelligence Deficit: It’s the Members, Stupid!” *Carnegie Europe*, last modified May 25, 2017, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/70086>.

<sup>18</sup> Jan Ballast, “Trust (in) NATO: The Future of Intelligence Sharing within the Alliance,” *ETH Zürich*, last modified September 22, 2017, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/articles/article.html/aaa972b2-8bdb-4a4b-a011-86612394f76b>.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

## Information Sharing: WWII And The Cold War

It is perhaps because of the necessity of a “unique combination of incentives” that modern intelligence sharing finds its origins in the Second World War.

World War II was defined by espionage and intelligence gathering missions, jeopardizing the classified nature of important documents. Understanding this, Nazi Germany developed an unbreakable “Enigma” code, which had the potential of scrambling military orders in billions of different permutations.<sup>20</sup> Decoding Enigma, therefore, was a priority for the Allies, as doing so would allow them to listen in on war plans and plan accordingly to mitigate loss of life.<sup>21</sup>

In 1940, the British war effort was dealt a huge blow, with France having fallen to Nazi forces in June.<sup>22</sup> This caused the UK to lose one of its most trusted allies in Europe, a vacuum whose impact was undoubtedly acutely felt. Later that year, Bletchley Park -- the headquarters of British

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<sup>20</sup> Karleigh Moore, Ethan W, Ejun Dean, et al, “Enigma Machine,” *Brilliant*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://brilliant.org/wiki/enigma-machine/>.

<sup>21</sup> Maya Wei-Haas, “The women codebreakers of World War II,” *National Geographic Kids*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/the-women-codebreakers-of-world-war-ii>.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Pattison, “THE FALL OF FRANCE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR,” *English Heritage*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/dover-castle/history-and-stories/fall-of-france/>.

cryptology -- made a breakthrough in decoding Enigma, creating a “Bombe” machine that was able to decrypt the cipher.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the United States and the United Kingdom grew much closer, with the former sending the latter money, mutations, and equipment.<sup>24</sup> While the US hadn’t officially joined the war at this point, they positioned themselves as a strong ally. Indeed, the sending of foreign aid to the UK was in violation of terms of neutrality,<sup>25</sup> and the country had already begun decrypting Japanese codes using their new “Purple” machine.<sup>26</sup> Eventually, the US, anticipating their entry into the war, reached out to the British security offices to set up the Sinkov Mission.

The Sinkov Mission was a visit to Bletchley Park by various US codebreakers and intelligence officers with the intention of sharing code-breaking resources with their ally across the sea. During the visit, Americans shared their

“Purple” machine while the British briefly mentioned their new “Bombe” machine in an act of reciprocity.<sup>27</sup> This act of intelligence sharing would bring about the UKUSA Agreement, the groundbreaking intelligence collaboration between the United Kingdom and the United States. Its mandate was to share “signals” intelligence – information acquired from the interception of foreign electronic signals, i.e. communications, and weapons systems – between the two close allies.<sup>28</sup> Despite the initial uncertainty, this partnership proved to be incredibly fruitful and allowed for the success of code breaking exercises. Indeed, the Agreement holds the honor of being one of the longest lasting and most successful intelligence alliances between Western nations.<sup>29</sup> Because of this early success, the initial UKUSA agreement was expanded into a formalized international pact post-WWII.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, in 1995, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand were added to the intelligence sharing agreement, creating the “Five

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<sup>23</sup> Jack Copeland, “Alan Turing: The codebreaker who saved 'millions of lives,’” *BBC News*, last modified June 19, 2012, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-18419691/>.

<sup>24</sup> Dave Roos, “How Was the US Involved in WWII Before Pearl Harbour?” *History.com*, last modified May 9, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.history.com/news/united-states-neutral-wwii-lend-lease>.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> “Bletchley Park: The Top-Secret US Mission to Crack the Enigma Code,” *Spyscape*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://spyscape.com/article/bletchley-park-the-top-secret-us-mission-to-crack-the-enigma-code>.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Sandy Vingoe, “Inside The Global Signals Intelligence Apparatus: An Overview Of The Five Eyes Alliance,” NATO Association of Canada, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://NATOassociation.ca/inside-the-global-signals-intelligence-apparatus-an-overview-of-the-five-eyes-alliance/>.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Wesley Chai, “Five Eyes Alliance,” *Tech Target*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/Five-Eyes-Alliance>.

Eyes” (FVEY) group, shorthand for “SECRET – AUS/CAN/NZ/UK/US EYES ONLY.”<sup>31</sup>

The FVEY group is the “gold standard” for the international information sharing experiments within the global community, and its functioning serves as a model for future projects.<sup>32</sup> Unlike NATO, there is no formal international agreement that legally binds all relationships within the Five Eyes group, and it instead functions more as a “cooperative, complex network of linked autonomous intelligence agencies.”<sup>33</sup> Even to this day, FVEY partners function in the same way, and individual intelligence organizations follow the governmental regulations of their domestic countries.<sup>34</sup> Each organization collects information in a specific area of the world, with the UK covering Europe and Western Russia, and the US monitoring Caribbean, China, Russia, and MENA. Importantly, partner nations do not spy upon each other, though there is no guarantee that such incidents do not occur.

FVEY group intelligence has been instrumental to NATO nations since its inception, but its

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<sup>31</sup> James Cox, “Canada and the Five Eyes Intelligence Community,” *Canadian International Council*, last modified December 18, 2012, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://opencanada.org/canada-and-the-five-eyes-in-intelligence-community/>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

impact in the Cold War era was especially relevant. Indeed, its use of satellite technology in the ECHELON project allowed the Allies to gain intelligence on the Eastern Bloc and Soviet Union, specifically relating to “advanced weapons development, and most particularly the development of ballistic missiles.”<sup>35</sup> In addition to this, FVEY was also alleged to have monitored communications during the Vietnam War, the Falklands War, and the Gulf War.<sup>36</sup> In fact, during the Vietnam War, Australian and New Zealand groups were working in the Asia-Pacific area to support the US war effort, while UK agents stationed in Hong Kong monitored Northern Vietnam’s air defense systems.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, during the Falklands War, Australia, Norway, and France provided the United Kingdom with valuable information that enabled the sabotage of Argentine missiles.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> “Joint Committee on Treaties, Pine Gap,” *Parliament of Australia*, last modified August 9, 1999, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22committees/commjnt/j000053.sgm/0003%22>.

<sup>36</sup> “The Five Eyes,” *Rough Diplomacy*, last modified April 15, 2018, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://roughdiplomacy.com/the-5-eyes/>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> George Jones, “How France helped us win Falklands war, by John Nott,” *The Telegraph*, last modified March 13, 2002, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1387576/How-France-helped-us-win-Falklands-war-by-John-Nott.html>.

Despite the existence of FVEY, NATO itself lacked a comprehensive intelligence network of its own. Indeed, some analysts note that “Even inside NATO, nobody shares everything,”<sup>39</sup> due to the nations’ conflicting interests. This means that while many FVEY nations were in NATO, FVEY information was never shared with NATO itself -- a problem which would plague NATO well into the 20th Century.

## Post-Cold War

After the Cold War, NATO began to implement its own collaborative security measures, chief among them was the North American Cooperation Council (NACC). Founded in 1991, the NACC included NATO members, members of Eastern Europe, and the Baltics.<sup>40</sup> Importantly, the NACC marks the start of NATO’s use of intelligence and military information to incentivize international partnerships with key nations.

The end of the Cold War saw a significant reshuffling in the political landscape of Europe, especially in the East. The ascension of Mikhail Gorbachev created a novel opportunity for

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<sup>39</sup> Jason Hanna, “What is the Five Eyes intelligence pact?” *CNN World*, last modified May 26, 2017, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/25/world/uk-us-five-eyes-intelligence-explainer/index.html>.

<sup>40</sup> “North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1991-1997),” *NATO*, last modified September 9, 2022, accessed September 14, 2023, [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics\\_69344.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics_69344.htm).

Western nations to engage with former Warsaw Pact allies for the first time in almost a decade.

However, while NATO allies were excited at the possibility of a new “Euro-Atlantic community,” it was the August 1991 coup dissolving the USSR that instigated the friendship between NATO and Eastern European countries.<sup>41</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia caused many former USSR nations to worry about security guarantees,<sup>42</sup> in light of the newly-created security vacuum. NATO and the US were called upon for additional support, and the latter was inclined to grant it. After all, NATO sought to promote democratic institutions in Central and Eastern Europe, and believed that a shared belief in democratic ideals “complements the maintenance of a common defense in ensuring security.”<sup>43</sup>

To do so, NATO created the NACC, which allowed the integration of nations into the current framework of European security led by NATO.<sup>44</sup> Nations that were on the verge of

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<sup>41</sup> Stephan Kieninger, “Opening NATO and Engaging Russia:

NATO’s Two Tracks and the Establishment of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council” in *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War*, ed. Daniel S. Hamilton and Kristina Spohr (Transatlantic Relations, 2019), 61, <https://transatlanticrelations.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/02-Kieninger.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*



“balkanization” – or the fragmentation of states into smaller states hostile to each other – were especially prioritized for ascension into the NACC.<sup>45</sup> As Germany’s former Foreign Minister, Genscher said, “We now have to decide how to help the Central and Eastern Europe countries and the Soviet Union: We cannot let them fail.”<sup>46</sup> Because of this, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary were the first states to be invited in December 1991.<sup>47</sup> All in all, the invitation of nations into the NACC also ensured that NATO would have greater access to countries previously behind the Iron Curtain, and opened up the possibility of closer relationships between the nations.

The NACC helped these fledgling nations in issues such as defense planning and regional issues, such as the withdrawal of Russian troops in the Balkans, and regional conflict in Yugoslavia.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, the NACC was a groundbreaking collaboration on a number of security issues and facilitated further communication regarding military contracts.<sup>49</sup>

Yet, for all its lofty intentions, the NACC was deeply unsuccessful due to its inclusion of nations who were deeply at odds with each

other.<sup>50</sup> This meant that, while the NACC was initially formed to create a united European security effort, internal conflicts meant that doing so was impossible. At the same time, a council like the NACC was much needed, as new threats to European security like cyber attacks and weapons of mass destruction started to emerge towards the end of the 20th century.<sup>51</sup>

To solve this issue, NATO created the Partnership for Peace in 1994, which worked within the NACC framework.<sup>52</sup> Specifically, the PfP focused on peace-keeping initiatives and international collaboration in exercise planning, assisting in military training for non-member NATO states.<sup>53</sup> While partners (non-member states) were not privy to FVEY intelligence, they were still given access to military information and were invited to observe military exercises.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> “North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1991-1997)”

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>50</sup> Trine Flockhart, “Introduction: Changing Partnerships in a Changing World,” in *Cooperative Security: NATO’s Partnership Policy in a Changing World*, ed. Trine Flockhart (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2014), 24, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/177617/WP2014-01\\_NATO-partnerships\\_TFL\\_web.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/177617/WP2014-01_NATO-partnerships_TFL_web.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> James M. Keagle, “A Special Relationship: U.S. and NATO Engagement with the Partnership for Peace to Build Partner Capacity Through Education,” *Connections* 11, no. 4 (2012): 59–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26326299>.

<sup>52</sup> “Partnership for Peace programme,” *NATO*, last modified April 11, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics\\_50349.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics_50349.htm).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

program gave partner nations access to the “PIMS system” which contained critical expertise and information resources from the US Department of Defense. These resources included “data derived from remote sensing technologies,” and “multi-national digitized imagery.”<sup>55</sup> The use of PfP to encourage international collaboration proved effective, with 15 former partners having since joined NATO as of 2020.<sup>56</sup>

## Turn Of The Century And The Modern Day

The 2000s have been characterized by NATO’s focus on cybersecurity and terrorism within its intelligence protocol.

### Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity became an area of concern for NATO even before the turn of the century. Indeed, the first instance of cyber attacks against NATO was during the 1999 Kosovo campaign, also known as Operation Allied Force.<sup>57</sup> In this

campaign, NATO conducted several air strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in an attempt to halt the nation’s ethnic cleansing of Albanians.<sup>58</sup> At this time, NATO members and military forces allegedly suffered from minor cyber attacks, including denial of service (DDoS) attacks and website defacements.<sup>59</sup> The attacks impacted all of NATO’s sites, causing all 100 of NATO servers to be taken offline.<sup>60</sup> While these incidents failed to hinder the Operation itself, they sounded alarm bells within NATO and saw the beginning of calls to improve cybersecurity from within the international defense community.<sup>61</sup>

To do so, NATO established multiple programs, including the 2002 Cyber Defense Program and NATO Computer Incident Defense (NCIRC) in an attempt to upgrade detection and response infrastructure.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, in 2005, NATO created the Comprehensive Political Guidance document which outlined capacity requirements

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<sup>55</sup> “RDT&E BUDGET JUSTIFICATION SHEET (R-2 Exhibit),” last modified February 2007, accessed September 14, 2023, [https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2008/budget\\_justification/pdfs/03\\_RDT\\_and\\_E/Vol\\_5\\_Miscel/DSCA.pdf](https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2008/budget_justification/pdfs/03_RDT_and_E/Vol_5_Miscel/DSCA.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> “NATO Partnership for Peace,” *US Department of State Archive*, last modified June 18, 1997, accessed September 14, 2023, [https://1997-2001.state.gov/regions/eur/NATO\\_fs-pfp.html](https://1997-2001.state.gov/regions/eur/NATO_fs-pfp.html).

<sup>57</sup> David P. Fidler, Richard Pregent, Alex Vandurme, “NATO, Cyber Defense, and International Law,” *Articles by Maurer Faculty* (2013): 4, <https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/facpub/1672>.

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<sup>58</sup> “Kosovo Air Campaign,” *NATO*, last modified May 17, 2022, accessed September 14, 2023, [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOOhq/topics\\_49602.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOOhq/topics_49602.htm).

<sup>59</sup> Jason Healey, “Cyber Attacks Against NATO, Then and Now,” *Atlantic Council*, last modified September 6, 2011, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/cyber-attacks-against-NATO-then-and-now/>.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Fidler, Pregent, and Vandurme, “NATO, Cyber Defense, and International Law,” 4

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

for NATO members to be able to fend off cyber threats.<sup>63</sup>

Yet, despite these measures, NATO was left reeling after the 2007 Estonia cyberattacks, which was “the first time that a foreign actor threatened another nation’s security and political independence primarily through cyber operations.”<sup>64</sup>

Estonia was a former member of the Soviet Union, and the cyber attack campaign is understood to be a part of a larger political disagreement between the country and Russia. Indeed, the inciting incident behind the 22-day campaign was the relocation of a monument which depicted Soviet troops annexing the city.<sup>65</sup> Backlash to the move was swift, and initially involved peaceful protest, which later devolved into violent protest.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, a number of Estonian institutions – including the parliament, banks, and newspapers – experienced

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> “Estonian denial of service incident,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, last modified May 2007, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/cyber-operations/estonian-denial-service-incident#:~:text=This%20series%20of%20denial%20of,independence%20primarily%20through%20cyber%20operations>.

<sup>65</sup> Rain Ottis, “Analysis of the 2007 Cyber Attacks Against Estonia from the Information Warfare Perspective,” (Tallinn: Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence), 1, [https://www.ccdcoe.org/uploads/2018/10/Ottis2008\\_AnalysisOf2007FromTheInformationWarfarePerspective.pdf](https://www.ccdcoe.org/uploads/2018/10/Ottis2008_AnalysisOf2007FromTheInformationWarfarePerspective.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 2.

sophisticated distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks which rendered their online services unusable.<sup>67</sup> In response, Estonia closed its digital borders and blocked international web traffic.<sup>68</sup>

The 2007 Estonia attack was a “watershed moment” and incited further calls to action within NATO,<sup>69</sup> highlighting the need for further intelligence sharing. As a result, NATO launched the Cyber Defense Concept Policy and Action Plan in 2011,<sup>70</sup> and created the Cyber Defense Management Board which engages in cyber defense activities.<sup>71</sup>

Today, NATO also has the Cyber Security Centre which facilitates information-sharing with regards to cyber security, and further collaborates with nation-states to conduct cyber defense exercises.<sup>72</sup> Additional efforts have been taken, inclusive of NATO’s Malware Information Sharing platform which allows for “indicators of

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>68</sup> “Estonian denial of service incident,” *Council of Foreign Relations*.

<sup>69</sup> Samir Jeraj, “NATO’s cybersecurity chief: ‘We’re always on the back foot in cyber defence,’” *The New Statesman*, last modified August 4, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.newstatesman.com/spotlight/tech-regulation/cybersecurity/2023/08/NATO-cyber-chief-defence-security-ukraine>.

<sup>70</sup> Fidler, Pregnant, and Vandurme, “NATO, Cyber Defense, and International Law,” 6.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> “Cyber defence,” *NATO*, last modified August 3, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATO/hq/topics\\_78170.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATO/hq/topics_78170.htm).

compromise” to be distributed widely among members, and NATO currently works with the EU, UN, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to fight cybercrime.<sup>73</sup> Thanks to these efforts, NATO allegedly tracks over a billion “suspicious events,” and fends off around 20-30 attacks daily.<sup>74</sup>

### **Terrorism**

Combating global terrorism is perhaps one of NATO’s most important mandates. Though the issue was first raised during the Alliance’s 1999 Sixth Strategic Concept,<sup>75</sup> the true turning point in the fight against terrorism was the 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001. Within days of the attacks on the Twin Towers, NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in the organization’s history, and member states began to launch attacks against targets in Afghanistan.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, NATO agreed on eight measures to support the United States in Afghanistan, inclusive of enhanced intelligence-sharing relating

to terrorism and counter-terrorism.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, resources for information gathering were also given to the country, with AWACS radar aircraft and 830 crew members being deployed.<sup>78</sup>

## **Past Actions**

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NATO’s capabilities for and emphasis on intelligence sharing increased in the last few decades. In facing a complicated intelligence landscape, member states must balance national interest, risk mitigation, and the delicate trade-off between trusting partner nations to share potentially sensitive information while also safeguarding one’s own sources.<sup>79</sup> In order to achieve its overarching objectives, NATO’s intelligence capabilities must align with four principal objectives: “contributing to global peace and regional stability; ensuring and enhancing national security of member states; consolidating NATO’s position as a security provider and peacemaker; supporting operational activities in

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<sup>73</sup> “Cyber defence,” *NATO*.

<sup>74</sup> Jeraj, “We’re always on the back foot in cyber defence.”

<sup>75</sup> “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept (1999),” *NATO*, last modified April 24, 1999, accessed September 14, 2023, [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/official\\_texts\\_27433.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/official_texts_27433.htm).

<sup>76</sup> “How 9/11 Reshaped Foreign Policy,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/how-911-reshaped-foreign-policy>.

<sup>77</sup> “Collective defence and Article 5,” *NATO*, last modified July 4th, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics\\_110496.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics_110496.htm).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Ballast, Jan. “Trust (in) NATO: The Future of Intelligence Sharing Within the Alliance.” 2017. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342492011\\_Trust\\_in\\_NATO\\_The\\_Future\\_of\\_Intelligence\\_Sharing\\_Within\\_the\\_Alliance](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342492011_Trust_in_NATO_The_Future_of_Intelligence_Sharing_Within_the_Alliance)

the framework of military missions and operations.”<sup>80</sup> Strategic analyses, situational assessments, and streamlined intelligence capabilities will play vital roles in supporting NATO’s operational goals.

Intelligence assets and structures have bolstered the organization’s strategic awareness and decision-making processes throughout NATO’s history. In NATO’s early decades, intelligence primarily came from a multilateral partnership known as the ‘Five Eyes.’<sup>81</sup> Five Eyes, comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, evolved from the 1946 bilateral Anglo-American UK-USA Agreement that had cemented intelligence collaboration within NATO. NATO allies and member states would rely on Five Eyes’ intelligence; nevertheless, the sharing of information was not automatic and would be hindered by mistrust of newer allies and concerns over the security of dissemination. Further, established in 1968, the Situation Centre (SITCEN) operates as an intelligence unit directly answerable to the Secretary General. SITCEN receives and disseminates information, aiding decision-making for the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and the Military Committee (MC) and bridging the civilian International Staff

and the International Military Staff (IMS).<sup>82</sup> Since its establishment, SITCEN has been restructured several times to evolve with intelligence demands.

The landscape of intelligence underwent a major shift after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Counterterrorism and non-state actors advanced as key international matters, and a perceived common threat encouraged increased bilateral intelligence exchanges and partnerships with non-traditional allies.<sup>83</sup> NATO understood the urgency of intensified cooperation and intelligence sharing on counterterrorism matters. Recognizing its lack of intelligence sources, NATO began to implement intelligence liaison and fusion elements. This development of intelligence structures and capabilities aimed to enhance analytical tradecraft and information exchange, specifically concerning “threats from terrorism, [weapons of mass destruction] WMD, and local conflicts.”<sup>84</sup> NATO introduced an integrated platform that included the establishment of the Terrorist Threat Intelligence Unit, responsible for analyzing terrorist threats; Network-Enabled Capabilities to facilitate

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>82</sup> “Situation Centre (SITCEN).” NATO. June 21, 2021. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics\\_57954.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics_57954.htm)

<sup>83</sup> Ballast, “Trust (in) NATO.”

<sup>84</sup> Gruszczak, Artur. “NATO’s Intelligence Adaptation Challenge.” Globsec. <https://www.globsec.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/NATOs-intelligence-adaptation-challenge.pdf>.

networked information exchange; an Intelligence Fusion Centre to provide warnings for NATO operations; and a new NATO Intelligence and Warning System (NIWS) that incorporated military and nonmilitary risk indicators of prospective sources of instability or crisis.

Nevertheless, NATO member states recognized the need for continued work. In 2010, the Lisbon Summit brought NATO Heads of State and Government together, emphasizing better intelligence sharing in order to proactively prevent crises and counteract terrorism and other threats.<sup>85</sup> Subsequently, NATO's intelligence structure underwent a comprehensive overhaul, leading to notable advancements in both the quantity and quality of shared intelligence.

On the operational side, the Allied Command Transformation (ACT) expanded and refined “strategic analyses of and forecasts regarding intelligence concepts and capabilities.”<sup>86</sup> Further, Allied Command Operations (ACO) strengthened intelligence support for operational planning and execution by improving communications and information systems.

In 2012, NATO established the Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (JISR) initiative at the Chicago Summit. JISR aimed to enhance pre-operational capabilities and

situational awareness, and in February 2016, an Initial Operational Capability for JISR began supporting NATO's communication and information systems, providing specialized training to personnel, and implementing procedures for automated information management and sharing.<sup>87</sup> Four years later, at the 2016 Warsaw Summit, the Alliance once again recognized the importance of expanding and adapting intelligence sharing beyond JISR. Consequently, they established the Joint Intelligence and Security Division (JISD) at NATO Headquarters, led by the new position, Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence and Security (ASG-I&S). Lauded as one of the most significant reforms for NATO's military operations, the JISD and the ASG-I&S aimed to implement the integration of all intelligence elements at the headquarters level into a cohesive JISD.<sup>88</sup> This would promote efficiency and eliminate redundancy. The ASG-I&S's approach focused on developing intelligence sharing as a gradual process to bridge the gap between “bilateral, case-by-case liaison and structured multilateral intelligence sharing.”<sup>89</sup>

Critically, the establishment of the JISD created the organization's first joint civilian and military division at the Headquarters. The first Assistant Secretary General declared that this joining

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<sup>85</sup> Gruszczak, “NATO's Intelligence Adaptation Challenge.”

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

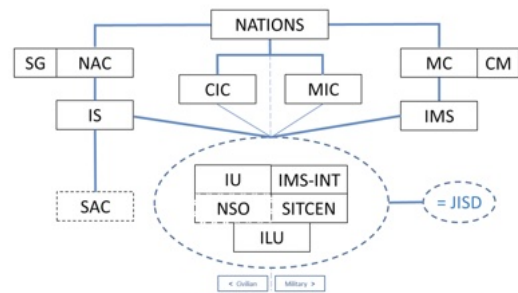
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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Ballast, “Trust (in) NATO.”

<sup>89</sup> Ballast, “Trust (in) NATO.”

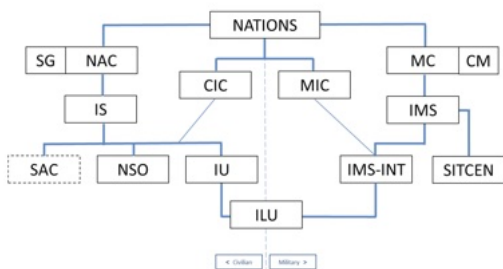
“allowed [NATO] to deliver coherent intelligence assessments, increase efficiency, avoid duplication of effort, and draw upon the strengths that both civilian and military organizations brought to the table, while fostering a new culture of cooperation.”<sup>90</sup> Before the JISD, political-strategic intelligence in NATO Headquarters was split between civilian and military areas. The Civilian Intelligence Committee (CIC) and the Military Intelligence Committee (MIC) served as platforms for the civilian and military sectors, respectively, dealing with national security and hybrid services.<sup>91</sup> However, with the establishment of JISD, these separate entities were fused together, leading to streamlined operations and coordinated analysis capabilities.



NATO Headquarters Intelligence following 2016.<sup>93</sup>

## Possible Solutions

As NATO moves forward, it faces challenges that will require the Alliance to harness technological advancements and address pressing issues related to the command and control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) architecture.<sup>94</sup> With advancements in IT technologies and the integration of artificial intelligence in analytical processes, intelligence sharing must operate in an increasingly sophisticated security environment. With data sharing, developing and operating AI-enabled systems may require the sharing of more extensive raw data than ordinary



NATO Headquarters Intelligence prior to 2016.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Freytag von Loringhoven, Arndt. “A new era for NATO intelligence.” NATO Review. October 29, 2019.

<https://www.NATO.int/docu/review/articles/2019/10/29/a-new-era-for-NATO-intelligence/index.html>

<sup>91</sup> Ballast, “Trust (in) NATO.”

<sup>92</sup> Model from Jan Ballast, (<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342492>

011\_Trust\_in\_NATO\_The\_Future\_of\_Intelligence\_Sharing\_Within\_the\_Alliance)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

<sup>94</sup> Davis Jr., Gordon. “The future of NATO C4ISR: Assessment and recommendations after Madrid.” Atlantic Council. March 16, 2023.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/the-future-of-NATO-c4ISR-assessment-and-recommendations-after-madrid/>.

intelligence sharing.<sup>95</sup> This may raise concerns about exposing sensitive information on capabilities and flaws of member states' intelligence systems. Nevertheless, in light of new global challenges such as cybersecurity, NATO must optimize intelligence capabilities and resources and build mutual confidence among member states.

To strengthen intelligence-sharing capabilities within NATO, member states can be encouraged to share a more substantial amount of intelligence assets, with a special focus on prioritized intelligence and operational needs. However, addressing the reluctance towards multilateral exchange will be crucial in this endeavor. To build trust and modernize infrastructure, NATO can invest in secure and advanced networks, establish a common data framework, and adhere to agreed standards respected by all member states.

Moreover, digital transformation is essential to optimize intelligence capabilities. NATO can adopt technical solutions to improve the flow, exchange, and secure storage of data and information. To enhance intelligence cooperation, the organization can strengthen ties between civil and military structures, promote inter-agency connections, and consolidate solutions in the NATO intelligence network

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<sup>95</sup> Lin-Greenberg, Erik. "Allies and Artificial Intelligence: Obstacles to Operations and Decision-Making." *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 2 (2020): 56-76.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/8866>

architecture. Additionally, to integrate AI and data sharing, NATO can establish and maintain intelligence sharing agreements that allow the exchange of sensitive data required for training AI systems. Technical standards can be set to maximize easy access and usability of data by all alliance members. Measures can also be implemented to counter the risks posed by AI-enabled misinformation.

Strengthening the institutional framework for intelligence capabilities, especially the JISD and ASG-I&S position, can facilitate further coherence in defense planning efforts. By bolstering its intelligence capabilities, NATO can foster greater cooperation and effectively respond to evolving security challenges in an ever-changing global landscape.

## **Bloc Positions**

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### **Enhancing Collaboration**

Some NATO member states advocate for enhanced collaboration and harmonization of intelligence sharing among member states. These states believe that the collective protection of NATO relies on compounding shared information that could be useful for preventative measures in security.

One example of this type of member state is the United Kingdom. On the more localized, within the country scale, the U.K. argues for comprehensive cyber threat information sharing



in order to “encourage more connection and collaboration between entities (internally and externally), helping organizations to prevent cyberattacks”.<sup>96</sup> They stress that “if a threat actor possessed the means and motivation, a cyber threat to one organization logically may be considered a threat to another”<sup>97</sup> – with this logic, the same could be understood on an international (NATO-wide) level.

Another prominent example of a member state within this group is the United States. While historically the U.S. has reserved “cyber capabilities... as strategic national assets to be shared with only the closest of allies”,<sup>98</sup> recent headlines surrounding the current state of cybersecurity urged the U.S. to more strongly commit “to use offensive and defensive cybersecurity capabilities on behalf of NATO allies”. This decision, in which “cyber capabilities might be used alongside conventional weapons with allies and indeed, equal weight appears to be given to offensive and defensive operations”<sup>99</sup> best

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<sup>96</sup> “Cyber-Threat Intelligence Information Sharing Guide.” GOV.UK, March 8, 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cyber-threat-intelligence-information-sharing/cyber-threat-intelligence-information-sharing-guide#purpose-of-this-document>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> “Sharing Is Caring: The United States’ New Cyber Commitment for NATO.” Council on Foreign Relations, October 10, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/sharing-caring-united-states-new-cyber-commitment-NATO>.

<sup>99</sup> “Sharing is Caring”

showcases the U.S.’s positive stance on collaboration within cybersecurity. A final example of a member state within this group is Canada, which is already one of the “U.S.’s favored signals intelligence partners”<sup>100</sup>).

## Balancing Sovereignty And Security

NATO member states within this group prioritize their national sovereignty and security concerns in the question of information sharing. These countries argue that while collaboration and shared security are important for NATO, this potential solution must be balanced with the long-term interests of member states, which often precludes comprehensive information sharing.

An example of a member state within this group is Turkey. While this country recognizes the need for more dialogue between member states in a time of threatened security, it has “adopted an approach of balancing everything pragmatically in order to maximize their own interests,<sup>101</sup>” especially in the case of intelligence sharing. One prominent instance that emphasizes this is Turkey’s veto over the EU–NATO security exchange. Since 2004, Turkey has opposed “NATO’s sharing of sensitive intelligence information with non-NATO EU members that

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Bayer, Lili. “Turkey Is the Headache NATO Needs.” POLITICO, April 26, 2023. <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-NATO-sweden-finland-is-the-headache-NATO-needs/>.

did not sign a bilateral agreement with NATO (i.e. the Republic of Cyprus) on protecting classified information.” This is primarily due to Turkey’s continued engagement in “boundary challenging through strategic noncooperation and inter-institutional balancing against the EU.” By vetoing greater intelligence sharing with non-NATO EU members, Turkey can continue to increase “its leverage against the EU in its accession negotiations, resolving the Cyprus problem to its advantage, and getting fully integrated into the European Defence Agency (EDA).”<sup>102</sup>

In conclusion, the NATO member states hold many different positions on intelligence sharing. While some argue for greater shared collaboration, both within NATO and strategically outside of NATO, others stress the importance of prioritizing national security and sovereignty. Therefore, in this time of technological innovation and advancements in cyber security (as well as cyber threats), finding a balanced solution to information sharing within NATO as a committee is especially important.

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<sup>102</sup> Dursun-Özkanca, O. (2019). The Turkish Veto over the EU–NATO Security Exchange. In *Turkey–West Relations: The Politics of Intra-alliance Opposition* (pp. 63-82). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
doi:10.1017/9781316998960.005

## Glossary

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**Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS):** This system provides persistent wide-area terrestrial and maritime surveillance delivering data to commanders protecting ground troops and civilians, providing humanitarian and disaster relief, and conducting counter-terrorism and border watch missions during peacetime.<sup>103</sup>

**Allied Command Operations (ACO):** ACO consists of a number of permanently established headquarters operating at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels; they are augmented by national forces assigned to NATO for specific standing and/or crisis roles and tasks. The command's overall aim is to contribute to Allied defense and security by maintaining the integrity of Alliance territory, safeguarding freedom of the seas and economic lifelines, and preserving or restoring the security of its members.<sup>104</sup>

**Allied Command Transformation (ACT):** ACT is one of two Strategic Commands at the head of NATO's military command structure. ACT leads the military adaptation of the Alliance, coordinating national efforts to ensure coherence and interoperability, ensuring that NATO has the right Military Instrument of Power to help guarantee the freedom and security of its members.<sup>105</sup>

**Five Eyes:** The Five Eyes Alliance (abbreviated as FVEY in government documents) is a cooperative intelligence network that monitors the electronic communications of citizens and foreign governments. This network of anglophone countries includes the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>106</sup>

**Hybrid warfare:** A type of conflict that blends conventional and unconventional methods, including military operations, cyber warfare, disinformation campaigns, and economic pressure.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> "NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS)." Northrop Grumman. Accessed September 10, 2023. <https://www.northropgrumman.com/what-we-do/air/NATO-ags>.

<sup>104</sup> "Allied Command Operations (ACO)." NATO, May 4, 2023. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics\\_52091.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics_52091.htm).

<sup>105</sup> "Allied Command Transformation (ACT)." NATO, May 4, 2023. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics\\_52092.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics_52092.htm).

<sup>106</sup> Chai, Wesley. "What Is the Five Eyes Alliance?" WhatIs.com, April 6, 2020. <https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/Five-Eyes-Alliance>.

<sup>107</sup> Ball, Joshua. "The Changing Face of Conflict: What Is Hybrid Warfare?" Global Security Review, July 12, 2023. <https://globalsecurityreview.com/hybrid-and-non-linear-warfare-systematically-erases-the-divide-between-war-peace/#:~:text=Hybrid%20warfare%20is%20a%20type,disinformation%20campaigns%2C%20and%20economic%20pressure>.

**Intelligence Fusion Centre:** The NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre (NIFC) provides the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Allied Command Operations with timely, relevant, and accurate intelligence in order to support the planning and execution of NATO operations; and enable deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic area.<sup>108</sup>

**Intelligence Networks:** A system through which information about a particular entity is collected for the benefit of another through the use of more than one, inter-related source.<sup>109</sup>

**International Military Staff (IMS):** The International Military Staff (IMS) is the executive body of the Military Committee (MC), NATO's senior military authority. It is responsible for preparing assessments, studies on NATO military issues identifying areas of strategic and operational interest, and proposing courses of action.<sup>110</sup>

**International Staff:** The primary role of the International Staff (IS) is to provide advice, guidance, and administrative support to the national delegations at NATO Headquarters. The IS helps to implement decisions taken at different committee levels and, in doing so, supports the process of consensus-building and decision-making within the Alliance.<sup>111</sup>

**Joint Intelligence and Security Division (JISD):** The JISD's key role is to support the NAC and MC on intelligence and security matters and is divided into security and intelligence pillars.

Assistant Secretary-General for Intelligence and Security (ASG-I&S).<sup>112</sup>

**Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (JISR):** Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (JISR) is vital for all military operations. It provides decision-makers and action-takers with a better situational awareness of the conditions on the ground, in the air, at sea, in space, and in the cyber

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<sup>108</sup> "NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre." NIFC Home. Accessed September 10, 2023. <https://web.ifc.bices.org/>.

<sup>109</sup> "Intelligence Gathering Network." Wikipedia, December 18, 2022. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligence\\_gathering\\_network#:~:text=An%20intelligence%20gathering%20network%20is,intelligence%2C%20or%20commercial%20intelligence%20network.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligence_gathering_network#:~:text=An%20intelligence%20gathering%20network%20is,intelligence%2C%20or%20commercial%20intelligence%20network.)

<sup>110</sup> "International Military Staff (IMS)." NATO, April 3, 2023. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics\\_64557.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics_64557.htm).

<sup>111</sup> "International Staff." NATO, April 19, 2023. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics\\_58110.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics_58110.htm).

<sup>112</sup> "IMS - Joint Intelligence and Security (JIS) Division." NATO. Accessed September 10, 2023. <https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOlive/107942.htm>.

domain. Allies work together to collect, analyze, and share information to maximum effect. This makes Joint ISR a unique example of cooperation and burden-sharing across the Alliance.<sup>113</sup>

**Military Committee (MC):** The Military Committee (MC) is the senior military authority in NATO and the oldest permanent body in NATO after the North Atlantic Council, both having been formed only months after the Alliance came into being. It is the primary source of military advice to the North Atlantic Council and the Nuclear Planning Group and gives direction to the two Strategic Commanders.<sup>114</sup>

**NATO Intelligence and Warning System (NIWS):** The NIWS provides warning of any developing instability, crisis, threats, risks, or concerns that could impact the security interests of the Alliance and monitors the de-escalation of a crisis.<sup>115</sup>

**Network-Enabled Capabilities:** The NATO Network Enabled Capability (NNEC) programme is the Alliance's ability to federate various capabilities at all levels, military (strategic to tactical) and civilian, through an information infrastructure.<sup>116</sup>

**North Atlantic Council (NAC):** The North Atlantic Council is the principal political decision-making body within NATO. It oversees the political and military process relating to security issues affecting the whole Alliance.<sup>117</sup>

**Situation Centre (SITCEN):** The NATO Situation Centre (SITCEN) alerts and provides situational awareness to the North Atlantic Council and to the Military Committee during times of peace, tension, and crisis, and for high-level exercises. This support is achieved through the receipt, exchange, and dissemination of information from all available internal and external resources.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> "Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance." NATO, May 23, 2023. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/topics\\_111830.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/topics_111830.htm).

<sup>114</sup> "Military Committee (MC)." NATO, August 16, 2023. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/topics\\_49633.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/topics_49633.htm).

<sup>115</sup> Kriendler, John. "NATO Intelligence and Early Warning." Watchfield: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, March 2006.

<sup>116</sup> "NATO Network Enabled Capability (NNEC) (Archived)." NATO, October 13, 2015. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOLive/topics\\_54644.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOLive/topics_54644.htm).

<sup>117</sup> "North Atlantic Council (NAC)." NATO, September 9, 2022. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/topics\\_49763.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/topics_49763.htm).

<sup>118</sup> "Situation Centre (SITCEN)." NATO, June 21, 2021. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/topics\\_57954.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/topics_57954.htm).

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## TOPIC B: ADDRESSING THE MIGRANT CRISIS IN THE AEGEAN SEA

### Statement Of The Problem

#### Overview

Starting 2015, the Aegean Sea has been the site of the greatest migrant crisis since World War II<sup>119</sup> – a situation which has drawn the attention of international humanitarian organizations. Among these organizations was NATO who, in 2016, joined the international task force responding to the crisis after receiving Germany, Greece, and Turkey’s requests for assistance.<sup>120</sup>



Map of the Aegean.<sup>121</sup>

### The Humanitarian Problem

Located between Greece and Turkey, the Aegean Sea is significant both in terms of its cultural legacy – as a “cradle” of Greek and Turkish civilizations – as well as its position as a commercial hub between Asia, Africa, and Europe.<sup>122</sup> However, the Sea has recently also gained international prominence as a popular migration route for refugees seeking to enter Europe from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions.

From 2015 to 2016, over 1 million refugees crossed into Europe from the Mediterranean or Aegean Sea, fueled by “conflict, widespread violence and insecurity, or highly repressive governments” in their home countries.<sup>123</sup> While a minority of refugees sought to reach Italian shores, the vast majority landed in Greece, causing the country to become a “holding pen for

<sup>119</sup> “Assistance for the refugee and migrant crisis in the Aegean Sea,” *NATO*, last modified January 17, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/topics\\_128746.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOHQ/topics_128746.htm).

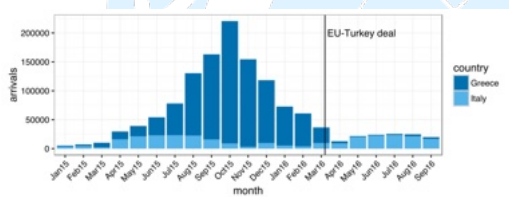
<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Image courtesy of Wikimedia. *Aegean Sea Map*, January 12, 2016 ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aegean\\_Sea\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aegean_Sea_map.png))

<sup>122</sup> Aigaíon Pélagos, Ege Deniz, “Aegean Sea,” *Britannica*, last modified September 11, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Aegean-Sea>.

<sup>123</sup> “Europe’s Refugee Crisis,” *Human Rights Watch*, last modified November 16, 2015, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/11/16/europes-refugee-crisis/agenda-action>.

people seeking asylum.”<sup>124</sup> At its peak, at the end of the 2015 calendar year, 856,723 migrants entered Greece through water routes – the most prominent of which being the Aegean Sea – causing migrant camps on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Samosto to exceed their maximum capacity by tens of thousands.<sup>125</sup> This initial wave of migration into Greece was only curbed by the 2016 EU-Turkey Deal, which limited the number of undocumented migrants entering Greece from Turkey by allowing Turkey to “take any measures necessary to stop people traveling irregularly from Turkey to the Greek islands,” including migrant deportation upon entering Greece.<sup>126</sup>



*Migrant Arrivals in Greece and Italy from January 2015 to September 2016.*<sup>127</sup>

<sup>124</sup> “Greece,” *Rescue.org*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.rescue.org/country/greece>.

<sup>125</sup> Nektaria Stamouli, “Mediterranean Migration to Europe Drops Sharply,” *WSJ*, last modified January 3, 2019, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/mediterranean-migration-to-europe-drops-sharply-11546531063>.

<sup>126</sup> “What is the EU-Turkey deal?,” *Rescue.org*, last modified March 16, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.rescue.org/eu/article/what-eu-turkey-deal>.

<sup>127</sup> Figure courtesy of Wikimedia. *Sea arrivals to Greece and Italy, 2015, February 1, 2016*, ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sea\\_arrivals\\_to\\_Greece\\_and\\_Italy,\\_2015.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sea_arrivals_to_Greece_and_Italy,_2015.png))

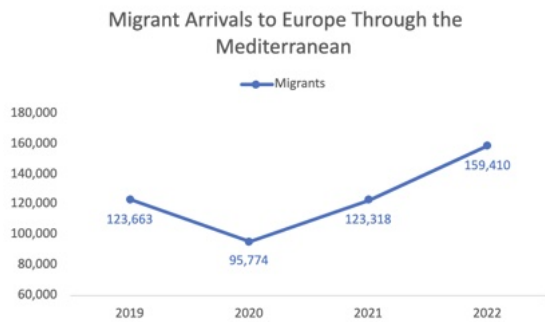
Since then, sea routes have still proven popular routes into Europe for migrants and refugees entering the continent, accounting for 98% of all refugee movement into Europe in 2023.<sup>128</sup> Between January and June of 2023, over 89,000 migrants and refugees entered Europe through maritime routes; the largest amount of migration since the peak of the migration crisis in 2015.<sup>129,130</sup> Greece alone experienced a 67% increase in refugees in June of this year compared to the same time in 2022, much of which occurred through the Aegean sea route.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>128</sup> “Operational Data Portal,” *UNHCR*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.

<sup>129</sup> “EUROPE SITUATIONS: DATA AND TRENDS - ARRIVALS AND DISPLACED POPULATIONS,” *UNHCR*, last modified August 19, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/103073>.

<sup>130</sup> Sana Noor Haq, Caolán Magee and Barbie Latza Nadeau, “Europe’s migration policies in chaos as arrivals surge,” *CNN*, last modified April 16, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/16/europe/europe-migration-chaos-boat-arrivals-intl/index.html>.

<sup>131</sup> “EUROPE SITUATIONS: DATA AND TRENDS,” *UNHCR*.



*Migrant Arrivals Across the Mediterranean 2019 to 2022.*<sup>132</sup>

The popularity of sea routes stems from the lack of feasible alternative paths into Europe for individuals without documentation, forcing many to attempt dangerous journeys via the Mediterranean and Aegean Sea.

Migrants seeking to cross into Europe from the Middle East and North Africa have multiple maritime paths available to them, depending on their initial location and intended final destination. The second most popular path for migrants is through the Eastern Mediterranean route, across the Aegean Sea, accounting for 10,696 arrivals into Greece in June of 2023.<sup>133</sup>

This is due, in large part, to how close some Greek islands are to the coast of Turkey. They're often visible across the Sea from certain Turkish ports, only a few kilometers away. In particular,

the island of Lesbos is directly to the West of Dikili, a small fishing village in the province of Izmir, especially popular for migrants as it has received more than half a million migrants entering the EU in 2015.<sup>134</sup>



*Map of Islands in the Aegean Sea.*<sup>135</sup>

Despite the popularity of the Aegean route, the journey is perilous and dangerous, characterized by extreme weather conditions and choppy waves. Water temperatures in January reach 15°C, 5° lower than the usual benchmark for

<sup>132</sup> Data via the UNHCR Operational Data Portal, including sea arrivals to Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Spain, and Malta. (Data from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.)

<sup>133</sup> "EUROPE SITUATIONS: DATA AND TRENDS," *UNHCR*.

<sup>134</sup> "History of the Refugee Crisis in Lesbos," *Peace Corps Community for Refugees*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.pcc4refugees.org/cpages/overviewrefugee>.

<sup>135</sup> *Aegean with legends*, January 27, 2007, ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aegean\\_dispute#/media/File:Aegean\\_with\\_legends.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aegean_dispute#/media/File:Aegean_with_legends.svg))

hypothermia risk.<sup>136</sup> Additionally, winds are often severe, shorelines in the area are rocky and hazardous, and weather is quick to change.<sup>137</sup> This means there exists an outsized risk of boats capsizing or being blown off course. While these environmental factors would make navigating these waters difficult even under normal conditions, many migrants attempt the route on unseaworthy boats. Many pay smugglers to illegally transport them across the sea on toy dinghies powered by faulty engines, yachts,<sup>138</sup> or small fishing boats incapable of remaining afloat, often without lifejackets and other safety mechanisms.<sup>139</sup>

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that this journey claims the lives of hundreds of individuals each year. An estimated 28,000 migrants have lost their lives in the Mediterranean

area since 2014 – 2,292 of whom reportedly died in the Aegean – though the actual figure is likely higher.<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, while children make up 36% of all arrivals to Greece, they make up around 45% of all fatalities in the Aegean.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, this issue sees no sign of improvement, as in the first six months of 2023 alone, 693 migrants and refugees have died attempting the passage.<sup>142</sup>

## NATO'S Involvement

NATO is currently involved in the Aegean Sea, having deployed maritime forces in February 2016 to assist Greek, Turkish, and Frontex authorities. As of 2023, NATO mobilized the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) to conduct “reconnaissance, monitoring and surveillance of illegal crossings in the territorial waters of Greece and Turkey.”<sup>143</sup> Under the authority of the Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM), the SNMG2 consists of 5 allied ships which patrol the Aegean and share all

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<sup>136</sup> Mark Mackinnon, “Turkey’s unsafe passage: High winds, frigid waters – and people are dying,” *The Globe and Mail*, last modified January 15, 2016, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/turkeys-unsafe-passage-high-winds-frigid-waters-and-people-aredying/article28212893/>.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> “Profiting from misery – how smugglers bring people to Europe,” *Frontex*, last modified February 18, 2016, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/focus/profitting-from-misery-how-smugglers-bring-people-to-europe-aUY2f>.

<sup>139</sup> “THE DEADLY BORDER IN THE AEGEAN SEA,” *Mare Liberum*, last modified July 9, 2020, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://mare-liberum.org/en/the-deadly-border-in-the-aegean-sea/>.

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<sup>140</sup> “MIGRATION WITHIN THE MEDITERRANEAN,” *Missing Migrants Project*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>.

<sup>141</sup> “Operational Data Portal,” *UNHCR*

<sup>142</sup> “Migrant arrivals by sea double in first eight months of 2023,” *Ekathimerini*, last modified August 16, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1217874/migrant-arrivals-by-sea-double-in-first-eight-months-of-2023/>.

<sup>143</sup> “Assistance for the refugee and migrant crisis in the Aegean Sea,” *NATO*.

information collected with Frontex.<sup>144</sup> Importantly, to avoid sending a message of militarization, NATO ships in the Aegean are instructed not to confront or apprehend migrant ships.<sup>145</sup>

One of the conflicts NATO seeks to resolve is migrant smuggling. An industry valued at over 4 billion Euros, migrant smuggling is responsible for bringing in more than a million individuals into Europe since 2014.<sup>146</sup> According to Frontex, the industry is incredibly sophisticated, with multiple smuggling networks along the Eastern Mediterranean Route. The routes along the Aegean Sea are especially “efficiently organized,” and serve transportation hubs in Izmir, Bodrum, and Istanbul.<sup>147</sup> In addition to transporting migrants, smugglers also often sell forged documents, including fake birth certificates, identification cards, and passports -- all of which are sold at exploitatively high prices. In 2015, a journey of only a handful of nautical miles could cost families upwards of two thousand Euros per person on a rubber dinghy, with the average cost

for a family on a yacht being around ten thousand Euros.<sup>148</sup> Much of the money made by people-smugglers is thought to then be funneled into the weapon and drugs market within multinational criminal organizations.<sup>149</sup>

Moreover, migrant smuggling networks often put vulnerable individuals in dangerous situations. The journey itself is incredibly dangerous and smugglers often bypass the implementation of important safety measures, treating migrants as goods. For instance, life jackets are often rare on these journeys, and eight-meter rubber dinghies have been recorded transporting up to 60 people.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, smugglers still operate trips in “bad weather,” which can prove dangerous across the notoriously rough waves of the Aegean. In rare circumstances, smugglers even engage in shootouts with authorities while on board yachts with migrants.<sup>151</sup> Due to these

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Steven Hill and Benjamin Bastomski, “Legal Dialogue on Human Rights Obligations: NATO’s Aegean Sea Activity as a Case Study,” *Harvard Law School National Security Journal*, last modified October 28, 2020, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://harvardnsj.org/2020/10/28/legal-dialogue-on-human-rights-obligations/>.

<sup>146</sup> “How smugglers bring people to Europe,” *Frontex*.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>148</sup> “How smugglers bring people to Europe,” *Frontex*.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Carmen Ang and Elbie Bentley, “Missing Migrants: Visualizing Lost Lives Along the Mediterranean Sea,” *Visual Capitalist*, last modified July 4, 2022, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/cp/missing-migrants-visualizing-lost-lives-along-the-mediterranean-sea/>.

<sup>151</sup> Andrea Vogt, “Teenage migrant killed in ‘shootout’ between smugglers and border police off Turkish coast,” *The Telegraph*, last modified August 30, 2015, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/11833659/Teenage-migrant-killed-in-shootout-between-smugglers-and-border-police-off-Turkish-coast.html>.



safety concerns, migrant smuggling is often seen as the direct cause of the vast number of migrant deaths in the Aegean.<sup>152</sup>

Additionally, migrant smuggling is also often associated with human trafficking.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, Greece is both a transit and destination country for human traffickers, with migrants being specifically targeted by traffickers.<sup>154</sup> Migrants are especially vulnerable to trafficking because they lack citizenship rights, and may fear contacting authorities due to the illegal nature of their passage. 50% of all trafficking victims in Central and South-Eastern Europe are migrants, though it is unclear how many were migrants or refugees smuggled from MENA across the Aegean.<sup>155</sup> As well, 27% of all adult victims of human trafficking in Greece were recruited in Turkey as they were headed into Europe.<sup>156</sup>

To combat these problems, NATO shares real-time information with regional authorities --

such as Frontex -- which enables regional governments to take action to stem the ongoing crisis. Additionally, NATO's presence is thought to serve as a deterrence mechanism for smugglers and traffickers.<sup>157</sup>

In addition to its goal of combating human smuggling, NATO's presence in the Aegean also serves to assist migrants in need. Observing international law, NATO ships in the area are required to rescue any person in distress they encounter, and all refugees rescued are returned to Turkey.<sup>158</sup> This proves especially advantageous as NATO ships are allowed to operate on both sides of the Greece/Turkey border, unlike the national coast guards of either nation. NATO's presence therefore acts as a "forerunner" to a united European coast guard,<sup>159</sup> and has been a "first spotter" of boats carrying migrants in the

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<sup>152</sup> "How smugglers bring people to Europe," *Frontex*.

<sup>153</sup> Valeria Hänsel, Rob Moloney, Dariusz Firla, et al. *Incarcerating the Marginalized The Fight Against Alleged Smugglers on the Greek Hotspot Islands*, (Munich: Druckwerk Druckerei GmbH, 2020), 38, [https://bordermonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/report-2020-smuggling-en\\_web.pdf](https://bordermonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/report-2020-smuggling-en_web.pdf).

<sup>154</sup> "Human Trafficking," *Migration.gov*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://migration.gov.gr/en/protection-from-human-trafficking/>.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>157</sup> Michael S. Schmidt and Sewell Chan, "NATO Will Send Ships to Aegean Sea to Deter Human Trafficking," *The New York Times*, last modified February 11, 2016, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/12/world/europe/NATO-aegean-migrant-crisis.html>.

<sup>158</sup> "Migrant crisis: NATO deploys Aegean people-smuggling patrols," *BBC News*, last modified February 11, 2016, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35549478>.

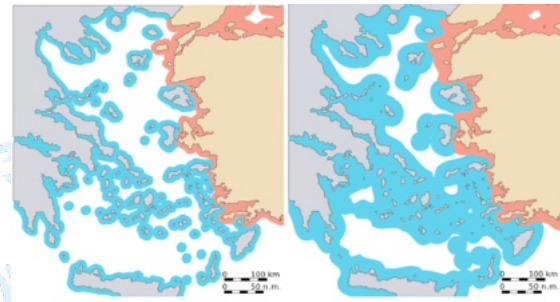
<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

Sea.<sup>160</sup> Thus, NATO continues to be an important actor in the Aegean, and occupies a vital niche in the area.

## The Aegean Sea Territory Dispute

Conflicting territorial claims between Greece and Turkey over the Aegean Sea complicate the migrant crisis.

Despite the two nations being NATO allies, the two have been at odds since the 1970s, with both claiming a six nautical-mile territorial sea in the Aegean.<sup>161</sup> At the same time, international maritime law entitles the two countries to waters 12 nautical miles off its territory.<sup>162</sup> Following this law would allow Greece to have access to a number of currently Turkish islands, and would even deprive the country of most of its access to the sea.



*6 nm (left) vs 10 nm (right) Territorial Claims*

*Greek territorial waters are shown in blue and Turkish territorial waters are shown in red.<sup>163</sup>*

However, it is important to note that, while Greece is a signatory of the treaty allowing the 12 mile territorial claim, Turkey is not, and hence does not recognize Greek claims to the area.

While this dispute has been ongoing for more than 40 years, tensions between the two nations have flared recently. Turkey has accused Greece of “militarizing” former Turkish islands close to the Aegean.<sup>164</sup> These islands include Kastellorizo and Kos, the militarization of which is viewed as a violation of terms of the Paris Peace Treaty which saw the secession of these islands to Greece. The Greek Government maintains that Turkey’s claims are “supported neither by the status quo

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<sup>160</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, “Secretary General: NATO’s Operation in the Aegean Sea ‘Has Been a Success,’” *Atlantic Council*, last modified March 15, 2017, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/NATOsource/secretary-general-NATO-s-operation-in-the-aegean-sea-has-been-a-success/>.

<sup>161</sup> Aashriti Gautam, “The Greco -Turkish dispute over the Aegean Sea,” *Indian Council of World Affairs*, last modified November 14, 2022, accessed September 14, 2023, [https://www.icwa.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=1&ls\\_id=8622&lid=5627](https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=1&ls_id=8622&lid=5627).

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>163</sup> Images courtesy of Wikimedia ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aegean\\_6\\_nm.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aegean_6_nm.svg) and [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aegean\\_12\\_nm.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aegean_12_nm.svg))

<sup>164</sup> Thomas O Falk, “Why Turkey, Greece remain on collision course over Aegean islands,” *Al Jazeera*, last modified June 20, 2022, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/6/20/why-turkey-greece-remain-on-collision-course-over-aegean-islands>.

nor by international law,<sup>165</sup> viewing their military presence on these islands as an exercise of their right to self-defense, citing the violations of Greek airspace by Turkish fighter jets.<sup>166</sup> Despite this, Greece has maintained an attempt at diplomacy with Turkey, with its foreign minister noting he would not issue “insulting statements, illegal and inappropriate demands and accusations” in an attempt to de-escalate the situation.<sup>167</sup> Yet diplomatic dialogue between the two nations has continued to break down, with Turkish President Erdogan previously refusing to meet with Greek diplomats. Furthermore, Turkey has threatened war against Greece for their militarization of the islands,<sup>168</sup> with Erdogan warning of “catastrophic consequences” should the military activity continue.<sup>169</sup>

The Aegean Sea dispute between these two nations puts migrants at risk, as Turkey is unwilling to accept migrants denied asylum in

Greece, and refuses territorial access to the EU.<sup>170</sup> This means that migrants unable to live in Europe may instead be deported back to nations unsuitable for their return, including wartorn Syria. At the same time, Turkey refuses to engage in discourse with the EU, causing this issue to remain unresolved.<sup>171</sup>

## History Of The Problem

The Mediterranean region has witnessed thousands of crossings for years. Over the decades, changing circumstances in the geopolitics of the area have caused the number of migrants and asylum seekers to vary. However, since the mid-1990s, the number of individuals crossing from North Africa and Turkey to Europe has seen an overall increase.<sup>172</sup> The main route has historically been from North Africa across the Central Mediterranean, but there has been a rise in individuals crossing the Aegean Sea, or the Eastern Mediterranean, from Turkey to

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Nektaria Stamouli, “Turkey renews threat of war over Greek territorial sea dispute,” *Politico*, last modified December 29, 2022, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-mevlut-cavusoglu-threat-war-greece-territorial-sea-dispute/>.

<sup>169</sup> Falk, “Turkey, Greece remain on collision course.”

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<sup>170</sup> “Greece: Ongoing Violations in the Aegean and Evros, Turkish Elections Leave Refugees in Fear and the Future of the EU-Turkey Deal Uncertain,” *ECRE*, last modified May 12, 2023, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://ecre.org/greece-ongoing-violations-in-the-aegean-and-evros-turkish-elections-leave-refugees-in-fear-and-the-future-of-the-eu-turkey-deal-uncertain/>.

<sup>171</sup> Falk, “Turkey, Greece remain on collision course.”

<sup>172</sup> “Migration Within The Mediterranean.” Missing Migrants Project. 2023. <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>.

the Greek islands. In the Eastern Mediterranean, maritime migration from Turkey to Greece, Cyprus, and Bulgaria has been a significant route, and at its peak in 2015, nearly one million migrants attempted to enter Europe using this route.<sup>173</sup> However, after the EU–Turkey agreement came into effect in late March of 2016, the number of people crossing this route dropped. Meanwhile, the Central Mediterranean route, mainly from North Africa to Italy and Malta, remains the most dangerous and deadly migration route.

A history of regional conflicts plays a major role in the increase of refugees. The Tunisian revolution in 2011 resulted in a significant rise in arrivals in Europe, and since then, migration in the Mediterranean has become a public issue as countries in the area grapple with severe humanitarian situations.<sup>174</sup> Syria’s multi-sided civil war has lasted for 12 years, with government forces and non-state armed groups both responsible for serious civilian abuses and deliberate attacks, arrests, disappearances, and

violence.<sup>175</sup> Millions have been forced to flee as refugees to neighboring countries and North Africa. Additionally, over 1.6 million individuals have fled Afghanistan since 2021, and decades of conflict and instability have intensified with the Taliban’s takeover in August 2021.<sup>176</sup> The country’s children face daily violence and some of the highest child mortality and malnutrition rates in the world. Furthermore, in Eritrea, Somalia, and Libya, histories of political turmoil and human rights abuses have contributed to complicated refugee crises in the Mediterranean region, as countries struggle with effective solutions for those displaced by these conflicts.<sup>177</sup>

The Mediterranean has emerged as the world’s deadliest migration route, with the International Organization for Migration reporting over 22,400 deaths and disappearances since 2000.<sup>178</sup> In 2013, the rising number of fatalities began to receive global attention, as around 45,000 asylum seekers and migrants crossed the Central

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> “Death on the Central Mediterranean: 2013-2020.” *The New Humanitarian*. January 12, 2021. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2021/01/12/migration-central-mediterranean-timeline-rescue>.

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<sup>175</sup> Sunderland, J. “The Mediterranean Migration Crisis.” Human Rights Watch. June 19, 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/19/mediterranean-migration-crisis/why-people-flee-what-eu-should-do>

<sup>176</sup> “Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained.” USA For UNHCR. July 18, 2023. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>

<sup>177</sup> Sunderland, “The Mediterranean Migration Crisis.”

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

Mediterranean with at least 70 losing their lives.<sup>179</sup> Responding to the humanitarian crisis, Italy launched Mare Nostrum, the first state-sponsored naval mission committed to rescue efforts.

Migration across the Central Mediterranean surged in 2014, fueled by the spreading violence from Syria's civil war. Furthermore, in the aftermath of Libya's 2011 revolution, smugglers operated freely along the Libyan coast. Over 170,100 asylum seekers and migrants reached Italy, with at least 3,000 perishing or going missing over the crossing.<sup>180</sup> Operation Triton, ran by Frontex, the European Union's border and coast guard agency, replaced Mare Nostrum and shifted to focus on border control and surveillance.

2015 saw a change in migration routes, as over 850,000 people, mostly Syrian refugees, crossed the Aegean Sea from Turkey to the Greek islands.<sup>181</sup> To address the gap that the end of Mare Nostrum left behind, the NGOs Médecins Sans Frontières and the Migrant Offshore Aid Station initiated search and rescue operations. These formed the first NGO-led search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean, and both organizations were soon joined by others.

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<sup>179</sup> "Death on the Central Mediterranean: 2013-2020."

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> "Death on the Central Mediterranean: 2013-2020."

By 2016, an EU-Turkey deal effectively shut down the Aegean route and redirected attention back to the Central Mediterranean. Stringent anti-immigration rhetoric rose in the European Union, as extremist political parties pushed hardline policies and campaigned for elections. Subsequent years saw increased efforts to reduce crossings from Libya to Europe, as well as laws restricting asylum. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic further complicated the situation, limiting the movement of refugees and asylum seekers in Greek camps and suspending asylum services.<sup>182</sup>

While the number of arrivals in Europe has subsequently decreased since the peak in 2015, the number of fatalities has increased.<sup>183</sup> Over 3,000 were recorded as dead or missing at sea in 2021 with only 123,300 reported crossings; the estimated death toll is on par with 2014's, despite almost twice as many people crossing the Mediterranean back then.<sup>184</sup> The migrant crisis in the Mediterranean continues to pose challenges for the countries in the region, necessitating

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> "UNHCR data visualization on Mediterranean crossings charts rising death toll and tragedy at sea." UNHCR. June 10, 2022. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-data-visualization-mediterranean-crossings-charts-rising-death-toll-and>.

<sup>184</sup> "Mediterranean Sea journeys for migrants have grown more deadly: UNHCR." United Nations. June 10, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1120132>.

collective efforts to address its underlying causes and find humane and sustainable solutions.

## Past Actions

The ongoing migrant crisis in the Aegean Sea has not only drawn international attention, but is also deeply entrenched in the politics of NATO as it primarily involves Greece and Turkey, two members of the alliance. As tensions have escalated, various initiatives have been launched to curb the deaths of migrants at sea and stop the human trafficking networks involved. Specifically, Operation Sophia and its successor Operation Irini, as well as Operation Sea Guardian, have played large roles in the progress and response to NATO's Aegean Sea Crisis.

### Operation Sophia And Operation Irini

The EU's first response to this crisis was launched in 2015, called Operation Sophia. Operation Sophia deployed an "initial eight ships and 12 air assets to address the migration crisis in the Central Mediterranean," keeping in mind that "the humanitarian dimension should be the top priority to prevent further loss at sea (3,771 in 2015 alone)."<sup>185</sup> The operation was made up of a four-phase approach: (1) tackle emergencies on

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<sup>185</sup> Marcuzzi, Stefano. NATO-EU Maritime Cooperation: For What Strategic Effect? NATO Defense College, 2018. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep19855>. Accessed 21 Aug. 2023.

the high seas and "build a comprehensive picture of smuggling activities and methods"; (2) board, search, seize, and divert smugglers' vessels on the high seas; (3) extend the second phase "into Libyan territorial waters and on-shore"<sup>186</sup>; and (4) withdraw forces. As of 2018, since Operation Sophia's launch, its "operations in the Mediterranean [had] contributed to saving more than 40,000 people, disabled 529 vessels used by criminal networks, and transferred 131 suspected smugglers and traffickers to Italian authorities."<sup>187</sup>

Given that many of the countries involved in the crisis were in both NATO and the EU, NATO soon followed up the success of Operation Sophia through the deployment of its Standing NATO Maritime Group (SNMG2), a maritime immediate reaction force to surveil the smugglers.<sup>188</sup> This surveillance built upon NATO's existing presence in the Mediterranean Sea: Operation Active Endeavour. NATO had launched Operation Active Endeavour following the September 11 attacks in 2001 to "deter, defend, disrupt and protect against terrorist

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Drake, Nelson R. "Efficiency and Relevance of EU-NATO Operations in the Mediterranean as a Cure for Irregular Immigration." Beyond the Horizon ISSG, February 8, 2018. <https://behorizon.org/eu-NATO-operations-mediterranean-irregular-immigration/>.

<sup>188</sup> "Standing NATO Maritime Group 2." Wikipedia, August 16, 2023. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standing\\_NATO\\_Maritime\\_Group\\_2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standing_NATO_Maritime_Group_2).

activity.”<sup>189</sup> This operation, in a sense, was due to the U.S.’s invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (the first time this was invoked), which stipulates that “Allies can provide any form of assistance they deem necessary to respond to a situation.”<sup>190</sup> Therefore, the Alliance launched Operation Action Endeavour as a “counter-terrorism operation in response to the attacks on the United States.”<sup>191</sup> Active Endeavor “hailed merchant vessels and boarded suspect ships, intervened to rescue civilians on stricken oil rigs and sinking ships and, generally, helped to improve perceptions of security.”<sup>192</sup> Moreover, these NATO ships also “systematically carried out preparatory route surveys in “choke” points, as well as in important passages and harbors throughout the Mediterranean.”<sup>193</sup> After 15 years of operation, Operation Active Endeavour would effectively transition over into Operation Sea Guardian in July of 2016. This move from Operation Active Endeavor to Operation Sea Guardian would provide more assistance over a

larger area. In essence, allowing for its mission to look over a much broader range of responsibilities in the Mediterranean Sea. Moreover, while Operation Active Endeavour was an Article 5 operation, Operation Sea Guardian is not, and instead “aims to establish maritime situational awareness, support counter-terrorism efforts, including through the hailing (and potentially boarding) of suspect vessels, and contribute to capacity-building for partners.”<sup>194</sup>

Cooperation between the two operations was soon to follow. Also in July 2016, the Joint Declaration between the European Council and the European Commission was signed, allowing for Operation Sea Guardian to cooperate with the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR), and therefore Operation Sophia, primarily through the “provision of information, surveillance and logistic support, [and]... contributi[on] to the implementation of the arms embargo in the high seas off the coast of Libya.”<sup>195</sup> This collaboration allowed the EU and NATO to work closely in pursuit of strategic solutions to the Mediterranean Sea crisis. During the time in which Operation Sea Guardian and Operation Sophia worked side-by-side, their

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<sup>189</sup> “Operation Active Endeavour.” shape.NATO.int. Accessed September 14, 2023. <https://shape.NATO.int/missionarchive/operation-active-endeavour>.

<sup>190</sup> “Collective Defence and Article 5.” NATO, July 4, 2023. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics\\_110496.htm#:~:text=With%20the%20invocation%20of%20Article,necessary%20in%20the%20particular%20circumstances](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics_110496.htm#:~:text=With%20the%20invocation%20of%20Article,necessary%20in%20the%20particular%20circumstances).

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>194</sup> “Operation Sea Guardian.” NATO, May 26, 2023. [https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics\\_136233.htm](https://www.NATO.int/cps/en/NATOhq/topics_136233.htm).

<sup>195</sup> Campana, Corrado. “Operation Sea Guardian The NATO Maritime Security Operation in the Mediterranean Sea.” *Maritime Interdiction Operations Journal*, no. 14 (September 22, 2017).

similar mandates and operational strategies allowed for a period of success, enhancing the work of both operations.<sup>196</sup>



*NATO's Operation Sea Guardian Task Group  
Commander Coordinating with EU's Operation  
Sophia Force Commander in the Central  
Mediterranean Sea<sup>197</sup>*

Soon, however, Operation Sophia's focus on "search and rescue (SAR) activities brought political tensions, which led [Operation Sophia] to undergo several changes<sup>198</sup>" (Kirtzman, 2020). This included the suspension of its naval assets in

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<sup>196</sup> Giuglietti, Lorenzo. "From the Gulf of Aden to the Mediterranean Sea: The Institutionalisation of EU-NATO Maritime Relations." SpringerLink, November 22, 2022. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-12338-2\\_21#citeas](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-12338-2_21#citeas).

<sup>197</sup> "Operation Sea Guardian Coordinating with EU's Operation Sophia in the Central Mediterranean Sea." mc.NATO.int. Accessed September 14, 2023. <https://mc.NATO.int/media-centre/news/2018/os-g-coord-with-eus-operation-sophia-in-the-central-med>.

<sup>198</sup> Camila Kirtzman, "Sophia to Irini: A shift in EU Mediterranean operations". Accessed September 14, 2023. <https://pathforeurope.eu/sophia-to-irini-a-shift-in-eu-mediterranean-operations/>.

2019 "due to a dispute between member states, particularly with Italy, over disembarkation points and relocation of migrants<sup>199</sup>" (Kirtzman, 2020). With this suspension, the operation could only utilize its air assets and the Libyan coastguard/naval support. Therefore, in March 2020, the Council officially discontinued Operation Sophia and replaced it with Operation Eunavfor Med Irini (also known as Operation Irini). In contrast to Operation Sophia's focus on search and rescue, Operation Irini aims to implement "the United Nations arms embargo on Libya through aerial, satellite and maritime assets".<sup>200</sup> Moreover, the operation monitored "illicit exports from Libya, train[ed] the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy, and disrupt[ed] smuggling and trafficking networks" in the context of the Second Libyan Civil War.<sup>201</sup> This switch in operational purpose transformed the EU's mission from a response to protect migrant lives to a focus on Libyan arms smuggling. With this, NATO quickly became the primary source of support for the crisis at sea.

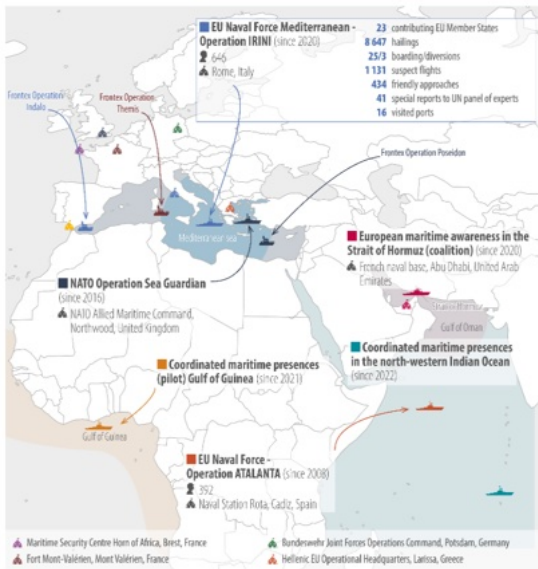
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<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Sophia to Irini.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.





Source: EPRS, based on the studies discussed in the briefing.

### *Naval Operations at the Mediterranean Sea.*<sup>202</sup>

## Operation Sea Guardian: Successes And Struggles

Operation Sea Guardian has shown varied success throughout its time in operation. Data shows that while there were marginal decreases in the number of migrants crossing the Aegean Sea from 2014 to 2017, “Never before had [migrant] detections been so high in the Central Mediterranean area, with 181,459 in 2016, which is 18% more than in 2015”.<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, “A staggering 96% of newly-arrived migrants interviewed in the Central Mediterranean region stated that they had used the services of smuggling networks to illegally enter the EU,”

<sup>202</sup> “European Maritime Security Landscape.” Epthinktank, March 8, 2023. <https://epthintank.eu/2023/03/08/charting-a-course-through-stormy-waters-the-eu-as-a-maritime-security-actor/european-maritime-security-landscape/>.

<sup>203</sup> 2017 Risk Analysis - Frontex, February 2017. [https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/Annual\\_Risk\\_Analysis\\_2017.pdf](https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2017.pdf).

which suggests that irregular migration via Libya is entirely dependent on the services of the smuggling networks”.<sup>204</sup> However, the data notes that “in its maritime operations in the Central Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea, the Agency-deployed vessels rescued 90,000 migrants”.<sup>205</sup> This mixed success could be attributed to a number of factors, from criminal network strategies that were designed to avoid Operation Sea Guardian detection to potential increased demand in land-route (as opposed to sea-route) smugglers.

## Possible Solutions

With the varied achievement of past NATO and EU operations in curbing the Aegean Sea crisis once and for all, new solutions are needed now more than ever. Whether solutions choose to center around legal terms between member states, security, or partnerships, collaboration within NATO is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the crisis at hand.

### Investing In Migrants’ Home Countries

This solution focuses on strengthening the rule of law and enhancing economic and social development in the home countries of migrants to tackle the problem at its root. Experts suggest

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

that “much could be achieved at a fraction of what is already being spent on excluding migrants and border control”.<sup>206</sup> For example, the EU’s current plan is to “double migration spending and quadruple border control expenditure for the next seven years, dedicating a total of €34.9bn to border and migration management”.<sup>207</sup> This could involve more regionally-based proposed solutions.

### Floating Wall In The Aegean Sea

This consists of “a system of floating dams off the coast of Lesbos, spanning 1.7 miles and rising 50cm (20in) above the water, and intends “to block the primary sea route to Greece from Turkey and deter migrants from attempting the journey”.<sup>208</sup> Many criticize that this solution doesn’t truly “address the issues at the heart of the refugee crisis”, only managing the inflow of immigrants.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Digidiki, Vasileia, and Jacqueline Bhabha. “Greece’s Proposed ‘floating Wall’ Shows the Failure of EU Migration Policies | Vasileia Digidiki and Jacqueline Bhabha.” The Guardian, February 7, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/07/greece-floating-wall-eu-refugees-migrant-policy>.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> “Op-Ed: European Union Needs Smarter Solutions to Refugee Crisis in Greece.” Harvard School of Public Health, February 14, 2020. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/op-ed-european-union-needs-smarter-solutions-to-refugee-crisis-in-greece/>.

### Increased Migrant Aid At Sea

This solution would be made up of the continuation and strengthening of NATO’s Operation Sea Guardian, while also drawing focus toward aid while migrants are in transit. This would look more like Operation Sophia’s humanitarian efforts in search and rescue operations to ensure the safety of migrants at sea. Moreover, this solution may depend on bolstering the existing aid available or the deployment of a new program.

These are only a few of the many solutions that can be implemented for the purpose of increasing NATO’s progress with the migrant crisis in the Aegean Sea. Due to the many various strategies and the complexity of the situation in combination with the personal interests of each member state, solutions to this problem will not be simple, and different countries will likely have different stances.

### Bloc Positions

It is no surprise that many within NATO have conflicting approaches to the Aegean Sea crisis, given the multifaceted nature of the situation. Generally, the two biggest areas of contention are in refugee traffic into Europe and internal objections to the current missions.

## Migrant Acceptance Levels

Due to rapid urbanization, the after-effects of climate change, and ongoing regional conflicts, the Aegean Sea crisis should heighten in the coming years.<sup>210</sup> This expected increase has caused some NATO members to become increasingly unwilling to allow migrants into their countries. Certainly, countries like Greece and Italy, who have long borne the brunt of the crisis, have recently favored policies which seek to close the doors on incoming migrants in an attempt to stop the flow into Europe. Greece, in particular, has attempted to reduce immigrant inflow, and has floated a plan for a “refugee-deterring sea wall,” set to be implemented off the coast of Lesbos.<sup>211</sup> It is unclear if migrant deterrence ought to be the policy for NATO moving forward, as its effectiveness has not yet been observed. However, countries like Greece need support from other NATO nations that have greater resources to receive migrants. Hence, a centralized approach would be helpful.

Other NATO nations, including Germany, have noted that exclusionary policies cutting migrant support result in many being unable to move into other parts of Europe,<sup>212</sup> exacerbating the crisis. Additionally, efforts to intimidate migrants cause an unwillingness to seek help from local governments, furthering poverty within the migrant populations. Instead, some nations, such as Sweden, readily grant asylum status to those seeking it, granting leave to more than 75% of individuals – a much higher rate than Greece’s 15% and Hungary’s 9% approval rate.<sup>213</sup>

## Internal Objections

On the national security front, while NATO’s mission in the Aegean serves as a critical multilateral intelligence gathering operation, Turkey, in particular, has voiced frustration at its continued presence. Turkey’s defense minister, Firik Isik, argued he was confident his nation could monitor the area with its own naval forces, seeking “restored sovereignty over its territorial waters.”<sup>214</sup> This call for heightened independence comes after ongoing Greek territorial challenges

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<sup>210</sup> Alastair Macdonald, “Migrant crisis forcing divided Europe to look ahead,” *Reuters*, last modified August 27, 2015, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-eu-insight-idUSKCN0QW26520150827>.

<sup>211</sup> Matt Hickman, “Greece floats plan for refugee-deterring sea wall,” *The Architect’s Newspaper*, last modified February 11, 2020, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.archpaper.com/2020/02/greece-floats-plan-for-refugee-deterring-sea-wall/>.

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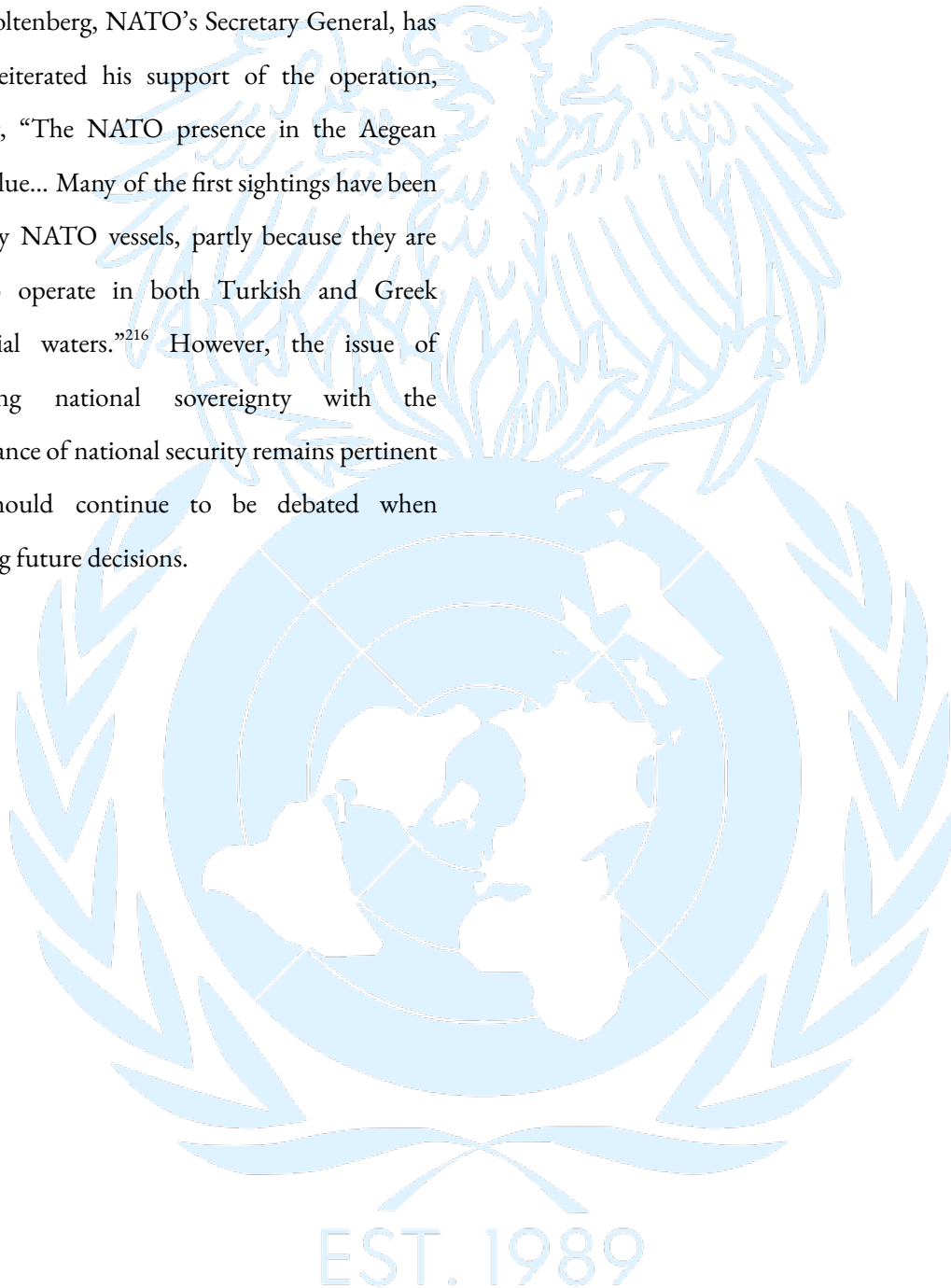
<sup>212</sup> Macdonald, “Migrant crisis forcing divided Europe to look ahead.”

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> David M. Herszenhorn, “Turkey seeks end to NATO patrols in Aegean Sea,” *Politico*, last modified October 27, 2016, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-seeks-end-to-nato-patrols-in-aegean-sea-migration-crisis-refugees/>.

in the Aegean and comes after decreased migrant flows into Europe.<sup>215</sup>

Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary General, has since reiterated his support of the operation, arguing, "The NATO presence in the Aegean adds value... Many of the first sightings have been done by NATO vessels, partly because they are able to operate in both Turkish and Greek territorial waters."<sup>216</sup> However, the issue of balancing national sovereignty with the importance of national security remains pertinent and should continue to be debated when assessing future decisions.



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<sup>215</sup> "Turkey says NATO's Aegean migrants mission achieved target, calls for end," *Reuters*, last modified October 27, 2016, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-europe-migrants-NATO-turkey-idUKKCN12R1A4>.

<sup>216</sup> Herszenhorn, "Turkey seeks end to NATO patrols in Aegean Sea."

## Glossary

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**Asylum Seekers:** Migrants who have fled their home country due to persecution or human rights violations, and who have applied for refugee status. Asylum seekers have not yet received a notification regarding their refugee -- and consequently -- asylum status, meaning that while some asylum seekers may be considered refugees, not all will be.

**EU:** The European Union, a collection of 27 countries in Europe.

**FRONTEX:** The European Border and Coast Guard Agency that focuses on the EU's external border management (i.e. tracking migratory flows, vulnerability checks, counter-terrorism, border intervention, and border surveillance).<sup>217</sup>

**Human Trafficking:** Transporting and/or coercing individuals with the intention of exploiting them for labor or monetary gain.

**Lesbos:** A small island in the Aegean Sea at the heart of the migrant crisis.

**MARCOM:** Central command of NATO's maritime forces.

**MENA:** Middle East and North Africa

**Migrants:** Individuals who leave their country of origin for any particular reason. Note: the terms "migrants," "refugees," and "asylum seekers" are used interchangeably in this background guide.

**Migrant-smuggling:** The illegal transport of a migrant into another country for financial gain.

**Operation Active Endeavour:** A NATO operation active from 2001 to 2016 with the primary mandate of defending against terrorist activity in the Aegean.

**Operation IRINI:** Also known as Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI; an EU mission with the primary mandate of enforcing UN arms embargoes.

**Operation Sea Guardian:** NATO's maritime operation in the Mediterranean focusing on supporting naval capacity building, situational awareness, and counter-terrorism efforts.

**Operation Sophia:** EU's response to the 2015 Mediterranean migrant crisis, employing the resources of several EU states.

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<sup>217</sup> "Operations," *Frontex*, accessed September 14, 2023, <https://frontex.europa.eu/what-we-do/operations/operations/>.

**Refugees:** Anyone who fled their country due to founded fears of persecution on the basis of their “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group of political opinion.”<sup>218</sup> Refugees are entitled to protection (“asylum”) by their new country of residence upon receiving approval of their refugee status.

**SNMG2:** Standing NATO Maritime Group 2; part of NATO’s rapid-reaction force currently deployed in the Aegean Sea as part of NATO’s response to the migrant crisis.



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<sup>218</sup> *Glossary on Migration* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2019), 170, [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml\\_34\\_glossary.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf).

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