

# STUDY GUIDE



ISTANBUL OKAN UNIVERSITY  
MODEL UNITED NATIONS

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL  
DENİZ NUR BERK

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## **1. Letter from the Secretary-General**

### **Dear Participants,**

I'm delighted to point out that it is my utmost pleasure and honor to serve as the Secretary-General of OKANMUN'25. Throughout the three days of our precious conference, different matters on different committees shall be discussed and very important decisions shall be taken on various past and present events that have already or will have a major impact on our lives. From political controversies to social and daily life problems, we will be creating an active atmosphere for our participants to enjoy and remember every moment they will have during the conference and find efficient as well as prudent solutions by having heated and accurate debates.

Heated and accurate debates require a well-executed and ideally placed preparation process. Therefore, our talented academic team has prepared study guides for their committees so that our participants will have a proper document to get prepared for our conference and perform accordingly.

I believe OKANMUN'25 will be a conference where many first timers will discover their inner diplomats and politicians, who had to hold back and keep it hidden for several reasons that no one knows. Hope to see you dear participants to shape the United Nations and Model United Nations to a better and lasting effulgence. It is thanks to our ancestors who guided us to who we are today. Trust in yourselves and stand out for a better world for everyone. Therefore, I would like to remind everyone of a saying from our Great Leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk,

“If one day you are helpless, don't wait for a savior. Be the savior, yourself!”

**EZGİ AKPINAR**

**Secretary-General of OKANMUN'25**



## **2. Letter from the Under-Secretary-General**

Dear Delegates,

My name is Deniz Nur Berk, and we will be serving you as your Under-Secretary-General. In this Model UN conference, some may be asking why NATO is present as a committee since it is not a part of the UN. The reason why international organs and organizations are set as committees in Model UN conferences is that the conference actually, carries an aim towards establishing a higher and more unique level of debating and diplomatic experience rather than being fully committed to the UN and its organs and limiting the extends of the conference. The NATO committee is a chance for all delegates to see the world and conference experience a bit different from the UN meanwhile not getting too far to lose focus from the main aim of such conferences, seeing a glimpse of the modern world and steps of politics and diplomacy. Hopefully raising enough awareness to be able to understand, cope with and even solve such international problems in the future as aimed by such organizations. As your Under Secretaries-General, we would be expecting you to take up the challenge and become a part of the debates and politics that you will be participating in with your utmost efforts so that you may both improve yourself in the disciplines of MUN conferences and the world and meanwhile enjoy what you are doing to the fullest. If you have any question do not hesitate to contact me.

**Deniz Nur Berk**

**Under-Secretary-General of NATO**

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### 3. Introduction

#### 3.1. What is NATO?

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is made up of 32, 30 European, and 2 North American countries. The organization was created following World War II to carry out the North Atlantic Treaty<sup>1</sup>, which was signed on April 4, 1949, in Washington, D.C. (What is NATO, 2001) NATO is a system of collective security in which the independent member states agree to defend one another from outside an assault. During the Cold War, NATO acted as a deterrent to the Soviet Union's threat. The alliance continued after the fall of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, participating in military actions in South Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Balkans. The organization's motto is “animus in consulendo liber” (Latin for "a mind unfettered in deliberation"). (Wikipedia, 1949)

NATO's military headquarters are in Mons, Belgium, while its major administrative offices are in Brussels, Belgium. The deployment of the NATO Response Force in Eastern Europe has been prioritized by the alliance, and the total military strength of all NATO countries is around 3.5 million soldiers. By 2022, their combined military spending accounted for about 55% of the nominal world total. Furthermore, members have committed to achieving or maintaining a target defense spending level of at least 2% of GDP by 2024. (The Wales Declaration on the Transatlantic Bond)



On April 4, 1947, NATO was founded with twelve founding members. Since then, the organization has recruited nine more members, the most recent being Finland on April 4, 2023, 74 years after NATO was founded. When Sweden's application for membership is granted in June 2022, it will become the 32nd member of the North Atlantic Treaty, as the existing nations have now ratified its Accession Protocol. (REUTERS, 2023) Additionally, NATO recognizes Ukraine, Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina as potential members. Non-member Russia, one of the twenty extra nations participating in NATO's Partnership for Peace program, has heightened relations. An additional 19 nations are involved in NATO's structured conversation projects. (What is NATO, 2001). The fundamental principle of NATO is expressed in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states that:

*an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all; and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.*

Article 5 has only been invoked once in response to the 9/11 attacks in the United States in 2001. In order to solve issues, build trust, and ultimately prevent conflict, NATO encourages democratic ideas and allows members to communicate and work together on military and security issues. (What is NATO, 2001) NATO is committed to settling conflicts peacefully. It has the military potential to carry out crisis-management operations if diplomatic efforts are unsuccessful. These are carried out, either alone or jointly with other nations and international organizations, in accordance with the collective defense clause of the Washington Treaty, the founding treaty of NATO.

### 3.2. NATO's Goals and Values

NATO's main goal is to bring together member countries under a common defense mechanism to ensure peace and maintain unity among countries. This is guaranteed by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. According to this article, an attack on any NATO member country is considered an attack on the entire alliance (NATO, 2023).

NATO is an organization that aims to bring together countries under umbrella values, not just military cooperation. Democracy, freedom, rule of law and human rights are some of these principles (Ringsmose & Rynning, 2022). These principles show that NATO also functions as a normative union.

Under NATO's strategic adaptation processes, NATO has also started to play a role in areas such as cybersecurity, hybrid threats and counter-terrorism. This shows how the organization responds to the changing threat environment (Shea, 2021).

### 3.3. Introduction to the Agenda Item

One of the main goals of NATO's establishment was to provide collective security against Soviet expansion. The changes experienced after the Cold War and the transformations in the international system have moved the organization's mission from being solely military deterrence to a point where multidimensional security policies are developed. Today, both the internal political harmony is disrupted and the external strategic integrity is being disrupted, testing NATO policies and mechanisms (NATO, 2023). The prominent titles "The New Defense Spending Proposal and Its Implications on Alliance Unity" and "The US Aggression Towards NATO Allies" are particularly important.



The decision taken at the 2014 Wales Summit to increase NATO countries' defense spending to 2% of their gross domestic product has recently entered a more stringent implementation phase under pressure from the US. However, this proposal has caused deep disagreements among member countries. Allies with different economic structures and budget priorities are concerned that this goal could negatively affect both short-term economic stability and domestic political balances. For Western European countries, where social spending is particularly high, this obligation could mean sacrificing public services in the eyes of the public.

In contrast, the US argues that this goal will not only increase military capacity but also create a "fair ground" for burden sharing. However, the fundamental issue here is not only economic but also political. The failure to develop a common understanding on increasing defense budgets weakens NATO's decision-making mechanism and questions the principle of collective deterrence. Parallel to this problem, the aggressiveness observed in the US foreign policy line has become applied not only to rival actors but also to allied countries.

Especially during the Trump administration, the open criticism directed at European countries, the "outdated" definitions of NATO and the unilateral closure of military bases in countries such as Germany have seriously shaken the trust within the alliance. Although the diplomatic tone has softened somewhat with the Biden administration, the shift of the US's geopolitical priorities to the Asia-Pacific is causing a perception of "strategic isolation" among allies in Europe. The idea of "Europe's strategic autonomy", which France has persistently advocated, has also become on the rise in this context. However, this tendency may make the way for fragmented defense initiatives instead of strengthening NATO's unity. Pressure on defense spending and diplomatic aggression should not be seen as two independent problems.

On the contrary, these two issues present a combined threat profile for NATO's future. The US's pressure on its allies by relying on its economic and military power undermines NATO's structure based on equality, causes a hierarchy of "leader and follower states" to emerge within the alliance, and makes decision-making processes less participatory. Furthermore, when the US makes decisions on foreign policy issues independently of NATO such as interventions in the Middle East, Iran policy, or trade wars against China other allies consider it as stepping outside of common defense mechanisms. This could be a sign of not only a political but also a strategic rupture. In an era when the global security environment is being more complicated, NATO's principles of solidarity and stability are more important than ever. Factors such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine, China's rising technological power, and cyber threats require NATO's collective response. However, if internal unity is weakened, it may become impossible to develop an effective policy against external threats.

## 4. Understanding Defence Spending

### 4.1. What is Defence Spending

Defense expenditures are the totality of financial resources allocated by a state to maintain the continuity of its military mechanism and strategies. All expenditures in this area, from personnel salaries to training programs, are included. In the context of NATO, this budget is not only a financial liability but also a part of the collective defense principle that strengthens solidarity within the NATO alliance, especially in Article . of the North Atlantic Treaty. At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO member countries were encouraged to increase this budget to 2% of their GDP in order to increase NATO's deterrence (NATO, 2014). Many countries hesitated to achieve this goal due to reasons such as economic difficulties, public welfare and public opinion. This situation caused conflict between the USA and other countries. Experts think that such a high defense budget will harm social services within the country. In addition, there is a group that argues that this is necessary against security threats (Mattelaer, 2016). Defense expenditures are not just a budget item, but a clear reflection of the state's policies and priorities.

### 4.2. NATO's 2% Guideline

#### 4.2.1. Which Countries Meet the Goal?

There are a limited number of countries that can meet the target of increasing defense spending to 2% of GDP by 2024 which was accepted by NATO at the 2014 Wales Summit. While the US has been spending above this target for a long time, some European countries such as Poland, Estonia, Greece, Lithuania and the United Kingdom have also reached this target (NATO, 2023). Eastern European countries, which have geographical and historical tensions with Russia in particular, tend to increase their defense spending. Some NATO members with large economies such as Germany, Canada, Italy and Spain are still below this level. The policies of these countries are often about maximizing domestic welfare and risking delayed meeting of the target. It is emphasized that defense spending should be evaluated not only in terms of quantity but also impact and sustainability (Chiriac, 2022).



#### 4.2.2. Criticisms of the Rule

Although the 2% spending target is seen as an important indicator of solidarity within NATO, there are also many criticisms of this target. First of all, it is argued that the 2% rate does not directly measure defense capability, but only focuses on the amount of spending. For this reason, even if some countries increase their budgets to this level, they may not achieve satisfactory results in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and operational capacity (Mattelaer, 2016). In addition, it is stated that this target may cause cuts in social spending during economic crises and that areas such as education and health may be damaged. Some experts argue that the 2% target is more of a political symbol and is insufficient to reflect the multidimensional structure of security threats (Daalder & Goldgeier, 2021). In addition, the use of this target, especially by the USA, as a pressure tool has raised questions in terms of equality and mutual trust within the alliance among some allies. It is stated that the implementation of a single target on defense spending without taking into account the different strategic and economic conditions of each country may weaken the harmony within NATO.

#### 4.3. The New Spending Proposal

##### 4.3.1. What Does the Proposal Suggest?

The new defense spending proposal aims to increase NATO members' military budgets not only to 2%, but also to use this budget in a more functional, sustainable and collectively compatible manner. It is also suggested that priority should be given to areas such as technology investments, cyber defense capabilities, strategic stocks and joint exercise capacity (NATO, 2024). In this context, the proposal aims to ensure that members both close their own national security gaps and contribute to NATO's deterrence capacity. In addition, increasing defense industry cooperation, standardization of weapon systems and tighter integration into the NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP) are among the important subheadings of this proposal (Ringsmose & Rynning, 2023).

#### 4.3.2. Timeline and Implementation

Although the 2% spending target is seen as an important indicator of solidarity within NATO, there is much criticism of this target. First of all, it is argued that defense capability cannot be measured by the allocated budget and that this situation will not lead to an efficient military force in terms of operational capacity, but will increase military density and a satisfactory result will not be achieved (Mattelaer, 2016). In addition, the size of the allocated budget suggests that social areas such as education and health will be disrupted in economic crises. Some experts argue that the 2% target is more of a political symbol and is insufficient to reflect the multidimensional structure of security threats (Daalder & Goldgeier, 2021). In addition, the fact that the US uses this target as a pressure tool on other countries has created equality and trust issues within the alliance for some allies. Therefore, it is stated that the implementation of a single target on defense spending without considering the different strategic and economic conditions of each country may weaken the harmony within NATO.

### 5. Impacts on Alliance Unity

#### 5.1. How Do Spendings Affect the Unity?

The level of defense spending within NATO directly affects not only military capacity but also fundamental elements of unity within the alliance, such as trust, burden-sharing, and strategic cohesion. Large differences between defense budgets feed the perception that some allies carry more burdens than others and undermine the internal balance of the alliance (Webber, 2021). In particular the fact that the United States has long covered a large portion of defense spending in Europe has been a source of pressure on other allies and has occasionally caused diplomatic tensions (Ringsmose & Rynning, 2023). If spending is not equalized, the inequality in sharing the security burden complicates collective decision-making processes, reduces deterrence, and undermines strategic cohesion among allies. In addition, low defense spending prevents some members from contributing to NATO's planning at the required level, which threatens NATO's operational integrity (Mattelaer, 2016). In contrast, increasing spending and converging with standards will strengthen not only military capacity but also political trust and mutual solidarity. Therefore, the issue of defense spending is closely related to the sustainability of the concept of "security in unity", which is at the existential basis of NATO, rather than an economic or military debate (Chiriac, 2022).



## 5.2. Reactions of NATO Member States

### 5.2.1. Supportive Countries

The new defense spending proposal is supported especially by countries located on NATO's eastern flank and facing a direct threat from Russia. Countries such as Poland, the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and Romania are trying to increase NATO's collective deterrence by going beyond the 2% defense spending target (Chiriac, 2022).

Countries are creating a security wall on NATO's eastern border by using their budgets in areas such as modernization and forward deployment. At the same time, as mentioned, the USA is one of the main advocates of this proposal. The Washington administration has long demanded more contributions from European allies and has been applying political pressure in this direction (Ringsmose & Rynning, 2023). The United Kingdom is another important actor that maintains high defense spending and supports NATO's global capacity. Increasing defense spending is not only to increase NATO's military power but also to play an active role in decision-making processes (Mattelaer, 2016).

### 5.2.2. Concerned or Opposing Countries

There are also countries that approach the new defense spending proposal cautiously or critically. Southern European countries such as Italy, Spain, and Greece, which are struggling with economic difficulties, and states such as Luxembourg or Belgium, which have traditionally low military spending, believe that the obligation created by the budget increase will increase pressure on their states (Webber, 2021). These countries think that in addition to the social service problems that will arise in a possible scenario, it is against the principle of equality within NATO. This can lead to the formation of a NATO structure that is against the principle of equality by creating "prior" and "secondary" members within the alliance. Countries such as Germany, which are strategically important but want to proceed cautiously due to military problems experienced in the past, also argue that foreign policy should also be taken into account in this budget increase (Ringsmose & Rynning, 2023).

## 6. The US and NATO Relations

### 6.1. The Role of the US in NATO

The US has played the leading role in military and political terms since the establishment of NATO. The US, by providing the largest budget share of NATO's budget, is in an effective position in NATO's political and strategic stance as well as in its military mechanisms. Its military bases, nuclear and intelligence forces in Europe make the US an effective country in Europe and the East, despite being on a different continent. Since the Cold War, the US has closely linked Europe's security with its own foreign policy priorities. This approach has led the alliance to address global threats, especially in the post-9/11 period, within the scope of the fight against terrorism (Kaplan, 2021). The US has recently criticized the defense budgets of European countries and has been pressuring all countries to implement its new defense spending proposal by demonstrating the principle of equality within the NATO alliance. This attitude weakens the bond between the US and other NATO countries and causes cracks to form within NATO.

### 6.2. Past and Present Tensions

Since Donald Trump became the US president, America's attitude towards NATO has changed, and this period has witnessed developments that have tested the solidarity within NATO. The Trump administration has frequently criticized economically strong but militarily unimportant countries in public, stating that NATO countries have not fulfilled their commitments regarding defense spending (Brands & Nichols, 2020). These criticisms have not only been a tool of political pressure on countries, but have also caused the understanding of mutual trust within NATO to be damaged. Arguing that the US carries a disproportionate burden within NATO, Trump has described this situation as "unfair and unsustainable" and stated that America's security commitments are not being sufficiently met by other allies (Deni, 2020). This attitude has increased concerns that the US may withdraw from NATO and has cast doubt on the US's long-term resolve (Mills, 2021). These statements have recently turned into actual actions, and the US has announced that it will withdraw approximately 12,000 troops from Germany. He stated that the reason for this was Germany's inadequacy in defense spending (Chivvis, 2021). This decision worried not only Germany but all NATO countries and made them think that NATO's deterrent power against Russia could be weakened.



### **6.3. Examples of Aggression and Pressure**

#### **6.3.1. Sanctions and Trade Pressure**

The economic pressure and sanctions imposed by the United States in its relations with its NATO allies have been one of the important factors that have weakened transatlantic ties in recent years. Especially during the Trump administration, trade threats and additional taxes against the US's allies in Europe have damaged alliance relations based on trust. For example, due to Germany's Nord Stream 2 project with Russia, the US has imposed sanctions on European companies participating in this project; this situation has been considered as an intervention in national sovereignty in many European countries, especially Germany (Conley & Ruy, 2020). At the same time, additional customs duties imposed on steel and aluminum imports have fueled trade disputes with NATO members such as France, Germany and Canada, and it has been observed that economic tensions have also negatively affected political relations (Bown, 2020). The use of such economic tools as foreign policy tools has weakened the understanding of mutual solidarity within NATO and has brought criticism that the US's strategic approach to its allies is more "interest-based".

#### **6.3.2. Unilateral Military Actions**

The military operations and actions carried out by the US without consulting or informing NATO have raised questions about whether the lack of coordination created by the US within NATO will reach an uncontrollable level. The sudden invasion of the Trump administration into northern Syria in 2019 left the US's Kurdish allies defenseless and facilitate for Türkiye's operations (Gordon, 2020). The US's sudden policy changes have created a lack of trust between other countries. In addition, the killing of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in a US airstrike in Baghdad in 2020 was interpreted as an initiative that threatened regional stability and was viewed with concern by many NATO countries (Katzman, 2020).

## 7. Concerns of Smaller Member States

### 7.1. Economic and Military Challenges

There are sharp disparities in terms of economic and military capabilities between NATO member nations. Countries in Eastern Europe, as well as the lower-income members, are now subject to political and public pressure to raise defense spending. The 2% defense spending goal is a top-end for many of the smaller or emerging nations (Chiriac, 2022). To meet the goal, countries may have to eliminate social service spending or go into debt. Additionally, their military inventories and technological base are far from comparable to those of their allied counterparts. This gap may undermine collective defense efforts and create barriers to military integration into NATO (Schreer & Becker, 2021). Cost is only one limit on spending, but equipping these nations lacks support relative to personnel, technology transfer, and strategic planning.

### 7.2. Political Pressure and Dependence

The influence of economically stronger states also contains a political dimension. Some states could be obliged to adopt their behaviours in accordance with the leadership of great powers, especially the United States. For these countries, this leaves them in a position of dependency and having to obscure their own national interests (Smith, 2020). As NATO does not permit voting and states have equal votes, different levels of financial and military contributions to the alliance in actual decision making also effect political relevance. Under this perspective, some states have observed that decisions of great importance are made without proper consultation and claimed that the Alliance needs to include the views of all the states, in a way more transparent manner (Yost, 2019).



### 7.3. Fear of Losing Equal Voice

Each country has one vote in NATO's decision-making process, which is designed to provide equality among members. However, in practice, larger member countries contribute more resources and lead operations, and this naturally creates an issue regarding equal participation by smaller countries. Smaller countries perceive themselves as potentially being included as members of NATO, but having little say or influence as members providing only a symbolic contribution (Giegerich & Nicoll, 2020). Additionally, the environment is enhanced when some of the allies are excluded from strategic issues and not informed or invited to participate. This potentially damages the atmosphere of trust within NATO, not to mention the spirit of solidarity among allies. Democratic processes are contextually important. Beyond reinforcing the democratic nature of decision-making within the alliance, the procedural democracy will be important to acceptance of NATO in future cooperation.

## 8. Case Studies

### 8.1. Germany and Defence Spending

Germany is economically one of the strongest countries in NATO and has the second largest defense budget in the alliance. Despite this, Germany's defense expenditure has been below NATO's target and NATO allies, especially the United States, expressed concerns with Germany's defense spending (Müller, 2023). The political culture in Germany obviously still deems social spending a higher priority over defense; the same anti-war sentiments that stalled defense spending historically still prevail. Germany has also seen delays in some of its military modernization programs. The situation has, however, prompted discussion that Germany should be expected to shoulder more of the burden sharing within NATO, and that Germany increasing its defense spending could restore and strengthen the bonds of alliance solidarity and leadership (Schmidt, 2022).

## 8.2. Türkiye and United States Relations in NATO

Relations between Turkey and the United States are important for NATO solidarity because Türkiye's geographical location is strategically important. Turkey, which is an important ally for the eastern flank, also stands out with the straits. Syria and the eastern Mediterranean have caused differences of opinion between the US and Turkey. Some of the US's policies in the region and Turkey's purchase of the S-400 air defense system from Russia have caused trust issues between the parties. Relations between the two countries directly affect the solidarity of the alliance.

## 8.3. Eastern European NATO Members

After their NATO accession process, Eastern European countries have also begun to have a valuable role in the alliance. These countries, and especially for their historical issues with Russia, emphasize the importance of increasing defense spending (Novak, 2022). However, these economically weaker countries struggle to meet the NATO target for defense spending. Consequently, this demands international support and collaboration to develop their defense capacities (Petrova, 2023). Furthermore, Eastern European countries expect that NATO provides more assistance with respect to border security and military modernization. The need for regional security exacerbates the motivation of these countries to strengthen NATO's solidarity. Strengthening Eastern European members is an essential factor to increasing NATO's defense capacity on the eastern flank.



## 9. Questions to be Addressed

- How can NATO member countries cooperate more effectively to increase defense spending?
- How do imbalances in defense spending affect alliance unity, and how can these be reduced?
- How can the US improve its behavior and attitude to strengthen solidarity within NATO?
- How do economic differences among members impact defense budgets and alliance relations?
- What solutions exist to resolve tensions between Turkey and the US that affect NATO's security?
- What mechanisms can be developed to help NATO members meet their defense spending targets?
- What diplomatic steps can be taken to reduce tensions and create a more united NATO?

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