

## Perceptions of NATO in North Africa and the Sahel

“The effects of security challenges in North Africa and Sahel (NAS) are not isolated to the region. Thus, it is in NATO’s interest to play a positive role to discover why these challenges exist and how NATO can help find and implement sustainable solutions.” ([JFCNP Webinar Kickoff Video](#))

On January 29, 2019, the NATO Strategic Direction– South HUB and Three Stones International held an online chat forum to discuss “Perceptions of NATO in North Africa and the Sahel.” The purpose of the forum was to gain key inputs from regional stakeholders to help NATO identify where opportunities exist for positive and mutually beneficial engagement in the region.

The main topics the webinar addressed were:

- How should NATO engage in NAS?
- How do different communities see NATO involvement?
- How should NATO engagement be different than bilateral engagements?
- Does NATO have a role to play in capacity building?

During the four hour forum, HUB personnel directly engaged with nearly 100 community and civil society leaders, including representatives from NGOs, think tanks, and academia. Countries represented included: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DRC, Egypt, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Libya, Rwanda, Morocco, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan, Tunisia. Plus, external experts participated from: Azerbaijan, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Kosovo, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States.

*"In many cases, NATO is seen by locals through the prism of imperialism / neocolonialism due to present and past actions of some of its members. In some regions, this is a very strong sentiment widespread across society. This kind of narrative can be easily fueled by non-State armed groups, further degrading the perception of NATO and allowing these groups to progressively root themselves into the social fabric."* (quote from a participant in the webinar)

NATO faces a crucial moment for its role in NAS. Without trust and confidence, relationships cannot be established. The HUB is using this and future webinars to hear local perspectives and discuss on-the-ground realities. Using a mix of chat forum and direct video, participants were able to share ideas and challenge NATO on how it operates and how it is perceived. NATO, in turn, was able to directly respond in real-time. The results and analysis from the webinar will also be used by the HUB to inform NATO leadership.

