

International Crisis Management Simulation: Stabilizing Afghanistan

From 13 to 17 July YATA – in cooperation with Queen’s University, the Atlantic Council of Canada and the Universities of Heidelberg and Mannheim – organized the fourth international Crisis Management Simulation (CMS) in Kingston. The main theme of the simulation consisted of the stabilization of Afghanistan.

During the first part of the conference, several high-level speakers from various fields of work connected to the current situation in Afghanistan held interesting briefings in order to update participants on the situation in this war-torn country. Participants – consisting of graduate students in related subjects like international relations and political science and coming from a range of countries from Canada to Latvia – were informed by academics, and military and political people to provide them with first-hand knowledge on the current situation to enable them to participate well-informed in the simulation. All speakers emphasized the issue of ‘Afghanization’: the governance of the country and the task of making it secure, stable and democratic must be delegated to the Afghan people in order to make Afghanistan a long-lasting success. Moreover, the fight against narcotics trade must be strengthened, as revenues from drugs trade provide counter-insurgency groups with financial means to continue fighting the coalition forces. The presidential elections of this August are definitely going to be very important for the future of Afghanistan. NATO’s upcoming new Strategic Concept must and most probably will contain clauses related to the conflict in Afghanistan.

After a thorough analysis of the current situation in Afghanistan, the second part of the conference was dedicated to the simulation. All participants were given a certain role within a delegation, ranging from representing states to NGOs and international institutions that are involved in this conflict. After a short time of preparation and writing a paper containing the minimum and maximum goals of each delegation, participants were to update others on their stance during a press conference. Thereafter, delegations could work together to search for common ground on their policy objectives. However, certain shocks during the simulation took most participants off-guard and led to a major adjustment of their goals. The most remarkable shock was the *coup d’état* committed by the Defence Minister of Afghanistan. In the end, Afghanistan became a confederation of three provinces under the authorization of a central government. As the organizers of the simulation pointed out, this was the first time in their history of organizing simulations that there was no need for them to initiate any shocks to the system, as participants managed to initiate shocks to the system themselves.

Except for the briefings and the simulation, participants were also able to visit interesting sites in Canada, like the Peace Support Training Centre in Kingston, the Canadian War Museum and the national parliament in Ottawa. To conclude, the CMS was a very interesting experience, providing participants with a wide range of knowledge about the current situation in Afghanistan, as well as enabling them to bring this knowledge in practice during the simulation.

Christa Verhoek, University of Amsterdam, Commissioner of the Dutch YATA