

Institution: University of Kent		
Unit of Assessment: 19: Politics and International Studies		
Title of case study: Transforming Understandings of and Responses to Terrorism: From NATO to Somalia		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 1 September 2011 - 31 July 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Harmonie Toros	Reader in International Conflict Analysis	1 September 2011-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 January 2015 - 31 July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Since 2015, Dr Harmonie Toros's research has: (1) transformed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) practice in training military and defence officials in counter-terrorism by directly changing NATO's curriculum to include non-violent responses; and, (2) introduced new approaches and frameworks for analysing terrorism and counter-terrorism now adopted within NATO centres.</p> <p>Through the co-production of policy reports and advisory roles, Toros's research has also (3) contributed to the framing of the Federal Government of Somalia's and the United Nations Mission in Somalia's response to non-state armed group, al-Shabaab, introducing non-violent responses to the armed group, including high-level defections and direct negotiations.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Mainstream counter-terrorism policy rejects the possibility of negotiations with groups labelled as 'terrorists'. Toros's research directly challenges this approach. Toros has developed a theoretically grounded framework on whether and how negotiations can be used as a response to terrorist violence. The framework is based on rare primary research, including interviews and participant observation with members of non-state armed groups and senior government and military officials in Somalia, Mali, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Crucially, her research outputs have consistently been policy accessible, enabling military, defence, and political affairs officials of states and international organisations to easily see the relevance of the research to their policy needs – from establishing frameworks for new policy, to mapping concrete implementation, to training new generations of policy leaders.</p> <p>Toros has published 10 articles in top-ranked specialist journals (including <i>Security Dialogue</i>, <i>International Studies Perspectives</i>, <i>Critical Studies on Terrorism</i>), one single-authored monograph, two edited volumes, and seven book chapters with top-rated publishers (including Oxford University Press). Her publications were the first to develop a critical theory-based understanding of terrorism and offer a comprehensive investigation of whether and how negotiations can provide an effective pathway out of terrorism that avoids the excessive violence of common state counter-terrorism responses.</p>		

Her **2012** single-authored monograph, *Terrorism, Talking and Transformation: A Critical Approach*, was one of the first to offer an in-depth study of negotiations in contexts of terrorism [R1]. Praised by leading peace scholar Prof. Roger MacGinty as theoretically ‘sophisticated’, it challenges mainstream arguments against negotiations with terrorist groups – that they undermine state legitimacy and incite more violence – and boldly argues that negotiations with al Qaeda-linked groups are a policy option that has the potential to transform conflicts and reduce violence. The monograph investigates the understudied case of successful negotiations with armed groups in the southern Philippines [R2] and establishes a critical theory-based framework that remains one of the main alternative approaches to understanding terrorism.

The monograph was followed by a special issue in **2013** and an edited volume in **2015**, both co-edited by Toros (50% each), which brought together leading scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers involved in negotiations in terrorist conflicts [R3, R4]. These collections offer original research into a variety of conflicts (Colombia, Syria, Iraq, Basque country) and innovative theoretical and practical approaches to negotiations. Toros has also produced scholarship that clearly lays out how critical approaches to terrorism can inform state and international policy in counter-terrorism [R5].

These publications and presentations based on this research prompted senior NATO officials to invite her in 2015 to join the rota of lecturers for the principal NATO courses in counter-terrorism, followed by the commissioning of co-produced policy reports with NATO and the United Nations, and a high-level secondment. These collaborations have led to further co-produced research outputs, including a co-authored (50%) book chapter published in **2018** investigating the increasingly salient question of whether the conflict in Somalia can be addressed through negotiations with al-Shabaab [R6].

3. References to the research

[R1] Toros, H. (2012). *Terrorism, Talking and Transformation: A Critical Approach*. Abingdon: Routledge. <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/77553/>

[R2] Toros, H. (2012). ‘Talking: A potential path to reconciliation in Mindanao’. In: J. Renner and A. Spencer (eds.). *Reconciliation After Terrorism: Strategy, Possibility or Absurdity?*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 167-185. <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/38557/>

[R3] Toros, H., and Tellidis, I. (eds.) (2013). ‘Terrorism and Peace and Conflict Studies: Investigating the Crossroad’. *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 6:1-223. <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/58607/>

[R4] Tellidis, I., and Toros, H. (eds.) (2015). *Researching Terrorism, Peace and Conflict Studies: Interaction, Synthesis and Opposition*. Abingdon: Routledge. <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/48146/>

[R5] Toros, H. (2016). “Dialogue, Praxis and the State: A Response to Richard Jackson”. *Critical Studies on Terrorism* [Online] 9:126-130. <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/58578/>

[R6] Toros, H., and Harley, S. (2018). ‘Negotiations with al-Shabaab: Lessons Learned and Future Prospects’. Report commissioned by the United Nations Missions in Somalia. Published in M. Keating and M. Waldman (eds.). *War and Peace in Somalia*. New York: Hurst, pp. 437-449. <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/72213/>

4. Details of the impact

Broadening NATO’s Core Defence Against Terrorism Training Curriculum

Toros’s work has had significant and far-reaching international impact on counter-terrorism training. Her collaboration with NATO’s Centre of Excellence-Defence Against Terrorism (COE-DAT) in Ankara (Turkey), the NATO School in Oberammergau (Germany), and on NATO’s Mobile

Training Courses since **2015** led to a direct change in the core curriculum of NATO's Defence Against Terrorism courses [a, b, c]. These weeklong courses are attended every year by approximately 100 military and defence officials at the NATO School, 45 students at COE-DAT, and some 30 students on the Mobile Training Courses. As the NATO School Course Director attested: 'Negotiations with terrorist groups had not been taught at the school prior to your involvement with the teaching and curriculum development. These courses gather military and civilian defence officials from NATO and partner countries who then bring back their newly-acquired knowledge to their home countries and institutions' [b]. Toros has also delivered the conceptual lecture on terrorism from **2015 to 2020**, enabling her to introduce officials to critical approaches to terrorism hitherto overlooked in the courses [c].

Shaping NATO's Framing and Research Practices on Terrorism

Toros's ongoing collaboration with NATO units has also directly influenced NATO policy-makers, broadening their frameworks of understanding terrorism to include non-violent responses and strengthening their analysis of terrorist threats and appropriate CT responses [e, g]. The Head of NATO's Counter-Terrorism Unit described Toros's contribution as 'extremely helpful and of considerable value to NATO's work on Counter-Terrorism', adding that it has prompted them 'to consider the wider CT spectrum rather than the narrow, kinetic military aspect' [d]. This was carried out through the co-production of policy reports (**2015, 2019, 2020**) and a high-level secondment in **2019**, both funded by NATO. Based on their knowledge of Toros's research, COE-DAT commissioned Toros for a report on conflict resolution approaches to terrorism that examines NATO's potential role in reducing conflict [e]. NATO units and national governments have widely used this report to develop counter-terrorism policy [h] and to produce research reports on specific terrorist conflicts for NATO in the Sahel [f].

Following this work, NATO's newly established Southern Hub invited Toros to be the first ever seconded academic working with its Comprehensive Research and Analysis Section (CRAS) from **April to July 2019** [g]. There, Toros introduced 20 analysts to research frameworks that integrate terrorism into broader social and political conflicts and to non-violent responses to terrorism [g]. Most importantly, Toros was the lead on CRAS's first ever policy report based on primary research (interviews, primary data collection) on informal governance of non-state armed groups in the Sahel [f]. The project's conclusions were co-produced with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (Ghana), the African Union's African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the AU's mission in the Sahel (MISAHEL), and the United Nations Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

Developing Somalia's and the United Nations' Response to al-Shabaab

Since 2017, Toros's publications [R1, R6, and e] and advisory role have been directly used in developing and delivering the Somali government's High Level Defector programme, aimed at convincing senior leaders of al-Shabaab, one of the largest non-state armed groups in Africa, to defect. The HLD strategy document cites four of Toros's publications, and the CT Presidential Advisor, who supported the Somali government in designing and carrying out the programme, described Toros's work as 'tremendously helpful in developing the High-Level Defector (HLD) project implementation documents, providing us with a theory of conflict resolution, useful case studies and an incredibly thorough bibliography. The resultant project framework shows the direct influence of Dr Toros's work' [h].

Toros acted as an advisor to the Somali government in **2018** and **2019**, and 'provided ongoing mentoring and insight in support of the HLD project and has also travelled to Somalia and the wider East African region to explore the possibilities for High Level Negotiated Settlement at the organizational level with al-Shabaab' [h]. This work also informed the United Nations Mission in Somalia's (UNSOM) understanding and approach to al-Shabaab. Specifically, UNISOM commissioned a co-authored policy paper (with Harley – 50%) on prospects for negotiations with the group [R6]. This was presented at a UNSOM workshop in Mogadishu in **February 2018**, where Toros presented the option of negotiations with al-Shabaab to Somalia's Interior Minister,

MPs, senior advisors to the President and Prime Minister, the United Nations Special Representative, and the ambassadors of major donor countries. Her presentation forms the basis of, and is directly cited in, UNISOM's current plan to build a 'community of practice' on the question of engagement with al-Shabaab [i].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[a] Example of programme of 'Defence Against Terrorism' week-long course delivered at the NATO School, May 2016.

[b] Letter of former Course Director of Defence Against Terrorism Course at NATO School attesting that Toros was the one who introduced the topic of negotiations in training of NATO officers in the course, 20 September 2016.

[c] Letter of Director of NATO's Centre of Excellence – Defence Against Terrorism, attesting to Toros's role in developing training at the Centre and the mobile training course, and advancing knowledge of the centre of excellence, 11 November 2016.

[d] Testimonial of Head of Counter-Terrorism Section in NATO Headquarters, 31 May 2019.

[e] Toros, H. (2015). *Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and Conflict Resolution: Building Bridges* [Online]. NATO Centre of Excellence – Defence Against Terrorism. <http://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/researches/03-ConflictResolution.pdf>.

[f] NATO Strategic Direction South (NSD-S) (2019). 'Informal Governance by Non-State Armed Groups in the Sahel'. Research report co-produced by H. Toros and analysts of NSD-S. https://thesouthernhub.org/resources/site1/General/NSD-S%20Hub%20Publications/Informal_Governance_of_non_state_armed_groups_in_the_Sahel.pdf

[g] Testimonial of Head of Comprehensive Research and Analysis Section (CRAS) of NATO Strategic Direction-South.

[h] Letter from Advisor to the President of the Federal Government of Somalia, confirming role of Toros's research in devising Somalia's high-level defector strategy and acting as academic mentor for the delivery of the programme.

[i] Invitation of UN Mission in Somalia to invitation-only meeting of experts on 'Engaging with al-Shabaab: Perspectives and Strategies', to constitute a community of practice on dialogue with al-Shabaab, 24 December 2018.