

# CONVERSATIONS ON STRATEGY

PODCAST  
TRANSCRIPT

**Sarah J. Lohmann**

*Countering Terrorism on Tomorrow's Battlefield:  
Critical Infrastructure Security and Resiliency ([NATO COE-DAT] Handbook 2)*

What do election infrastructure, space, drones, and disinformation have to do with each other? How can medical resilience be strengthened, and how are terrorists using broken supply chains, energy security, and climate change to sow chaos and destruction? Malicious actors are laying the groundwork for victory on tomorrow's battlefield by using the same innovation and critical infrastructure democracies are using to save lives. Terrorists, however, are using new technologies to extinguish lives.

Read the collaborative study [here](#).

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**Keywords: counterterrorism, NATO, critical infrastructure, hypersonics, drones**

## **Stephanie Crider (Host)**

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Today, I'm talking with Dr. Sarah J. Lohmann, editor of [Countering Terrorism on Tomorrow's Battlefield: Critical Infrastructure Security and Resiliency \[NATO COE-DAT\] Handbook 2](#), which was published by the US Army War College Press in 2022. Lohmann is an acting assistant professor in the Henry M. Jackson School for International Studies (Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies) at the University of Washington and a visiting professor at the US Army War College.

Welcome, Sarah.

## **Sarah J. Lohmann**

Thank you so much for having me.

## **Host**

I'm glad you're here. We're talking about *Countering Terrorism on Tomorrow's Battlefield*. This is the second handbook looking at maintaining critical infrastructure resilience while countering terrorism. Why was there a need for another handbook? How is this one different?

## **Lohmann**

Thanks so much for the question. First of all, we're building on the success of the first handbook. The first handbook collected practices in counterterrorism through providing an outline of current threats and tools for critical infrastructure and security policies. Now, we had had a close partnership, and still do, with the NATO Centre of Excellence in the Defence against Terrorism (NATO Centre of Excellence Defence against Terrorism) in Ankara, (Turkey), and due to that close partnership, it was also suggested that we continue with the second handbook.

This is being used to inform military officers across NATO, as well as partners and Allies, about best methods and mitigations as we look at counterterrorism. But this new handbook looks at the future and what innovations are being developed. It's looking at how terrorists are using emerging and destructive technologies, and how they

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**Sarah J. Lohmann**  
*Countering Terrorism on Tomorrow's Battlefield:*

fill the power vacuum in the wake of, for example, pandemics or natural disasters. It's based on [NATO's Warfighting Capstone Concept](#), so we're really looking at the next couple decades in warfighting. The topics are rooted in the seven baseline requirements for NATO, so that's really the standard for enhancing resilience in every aspect of critical infrastructure and, also, of civil society.

**Host**

What threats do you look at in your chapter?

**Lohmann**

So, I look at terrorist threats coming through big data analytics, coming through hypersonics, and then also looking at how all of this connects through the use of drones and unmanned vehicles.

**Host**

So, what is NATO doing in the area of drones to defeat terrorists?

**Lohmann**

So, what we found is, in the area of drones, NATO is already doing a lot of interoperability. We have specific NATO Allies that are helping to produce parts of drones, others that are producing other parts, and then we are doing Joint exercises to really make sure we are strong and not only able to operate drones that help repel terrorists, but also, that we are able to counter their drone attacks.

So, we've seen terrorist attacks through drones. This is a cheap method for them. If you think about terrorists are taking advantage of technology that is already existing out there, that they don't need big regulation or licensing for, that are easy to obtain with low financing. And being able to repel those is just as important as being able to operate them and being able to work together in these exercises to make sure that we maintain the upper hand on the battlefield.

**Host**

What is the US doing, and what can NATO do, to counter the hypersonic threat?

**Lohmann**

As we think about hypersonics, NATO is really at a crucial point right now in terms of determining its own posture. Up until now, we've been looking at hypersonics as a research area for exploration of space, but we have not had an aggressive hypersonics policy. We have . . . defenses have been set up to repel missiles going over the north. We have not had it specifically for the south. And what we've seen is that China and Russia, other actors, have developed new hypersonic glide vehicles that can go around the south. And so, NATO is trying to determine how—now that some of these hypersonic missiles can go beyond that area where we have defenses—how should we be posturing ourselves? So there's a number of different options. There's electromagnetic warfare; there's also land-based options.

Recently we have moved a base to Germany specifically, to enable defenses should this problem arise, coming out of Russia, for example. But this is something that's going to be before Congress. They're going to be asking for a lot more money to increase both defense and offense on this, and this is a decision for NATO as a whole in terms of how we want to posture ourselves.

**Host**

How can we ensure that terrorists don't use big data analytics to target innocents?

**Sarah J. Lohmann**  
*Countering Terrorism on Tomorrow's Battlefield:*

**Lohmann**

This is an area that is crucial in the defeating of terrorism. Through big data analytics, we are able to predict when and where terrorist attacks could happen, down to a neighborhood level. And so this is a way that NATO countries can work together and make sure that we prevent terrorist attacks from happening. The horizon is very broad on this. What we're looking at are ways to securely share information on this front through the technology options that are out there so that each country is given the actionable information it needs to prevent terrorist attacks on its soil.

But because those big-data analytics are something that's out there commercially, terrorists sometimes use them to target innocents, as well. So we are looking at ways to ensure that there is no back-end possibility when civil and military work together to create this technology, that terrorists cannot use some of these tools for their nefarious purposes.

**Host**

Thanks so much for your time and for your insight. This is pretty heavy stuff.

**Lohmann**

It is, but it's super important on saving lives, and we're glad that the technology is developing so that we can use it to save those lives.

**Host**

If you'd like to learn more about *Countering Terrorism on Tomorrow's Battlefield*, read the monograph. You can download it at [press.armywarcollege.edu/monographs/957](https://press.armywarcollege.edu/monographs/957).

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