The Transformation of European Security and Defence: Military Capabilities, Emerging Dual-Use Technologies, and Hybrid Drones

Postdoctoral Research Project

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Abstract

This postdoctoral project builds on the premise that political will has been developing at the European Union (EU) level concerning hard defence capacity build-up, as demonstrated by the recent policy initiatives and strategies spearheaded by the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the European Commission. The research goal is to map out the EU's defence capabilities and the inherent tensions triggered by the transformation of the European defence field from the implementation perspective. An agenda to fund for defence by stealth and to generate cutting-edge capabilities seems to be the preferred approach – through the hybridization of civilian-military Research & Development (R&D) and Research & Technology (R&T) and by funding for 'smart' dual-use technologies such as Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS).

The postdoctoral project examines the EU's recent impetus to fund for serious defence capacity build-up through emerging security technologies. In this regard, the research explores the EU's technocratic rationalizations for the development of dual-use technologies such as drones and their potential to transform the European security practice in the internal-external security continuum. To this end, active steps have been taken: to hybridise civilian-military R&D and R&T; to incentivise the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) so that it invests in new, dual-use technologies to retrofit the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP); to increase the dronization of border management under the EU Border and Coast Guard Agency; and to prioritize new technologies such as the EU-endorsed Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems.

The social impact of such disruptive security technologies is neither clear nor widely debated. What exactly drives the backing of this new policy agenda and what is its purpose? This project argues that the EU is bolstering an undeniable technology push for dual-use research and investment in drone-related technology by using the European massive structural funds for civilian-military projects. By investigating the case of the EU-sanctioned RPAS programmes, the research will reconstruct the levels of civilian, military, technocratic, and corporate involvement in shaping the European defence sector. It will also compare and contrast the drone programmes and policy strategies of the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), Israel, and China to those of the EU.

The research calls for unpacking the contested concept of technology in relation to security, special consideration being given to the correlative concepts of emerging, disruptive and dual-use technologies. The aim of the research is to contribute to the *technology-security nexus* by tracing and signifying the EU-endorsed policy evolution of hybrid unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The research will explore relevant scholarship pertinent to the research topic from Critical Security Studies and Critical Technology Theory (Philosophy of Technology & Constructivist Technology Studies), and it will draw on the work of authors such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, Don Ihde, Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, Herbert Marcuse, Didier Bigo, Jacque Ellul, Peter-Paul Verbeek, and Andrew Feenberg. Such an analysis is long overdue in the academic debate, and this research aims to fill in this gap.

Keywords