

Paper Proposal: Alliance Dynamics in an age of technological and doctrinal change.

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Preferred Working Groups: Military Strategy, Security and Defense Policy Strategy

This paper engages with the transformative nature of military technology and its impact on alliance dynamics. It is based on the concept that both heightened levels of interconnectivity in military technology and operations combined with the increasing cost and complexity of military platforms and systems are fundamentally changing alliance dynamics and undermining previously held understandings of strategic and operational autonomy. In particular, US allies in NATO and Asia are investing in capabilities that increasingly are integrated with or are reliant on US systems and support. These systems can be specific platforms such as the F-35 that are reliant on the US or US contractors over their life cycle for specific maintenance and sustainability tasks. They can also be other enablers such as communications and ISR that are necessary for contemporary military operations but only owned by the US.

This paper argues that this may result in hitherto unexplored entrapment risks and reduce operational and strategic autonomy. One example is missile defence where states have integrated their command, control and surveillance assets with the US to create an advanced, comprehensive cooperative engagement capability. However, such connectivity removes the decision-making potential of state leaders, thereby risking entrapment in a US conflict without making any decision to join said conflict. Moreover, a reliance on US-made platforms and systems reduces decision making autonomy by in effect requiring US permission for any military operation in which those systems may be used.

This paper will examine the extent of these risks by assessing how technology-driven operational concepts such as MDO and capability procurement processes will alter decision making within alliance constructs. It will then use case studies in NATO and Asia to explore the degree to which states are engaging with this problem. The findings of this paper will make important contributions to the literature on military operations, alliance dynamics and strategic stability.