

## European defence transformation – the performance of liminal notions on European defence industry

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The European defence industry reflects a state of liminality, where traditional distinctions between conflict and peace, autonomy and dependence, and state and market are increasingly blurred. In the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine, Europe's approach to defence remains in flux, marked by hybrid individual strategies yet ambiguous goals. Defence spending has surged in response to security concerns, yet Europe's fragmented industrial base struggles to efficiently meet demand. Academic discussion on the subject has historically been limited both in scope and focus. Given the fresh centrality of topic in societal discussion it invites much closer academic attention.

Europe aspires to strategic independence; however, the majority of its defence procurement relies on non-European suppliers, particularly from the U.S., South Korea, and Israel. Each of these relationships is evolving. This dependence challenges the very notion of autonomy, placing Europe in an "in-between" state where true strategic independence remains out of reach. This reliance embodies a power structure that complicates Europe's role as a self-sufficient security actor, rendering its autonomy in defence both sought after and elusive—much to the dismay of newly established EU instruments and collaborative incentives.

This hybrid landscape—where industrial capacity and strategic aspirations are misaligned—highlights the ambiguous nature of European security, where old hierarchies of power and influence are continually questioned. While record profits and exports are being reported, long-term societal reflection on defence economies is notably absent. Environmental and societal concerns frequently delay or obstruct defence projects, reflecting tensions between security needs and societal values. This tension extends to current or future controversial arms exports, which are expected to keep the industry profitable and justify substantial national investments in the short term.

Viewed through this lens of hybridity and unfinished transformation, Europe's defence industry becomes a space of potential renegotiation. As Europe grapples with the dual pressures of internal demand and external dependencies, the industry offers both a reflection of and a challenge to the continent's aspirations for a coherent, self-determined defence identity. Academic debate on these topics is necessary.

### **We invite contributions to this discussion namely on:**

- liminality of European defence: navigating the blurred boundaries of autonomy and dependence
- hybrid strategies and fragmented capacities: the paradoxes of defence cooperation in Europe
- redefining power and influence: the shifting hierarchies in Europe's defence sector
- societal reflections of defence industry: presumptions and curated narratives
- ambiguities of strategic independence: EU instruments and collaborative initiatives in defence
- economics of defence industry growth: spending versus investment optics
- power dynamics of defence procurement: European dependence on non-EU suppliers
- avenues of technological innovation: defence industry in national and EU innovation strategies
- Europeanisation of defence industrial policies: sovereignty, alliances, competition, and mistrust
- societal and environmental values: ESG, defence industry financing, and responsible arms trade