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Strategic sensemaking: Scanning the military technological edge

Increased strategic competition over technology puts defence innovation at the forefront of current national security and defence policy strategizing. A central issue in the defence innovation debate is how different types of countries –from advanced major powers such as the US, over catching-up states like China to middling powers such as Russia, Iran and India, and finally to small countries, often advanced innovators like Israel and Singapore –organise their defence innovation systems. Filling a gap in the literature which focuses on either great powers or small but great innovators, this article reconstructs the logic of strategic sensemaking in defence innovation for small states without a particularly strong defence and innovation portfolio. For small states who are unable to either develop advanced defence materiel on their own or to participate in but a few of the leading international (allied and partner) capability development programmes, technology scouting – scanning the military technological edge –is both crucial to their strategic sensemaking. We reconstruct three modes of technology scouting as integral to national defence planning and capability development decision-making. The argument adds to the academic agenda of defence innovation and the global technological aspects of strategic competition, and is relevant to policy makers redesigning defence innovation and materiel policies.

What discipline or branch of humanities or social sciences do you identify yourself with?

international relations / international security studies / strategic studies

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No, I am submitting a Closed Panel abstract

Are you a PhD student or early-career researcher?

No

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