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'Total Defence' and Transformations in the Making of European Security

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Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it has become abundantly clear that territorial aggression and large-scale international war are back in Europe. The conventional narrative in research on European security policymaking holds that this provides an impetus for the (re-)building of centralized coercive capacities within "positive" security states. With the return of territorial aggression, the idea of the state as *the* key provider of national security seems to be back. At the same time, European states –first of all Nordic and Baltic vanguards, but also Continental European countries –have reinvigorated "Total Defence" (TD) or "comprehensive security" concepts. TD reflects a "whole-of-government and whole-of-society" concept of security policymaking that aims at extensive cross-sectoral collaboration. Against the backdrop of these seemingly contradictory trends, we ask: How do evolving threats shape European ways of organizing national security and how do the resulting organizing concepts impact on the authority foundations and policy instruments of European security states? Bringing together research on TD and types of security states, we argue that contemporary territorial and hybrid threats drive the (re-)emergence of TD as an organizing concept for the making of security in Europe. TD in turn entails decentralized and pluralist notions of epistemic authority and regulation-based policy instruments to orchestrate diverse public and private experts. Thus, contemporary security threats and ensuing TD concepts contribute to regulatory security statehood and network-based security governance. Our key contributions are to specify the links between 1) types of security threats and the (re-)emergence of TD and 2) between TD and the evolving authority foundations and policy instruments of European security states. We thereby challenge the conventional narrative of centralized state capacity-building in a reshuffled European security landscape on theoretical grounds and by referring to ample illustrative evidence from the Nordic, Baltic and Continental European countries.

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Political Science, International Relations

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No

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