


RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Imagining (in)security: NATO's collective self-defence and post-9/11 military policing in the Mediterranean Sea

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## Abstract

How do scenarios of dangerous futures imagined in the framework of the post-9/11 counterterrorism shape security institutions? Critical Security Studies (CSS)'s dominant answer is that state apparatus are significantly transformed by the use of new technologies of prediction that are very prolific in imagining potential risks. The present article questions this technologically determinist thesis. Introducing the notion of weak field in the study of pre-emption, it argues that the political sociology of transnational fields of power can help us to historicise and assess more precisely the impact of imagination over power and control in the pre-emptive era. The article analyses NATO's reaction to 9/11 as a case study. It shows how the fabrication of potential terrorist threats by NATO's practitioners, that served to justify the pre-emptive use of the collective self-defence clause of the Washington Treaty (Article 5), evolved into an ambiguous support for NATO's military policing of the Mediterranean basin and into its involvement in migration control.

**Keywords:** Pre-emption; Imagination; Critical Security Studies; NATO; Counterterrorism; Transnational Fields

## Introduction

For Western security apparatus, the 9/11 attacks have revealed the unpredictability of transnational terrorism. Claudia Aradau and Rens van Munster show that the consequence was a change in the practice of risk management. It is now animated by a precautionary logic that 'introduces within the computation of the future its very limit, the infinity of uncertainty and potential damage'.<sup>1</sup> CSS argue that imagination is consubstantial to the post-9/11 politics of pre-emption. Institutions work 'by visualizing and drawing on multiple imagined futures'.<sup>2</sup> The main flaw of the critical perspective is its technological determinism: imagination relates to the use of new technologies of prediction that transform the rationale of security apparatus towards a maximum anticipation. Such a view does not explain the social complexity of introducing pre-emption into pre-existing institutional realities. Looking at the role of professional struggles and practices in the framing of 'global (in)security',<sup>3</sup> the article revisits the role of imagination in pre-emptive politics.

<sup>1</sup>Claudia Aradau and Rens van Munster, 'Governing terrorism through risk: Taking precautions, (un)knowing the future', *European Journal of International Relations*, 13:1 (2007), p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>Marieke de Goede, 'Beyond risk: Premediation and the post-9/11 security imagination', *Security Dialogue*, 39:2–3 (2008), p. 159; Marieke de Goede, 'The politics of preemption and the War on Terror in Europe', *European Journal of International Relations*, 14:1 (2008), p. 176.

<sup>3</sup>Didier Bigo, 'Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations: Power of practices, practices of power', *International Political Sociology*, 5:3 (2011), pp. 225–58; Jef Huysmans, *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU* (London: Routledge, 2006).

I show that the changes triggered by the imagination of risk are less linear than the dominant CSS ‘high-tech theory’<sup>4</sup> of security suggests. To understand the role of imagination, one should identify the socio-professional spaces of struggles in which pre-emptive security is forged. My hypothesis is that pre-emption is grounded in weakly institutionalised fields of power.<sup>5</sup> They involve a variety of security actors who act accordingly to different legitimacies and interests. Imagining unclearly defined unknowns is the product of flexible and evasive (dis)agreements about the nature of risks and the means to fight them. Weak fields are the social sites of pre-emption where the transformative power of its imagination is readable.

Empirically, the article analyses NATO’s reaction to 9/11. Following the 9/11 attacks, NATO activated, for the first time in its history, Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which defines the collective self-defence clause. Consequently, NATO launched Operation Active Endeavour (OAE) in the Mediterranean Sea. The objective of OAE was to ‘prevent and disrupt terrorist activities’ by tracking the trajectory of civil ships. This case study allows us to investigate the extent to which a historically entrenched institution such as NATO’s collective self-defence (the guarantee of member states’ territorial integrity against major threats such as the Soviet Union during the Cold War) came to support pre-emptive policies opposed to its core meaning. In time, OAE turned into an extended aero-naval surveillance mission that intended to secure the Mediterranean maritime routes and traffic against an absent danger. OAE forces never found evidence of terrorist activities. OAE ended in 2016, and transitioned into the on-going NATO operation Sea Guardian. NATO, a political-military alliance acting for the first time in the name of Article 5, came to integrate maritime policing tasks. Here, policing refers to the involvement of military forces into the ‘fabrication of order’<sup>6</sup> and the control of human (maritime) activities: ‘Maintaining order and preventing disorder are the main tasks and ambitions for police power.’<sup>7</sup> Policing contrasts with the ‘annihilatory logic [of] warfare’,<sup>8</sup> which intends the military destruction of an enemy. Policing is a useful concept in understanding how NATO’s collective self-defence, traditionally associated with war, was used to pre-emptively secure in the Mediterranean the legitimate order of international freedom of maritime circulation. For OAE’s policing activities, terrorism was then less a threat to destroy than a potential trouble to this order, which needed to be contained and prevented.

This evolution of NATO’s Article 5 lies in the sociological dynamics of pre-emptive imagination. Emerging as a weak field, OAE was the site of struggles between diplomatic and military authorities over the definition of the mission as one of collective self-defence or as one of maritime security. The imagination of hypothetical threats allowed NATO’s practitioners to agree over the combination of the two opposing orientations. This dynamic explains why a NATO’s Article 5 mission became a policing operation. I conclude that OAE did not result into a precautionary transformation of Article 5, but induced an evolution in its conception. Therefore, the article contributes to CSS debates by showing the added value of the weak field framework to capture the changes and continuities of power and control in the pre-emptive era.

The article analyses 38 anonymised qualitative interviews conducted between 2015 and 2018. I interviewed members of NATO International Staff, militaries from the International Military Staff

<sup>4</sup>Laurent Bonnelly and Francesco Ragazzi, ‘Low-tech security: Files, notes and memos as technologies of anticipation’, *Security Dialogue*, 45:5 (2014), p. 478.

<sup>5</sup>Antoine Vauchez, ‘The force of a weak field: Law and lawyers in the government of the European Union (for a renewed research agenda)’, *International Political Sociology*, 2:2 (2008), pp. 128–44; Antoine Vauchez and Stephanie Lee Mudge, ‘Building Europe on a weak field: Law, economics, and scholarly avatars in transnational politics’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 118:2 (2013), pp. 449–92.

<sup>6</sup>Mark Neocleous, ‘Air power as police power’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 31:4 (2013), p. 588.

<sup>7</sup>Caroline Holmqvist, Ian Bachman, and Colleen Bell, ‘Introduction’, in Caroline Holmqvist, Ian Bachman, and Colleen Bell (eds), *War, Police and Assemblages of Intervention* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Martin Coward, ‘The globalisation of enclosure: Interrogating the geopolitics of empire’, *Third World Quarterly*, 26:6 (2005), p. 860.

and national delegations, diplomats, civil advisers at NATO Maritime Command (MARCOM), and maritime security experts involved in NATO working bodies. Through the interviews with a variety of professionals, I gathered information on OAE's decision-making in order to reconstruct its institutional environment. I complete these sources with publicly accessible data collected in reports, press contents, official declarations, and cables.

The article is organised in four parts. First, I discuss the critical interpretation of imagination in pre-emptive security and I explain why it should be analysed through political sociology. In the three other parts, I reconstruct the three sequences of NATO's policing in the Mediterranean Sea. The first is the *emergence* of pre-emption, characterised by the activation of NATO's Article 5. The second is the *structuration* of pre-emption. I shed light on how the imagination of maritime terrorism shaped the (dis)agreements between the North Atlantic Council (NAC – NATO's main political body) and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE – NATO's main operational planner)/MARCOM over the use of Article 5 to justify OAE. The third one is the *normalisation* of pre-emption, materialised in the transition to Sea Guardian.

## Imagining (in)security

### *Pre-emptive imagination as a technological creation*

CSS argues that pre-emptive counterterrorism secures an 'array of possible projected futures'<sup>9</sup> where the next attack is radically unknown. The reason is that 'what is ever-present is not a particular threat or set of threats, but the potential for still more threats to emerge without warning'.<sup>10</sup> Pre-emption therefore necessitates a 'knowledge deployed to capture the non-calculable'.<sup>11</sup> As Aradau and van Munster put it: 'Counter-terrorism scenarios assume that the less we know about the enemy and the threat, the more we need to use our imagination'.<sup>12</sup> Technology is the mean through which pre-emption and imagination articulate. The post-9/11 proliferation of technologies for infrastructure protection, intelligence sharing or mass surveillance feeds a 'self-conscious deployment of imagination and speculative mediation in the quest for knowledge'.<sup>13</sup> Anticipating the next terrorist attack involves a demand for 'new methodologies of calculation and imagination'.<sup>14</sup>

CSS tends, therefore, to be technologically determinist. Imagination of (in)security is an unstoppable process of technological creation. This conception diminishes the importance of the socio-professional milieu conditioning the use of these material artefacts.<sup>15</sup> Institutions are resistant to changes and their evolutions cannot be reduced to the incorporation of new technologies. This is even more the case for NATO's Article 5. After the Cold War, it continued to be seen as the guarantee of territorial integrity against major threats. But OAE's policing contrasted with the historical conception of Article 5. As such, a technological reading of OAE misunderstands the role of Article 5 in the mission and, more importantly, the meaning of this episode in NATO's post-Cold War trajectory. It is either underestimated or overestimated. In the first case, OAE is a

<sup>9</sup>Louise Amoore, *The Politics of Possibility: Risk and Security Beyond Probability* (London: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 9.

<sup>10</sup>Brian Massumi, *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup>Claudia Aradau and Rens van Munster, *Politics of Catastrophe: Genealogies of the Unknown* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), p. 29.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>13</sup>Marieke de Goede and Samuel Randalls, 'Precaution, preemption: Arts and technologies of the actionable future', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27:5 (2009), p. 868; Mark Salter, 'Imagining numbers: Risk, quantification, and aviation security', *Security Dialogue*, 39:2–3 (2008), pp. 243–66.

<sup>14</sup>de Goede, 'Beyond risk', pp. 159–60.

<sup>15</sup>Stephan Davidshofer, Julien Jeandesboz, and Francesco Ragazzi, 'Technology and security practices: Situating the technological imperative', in Tugba Basaran, Didier Bigo, Emmanuel-Pierre Guittet, and Rob Walker (eds), *International Political Sociology: Transversal Lines* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 211–12.

mission of intelligence sharing artificially associated with Article 5.<sup>16</sup> The use of Article 5 is a temporary deviation of NATO's collective self-defence. This fails to appreciate the reasons for which the mission remained for 15 years under Article 5. In the second case, OAE reflects a new interpretation of Article 5, aligned with the post-bipolar evolution of NATO towards a risk management posture.<sup>17</sup> OAE is, of course, part of NATO's transformation.<sup>18</sup> It is, however, hardly conceivable that collective self-defence was instinctively seen in NATO as the appropriate justification for a maritime security mission, which faced a quasi-inexistent adversity. I propose that the key to understanding the way in which OAE shows NATO's imagination of threat requires us to examine the socio-professional imagination of risk.

### Pre-emption in the light of weak fields theory

This subsection formalises a political sociology of imaginaries in pre-emption. To do so, it is first important to posit that invention is not the exclusive property of imaginaries, as CSS suggests. The key aspect of imaginaries is the collective dimension. An imaginary is made of collective representations that 'incorporat[e] a sense of the normal expectations we have of each other, the kind of common understanding that enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life'.<sup>19</sup> Imaginaries are socially and politically grounded. They carry symbolic elements (myths, traditions, belief in science and rationality), which forge a sense of belonging, at the level of groups, communities, or nation-states.<sup>20</sup> Imagination is commonly associated with fiction. Imagination would be the opposite of the real, especially in our rationalised modern world.<sup>21</sup> The opposition between the real and the imaginary, that CSS tends to assume, as it sees pre-emptive security as a technological invention, cannot grasp the concrete effects of imaginaries. As Cornelius Castoriadis argues, an imaginary is not (un)real. It is a socially instituted belief.<sup>22</sup> Collective representations might be unrealistic in the story they tell, but have strong effects on their social environment, as it was the extreme and dramatic case for instance with the German Aryan racism of the Second World War. An imaginary is real as a social fact, because it emerges from human groups and influences its political trajectory. What differentiates an imaginary from fiction is that an imaginary embodies a degree of truth and utility in the eyes of those who share it.

The widespread imagination/reality dichotomy is even more superficial in pre-emption. Crisis preparedness exercises rely on worst-case scenarios that rarely become real. Nevertheless, they influence risk management.<sup>23</sup> NATO's OAE is a perfect illustration. The scenarios of terrorist

<sup>16</sup>Peter Hudson, 'The Renaissance at sea: A new era for maritime NATO', *The RUSI Journal*, 159:3 (2014), pp. 24–8.

<sup>17</sup>Barry Ryan, 'A Mediterranean police assemblage', in Holmqvist, Bachman, and Bell (eds), *War, Police and Assemblages of Intervention*, pp. 147–63.

<sup>18</sup>After the Cold War, NATO has indeed developed a strong risk management component, especially through the out-of-area or non-Article 5 missions, such as the peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, the counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan, or the humanitarian bombings (Balkans, Libya). Celeste Wallender, 'Institutional assets and adaptability: NATO after the Cold War', *International Organization*, 54:4 (2000), pp. 705–35; Robert Keohane and Celeste Wallender, 'Risk, threat and security institutions', in Helga Haftendorn, Robert Keohane, and Celeste Wallender (eds), *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions Over Time and Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 21–47; Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, 'Reflexive security: NATO and international risk society', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 30:2 (2001), pp. 285–309.

<sup>19</sup>Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 24.

<sup>20</sup>Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006); Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>21</sup>Arjun Appaturai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005), pp. 355–6.

<sup>23</sup>Claudia Aradau and Rens van Munster, 'The time/space of preparedness: Anticipating the "next terrorist attack"', *Space and Culture*, 15:2 (2012), pp. 98–109.

attacks in the Mediterranean had few chances of becoming reality. The imagination of this maritime space as a site of catastrophe nevertheless made possible its militarisation. As a former political adviser at MARCOM confessed: ‘To be honest, we did not expect to find terrorists or discover activities related to terrorism. We rather tried to make sure that the possibility of such risks could not even emerge.’<sup>24</sup> Pre-emptive imagination is one type of social imaginary pertaining to the domain of security. As such, it must be studied as a socially grounded phenomenon and not as a techno-transcendental dynamic.

From a political perspective then, the ability of imaginaries to structure collective dynamics is reproduced through power struggles: ‘a group in position of inferiority and who intends to progress in the hierarchy of power and prestige will manipulate the myth and suppress the part of the story that ... justified its inferiority’.<sup>25</sup> Power struggles instantiate legitimate imaginaries. The definition of dangers, the radical ‘futurisation’ of (in)security are objects of struggles between different professional bodies.<sup>26</sup> Security imaginaries feed the professional sense of we-ness and other-ness. These confrontations reproduce or change the dominant perception of risk. As a consequence, the pre-emptive use of technologies emerges from specific social structures.<sup>27</sup> Instruments shape actors’ practice of security. But the imaginative capacity of technologies also comes from the recognition by the actors of the pre-emptive ways in which to use them. There must be a collective acceptance, elaborated through negotiations, that makes total suspicion the normal pattern of *performing* security.

In the last paragraphs, I argued that the relationship between imagination and pre-emptive security should be sociologically investigated. To push this analytical attempt even further, the article must address the following issue: identifying the social dynamics that structure this relationship. The article introduces the notion of weak fields to designate the social conditions under which pre-emption is (technologically) imagined and performed.<sup>28</sup> The notion of field is useful to understand why and how actors are bounded together by the share of a common stake to fight or cooperate for (the legitimate definition of law, national identity, education, art, fashion, or maritime security in OAE’s case). For Bourdieu, fields are autonomous and separated spaces of power struggles, made of polarised (or dominated/dominant) positions.<sup>29</sup> The weak field theory suggests the existence of less structured spaces, where power relations are still intense but more fluid than the dominated/dominant archetype. In such fields, the system of positions gravitating around the central stake is a ‘fractured amalgamation’<sup>30</sup> of a plurality of actors, mobilising different interests, visions, and knowledge. This internal *heteronomy* of weak fields creates an ‘impossible monopole on the political meaning of public actions’,<sup>31</sup> in contrast to a segmented field where this symbolic production is concentrated in and imposed by the dominant groups. Weak fields are not closed social worlds. Their boundaries are porous and poorly delimited, meaning that ‘the models of action are structured and defined (in part) outside’ those spaces.<sup>32</sup> Weak fields are characterised by professional mobilities. Players extend their network to exogenous agents in order to pluralise their resources and, as such, influence the dynamics of the field. These strategies are called ‘liminal’ or ‘border’ transactions.<sup>33</sup> They reproduce the internal heteronomy, because weak

<sup>24</sup>Interview with Maritime security expert to NATO’s Defence College, February 2017.

<sup>25</sup>Pierre Ansart, *Idéologies, conflits et pouvoir* (Paris: PUF, 1977), p. 29.

<sup>26</sup>Bigo, ‘Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations’, p. 252.

<sup>27</sup>Bonnelli and Ragazzi, ‘Low-tech security’, p. 479.

<sup>28</sup>Vaucher, ‘The force of a weak field’; Vaucher and Lee Mudge, ‘Building Europe on a weak field’.

<sup>29</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of the Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>30</sup>Vaucher and Lee Mudge, ‘Building Europe on a weak field’, p. 457.

<sup>31</sup>Béatrice Hibou, *The Political Anatomy of Domination* (Paris: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), p. 309.

<sup>32</sup>Vaucher, ‘The force of a weak field’, p. 137.

<sup>33</sup>Gal Eyal, ‘Dangerous liaisons between military intelligence and Middle Eastern studies in Israel’, *Theory and Society*, 31:5 (2002), p. 657; Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented ‘Terrorism’* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 13.

boundaries make possible the pluralisation of the voices entering into the field. In other words, the ‘weakness’ of a field ‘is not necessarily a sign of imperfection or incompleteness, but should be regarded as the hallmark of its relatively stable<sup>34</sup> social architecture. Weakly autonomous fields are not degenerative or pre-mature versions of segmented fields, but constitute regulated spaces that are ‘strong and influential when it comes to shaping the representations and principles of ... government’.<sup>35</sup>

The concept of weak fields is relevant for a sociological understanding of pre-emption. It allows us to grasp the heteronomy under which it is performed. Following Didier Bigo’s work on Bourdieu, many critical scholars argue that security professionals struggle in highly structured spaces for the ‘monopoly’ over the definition and hierarchisations of threats. I suggest that there is much to gain in investigating the heteronomous foundations of risk management. In pre-emption, security discourses are less founded on *hierarchisations* of threats than on a *continuum* of threats.<sup>36</sup> Terrorism occupies a prominent place in security discourses. However, it is often linked with other types of threats (criminality, migration, piracy, drug and arms trafficking, etc.). The risks are more connected than hierarchised. This could indicate that the professional contests are not as polarised as in the Bourdieusian perspective. The reason would be that professionals have an interest in considering risks as catch-all categories. They are invested in a sociological game where the legitimate perception of risk cannot be monopolised. The so-called ‘impossible definition’ of terrorism is part of risk management politics and, as such, its functionality should be investigated through its non-differentiated social architecture.<sup>37</sup>

My argument is that due to their uncertainty, the structure of security fields is fluid as the state of (dis)agreements dynamically evolve over time. This is where the weak structure of pre-emption locates its political force: the struggles that condition pre-emptive imagination generate evasive, unstable but working agreements between actors around potential dangers to prevent. This flexibility also relates to the number of security protagonists and knowledge interacting in the field. The risks being unlimited, actors can easily build alliances with exogenous players. Regarding the functionality of struggles, my conception therefore slightly differs from the Bourdieusian approach. It is admitted that the professional differences in the perception of risks are sources of conflict.<sup>38</sup> Through struggles, actors try to secure their monopoly over the legitimate definition of threats. I rather suggest that the (dis)agreements over the risks might be an accommodating situation, in which the players see a sufficient gain, an opportunity to consolidate their status. Differing on the meaning of risks might be a factor of tensions when the acquisition of resources is at stake, but this is not always the case. Actors may cope with this vagueness. They are not necessarily in a quest for the domination over the meaning of the risks:<sup>39</sup> ambiguity plays an ordering role in professional contests. Imagination is a central element in the porous border between conflict and cooperation: by articulating a vague horizon of risks, pre-emptive imagination makes possible the emergence of conflicting, polarised phases or compromises. In other words, liminal transactions and (de)polarisation are crucial indicators to identify a pre-emptive weak field. They make visible the elasticity through which actors’ positions and collective imaginaries are fabricated.

Professional practices and imaginaries are thus co-constitutive. The latter is the product of the former. Imaginaries are also reinvested in the polarised tensions or compromises between actors.

<sup>34</sup>Vauchez, ‘The force of a weak field’, p. 138.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>36</sup>Fabrizio Battistelli and Maria Grazia Galantino, ‘Dangers, risks and threats: An alternative conceptualization to the catch-all concept of risk’, *Current Sociology*, 67:1 (2019), pp. 64–78.

<sup>37</sup>Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*, pp. 7–13.

<sup>38</sup>Bigo, ‘Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations’; Médéric Martin-Mazé, ‘Returning struggles to the practice turn: How were Bourdieu and Boltanski lost in (some) translations and what to do about it’, *International Political Sociology*, 11:2 (2017), pp. 203–20.

<sup>39</sup>Lisa Stampnitzky, ‘The politics of (anti-)knowledge: Disciplining terrorism after 9/11’, in *Disciplining Terror*, pp. 186–201.

Weak fields are the ordering environments of pre-emptive imaginaries and the site where the institutional changes induced by pre-emption are activated. NATO's OAE is an interesting case for testing this sociological hypothesis. The futurised intelligibility of terrorism in the Mediterranean Sea was embedded in liminal strategies and successive (de)polarised phases between diplomatic-military players over the conduct of maritime surveillance and, more specifically, its Article 5 regime. The next section starts with the first sequence in the constitution of OAE's field: the emergence of pre-emption through the invocation of Article 5.

### The emergence of pre-emption: Invoking NATO's Article 5

Facing the 9/11 attacks, NATO endured a 'crisis'. A crisis is an exceptional situation that organisations face and challenges their routine. Actors are forced to improvise an answer to reduce this state of uncertainty.<sup>40</sup> As for many security organisations, 9/11 came as a surprise for NATO. In spite of the changes of the Alliance in the 1990s, nothing indicated that Article 5 could be used to answer a transnational terrorist attack. Article 5 was nevertheless NATO's immediate response, invoked the day after 9/11, designed to mitigate the uncertainty left by the attacks and to prove its relevance in the fight against the number one threat, terrorism. Linking the event to collective self-defence was, however, not taken for granted. It required diplomatic negotiations: 'The invocation of Article 5 was relatively spontaneous. But, given the nature of the attacks, how we were going to manage this decision was problematic.'<sup>41</sup> I argue that the invocation of collective self-defence was grounded in heteronomous foundations that launched OAE's pre-emption.

The invocation of Article 5 was indeed based on an ambiguity: it did not designate the entity against which collective self-defence was directed. The 9/11 attacks were not diplomatically perceived as an 'armed attack' in the sense of Article 51 of the UN charter, which justifies the right to individual or collective self-defence only in such cases. The articulation between 9/11 and Article 5 was even more unnatural given that collective self-defence remained the guarantee of NATO's territorial integrity against conventional attacks. The clause 'was designed to fight the Soviet tanks, divisions, armies, aircrafts ... but not to react to an attack conducted by non-state terrorists using transportation planes!'<sup>42</sup> The focus of the first diplomatic consultations at NATO HQ following the 9/11 attacks was therefore to 'evaluate the applicability of Article 5'.<sup>43</sup>

Consequently, in the formal invocation of Article 5, on 5 October, NATO designated Al-Qaeda and the Taliban as responsible for the 9/11 attacks, but there was no indication that the Alliance intended to militarily act against them. NATO diplomats 'did not anticipate what this decision meant in terms of implementation and for the future of NATO'.<sup>44</sup> The invocation of Article 5 was characterised by a tension between the political priority of its implementation and the absence of enemy. This tension crystallised the necessity for NATO diplomacy to imagine a horizon of terrorist risks that would justify the operationalisation of collective self-defence. The crisis that NATO faced in operationalising Article 5 became even more salient in regard to the US intentions to launch the war in Afghanistan. Nothing was initially envisaged to implement NATO's Article 5, but the 'allies waited for a diplomatic demand from the US for NATO support in the invasion of Afghanistan'.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the Bush government preferred to rely on a flexible multilateral format, and refused to associate NATO with the war in Afghanistan. The US saw in NATO a constraining bureaucracy, especially because of the difficulty to agree on bombings during the 1999 air campaign over Kosovo. The US decision contributed to 'empty the invocation

<sup>40</sup>Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen, 'The study of critical junctures: Theory, narrative, and counterfactuals in historical institutionalism', *World Politics*, 59:3 (2007), p. 348.

<sup>41</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 1, April 2015.

<sup>42</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 2, May 2015.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 5, June 2015.

<sup>45</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 2, May 2015.

of Article 5'.<sup>46</sup> The US reaction deprived NATO of an enemy and of a war that would have made Article 5 concrete. NATO therefore had a problem to solve, namely 'filling' the invocation of Article 5 with an alternative solution:

Nick Burns, the US ambassador to NATO was troubled. He was caught in the line of fire: on one side, the vision of the US administration who did not want to link NATO to the operations in Afghanistan; on the other side, the fact that we need to do something of this Article 5. Burns has negotiated with the US administration to demand some instructions about it. A cable from the US came to NATO in which the proposition was made to 'fill' the Article 5 activation through eight measures.<sup>47</sup>

Traditionally the purpose of NATO's Article 5 was to offer a legal support to the decision of war against an enemy aggressor. Instead, the diplomatic invocation of Article 5 was made of eight technical and symbolic measures, from which OAE was a part, related to infrastructure and ports protection, intelligence sharing, and maritime surveillance.<sup>48</sup> Countering a physically absent danger, those measures were precautionary ones. They were adopted in the name of imagined future attacks on civil-military infrastructures. As such, this response to the crisis NATO faced regarding Article 5, was the site from which emerged the weak structure of OAE's field: the diplomatic positions of NATO's member states regarding (counter)terrorism were not *polarised* and *opposed* but *fragmented*:

The discussions about how we were going to make sense of Article 5 were intense. But we were not debating on the nature of terrorism and even less on a common definition. With so much national sensibilities with counterterrorism, that would have been impossible to agree on, especially after the 9/11 shock. The question allies asked themselves was: 'How can we handle counterterrorism from a NATO perspective?' That's all what mattered then, no matter what terrorism could be.<sup>49</sup>

The discussions were driven by the attempt to formulate a sufficiently evasive discourse about counterterrorism, so that 'the Allies could easily agree on the implementation of Article 5'.<sup>50</sup> The diplomatic positions were articulated in a vague and fractured technical discourse that opened an array of possibilities in NATO's responses.

OAE and the forthcoming invention of maritime terrorism were indeed the result of a specific diplomatic configuration: the deployment of NATO's Standing Naval Forces in the East of the Mediterranean Sea was not a reaction to a threat. The motivations were to 'secure Eastern Mediterranean in order to facilitate invasion of Afghanistan by US forces', and to 'secure an area where terrorist attacks have occurred in the past, an example being the USS Cole in 2000'.<sup>51</sup> What remained for the future was the management of the tension at the core of the precautionary logic underpinning collective self-defence. OAE was an Article 5 mission without responding to a threat. The political-military tensions that will arise are located in this initial contradiction.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Lord Robertson, 'Déclaration à la presse du Secrétaire général sur la décision du Conseil de l'Atlantique Nord concernant l'application de l'article 5 du Traité de Washington en conséquence des attaques perpétrées le 11 septembre contre les États-Unis' (2001), available at: {<http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/s011004c.html>} accessed 3 March 2019.

<sup>49</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 7, July 2015.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 9, July 2015; NATO, 'Briefing: Combating Terrorism at Sea. Report' (Brussels: NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2008). The USS Cole destroyer was bombed by Al-Qaeda in October 2000 in Yemen's Aden harbour.



The first sequence of OAE shows how imagination serves the emergence of pre-emptive security. The invocation of Article 5 through the invention of potential risks to counter laid the heteronomous foundations of OAE's field. Diplomatic negotiations reveal that imagination is embedded in sociopolitical contexts (here of crisis) where pre-emption is progressively considered as a pattern of practicing security. The diplomatic tensions following the choice for collective self-defence show that pre-emptive imaginaries have nourished an unexpected use of Article 5 without transforming its historical meaning. This initial relation between pre-emptive imaginaries and NATO's Article 5 launched the second sequence of NATO's maritime policing: *structuration*.

### The structuration of pre-emption: Diplomatic-military struggles and the invention of Mediterranean (in)security (2001–10)

This section focuses on the role of pre-emptive imaginaries in the institutionalisation of security weak fields. I explore the evolution of the diplomatic-military debates regarding the Article 5 status of OAE and the related consolidation of NATO's maritime policing.

#### *Maritime security vs collective self-defence*

OAE extended to the entire Mediterranean Sea in 2004 as a 'precautionary measure'.<sup>52</sup> In this context, the Article 5 status of the mission became the object of struggles between NATO's diplomatic and military bodies. The consolidation of these disputes fixed the structure of OAE's field. A process of polarisation characterised this first structuring phase. It was nourished by the development of pre-emptive imaginaries.

OAE aimed to track the trajectories of the merchant traffic to deter potential terrorist activities. For SHAPE, this orientation 'did not fit with the Article 5 status of OAE. Military commanders estimated that the mission was not a collective-self-defence one, but that it evolved towards a maritime security operation.'<sup>53</sup> This was why 'SHAPE recommended to the NAC to change the status of OAE as a non-Article 5 mission.'<sup>54</sup> To consolidate its position towards the NAC, SHAPE mobilised a double argument.

The first argument objected that the rules of engagements (ROEs) were too limited. NATO naval forces were able to board only if the flag state of the merchant ship gave its authorisation.<sup>55</sup> As a consequence, SHAPE argued that 'there was too much contrast between the self-defence spirit of OAE and what could be militarily executed. The ROEs were too weak. We hailed the ships and asked: "do you have any terrorists on board?!" That was the logic of OAE.'<sup>56</sup> The difference between the number of hailed and boarded vessels was indeed significant: 'As of September 15, 2005, some 69,000 ships had been hailed and 95 boarded.'<sup>57</sup>

The second argument was the scarcity of military resources allocated to the operation by member states. Due to the low level of threat in the Mediterranean, there was no need to 'finance the expansive deployment of warships for months'.<sup>58</sup> In this context, SHAPE was constrained to

<sup>52</sup>Roberto Cesaretti, 'Combatting terrorism in the Mediterranean', *NATO Review* (2005), available at: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_21878.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_21878.htm?selectedLocale=en) accessed 25 May 2019.

<sup>53</sup>Interview with Maritime security expert to NATO's Defence College, February 2017.

<sup>54</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 9, July 2015.

<sup>55</sup>The international law indeed stipulates that warships can board civil vessels suspected of terrorist activities in high seas only with the authorisation of the flag state. UN, *Protocol of 2005 to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation* (New York, 2005).

<sup>56</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 2, May 2015; Richard Olson, 'North Atlantic Council Readout – 7 November 2007', Cable n°07USNATO601\_a (2008), available at: [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07USNATO601\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07USNATO601_a.html) accessed 8 March 2019.

<sup>57</sup>Cesaretti, 'Combatting terrorism in the Mediterranean'.

<sup>58</sup>Interview with military officer No. 14, September 2015.

reconsider the operation's cost-effectiveness balance. A New Operational Pattern (NOP) was consequently adopted in October 2004. NATO's forces were no longer permanently at sea. Allied vessels operated in shorter missions against specific targets on the basis of information collected through a network of intelligence technologies.<sup>59</sup> In NATO's language, OAE became a 'network-based operation', meant to reduce costs by increasing the level of information and control on maritime activities in the Mediterranean. This evolution reinforced the pre-emptive logic of OAE. Simultaneously, it created a tension over the long-term use of Article 5. As a former SHAPE maritime officer put it:

We used Article 5 for a permanent mission, intelligence sharing, whereas Article 5 is made for a punctual decision of launching a war. We used for a moment at NATO a beautiful expression to describe it: 'the sunset Article 5', meaning that the end of declaring Article 5 is as long as a sunset! This was precisely the Achilles heel of OAE: there was not a concrete threat that justified the Article 5 nature of the operation. It makes no sense.<sup>60</sup>

SHAPE saw a contradiction between the combination of restricted ROEs with the adoption of the network-based format and the self-defence status of OAE. Facing these arguments, NAC decided in 2005 to conserve the Article 5 regime. The reason was that it 'provided a powerful political basis for NATO member states to justify and extend their surveillance of the Mediterranean Sea, as well as to assure a sufficient level of dissuasion against terrorism'.<sup>61</sup> From an improvised reaction to a crisis, the invocation of Article 5 turned into a political opportunity for different national security purposes. As such, the preservation of the collective-self defence posture prolonged the diplomatic heteronomy that drove the implementation of Article 5 after 9/11. The positions at the NAC regarding OAE's counterterrorism remained fractured and non-polarised. Indeed, after 9/11, most of NATO member states' maritime strategies, and particularly the US one, focused on the global collection of information on maritime traffic to prevent the use of maritime routes by terrorist and criminal networks.<sup>62</sup> This orientation required 'an increased knowledge and global view of everything which is related to ships cargos, trajectories, personnel. OAE was an important piece of this evolution.'<sup>63</sup> Turkey also used OAE to increase the informational capacity of the surveillance mission Black Sea Harmony, which it had coordinated in the Black Sea since 2004. The objective was to 'benefit from a continued tracking of vessels circulating from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean (and vice versa)'.<sup>64</sup> The Article 5 status of the operation was founded on an extensive reading of collective self-defence. Consequently, the NAC's position concerning Article 5 reinforced the heteronomous structuration of OAE. The NAC's consensus was founded on non-differentiated and imagined views about counterterrorism: 'Counterterrorism meant everything at the NAC level: dangerous cargos, arms trafficking, terrorists on board ... there was no clear view of what we were searching for.'<sup>65</sup> Threat invention was the accommodating basis from which diplomacies agreed to provide data to their agencies.

NATO's pre-emption in the Mediterranean between 2001 and 2005 resulted from diplomatic-military tensions about OAE's Article 5. Nevertheless, the mission became an important apparatus of surveillance in the Mediterranean. Imagination played a key role in the resolution of this paradox. Diplomatic and military bodies constructed a common understanding of the mission through the imagination of various dangers:

<sup>59</sup>NATO, 'Briefing: Combating Terrorism At Sea. Report' (Brussels, 2006), p. 3.

<sup>60</sup>Interview with military officer No. 13, July 2015.

<sup>61</sup>Interview with diplomat No. 10, August 2015.

<sup>62</sup>US Department of State, 'The National Strategy for Maritime Security' (Washington, DC, 2005).

<sup>63</sup>Interview with civil adviser No. 1 to MARCOM, March 2017.

<sup>64</sup>Interview with military officer No. 5, March 2015.

<sup>65</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 11, August 2015.

We searched everything that was linked to terrorism, such as suspect cargos. The objective was to prevent the use of the Mediterranean Sea by terrorists that intended to conduct an attack or to travel. A cargo can be used for an attack, but it can also transport terrorists. There could be attacks that are close to happening, weapons, tools, or even information that would allow the prevent of an attack.<sup>66</sup>

The ‘success’ of NATO’s counterterrorism in the Mediterranean Sea was not evaluated in terms of terrorist attacks prevented, but in the quantity of ships that OAE hailed or boarded.<sup>67</sup> The data collected did not indicate the presence of terrorist activities. For NATO bodies, it did not mean the absence of threats. It was rather the proof of OAE’s dissuasion effect:

Statistics prove what we do and that we do something. The most important was that other ships knew that they might be called and boarded. The hailings are important, because they are dissuasive. We must admit one thing: SHAPE planners and NAC representatives did not know what they fought in the Mediterranean. The most ironic is that this situation maintained a consensus. SHAPE saw in OAE an intelligence-sharing operation that did not need the Article 5 cover. The NAC, on the contrary, estimated that the unknown character of what we searched necessitated a collective self-defence posture to prevent potential attacks.<sup>68</sup>

As it reduces the divergences over pre-emption, the imagination of risks is key in the making of precautionary measures, such as OAE. This dynamic was a crucial component in the heteronomous structuration of OAE’s field. The pre-emptive imaginaries crystallised the diplomatic-military polarisation and, as such, consolidated the structure of OAE’s field. Simultaneously, those imaginaries ensured the fluidity of the positions regarding OAE’s counterterrorism and, therefore, created a minimal consensus about the dissuasive nature of the mission. As the next subsection shows, the technologies of suspicion supported this underlying consensus over pre-emption.

### ***Suspicion: The consensual science of weak fields***

As previously argued, this article is interested in the role of technology in pre-emption. It situates those technologies in their social context, to grasp the changes that pre-emption generates in security organisations. Having described the emerging weak structure of OAE’s field, I now analyse how the technological production of NATO’s surveillance was determined by this social architecture.

From 2005 onwards, SHAPE had to conform to NAC’s decision of maintaining the Article 5 status of OAE. The network-based reorientation became the cornerstone of the diplomatic-military consensus. For SHAPE, the increased use of intelligence was a way to construct a military credibility in what will remain a collective self-defence operation. Initially created for reducing the financial cost of OAE, the 2004 NOP became the basis for a military strategy of legitimation. More importantly, it signalled the second step in the structuration phase of the field: its depolarisation. The position adopted by the military after 2005 regarding Article 5 became similar to the diplomatic one, which considered collective-self defence as the dissuasive force of OAE. The diplomatic position after the NOP remained indeed stable: the new format optimised the access of national agencies to maritime intelligence. This depolarisation of the field reflects the dynamism of its weak structure. Heteronomy was the mechanism that nourished a pre-emptive surveillance and its related technological imagination of risks.

<sup>66</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 6, June 2015.

<sup>67</sup>Cesaretti, ‘Combatting terrorism in the Mediterranean’.

<sup>68</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 8, July 2015.

The tool adopted by SHAPE to operationalise the network-based orientation of OAE was the Recognized Maritime Picture (RMP). The RMP gives an image of the traffic over a maritime space in order 'to determine the location, identity, and activity of targets of interest'.<sup>69</sup> To elaborate the maritime picture, NATO's military community used the Automated Identification System (AIS). Originally, AIS data were used by merchant ships to locate each other and avoid collisions. As such, it provides information about the speed, planned trajectory, nature of cargos, name, and dimensions of merchant ships transiting in a maritime area. The militarisation of AIS data originated in MARCOM's demand towards the US Department of Transportation to create a technology allowing allied forces to track a large number of vessels in the Mediterranean. The Volpe Center, integrated to the US Department of Transportation, traditionally dedicated to the technological improvement of the national civil transportation system, was in charge of the project. The Volpe then developed the Maritime Safety and Security Information System (MSSIS). It is 'a freely-shared, unclassified, near real-time data collection and distribution network',<sup>70</sup> based on sensors set up on NATO's member states' coastal boards, vessels, or aircrafts. The detected AIS emissions from ships navigating in the Mediterranean were fused into the MSSIS common picture. The picture indicated the real-time position and identity of the detected vessels.

The militarisation of AIS data reveals the pre-emptive rationality dominating the military perception of OAE. Resorting to open-source data was a solution to increase the information volume and anticipate the manifestation of dangers.<sup>71</sup> The AIS data 'g[a]ve ... the God's eye view ... need [ed]':<sup>72</sup> 'As a result of the use of the MSSIS system, NATO has a much clearer picture of maritime traffic in the Mediterranean. As of November 2005, only approximately 300 ships were being tracked; that number has risen to approximately 10,000 today.'<sup>73</sup> NATO went so far in this process that 'MARCOM signed a series of contracts with private companies, like exactEarth, LuxSpace, ORBCOMM and Spire, for the provision of satellite-based AIS [S-AIS] data.'<sup>74</sup> The spatial elevation of satellites 'on which AIS sensors were installed allowed them to capture in one real-time picture, the state of the entire maritime traffic within the Mediterranean basin'.<sup>75</sup>

This pre-emptive quest for data was the mechanism behind the links between NATO's military authorities, the Volpe Center, and other commercial entities. These liminal transactions were developed by NATO operational and planning bodies to consolidate the military symmetry between Article 5 and a maximal intelligence capacity. This symmetry was the military response to prevent a terrorist attack. The imagination of attacks perpetrated at sea stimulated the first liminal transaction with commercial actors. Indeed, the imaginary of the dangerous cargo motivated an extended data gathering. This is why the threat imagination led to the militarisation of civil technics through their importing into OAE's field. The Volpe Center and the private companies providing S-AIS data to OAE do not limit their services to security purposes. The latter pretend

<sup>69</sup>Steve Helleur Dore and Chris Van Fong, 'Scenario-Based Assessment of Sensors for the Canadian Recognized Maritime Picture', 7<sup>th</sup> International Command and Control Research and Technology Symposium, Quebec, 16–20 September 2002.

<sup>70</sup>Volpe Centre, 'M.S.S.I.S. Maritime Safety & Security Information System', available at: {<https://mssis.volpe.dot.gov/Main/>} accessed 12 July 2019.

<sup>71</sup>Rob Kitchin, *The Data Revolution: Big Data, Open Data, Data Infrastructures and Their Consequences* (London: Sage, 2014).

<sup>72</sup>NATO Review, 'The God's Eye View: Operation Active Endeavour' (2010), available at: {<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJLZAMZrKA>} accessed 23 February 2019.

<sup>73</sup>NATO Parliamentary Assembly, '158 DSC 08 E BIS – NATO Operations: Current Priorities and Lessons Learned' (2008), § 102–03.

<sup>74</sup>Interview with military officer No. 15, September 2015; ExactEarth, 'ExactEarth Announces New Contract with NATO' (2012), available at: {<http://investors.exactearth.com/recent-news?item=144>} accessed 28 February 2019; Davide Severino, 'Sensors in NATO maritime situational awareness', in Michele Vespe and Fabio Mazzarella (eds), *Maritime Knowledge Discovery and Anomaly Detection Workshop* (Ispra: European Commission, 2016); Gerald Eiden, 'LuxSpace SAT: AIS Data Service Enhancing Maritime Safety and Security for European Institutional Users', AIS Summit 2013, Hamburg, 8–9 May 2013.

<sup>75</sup>Interview with military officer No. 12, June 2015.

nevertheless to provide the most complete and ‘global AIS service’ available.<sup>76</sup> They deliver S-AIS data also to transportation and fishing companies. For these companies, contracting with NATO was an opportunity to enlarge their customer basis and reinforce their position into the risk industry market.<sup>77</sup> In the name of countering potential attacks from the sea, NATO forces relied on services produced in the industrial market of technological prediction. Consequently, these first liminal transactions had an effect on the internal structure of OAE: it supported the depolarisation of the field, reflected in the military alignment on the diplomatic view over Article 5.

Technologically speaking, suspicion was then the mechanism guiding NATO’s use of the MSSIS. It served the elaboration of maritime shipping patterns:

Ships became suspects from the moment their trajectory deviated from the normal pattern of circulation in the Mediterranean Sea, as elaborated by NATO navies based on the AIS data. From the moment you located suspect movements, you tracked it, and, after two to six days, you could distinct what was suspect from what was not.<sup>78</sup>

Once the suspicious status of a ship was established, the decision to board was eventually taken. Enlarged suspicion was a diplomatic opportunity for NATO member states to increase the access of their national security services to vast amounts of data. Suspicion was the science driving the heteronomy of OAE and the corollary imagination of terrorism. Consequently, between 2005 and 2010, OAE extended its network and provided information to:

national coastal guards or other homeland security services who controlled ships and sometimes arrested crews suspected of traffic of weapons, cigarettes, or clandestinely transporting migrants. Counter-terrorism was a global justification that offered an opportunity for NATO’s nations to increase their Mediterranean border security on multiple issues.<sup>79</sup>

OAE contributed to blurring the distinction between internal and external security by pre-emptively generating data in high seas that were used by law enforcement agencies. This ‘internal/external de-differentiation’<sup>80</sup> motivated OAE’s policing as it connected NATO to law-enforcement agencies. It was also made possible through the construction of a continuum of threats by NATO’s diplomatic-military bodies. The potentiality of terrorism was linked to other risks. Reacting to the interception by Hellenic coast guards of a ship transporting migrants, the vice admiral Roberto Cesaretti, former OAE Commander, declared: ‘it sends a message for the terrorists here: we are looking for you ... there will be no place to hide’.<sup>81</sup>

The more terrorism served as a vague justification for the development of NATO’s intelligence, the more the implementation of Article 5 enlarged its dissuasion power against potential threats. The technological imagination of terrorism constituted a central component of the diplomatic-military common ground. Due to the ‘vast amount of data collected and the potential diversity of its significations, the RMP was key in the consensus between the NAC and SHAPE’.<sup>82</sup> The

<sup>76</sup>ExactEarth, ‘ExactEarth Announces New Contract with NATO’; LuxSpace, ‘Global AIS Data Service LuxSpace Global AIS Data Service’, available at: {<http://www.luxspace.lu/index.php/global-ais-data-service.html>} accessed 24 June 2019.

<sup>77</sup>Elke Krahnmann, ‘Beck and beyond: Selling security in the world risk society’, *Review of International Studies*, 37:1 (2011), pp. 349–72; Rita Abrahamsen and Michael Williams, ‘Security beyond the state: Global security assemblages in international politics’, *International Political Sociology*, 3:1 (2009), pp. 1–17.

<sup>78</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 8, July 2015; Arian Minderhoud, ‘Maritime Security Regime: Brief to MSR Roundtable’ (Northwood: MARCOM, 26 April 2016).

<sup>79</sup>Interview with civil adviser No. 2 to MARCOM, February 2017; US Department Of Homeland Security, ‘National Plan to Achieve Maritime Domain Awareness for the National Security Strategy for Maritime Security’ (Washington, DC, 2005).

<sup>80</sup>Didier Bigo, ‘Internal and external aspects of security’, *European Security*, 15:4 (2006), pp. 385–404.

<sup>81</sup>NATO, ‘NATO Uncovers Immigrant Smuggling in Mediterranean’ (2006), available at: {[https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/news\\_22358.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/news_22358.htm?selectedLocale=en)} accessed 4 October 2019.

<sup>82</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 8, July 2015.

depolarisation of the field at the source of the rapprochement between the NAC and SHAPE consequently produced a change in the use of Article 5: while it has been historically understood as related to the *international* dimension of security and Article 51 of the UN Charter, it partly served in OAE *homeland* security purposes.

The second sequence of OAE weak field shows how imagination serves the structuring of pre-emption. Liminal transactions and the attenuation of disagreements through the imagination of dangerous scenarios are transitioning phases in pre-emption. It was shown then that pre-emptive imaginaries are embedded into (de)polarisation processes. Pre-emption was not routinised through actors' attempts to monopolise the meaning of counterterrorism, as a classical Bourdieusian reading would suggest. It became rather routinised through a non-differentiated field of positions, in which diplomatic and military players used vaguely imagined risks. Indeed, this second part of the demonstration shows that technological imagination does not determinate the complete pre-emptive transformation of security organisations. Even when OAE's pre-emption became the accepted principle of action, the meaning of NATO's Article 5 was not linearly changed but negotiated. The fragility of OAE consensus paved the way of a third phase of pre-emptive development: *normalisation*.

### The normalisation of pre-emption: From active endeavour to Sea Guardian (2010–16)

This section explores the *normalisation* of pre-emption. By normalisation, I understand that heteronomy is transformed into an unconditional mechanism driving security. This last step is characterised by strategies of influence used by OAE bodies to elude the issue of Article 5.

#### **Back to (dis)agreements?**

After 2010, the diplomatic-military tensions re-emerged, due to the adoption in 2011 of the Alliance Maritime Strategy (AMS). The AMS resulted from the attempt of naval officers located in the Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and the Combined Joint Operations from the Sea Centre of Excellence (CJOSCOE), both in charge of NATO's doctrinal position,

to rehabilitate maritime forces in NATO, dominated by land forces because of the pre-eminence taken by operations in Afghanistan. This was the key driver behind the development of the maritime strategy. With OAE they needed to articulate a strategy to demonstrate the on-going relevance of naval forces in the alliance.<sup>83</sup>

To the naval officers positioned in NATO's doctrinal centres, OAE served as a justification for a new allied strategy. This new strategy was meant to reflect the post-Cold War evolution of maritime forces, focused more on security missions against terrorism or organised crime rather than large-scale conflicts.<sup>84</sup> The pre-emptive orientation of OAE made possible the emergence of new tensions in NATO's environment. The imagination of terrorist possibilities in the Mediterranean encouraged the second transaction at the border of OAE's field. The risks imagined in the Mediterranean were exported in a struggle between military services, which, later, was to be reimported in the field.

A significant part of the AMS is dedicated to policing missions.<sup>85</sup> The main purpose of NATO naval forces is to maintain the freedom of navigation and transoceanic communications by

<sup>83</sup>Interview with civil adviser No. 2 to MARCOM, July 2017.

<sup>84</sup>ACT, *Multiple Futures Project: Navigating towards 2020. Final Report* (Norfolk, 2009), p. 2. The existing maritime strategy dated from the Cold War (1984).

<sup>85</sup>NATO, 'Alliance Maritime Strategy' (2011), available at: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_75615.html](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_75615.html) accessed 1 July 2019.

securing commercial maritime routes against transnational crime and terrorism through patrols, controls, and intelligence sharing. Collective self-defence is the object of a specific section in the new strategy. In such situation, naval forces are to be used in the classical reading of Article 5: to support nuclear dissuasion or conventional military campaigns. The operational realities covered by OAE that inspired the AMS, are reflected in the document through a task ('maritime security') separated from collective self-defence, while OAE was still under the Article 5 regime. By adopting the AMS, the NAC implicitly recognised a distinction between OAE's policing and collective self-defence. This separation was assumed by ACT's and CJOSSCOE's naval officers in the drafting phases of the maritime strategy in order to consolidate the relevance of navies in NATO. It was even more the case that SHAPE and MARCOM took part to the drafting of the AMS and, as such, had an interest in having this separation. The adoption of the AMS constrained the diplomatic actors to accept the dichotomy between collective self-defence and maritime security:

This implicit distinction between OAE and Article 5 erected in the AMS was a strategy used by ACT and SHAPE, which also took part to the negotiations. The aim was to show that the functions assumed by NATO's maritime community have evolved, especially through security missions like OAE, but also that naval forces are still relevant in collective self-defence. Military planners had everything to gain from this implicit separation and the political side was constrained to approve it: how could NATO nations be rationally opposed to it by fusing maritime security and Article 5 missions? The NAC validated a political-military reality that was difficult to admit until that point: OAE was a maritime security operation.<sup>86</sup>

The adoption of the AMS reopened the debate over the Article 5 status of OAE that was downplayed after 2005. It generated a new polarisation of the field. Given that 'the AMS provided a politically validated framework recognizing OAE as a maritime security operation focused on situational awareness, and freedom of navigation, SHAPE used the document to incite the NAC to finally separate OAE from the Article 5'.<sup>87</sup> The imagination of maritime terrorism was reproduced after 2009 by an extension of the diplomatic-military struggles to the area of inter-military services (naval vs land forces). The product of these inter-service struggles, the AMS, was reimported in the rivalry between the NAC and SHAPE. The liminal transactions were part of the repolarisation of the field. The military planners used these liminal relations to consolidate their positions towards the political authorities.

In spite of the military pressure put on diplomats via the AMS, they refused to turn OAE into a non-Article 5 mission. A part of the resistance was due to the rise of the migration crisis after 2010 in the Mediterranean at the top of the European political agenda. Certain NATO member states,

like Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey insisted to maintain OAE under the Article 5 regime. They saw in a potential separation the danger of a decrease in Allies' contributions to the mission, which was unacceptable in the context of the migration crisis. Article 5 was a minimal collective obligation. Seeing in OAE the opportunity to an enlarged collect of information, Greece, Turkey, or even Spain and Italy had a real interest in keeping the mission ongoing.<sup>88</sup>

Nevertheless, the reactivation of the diplomatic-military tensions around the Article 5 status of OAE persisted and grew. OAE's collective self-defence became linked to the issue of migration. From an improvised answer to 9/11, Article 5 became a political guarantee for extending the military control of the Mediterranean to human migrations. This process indicates the normalised state of heteronomy reached by OAE's field. As during the emergence and structuration phases,

<sup>86</sup>Interview with civil adviser No. 2 to MARCOM, February 2017.

<sup>87</sup>Interview with maritime security expert to NATO's Defense College, February 2017.

<sup>88</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 9, July 2015.

diplomatic actors exploited the plasticity of counterterrorism to extend the purpose of the mission (to migration control). The normalisation of heteronomy came hand-in-hand with the imagination of the terrorism-immigration nexus, according to which ‘terrorists can use migration flows to penetrate the European territory’.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, the blurring of international/internal security to which Article 5 was submitted was reinforced after 2010. It was due precisely to the significant penetration of migration control in the field (a law-enforcement task, traditionally). By resisting to the military pressure through the argument of the migration crisis, the diplomatic authorities created the conditions for a consolidated heteronomy of the field. The terrorism/migration imaginary was both the site of disagreements between the NAC and SHAPE over the mission and a converging point:

Counterterrorism is a hard thing to qualify, you don’t have any terrorist attacks from the Med. The NAC saw in OAE a dissuasive success and an opportunity to sustain the informational control over the Mediterranean, even more in the context of the migration crisis. For SHAPE, the absence of concrete threats in the Mediterranean involved the need for a shift towards maritime security. That was the big debate between SHAPE and the NAC to qualify OAE after the adoption of the AMS. But there was even in 2014 pressure among capitals, they still wanted to have the political top-cover of collective defence.<sup>90</sup>

The repeated use of liminal transactions and the rise of migration as a central diplomatic stake demonstrates the influence of imagination on the heteronomous structure of OAE. The imagined probability of terrorism is an opportunity for actors to adapt and consolidate their positions. Indeed, the repolarisation of the field created the conditions for a polysemous agreement among diplomatic-military players about the mission’s purpose. As the next subsection shows, heteronomy made possible the end of the debate over Article 5 and made NATO’s maritime policing in the Mediterranean permanent and official.

### ***Deepening heteronomy: The consolidated terrorism-migration nexus***

The debate on the Article 5 status of OAE ended in 2015–16 with the transition to a new mission: Sea Guardian. Still ongoing, Sea Guardian covers the same tasks as OAE, but as a non-Article 5 mission. Defined as a maritime security operation, it conducts counterterrorism, protects freedom of navigation, and critical infrastructures.<sup>91</sup> The transition to Sea Guardian in November 2016 was a solution designed by NATO’s diplomatic-military actors to overcome their tensions, especially after the adoption of the AMS:

In 2011 you had the AMS. There, the member states have articulated the core tasks for maritime forces and it became increasingly difficult to equip OAE with the collective self-defence when you had other dimensions in terms of maritime security. This was the evolution that took place from 2011. When we came to Sea Guardian, there was a maturing process. The all capitals said, ok, let’s recognise this for what it is: maritime security.<sup>92</sup>

Sea Guardian satisfied both diplomatic actors, who saw OAE as a necessity for the safety of the Mediterranean, and SHAPE, who considered OAE to be militarily relevant, but as a security mission. Sea Guardian was mainly a change of terminology. It transited to a permanent surveillance whose pre-emptive logic was already official. Sea Guardian was an ‘exit strategy’ elaborated to

<sup>89</sup>Interview with military officer No. 10, June 2015.

<sup>90</sup>Interview with maritime security expert to NATO’s Defence College, February 2017.

<sup>91</sup>NATO, ‘Operation Sea Guardian’ (2018), available at: {[https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/topics\\_136233.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/topics_136233.htm?selectedLocale=en)} accessed 17 July 2019.

<sup>92</sup>Interview with maritime security expert to NATO’s Defence College, February 2017.



resolve the political-military tensions. Sea Guardian was the opportunity to free the imagination of risks from the constraint to justify collective self-defence:

Politically, Sea Guardian was a golden opportunity to finally separate OAE from Article 5. It was an exit strategy! The allies wanted to pursue the operation without losing face, without renouncing to Article 5. The AMS had been adopted, no terrorists have been found, more than ten years elapsed ... It became difficult to maintain collective self-defence, all the more that Greece, Turkey, Italy had, with the transition to Sea Guardian, the guarantee of the permanent surveillance mission partly dedicated to migration control purposes.<sup>93</sup>

Rather than disappearing, the Article 5 rationale of OAE left the legacy of a routinised pre-emption. In the name of Article 5, political-military agents extended their surveillance, including over migration. Sea Guardian is the logical outcome. Transiting to a non-Article 5 mission was the opportunity to benefit in the long run from NATO's surveillance. At the same time, the transition reasserted the historical meaning of collective self-defence as the guarantee of member states' territorial integrity. Sea Guardian constituted a final phase of depolarisation: diplomatic-military players agreed to suspend Article 5 of OAE by elaborating a new mission. Interestingly, the final depolarisation of OAE does not result in the domination of an actor over another, as it was the case during the structuration phase, when the military had to adapt to the political decision to maintain the Article 5 regime. Following the adoption of the AMS, the diplomatic side progressively gave in facing the military pressure. It created a new situation of asymmetry in the field. Nevertheless, Sea Guardian mitigated this political defeat: OAE has not been *separated* from collective self-defence (which would have meant a military victory) but *ended* with it. To a certain extent, transiting to Sea Guardian was a diplomatic face-saving measure. The final depolarisation revealed the normalised state of OAE's heteronomy: the flexibility of the diplomatic-military (op)positions created a permanent pre-emption (creation of Sea Guardian) by simultaneously resolving the problematic Article 5 status of the mission. Indeed, through Sea Guardian, NATO bodies kept alive the legacy of Article 5 'without taking the risk to dilute its signification and credibility, even more with the increased visibility of NATO's involvement in migration control'.<sup>94</sup>

Indeed, the diplomatic strategy to mitigate the political alignment on the military position was even more successful as it capitalised on the merging between terrorism and migration. The consolidation of the terrorism-immigration imaginary through the cooperation between OAE and the EU naval operation EUNAVFOR Med (Sophia) played a key role in the transition to Sea Guardian. Turkish and Southern European diplomacies opened OAE to other actors and influences, namely the EU's political-military institutions and their recent focus on migration issues. This dynamic is the third liminal transaction of OAE.

Launched in June 2015, Sophia's aim was to fight the trafficking of migrants and to strengthen the control of migrations coming from North Africa. The objective of the OAE-Sophia cooperation was to share intelligence concerning circulations in the Mediterranean.<sup>95</sup> NATO did not have a mandate for migration control. The imagination of terrorism allowed nevertheless NATO's informal involvement in this domain, a process already in place as shown above. It served countries such as 'Spain, Turkey, Italy and Greece', who 'exploited the OAE-Sophia intelligence sharing for migration control purposes'.<sup>96</sup> The deployment of OAE naval units in the Aegean Sea in February 2016 at the demand of Greece and Turkey and in support of

<sup>93</sup>Interview with NATO international civil servant No. 11, August 2015.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>A. G. Dibenetto, 'Implementing the Alliance Maritime Strategy in the Mediterranean: NATO's Operation Sea Guardian', research paper No. 134 (NATO Defense College, Rome, 2016), p. 12.

<sup>96</sup>Interview with military officer No. 16 (October 2015); Jens Stoltenberg, 'Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg' (2016), available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_132492.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_132492.htm?selectedLocale=en) accessed

FRONTEX to fight illegal migration was also part of the transformation of NATO's maritime action. Using the experience accumulated in OAE's surveillance, NATO ships patrolled in the Aegean.<sup>97</sup> To formalise their coordination in the Mediterranean basin, the EU and NATO issued a declaration in July 2016 about joint maritime and migration control activities. The statement was part of the preparation of the new NATO mission.<sup>98</sup> The transition to Sea Guardian was the product of this liminally fabricated terrorism-immigration imaginary:

During the last phases of OAE, a sub-branch of the mission supported Turkey and Greece in migration control. NATO forces were patrolling between the Turkish coasts and the Greek islands. What was wired was that NATO did not have a clear mandate like Sophia. Now, Sea Guardian clearly includes migration control. This was a major change: NATO is officially involved in the migration crisis along with the EU. It was informal before, NATO being in charge of counterterrorism.<sup>99</sup>

The transition to Sea Guardian was the epitome of OAE's pre-emptive imagination. Counterterrorism was about the protection of the freedom of navigation, critical infrastructures and energy routes, fight against human or drug trafficking, or the 'military-humanitarian containment of migrations'.<sup>100</sup> The imagined continuum of risks connected political-military views over NATO's role in the Mediterranean. It consequently opened an array of possibilities in terms of maritime policing, which was the purpose of Sea Guardian. Transitioning to a non-Article 5 mission was a convenient decision, even more diplomatically. Sea Guardian shows that the diplomatic authorities turned an initial defeat facing the military after the adoption of the AMS into an advantageous situation. This process officially enlarged the scope of NATO's policing while keeping intact the historical signification of collective self-defence.

The third sequence of OAE weak field of power shows how imagination supports the normalisation of pre-emption, that occurred through a final rapprochement of the diplomatic-military interests. Sea Guardian was the by-product of this final consensus and, more specifically, the result of a double liminal transaction: the importation by SHAPE of the AMS into OAE and the diplomatic opening of the mission to EU arenas. Therefore, Sea Guardian was mainly a change of label that consolidated the existing terrorism-migration nexus. As such, it guaranteed the consensual non-Article 5 permanency of NATO's maritime pre-emption. The last stage of evolution of OAE reveals the non-linear transformation that pre-emptive imagination catalyses in security organisations.

## Conclusion

Taking the case study of NATO's maritime policing, this article argued that pre-emption is grounded in specific social conditions, that is, heteronomous fields of power. Consequently, the weak field theory can have a significant contribution in CSS, regarding the analysis of the technologies and imaginaries involved in late modern security. The technological focus, central

17 May 2019; SHADE-MED, 'EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA SHADE MED Working Group. Report' (OHQ Rome: 12–13 May 2016).

<sup>97</sup>NATO, 'NATO's Deployment in the Aegean Sea'.

<sup>98</sup>NATO, 'Joint Declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization' (2016), available at: {[https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133163.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm)} accessed 15 May 2019.

<sup>99</sup>Interview with diplomat No. 14, October 2015.

<sup>100</sup>Glenda Garelli and Martina Tazzioli, 'The biopolitical warfare on migrants: EU Naval Force and NATO operations of migration government in the Mediterranean', *Critical Military Studies*, 4:2 (2018), pp. 181–200; Paolo Cuttita, 'Delocalization, humanitarianism, and human rights: The Mediterranean border between exclusion and inclusion', *Antipode*, 50:2 (2017), pp. 783–803.

to CSS, leads to a homogenisation and overestimation of the transformation that security organisations have experienced since 9/11. The added value of the weak field framework is to capture the non-linearity of the changes induced by the technologised imagination of power and control in the pre-emptive era. The pre-emptive relevance of NATO's collective self-defence was not natural and unanimous in OAE. The use of Article 5 in OAE did not mean either a transformation, or a temporal deviation from its original conception, as the dominant CSS reading would suggest. OAE induced an *evolution* in NATO's collective self-defence, made possible through liminal strategies of power and (de)polarisation phases. The precautionary use of Article 5 served to normalise NATO's policing but it does not mean that NATO's policing normalised such a use of Article 5.

Therefore, the weak field approach indicates the benefit of a triple shift in CSS regarding pre-emption. The first involves the study of imagination not exclusively as a *process of invention*, but as a *social process*. If imagination is reduced to invention, then pre-emption relates to a *deus ex machine* mechanically transforming security. If imagination is captured through its social structure, then the organisational effect of pre-emption can be studied with more accuracy. The second shift relates to the sociology of security itself. The weak field theory is an opportunity to shed light on the flexible social dynamics of pre-emption, which would be otherwise overshadowed through a strict structural reading. The third shift is methodological. The weak field framework highlights the value of fieldworks in the study of pre-emption. These methods provide information about the professional contests driving pre-emption, which are rarely accessible in official documents. This article intended then to outline an ethnography of security imagination.

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