

Abstract

In the past two decades, digital technologies have changed how international organisations respond to conflicts. With contemporary armed struggles gaining new dimensions and becoming more complex, a challenge remains to comprehend the potential of both militarised and unconventional digital capabilities, and to determine which of them are the best devices and systems for peacekeeping operations. Nevertheless, the potential of such innovative digital technologies in EU's CSDP operations remains unclear. Along those lines, this study aims to firstly assess the practicality and functionality of these innovative capabilities, in terms of their impact on the actors, intelligence gathering and analysis process, and the opportunity for advocacy that such technologies offer to local communities. Secondly, it identifies and deconstructs the narratives and initiatives dealing with digital technologies in EU external action, in order to understand the growing emphasis placed on these tools and the direction in which the Union is going with regard to these innovative capabilities. Thirdly, in its quest to answer the research question, this study examines the potential benefits and shortcomings posed by both existing and more novel digital capabilities to CSDP operations. This dissertation proposes and defines the overarching notion of 'innovative peacekeeping', which bridges the lacunas of the academic literature by providing a comprehensive conceptual contribution that synthesises the various understandings found in the scholarship. While taking a reconciliatory stance, two main qualitative research methods – discourse and document analysis – were applied throughout the analysis of this study in a systematic and rigorous manner. This dissertation concludes that digital technologies represent an arsenal of high-value niche capabilities that can be beneficial to CSDP operations by strengthening them to take a more pragmatic, holistic and inclusive approach in order to achieve sustainable peace, in accordance with the objectives and commitments presented in the EU Global Strategy.

Keywords: European Union, external action, CSDP operations, digital technologies, social media, innovation, peacekeeping.