Geopolitical Shift in Drone Proliferation: Chinese Strategic Impact on U.S Policy

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ABSTRACT

In the midst of new technologies, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), have become rapidly proliferating machineries around the globe that are used for military and non-military purposes. Although USA has been the leader and the most prolific user of drones in their operations abroad and for national security, China now has turned out to exert influence on the UAV expansion. The US Department of Defence estimates that China will manufacture up to 41,800 UAVs worth approximately USD10.5 billion, for land and sea-based operations by 2023. Chinese-made drones have already been spotted in both the East and South China Sea, where China has regional disputes. Moreover, China has begun to provide UAVs to Middle Eastern countries. As the studies on drone have indicated, this may create a shift in regional power dynamics and bring destabilization by increasing the accessibility of UAVs and empowering the non-state actors. Thus, in these given context the aim of this study is to analyse the possible influence of Chinese drone trend on US policy and future military investment. As some scholars argue, Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) may alter the balance of power between US and China. On the other hand, under the deterrence theory, this shift can be seen as a posture of reassurance toward greater willingness to demonstrate capabilities. In this paper, we claim that Chinese strong interest on drones reflects its strategic outlook emphasizing superior information, intelligence that shapes US approach to UAV and brings fundamental change in strategic affairs associated with this technology.

Keywords: