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Published online: 01 Feb 2017.

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Navigating the Unknown: Barriers to Evidence-Based Defence and Security Policy in the European Union

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ABSTRACT

At a time when Europe faces numerous crises, there is a real need for rigorous evidence to underpin effective policymaking. However, a gap between academia and policy creates clear obstacles in the use of evidence in policymaking. Many of these enduring obstacles are manifest in the inherent differences between separate communities: academics have difficulty communicating research in an applicable manner, and policymakers, in turn, tend to focus on operational motivations. The gap widens considerably when foreign, security and defence policy within the complex institutional structures of the European Union is considered. In addition to these well known barriers to evidence-based policy, there are two more obstacles in the defence and security space: sovereignty and dispersed decision-making. A dialogue of best practices must be opened up to broker knowledge in the EU context.

In the mid-1990s, David D. Newsom, former US Ambassador, sometime Under Secretary of State and key advisor in the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979, wrote an article in which he lamented the failure of academia to have real impact on decision-making in the spheres of foreign, defence and security policy.[1] Newsom, himself a policymaker-turned-academic, saw blame on both sides: academics are suspicious of government and constantly in "opposition to official policies"; while many in government see academia as "an irrelevant ivory tower", whose practical value for policy is minimal.[2] For Newsom this was a failing of both parties: he realised the value that academic expertise could have for policymakers in providing critical insights that could be missed or forgotten. He recognised that, in contrast to policymakers, scholars have the time to reflect, to gather vast stores of evidence, to delve deep into the data and produce independent analyses of key moments and decisions. The big problem, as he saw it, was that in the world of foreign and security policy, this valuable work rarely influenced policy – the already wide gulf between academia and policy was expanding.

For Newsom, academic expertise offered myriad potential benefits for policymakers, but was of greatest value during a crisis when events are in flux, public servants stretched to the limit, and obvious solutions not readily available. One cannot help feeling that Europe

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[1]Stout, "David Newsom, 90, Dies"; Newsom, "Foreign Policy and Academia".
[2]Newsom, *Ibid*.

is on the precipice of just such a crisis, with numerous challenges ahead: the migrant crisis continues to cause significant political and social upheaval; the growth of home-grown terrorism in the wake of the attacks in Paris and Brussels is stretching European security efforts; the outcome of Brexit has the potential to undermine the whole European project. As the crisis looms ever closer, it is not the time for what David Halpern once called "spray-on evidence" – evidence selected to support decisions already made[3] – but for academia to play a role in decision-making.[4] The circumstances are such that there is a genuine and pressing need for rigorous substantive evidence to underpin policy formulation to ensure the best use of limited resources when dealing with significant challenges.[5]

Yet, sadly, there continue to be numerous barriers between the academic and policy communities that prevent the uptake of expertise and analysis in policy decision-making processes. Many of these barriers were identified by Newsom in the mid-1990s, indeed, many of them were already identified in the 1970s.[6] But it is a sad state of affairs that barriers between the academic and policymaking architecture still persist. Newsom, once again, got to the heart of the issue: "Scholars find that bureaucracies are seldom open to assessments that cast doubt on current policies…", adding that "the scholar or, for that matter, the official who challenges policy and the conventional wisdom is unwelcome."[7]

These barriers are well known; predominantly they are issues of poor communication, meagre appetite for research amongst policymakers, weak networks between academia and policymakers and different timeframes for both communities.[8] In other policy fields, particularly health policy, these barriers are widely acknowledged.[9] Indeed, they have been subject to long-standing and rigorous analysis within academia.[10] However, the body of literature which explores whether and in what way evidence informs foreign, security and defence policymaking is very limited. In this article, we aim to identify some of the barriers between academia and policy, as well as to recommend how these might be overcome. With that in mind, we begin by attempting to utilise the wider literature on evidence-based policy to identify the barriers generally found in all academic fields. In the second section, we explore a number of significant additional barriers that are unique to defence policymaking in the European context. If academics are to add their considerable value to European defence policymaking at a time when there is a pressing need for evidence, academics will have to develop bespoke strategies to overcome them. With this in mind, in the final section, we provide a number of recommendations for academics seeking to impact defence policy formulation.

The age-old problem: bridging the academia-policy gap

The evidence suggests that the gap between academia and policy is an enduring problem that pervades multiple policy areas. Newsom saw it at play in foreign policy decision-making, noting that "the practitioner's emphasis on experience versus the scholar's emphasis on

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[3]Halpern, academic and founder of the UK's Behavioural Insights Team in the Cabinet Office, "Evidence based policy".
[4]Whitty, "What makes academic paper useful".
[5]Feldman *et al.* "Improving Communication".
[6]Weiss, "Meanings of Research Utilization"; Caplan, "Two-Communities Theory".
[7]Newsom, "Foreign Policy and Academia", 65.
[8]Feldman *et al.* "Improving Communication", 312; Nutley *et al.*, *Evidence-Based Policy and Practice*; Oliver *et al.*, "Systematic review of barriers".
[9]Nutley *et al., Using Evidence*; Cameron *et al.*, "Policy makers' perceptions"; Liverani *et al.*, "Political and institutional influences"; Oliver *et al.*, *Ibid.* ; Whitty, "What makes academic paper useful".
[10]Boaz *et al.*, *Systematic Reviews.*

research creates a dividing line between the two and affects the perspectives each presents to a wider public".[11] Although there is limited research on the nature and causes of the gulf between academia and policy in the defence, security and foreign policy arena, there is a fertile and extensive literature that focuses on other sectors.[12] A robust and rigorous area of research, initially focusing predominantly on components of health policymaking, that has grown over the last 40 years has produced much of this material that seeks to understand the barriers that prevent knowledge from flowing between academics and policymakers.[13] This field has had a wide-ranging impact on health policy research, resulting in a number of initiatives, including 'What Works' evidence centres and the Cochrane Collaboration, and more generally defining the parameters and perimeters of evidence quality and credibility in a practical manner.[14] More recently, approaches to evidence developed in health and medicine have spilled over into other policy areas such as social policy, education and transport.[15]

Although there are clear differences between these policy areas and defence and security, useful parallels can be drawn. Above all, there are four abiding and intractable barriers that recur time and again, and appear to permeate all areas of policy: (a) academics communicate poorly with policymakers, (b) there is a lack of political 'appetite' to seek independent, quality evidence, (c) networks and relationships between academics and policymakers are often sporadic, uneven and informal, and (d) academia and policy work to different timeframes.

Communication

It is often suggested that academics' communication skills are invariably seen by policymakers to be weak.[16] A case in point is the antiquated image of bespectacled, detail-oriented academics working in their ivory tower.[17] In part, the problem exists because academia has developed its own channels of communication which invariably excludes wider audiences. Newsom put the problem in particularly tart terms:

> To the observer, much of the process of modern scholarship seems incestuous. Academicians often appear caught up in an elite culture in which labels, categories, and even the humor have meaning for "members only." Their writings are filled with references to other scholars' writings; they speak to each other rather than to a wider public.[18]

The other side of the problem stems from the fact that research may well be accessible, but not appropriately targeted to the needs, preoccupations and questions of policymakers. In their study on the barriers and facilitators of evidence usage, for example, Oliver *et al.* find that there is a lack of "clear or relevant research evidence" available to policymakers. Ultimately, of course, this is not purely about communication modes and channels, nor about access to the 'right' information; it is also about the language deployed by academics

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[11]Newsom, "Foreign Policy and Academia", 55.
[12]Walter *et al.*, *Research Impact*.
[13]Boaz and Ashby, *Fit for purpose*.
[14]Solesbury, *Evidence Based Policy*.
[15]Weiss, "Meanings of Research Utilization".
[16]Oliver *et al.*, "Systematic review of barriers"; Pinker, *The Sense of Style*.
[17]Newsom uses a Jack Orman cartoon to depict how 'careerists' view academics and vice versa. The academic, literally bogged down in paperwork, is unable to proceed past a theoretical concept referenced in 'footnote 2' in order to give strategy recommendations (Newsom, "Foreign Policy and Academia", 58).
[18]*Ibid.*, 62.

when communicating to their intended audience. Studies have indicated that academics are still unsure about how best to disseminate information to users such as policymakers.[19] Whitty puts the dilemma neatly, arguing that even when the intended audience is the policymaker or practitioner, researchers tend to frame their argument using different language, cultural dimensions and formats (that is, long technical papers).[20] Academic work is often structured in response to a theoretical issue rather than addressing pressing policy questions and, as a consequence, it is hard for practitioners and research users to implement academic expertise in their day-to-day work.[21]

Appetite for credible evidence

Even where findings are communicated in an accessible and timely form to policymakers, the latter often lack an 'appetite' for research evidence. Literature on other policy areas suggests that policymakers' appetite for rigorous, robust and high-quality evidence in decision-making is meagre, not least because there are concerns about how credible the evidence and findings actually are.[22] However, recent studies have begun to suggest that the drive towards evidence-based policy has led policymakers to search for evidence that supports their claims, rather than evidence which will generate policies with optimal out-comes.[23] According to these studies, there has been an unconscious 'buy-in' to evidence, produced in part by the commitment to evidence-based policymaking and initiatives such as the What Works phenomenon and other government reports of the early 2000s. A number of strategies have been recommended to encourage the 'pull' for evidence, including early literature which suggested policymakers build stable relationships with various types of partners.[24] Hence, the suggestion has been that research must be integrated as an evidence base in a 'two-way negotiation' at the beginning of policy formulation.[25]

Networks and relationships

The evidence also suggests that weak relationships and networks between policymakers and academics limit the uptake of evidence into policy. Caplan's "two communities" theory argued that cultural and institutional differences hindered relationships between researchers and policymakers, which manifested themselves as two communities.[26] Each "ecosystem" was made up of separate groupings of actors which differed in language, processes and life cycles. More recent research suggests that, rather than organising subgroups by their differences, a different approach is to establish whether and how actors are "bound through a shared value system".[27] In so doing, the importance of 'co-production' of research comes to the fore, emphasising the need for policymakers to be involved in research,[28] as well as the

[19]Nutley *et al,. Using Evidence*, 66; Tang and Sinclair, "Exploitation practice in research".
[20]See e.g. Caplan's "Two-Communities Theory".
[21]Nutley *et al., Using Evidence*; Percy-Smith *et al., Promoting change through research*.
[22]Cameron *et al.*, "Policy makers' perceptions", 441.
[23]Whitty, "What makes academic paper useful", 1; Walter *et al.*, "Research Impact: cross-sector review".
[24]Walter *et al., Ibid.*
[25]Oliver *et al.*, "Systematic review of barriers", 2.
[26]Caplan, "Two Communities Theory", 460.
[27]Smith and Joyce, "Capturing complex realities", 2.
[28]*Ibid.*

need for both parties to participate in a 'two way' negotiation in which partners exchange knowledge and learn from one another.[29] In a similar vein, Nutley, Smith and Davies found that dissemination within UK local governments generally relied on informal networks and 'resourceful' individual actors to ensure that relevant evidence reached the correct audiences.[30] Nonetheless, two communities with different identities will not connect naturally without the proper pathways, which is where an external body, such as a reputable institute, can assist in mending gaps, to ensure policy is tailored to "characterise the process as a whole" rather than a single component.[31]

Timescales and timing

Academic research is meticulous, and takes an extensive amount of time and effort. By contrast, policy formulation is often rapid and driven by sudden changes in the environment. One of the major barriers to the greater use of academic research in policymaking is that these differing timescales are hard to reconcile.[32] Sir David Omand, UK Security and Intelligence Coordinator in 2002, another policymaker-turned-academic, emphasised the differences in timescales. "The pace [in the policy world] is relentless, the time for reflection compressed close to zero, the number of policy officials continuing to fall with the resources to invest in tomorrow's potential issues lacking."[33] Ultimately, the different timescales mean that although expertise is valued by government, when "it decides it needs it, it also decides the terms of engagement".[34] The natural corollary of this is that either academics have to be lucky to be working on the topic *du jour* or they have to condense timescales significantly. The latter is hard, particularly for those working on multi-year grants; while the former invariably requires the academic to become prophet and predictor, able to identify the 'next big thing' and to develop solutions appropriately.

Evidence in the European Union defence context: obstacle compounded by obstacle

Much of the previous section focuses on how barriers that prevent evidence and expertise from flowing between academia and policy operate at the national level. However, if we extrapolate to the European level, the same challenges appear to play out in the EU context: communication problems are aggravated, once again, by the different channels and modes of communications; networks and relationships are just as limited; the timescales of the expert and the policymaker in the EU context equally incongruous. On a more positive note, however, the EU has a growing commitment to evidence and expertise in policymaking since at least the Lisbon European Council meeting in 2000, which endorsed the idea of a European Research Area (ERA) in which "researchers, technology and knowledge

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[29]Oliver *et al.*, "Systematic review of barriers", 2.
[30]Nutley *et al., Using Evidence.*
[31]Nutley *et al., Ibid.*
[32]Zahariadis' modified 'Multiple Streams' (MS) approach to agenda setting and decision-making provides a theoretical underpinning of how policy choice is affected by a constantly evolving 'black box' system. It expands to explain the influence that ambiguity and time have on how and when a policy is chosen (Zahariadis, "Ambiguity, Time, and Multiple Streams). This explains why approaches to decision-making are dependent on context and cannot easily be replicated.
[33]Omand, *Securing the State*; Wilkinson and Gow, *The Art of Creating Power.*
[34]Wilkinson and Gow, *Ibid.*

freely circulate".[35] It appears, then, that there is a growing appetite in the EU for evidence when it comes to formulating policy, though the extent to which this has shifted policy decision-making towards evidence in practice has yet to be fully understood.

Aside from the challenges in most policy areas, two further barriers come into play in the European foreign security and defence policy context. Both are products of the characteristics of the area itself. In the first place, defence, security and foreign policy are spaces where sovereignty is on display and secrecy at play. Governments are often reluctant to broadcast secrets, particularly when national security is at stake. In second place, the European Union is, by its very nature, a complex phenomenon with myriad actors, hierarchies and agendas; decision-making is therefore dispersed across a wide range of actors with different sets of priorities. At a national level, this can be difficult to navigate, but with 28 member states in addition to the wider architecture of the European Union, consensus may be almost impossible to achieve.

Defence and the veil of secrecy

In the defence, security and foreign affairs nexus, barriers in other policy domains are compounded by the fact that, when it comes to national security and defence, secrecy tends to be the rule.[36] This has knock-on effects. In the first place, it can mean that evidence is hard – or impossible – to come by: study of the growth of extremist groups in Europe, for example, or aspects of military R&D, or the effectiveness of specific intelligence agencies requires access to classified information or rigorous acquisition of information from less reliable sources. In order for academic experts to get the appropriate data, either governments need to 'open up their books' to outsiders (a relatively rare occurrence), or academics have to find other ways of finding information (for example, estimating figures, interviews with experts, or interviews with practitioners). This, in turn, means that evidence can be patchy and incomplete, providing some, but not all, of the picture. A recent European Parliament report on the economic costs of the failure to reach a fully integrated EU Single Market estimated that, in the realm of defence, this amounted to "130 billion euro, at the high end, to at least 26.0 billion euro per year, on a more cautious estimate".[37]

Multiple players and dispersed decision-making

The inherent secrecy of defence, security and foreign policy is obviously a challenge, rendered even greater in the EU context where decision-making is dispersed across myriad players, each with their own agendas, politics and objectives. In essence, the EU is what we might refer to as a "compound polity".[38] The consequence is that, at the EU level, decision-making power is dispersed both vertically and horizontally; vertically, power is shared between EU institutions and member states, while horizontally, it is shared by a system of separate institutions.

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[35]European Union, *Green Paper: The European Research Area: New Perspectives*. https://ec.europa.eu/research/era/pdf/era_gp_final_en.pdf, 2.

[36]A point often made by those in security studies. See e.g. O'Leary *et al*., "Understanding and Ending Persistent Conflicts".

[37]European Parliamentary Research Unit, *Mapping the Cost of Non-Europe,* 21.

[38]Fabbrini, *Which European Union?,* 225.

The vertical separation of power is epitomised by the principle of unanimity, which applies without exception in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) under the December 2009 Lisbon Treaty (TEU, Art. 31.4). Thus, under the current legal regime, the community method for decision-making applies to all areas of the EU except for those under the remit of the CFSP and the CSDP (TEU, Art. 24). This looks set to hold for the foreseeable future: Declarations 13 and 14[39] reiterate EU member states' desire to avoid a 'communitarisation' of CFSP and CSDP governance.[40] In principle, if the gap between academia and policymakers were overcome at the national level, single member states could act as consensus-seekers within intergovernmental fora such as the European Council and the Council of the European Union. However, because of the aforesaid vertical dispersion of decision-making power, even if technical experts overcame the obstacles that prevent knowledge from flowing between them and policymakers in the national context, all twenty-eight member states would still have to agree for the EU institutional system to be able to generate evidence-based policies.

Admittedly, seeking to bridge the academia-policy gap in national political systems rather than in the EU may be particularly effective when member states are willing to strengthen cooperation in the defence sector. For example, under the Lisbon Treaty (TEU, Art. 20), 'Enhanced cooperation' can take place in CFSP and CSDP matters in areas of the Union's non-exclusive competence. A group of member states can also be entrusted by the Council to implement one of the 'Petersberg tasks' (TEU, Art. 44) on a voluntary basis.[41] EU member states that fulfill higher criteria for military capabilities and are willing to make more binding commitments can also establish a 'permanent structured cooperation' (TEU, Art. 42.6) in CSDP. The chances of having evidence-based research impact policies by making the technical expertise of researchers available to a single member state or a restricted group of them may be better under such circumstances. Nevertheless, in these cases the final decision still has to be taken unanimously by the member states in the Council.

The vertical separation of power is further compounded by a dispersion of decision-making power at the horizontal level. To manage EU foreign and security policies, the Lisbon Treaty has established a system of government characterised by a separation of powers of all the institutions that participate in the decision-making process.[42] In this

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[39]Both Declarations 13 and 14 on CFSP are annexed to the Lisbon Treaty. They underline that the TEU provisions on CFSP, including the establishment of the post of HR and the EEAS, "do not affect the responsibilities of the member states, as they currently exist, for the formulation and conduct of their foreign policy nor of their national representation in third countries and international organisations"; and "do not affect the existing legal basis, responsibilities, and powers of each member state in relation to the formulation and conduct of its foreign policy, its national diplomatic service, relations with third countries and participation in international organisations, including a member state's membership of the Security Council of the United Nations", respectively.

[40]Blanke and Mangiameli, *The European Union after Lisbon*, 472. The defence sector also enjoys a special status within the internal market. Member states have long tried to avoid applying EU law to defence by relying on TFEU, Art. 346, according to which "the provisions of the Treaties shall not preclude the application of the following rules: (a) no Member State shall be obliged to supply information the disclosure of which it considers contrary to the essential interests of its security; (b) any Member State may take such measures as it considers necessary for the protection of the essential interests of its security which are connected with the production of or trade in arms, munitions and war material; such measures shall not adversely affect the conditions of competition in the internal market regarding products which are not intended for specifically military purposes'. In order to limit member states' extensive recourse to TFEU, Art. 346, the EP and the Council passed the Defence and Procurement Directive in 2009. Randazzo, "Article 346 and qualified application".

[41]According to TEU, Art. 42, the Petersberg tasks include humanitarian and rescue operations; conflict prevention and peace-keeping; combat in crisis management, including peacemaking; joint disarmament; military advice and assistance; and post-conflict stabilisation.

[42]Easton, *The Political System*.

respect, the EU does not have a government, intended as a single institution entitled to take the ultimate decision on policy issues.[43] The decision-making power is dispersed and shared by a number of separate institutions composed of actors with different dialects, idioms, processes and even lengths of their mandate.

The horizontal separation of power implies that all institutions need to cooperate for the institutional system to generate a policy output. Bearing this in mind, to overcome barriers to evidence-based defence policy and influence the final policy output effectively, technical experts have two options: to gain access and convince all the institutions taking part in the decision-making process; or to open a communication channel with only one – or a few – of them and provide them with sufficiently persuasive evidence for them to convince all the other institutional actors involved in the process. Acknowledging this obstacle, the EU published a Global Strategy in 2016, with recommendations to invest in a stronger knowledge base to underpin external actions, mainly by arranging for appropriate expertise, joint reporting and information sharing. The document stated that the EU will

> encourage cross-fertilisation between [the EU] and regional and international organisations, civil society, academia, think tanks and the private sector… will do so both in traditional ways – through dialogue, cooperation and support – and through innovative formats such as exchanges, embedded personnel and joint facilities, harnessing knowledge and creativity in our system.[44]

The chairs of the European Council and the different Council formations involved in EU foreign and security policymaking might be strategic targets for technical experts to connect with if they want to influence such policies. Essentially, these actors may have a multiplier effect on quality evidence in defence policy formulation by seeking consensus within the respective institutional gatherings.[45] The chairs may influence and shape the discussion among member states through agenda-setting prerogatives. In this respect, the role of the President of the European Council is crucial, as the chair of the intergovernmental forum uniting Heads of States or Governments in the main guiding body on EU foreign and security policy (TEU, Art. 15). Accordingly, the President of the European Council shall

> chair it and drive forward its work; ensure the preparation and continuity of the work of the European Council in cooperation with the President of the Commission, and on the basis of the work of the General Affairs Council; endeavour to facilitate cohesion and consensus within the European Council; and shall present a report to the European Parliament after each of the meetings of the European Council. (TEU Art. 15.6 par. 2)

In turn, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) may act as consensus-seeker among member states' ministers in her/his capacity as chair of the Foreign Affairs Council (TEU, Artt. 18 and 27). Thus, this institutional actor is tasked with ensuring the unity, consistency (TEU, Art. 16.6) and effectiveness of EU policies (TEU, Art. 26.2) by tabling proposals on the preparation of CFSP and CSDP (TEU, Art. 22.2) and making sure that the decisions adopted by the European Council and the Council are implemented (TEU, Art. 27.1). The relevant minister holding the six-month rotating Presidency of the EU and chairing the General Affairs Council (GAC) may be decisive as well. As a matter of fact, one of the tasks of the GAC is ensuring the consistency of the work of the other

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[43]Fabbrini, *Which European Union?*
[44]European Union Global Strategy, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, 2016, 49, http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf
[45]Amadio Viceré, "The roles of the President".

Council formations within the framework of a multi-annual programme. Such a fragmented institutional arrangement implies that the President of the European Council, the HR and the relevant minster holding the rotating presidency need to have the political appetite concurrently to seek independent evidence on a specific policy issue. Last but not least, that appetite would necessarily have to be in line with the European Council's "general political directions and priorities" (TEU, Art. 15). Indeed, the members of the European Parliament may be more accessible to technical experts than heads of states or government, ministers and pivotal actors such as the President of the European Council and the HR. However, the European Parliament plays a marginal role in this policy sector as it is excluded from the decision-making process.

Whilst the Commission has no right of initiative in CSDP, this institution ensures, together with the Council, the consistency of EU action (TEU, Art. 21.3). Arguably, now that the HR is also a Vice President of the Commission, the role of this organisation in EU foreign and security policy is strengthened. Under the authority of the Council, supported by the Political and Security Committee (TEU, Art 38),[46] the HR is tasked with the implementation of CSDP and coordination of the civilian and military aspects of the missions the EU carries out (TEU, Art. 42). The HR is also head of the European Defence Agency (EDA) (TEU, Art. 42.3 and Art. 45), open to the participation of all EU member states, and responsible for improving the defence capabilities of the EU in the field of crisis management and the EU's industrial and technological armament capacities through cooperation among EU member states. However, EDA's activities fall under the direct authority of the Council of the European Union acting unanimously.

The EU's multiple separations of power is epitomised by the institutional framework of the systems established to provide administrative and executive support for EU foreign and security policy. The wide range of institutional actors involved corresponds to an equally wide range of dividing lines between technical experts and practitioners, each with their own timeframes for their activities, specific working cultures and regulations enabling access to civil society. The European External Action Service (EEAS), whose creation was envisaged in the Lisbon Treaty (TEU, Art. 27), was established on 26 July 2010 to support the HR in fulfilling both representative and internal functions in the different domains of EU external action. The EEAS comprises "officials from relevant departments of the General Secretariat of the Council and of the Commission as well as staff seconded from national diplomatic services of the member states" and works "in co-operation with the diplomatic services of the member states" (TEU, Art. 27). Its contribution to the functioning of the EU foreign and security policymaking processes lies in its "specificity as common bureaucratic machinery".[47] Nonetheless, inter-institutional rivalries and different bureaucratic cultures increase the number and complexity of the barriers that prevent knowledge from flowing between academics and policymakers. For instance, under the direction of the HR, the Commission plays a crucial role in the implementation of the CSDP budget to which the EEAS has no autonomous access, or in some circumstances, member states' administrative infrastructures may also be involved in the financing of the deployment of civilian and military missions (e.g. Athena Mechanism).[48]

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[46]The Political and Security Committee is a Council body which contributes "to the definitions of policies by delivering opinions" and by controlling the "strategic direction of the crisis management operation" (TEU, Art. 38).

[47]Gebhard, "International Relations and EU".

[48]Under the 'Athena mechanism' common operational costs stemming from military missions - e.g. headquarters and operation headquarters - are shared by EU member states. This cost sharing is conducted in proportion to gross national product.

Conclusions: evidence-based policy or policy-based evidence?

With multiple players, partial or imprecise evidence and a number of enduring obstacles between academia and policy, the role of evidence in EU policymaking in the defence, security and foreign policy sectors looks like something of a pipe dream. Nonetheless, all signs suggest that governments at the member state level and the wider EU policy architecture all recognise the value of evidence in ensuring good decision-making. They also suggest a gradual move towards opening channels through which evidence might flow into government. In the EU, these are encapsulated by proposals such as the European Research Area; in the academic realm, they are signalled by the rise of the 'impact' agenda and efforts to encourage academics to engage with policymakers to benefit society more broadly.

This is positive. However, two issues persist. In the first place, in contrast to other policy areas, academic expertise and its impact on policy formulation in the defence, foreign and security sectors is worryingly under-researched. Unlike some of the rigorous and substantive analyses of scientific research and how it is translated into policy and practice,[49] we could find no similar study in the fields of defence, security and foreign policy. This is an important area for future work: until we understand better how knowledge flows from academia into policy in these areas, and evaluate the quality of that evidence, we will not know whether, how and to what extent more effective policy decision-making can take place in matters of defence, security and international affairs.

Secondly, even though there appears to be a growing appetite for evidence in government at the member state and EU level, the four enduring obstacles described are cultural and institutional, rather than structural. To put it another way, they are the product of different mindsets held by different professions. The temptation is to think that structural changes (e.g. the ERA and the impact agenda) may be a panacea that paves the way for greater uptake of academic evidence in policymaking. Yet, this seems rather optimistic: politics and agendas will continue to persist and, as they intersect, there is every chance that evidence will be cherry-picked to suit policies already decided upon.[50] The risk is, to return to a quote by Halpern, that evidence will be "sprayed on" to give particular policies the veneer of rigour and authority, whilst findings that suggest other, less desirable, but potentially more effective, policy options are dismissed out of hand.[51] The real danger, then, is that we end up with policy-based evidence, rather than evidence-based policy.

All this begs the question what academics conducting policy-relevant research in the areas of foreign, defence and security policy can do about this. As the appetite in Europe and beyond for evidence to improve policymaking in these areas grows and expands, and as the strategic environment becomes increasingly volatile and unpredictable, there needs to be a greater commitment in the field to empirical studies and to producing research that is substantive and rigorous. Recent research suggests that the existing literature on defence and security is heavily indebted to theory, rather than to quantitative and qualitative evidence.[52] And yet, it is precisely the latter that will create more robust policy, capable of dealing with the challenges of this increasingly complex and changeable world. The lesson, then, is that

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[49]King's College London and Digital Science, *Nature, scale and beneficiaries,* 12.
[50]Uttley and Wilkinson allude to this in their theory that the 'undecided' vote in the British EU referendum would result in a clash of 'logics' between pro-Brexit and pro-Bremain campaigns, in which the side that could most persuasively spin the argument would triumph (Uttley and Wilkinson, "A spin of the wheel?", 586).
[51]Halpern, "Evidence based policy".
[52]Dorman and Uttley, "*International Affairs* and British Policy Debate".

as the call for rigorous evidence to underpin foreign, defence and security policy is growing, academics should grasp the opportunity and answer the call.

Acknowledgements

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